

INFORM

VOLUNTARY
ACTION
GWEITHREDU
GWIRFODDOL

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil • *Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Merthyr Tudful*

March 2025

VAMT's Volunteer Recognition Awards Ceremony returns for 2025

The event is taking place at
6.30pm on Thursday 26th June at
Morlais Castle Golf Club and will be
hosted by ITV Wales Newsreader, Andrea Byrne.

This year there are 6 categories:-

- **Young Volunteer of the Year (25 and under Award)**
- **Volunteer of the Year (26 and over Award)**
- **Community Group/ Charity of the Year**
- **Trustee Award**
- **Outstanding Contribution Award**
- **Sports Volunteer of the Year**

(This award, in partnership with VAMT, will be a closed nomination with each of the monthly Active Merthyr Volunteer of the Month winners put forward automatically for the award. This Award is designed to recognise and reward those volunteers across Merthyr Tydfil who are the backbone of community sport. Nominated by the general public, winners are chosen by a panel each month and presented with their award out in the settings in which the volunteer).

Application and guidance forms for each of the categories can be found on the VAMT website:

<https://vamt.net/en/volunteering/celebrating-volunteering/>

Nominations open from
Monday 17th March

**Closing date for applications is
Friday 18th April**



In 2024, an incredible **14.2 million volunteers** dedicated their time giving back to society, contributing an estimated **£4.6 billion** to the economy.

This year, we're here to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone.



For 41 years, Volunteers' Week has been a cornerstone of gratitude and recognition, celebrating the millions of individuals who selflessly support thousands of charities and organisations across the UK. This June, we continue the tradition of rejoicing in their remarkable contributions.

"Volunteers' Week is such an important moment to take stock and recognise just how essential volunteers are and the vital impact they make on people and communities every day."

Lindsay Cordery-Bruce, Chief Executive, WCVA

UK wide celebrations

This year, the UK Volunteering Forum — comprising Volunteer Scotland, Volunteer Now in Northern Ireland, WCVA in Wales, and NCVO in England — is inviting every volunteer-involving organisation to take part in a UK-wide programme of celebratory activities and events from **Monday 2 June to Sunday 8 June 2025**, to recognise the incredible impact of their volunteers.

To find out more about Volunteers' Week and how you or your organisation can get involved, visit www.volunteersweek.org

UK volunteering facts:

- In 2024, 14.2 million people volunteered their time to help others.
- Economic impact of volunteering: Volunteering added £4.6 billion to the UK economy in 2024. Report link: <https://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/about-us/our-impact/our-research-policy-work/a-pro-bono-bonus-the-impact-of-volunteering-on-wages-and-productivity/>

New website for Volunteers' Week 2025

We're thrilled to announce the launch of a brand-new website for Volunteers' Week. It's your go-to hub for celebration ideas, free resources to help decorate your events and showcase your volunteers online, and updates from each nation, so you can stay connected to what's happening in your local area. To keep posted on activity in Wales – start here: <https://volunteersweek.org/wales/>



Friends of Nant Llwynog Park

Merthyr Tydfil is blessed with very many parks and open spaces. Nant Llwynog is one of these, using space left over from the mining and quarrying era. That legacy of industrial legacy is now being put to good use providing places for people to enjoy and in which children can play. Nature takes over these places naturally and they soon become rich in heritage, countryside and wildlife. We now look after them and promote them for biodiversity and as good places for health, wellbeing and recreation. Nant Llwynog is one such site and we were delighted to be granted the Green Flag Award again in 2024/25.

We have suffered from some serious storm damage causing the main footpath to be closed. We hope funds can be found to repair and restore this important amenity.

One improvement by the Coal Authority has been the building of some new steps up to the Angling Pond. It is part of a bigger programme of works to stabilise the water feature and make it safe for the public to use. It is quite deep and stocked with fish but the sides have been leaking and work will recommence once there is better weather and greater visibility.



Winning the Green Flag Award for the 6th consecutive year was an amazing achievement. This is because each site has to demonstrate that it has met all the criteria, as judged by an independent panel, and also done something new. Each year we can claim to have moved the park forward. This includes the bird nesting programme of more boxes in the woodland, and with a new bug hotel, fit for all manner of species and pollinators. The judges seemed well pleased.

We finally organised a Great Welsh Walk in 2024, after two years of trying. It was very well attended and was a bilingual event, the aim being to speak some Welsh language and learn about nature at the same time. Small banners were put up around the park indicating species and habitats in both English and Welsh. Once explanations were given in English, they were translated into Welsh. After the walk there was tea and cake for everyone. The feedback was good and people appreciated the chance to hear about wildlife and also converse with old and new friends in Welsh. We hope to make this an annual occasion and drawn in a wider audience to enjoy the experience. It is one of a number of walks and events running through the year.

We have been invited to send a representative to an international conference in Turkey this year, and talk about the park to a wider audience. It will focus on green prescribing and how local parks and green spaces can be used to best advantage for our wellbeing. It is a great opportunity to put Merthyr Tydfil and the Park on the map! We will report on it next time. For further information please contact edawson1215@gmail.com

WELSH LANGUAGE WALK IN THE PARK

Date: Saturday 7th September 2024 at 2:30pm
 Venue: Parc Nant Llwynog
 This is a bi-lingual event for everyone
 All Welsh Speakers and Learners welcome

Join us for a walk to learn about the wildlife in the park
 Find what flowers and birds are called in English & Welsh

- Family Fun
- Arts and Crafts Activities
- Refreshments available

Contact :- 07956 862959
edawson1215@gmail.com

Friends of Nant Llwynog Park
 Website: NantLlwynog.wordpress.com

Supported by Community Focused Schools



Onam Celebration with the Merthyr Malayali Cultural Association

In September, the Merthyr Malayali Cultural Association (MMCA) hosted a vibrant celebration of Onam, a traditional harvest festival from the southern state of Kerala, India. This event brought together the Malayali community along with local residents, creating a wonderful opportunity for cultural exchange and unity in Merthyr Tydfil.

Onam is a festival of joy, marking the harvest season in Kerala and celebrated with grand feasts, traditional music, and performances. Our Onam event was no exception. The highlight of the day was the Onam Sadhya, a grand vegetarian feast featuring 30 different dishes. It was a delight for both our community and local guests. Many who had never tried Kerala cuisine were pleasantly surprised, with one attendee saying, "I am so full! This is not as spicy as I imagined Indian food to be.. Its perfect!"

The festival was also a chance for cultural sharing. One of the standout performances was the traditional Chendamelam - a Kerala percussion ensemble that filled the air with powerful, rhythmic drumbeats. It was a first-time experience for many of our local guests. The children had a wonderful time enjoying a special musical performance, Do Re Mi Canu, where they sang along to popular Welsh songs, further strengthening the sense of inclusivity and community spirit.

We were honored to have Dr. Richard Lewis, the High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan, and Council Leader at the time - Geraint Thomas join us for the event. They awarded the volunteers of MMCA, whose efforts led us to win the Community Group of the Year award. Dr. Richard Lewis wrote a letter saying - "The welcome I received, entertainment on the day, and of course the special banquet was second to none. It was a truly happy, joyous and blessed occasion, and I am so grateful to you for including me, in what was a very special day."

For many families, especially those new to the area, the event helped them feel more connected and welcomed. Through festivals like Onam, MMCA aims to preserve the rich cultural heritage of Kerala while creating opportunities for the wider community in Merthyr to experience new traditions, strengthening the bonds that make our town so diverse and inclusive.



The Rotary Club of Merthyr Tydfil

Rotary
MERTHYR TYDFIL
District 1150



2024-25: The Magic of Rotary



The Rotary Club of Merthyr Tydfil continue to maintain the Macmillan and Butterfly gardens at Prince Charles Hospital, making sure that patients have a good outlook when receiving treatment.



The gardens in great condition and beautiful at the end of January 2025



In November, Amy Parker - Malumwa, originally from Heolgerrig Merthyr Tydfil, but now lives in Zambia, gave a talk on the charity she is involved with in Zambia and the UK. Her Daughter, Naleli Anne was born with Hirschsprungs Disease. This resulted in her having a stoma fitted at 15 months old for a period of three months, during the treatment and cure of the disease.

Thankfully the stoma has now been reversed and the disease cured. In Zambia stoma bags are not generally available and compromises like plastic bags etc. have to be used.

The Charity is actively involved in supplying stoma equipment and supplies throughout Zambia. She demonstrated a stoma on a child's teddy bear. The Club donated to the charity £200.



The Club also donated £200 to the local Salvation Army Christmas appeal and £50 to Operation Smiles an International charity.

The Outdoor Partnership

Last November we partnered up with Summit Centre, Rock UK in Merthyr to offer the Rock4All weekend. Events included a UV and beginners climbing competition and a FREE Adventure Film Evening, offering a broader range of stories and viewpoints than your usual adventure film evening!

A few local organisations spoke about what activities and clubs people can join locally. On the Sunday, the Climbing for All course for instructors was available at a subsidised rate, this was fully subscribed!

This is one of the first weekend climbing events in South Wales which was open to all.

The Outdoor Partnership had Amser Short Breaks Wales funding for 2 groups of young carers which allowed them to join in the UV climbing party. "20 out of 10" was what one boy scored it! He enjoyed it so much, he attended the next day and won his age group climbing competition, with his brothers gaining 2nd and 3rd place, a family of natural climbers! These boys have attended climbing ever since, no more of a success than that!

PARTNERIAETH AWYR AGORED



OUTDOOR PARTNERSHIP



On show at the entrance was also the donated 'Terrain Hopper' a 4x4 electric wheelchair which will soon be available for other organisations to borrow, making outdoor adventures in the Merthyr region much more accessible for all!

Please check the website for further information: <https://partneriaeth-awyr-agored.co.uk/>

HOPE CHURCH - OUT FOR AN HOUR

Out for an Hour runs in Hope Church every Monday & Thursday 10am-11.30am (term time only)

A registered warm space we open for anyone over 18 years who would benefit from getting out of the house. We have lots of fun, with hot drinks and snacks, art, craft, music, board games, and various other activities on a rotational basis. These include gardening, cooking, bingo (a new addition!) as well plenty of settees to chill & chat with a good brew.

With funding from Multiply we have been learning all sorts of new cooking skills, weighing and measuring the ingredients, working out the cost, then enjoying the end result!

Out for an Hour is Dementia friendly, and benefits from visits from outside agencies for advice and support. These include Warm Wales, National Energy Action, CTM, Hope Rescue, Alzheimer's Society, Tydfil Training, VAMT Community Coordinators & Carers Service.

We love a theme, any excuse to celebrate & eat cake! Be it Christmas, Easter, World Knit in Public Day, Time to Talk Day, MacMillan Coffee morning, warm welcome week & most recently Valentine's Day, when we made sure everyone who attended knew they were loved, valued and accepted.

Hope Church sits in the middle of Merthyr town, with disabled access & facilities.

We would love to welcome you, if you'd like more information please contact **Heidi on 07790 801686** or help@hopemerthyr.org.uk



Join us Mondays and Thursdays from 10am to 11:30am at Hope Church Merthyr

JOIN US FOR TEA, COFFEE, A CHAT, CRAFTS, GAMES AND SO MUCH MORE!



You'll find us through the middle doors that lead down to the basement. (Lift available)
Contact Heidi on 07790 801686, if you'd like to come along.



Canolfan a Theatr Soar ym Merthyr

Mae Canolfan a Theatr Soar ym Merthyr yn ganolbwynt i'r iaith Gymraeg yn y dref a'r sir ond yn llawer mwy.

Mae yn Ganolfan sydd yn croesawu nifer o fandiau o'r radd flaenaf gan gynnwys Al Lewis a'r Band, Tara Bethan, Celavi, Gwilym Bowen Rhys, Burum, VRi a Calan yn ogystal â pherfformiadau clasurol fodern arloesol fel Uproar: Ensemble Cerddoriaeth Newydd Cymru.

Un o'r digwyddiadau mwyaf cyffrous y llynedd oedd Metal Soar pan oedd y cyfansoddwr David John Roche wedi creu darn i'w berfformio gan fand Metal Trwm gyda'r organ hanesyddol, unigryw sydd yma y Soar. Hi yw'r unig organ yng Nghymru sy'n cael ei gyrru gan drydan, bôn braich ond hefyd dŵr!

Yn Soar rydym yn cynnig profiadau theatrig cyffrous gan gynnwys sioeau gan Theatr y Sherman, Bando Cymru, a Company of Sirens – cofwch gadw golwg ar ein gwefan ac ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol i weld beth sy'n digwydd yn Soar dros y misoedd nesaf.

Mae gennym dîm o weithwyr ymroddedig yma yn Soar ond byddai'n wych cael cwmni rhai ohonoch fel gwirfoddolwyr i gynorthwyo ar ddyddiau a nosweithiau a dyddiau pan mae digwyddiadau yn y Ganolfan.

Rydym yn Ganolfan Gymraeg gyda ugeiniau o ddysgwyr Cymraeg yn cyfarfod yma'n ddyddiol i ddysgu Cymraeg ac i gymdeithasu yn y Gymraeg felly mae'n gyfle i siaradwyr Cymraeg hyderus a'r rhai sydd ar ddechrau eich taith o ddysgu'r iaith i ymarfer mewn awryglch gartrefol, gyfeillgar, gefnogol.

Os oes diddordeb genych mewn gwirfoddoli cysylltu gyda ni:

swyddfasoar@merthyrtdful.org 01685 722176

Cofwch hefyd bod Caffi Soar ar agor yn ddyddiol am fwy a phaned o'r radd flaenaf.



Canolfan a Theatr Soar

At Canolfan a Theatr Soar we are always looking for Welsh speakers of all levels to join us for specific events – we have a Large community of Welsh language learners with us on a daily basis who appreciate the warm, friendly, supportive environment - a perfect opportunity to grow in confidence!

Keep an eye on the website and on our social media for events or just call in to Caffi Soar or Siop Soar - our book shop with a great variety of books in Welsh and English including local gifts and cards.

Dilwyn [Ellis Roberts]

Swyddog Datblygu'r Gymraeg a Rheolwr Siop Lyfrau

Canolfan Soar, Pontmorlais, Merthyr Tudful, CF47 8UB.

E-bost: dilwyn@merthyrtdful.org

Ffôn: 01685 722176

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Help shape your local mental health and wellbeing educational service

Recovery Colleges are unlike a conventional educational system. Instead, they offer a place to come together and learn from one another through conversation and mutual sharing of knowledge and experiences. They are tailored towards every individual, whether you are looking to learn more about your own mental health and wellbeing challenges or learn how to better support those with mental health and wellbeing challenges.

Anyone can get involved, but this may be especially important to those who may benefit personally or professionally from having a local mental health and wellbeing educational service that is accessible for all, free to engage with and is shaped by the people who will be using it.

Your voice will inform how a new local CTM Recovery College could look in the future, based on what matters to you and others in the community.

You can get involved by [completing an online survey](#) OR by attending one of our engagement events – further details below.

To have your say in shaping what a CTM Recovery College can look like, please complete our survey. All questions are optional to answer, but the more information you can provide the more helpful it will be in learning what matters to you.

What is a Recovery College?

Recovery Colleges provide:

- Free educational courses on a range of mental health, physical health and wellbeing topics.
- Workshops and courses that are either held online or in a physical/ in-person space – creating a non-judgemental environment where there is no hierarchy, contributing to a unique shared learning experience from one another in an equal and conversational way.
- Courses that are created and delivered between those with a lived experience of mental health challenges and a health practitioner with learned knowledge.
- Courses which are available and accessible for all at any stage of recovery. All courses are self-referral, with no waiting lists and no discharge service.
- A place that builds connection and values everyone's experiences and knowledge, equally and equitably.

A Recovery College is guided by the principles of hope, control and opportunity.

Who is a Recovery College for?

- People with lived/ living experience of mental health challenges. You can be any member of the public in CTM – you do not need to have a diagnosis and do not need to be accessing or have accessed mental health services.
- Carers, family members and friends supporting those with mental, emotional and physical health challenges.
- All CTMUHB staff including health care professionals and health practitioners.
- Third or voluntary sector organisations
- Arts organisations and individuals working in the Arts or Arts and Health.
- Public sector workers including education, local authorities and emergency services workforces.
- All members of the CTM community with an interest in shared educational courses around mental health and wellbeing topics.

You can also attend one of our engagement sessions. Upcoming engagement sessions:

Merthyr Tydfil

27 March – 10am – 12.30pm in
Trelewis Community Centre

1 April – 10am – 12.30pm
at VAMT (Voluntary Action
Merthyr Tydfil)

Bridgend

31 March – 10am – 12.30pm at BAVO
(Bridgend Association of Voluntary
Organisations), Maesteg

19 March and 2 April –
10am – 12.30pm at Arc Bridgend

RCT

25 March – 10am – 12.30pm
at YMa, Pontypridd

26 March – 10am – 12.30pm
in Pentre Comrades Club

Online

12 March – 11am – 12.30pm • 3 April – 5pm – 6.30pm
[Book your ticket](#) for the online engagement session.

Or you can email: CTM.MHLD.ServiceEngagement@wales.nhs.uk to book your place.



This is the latest update from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board (CTM PSB), and the PSB work across Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend. We last updated Members in the Autumn edition, where we explained who CTM PSB are, our purpose, and our current work.

If you would like to know more about the CTM PSB and what it does, please visit our website: <https://www.ctmpublicservicesboard.wales/>

We held our recent CTM PSB Board meeting in the John Meredith Room in the VAMT building. We had a very warm welcome, and the space and facilities were excellent, so we would like to say a big thank you to the VAMT



Working to improve our workforce’s health and well-being

With the Neurodiversity Celebration and Awareness Week due to take place W/C 17th March 2025, some Workforce Well-being Sub-group members have drafted an information leaflet to be circulated within the CTM PSB organisations to their staff with support and guidance information.

Further to this the sub-board is working on a Greenspace Volunteering Project to connect staff with volunteering opportunities in our green spaces. Volunteering in greenspaces can be so beneficial; from being outside, being together, being active and making difference in your community.

Working to involve young people in the work of CTM PSB

We have been working with students from Merthyr College, Coleg Y Cymoedd and Bridgend College, who have told us that they would like a ‘reverse mentoring’ scheme with senior leaders in CTM PSB. This involves young people spending time with heads of organisations, allowing the leader and the young person to mutually learn from each other and understand each other’s perspectives. Young people also told us they would like work experience programmes within the organisations of the PSB. We are working with our leaders to develop these schemes for present and future young people.



Work has continued with partners, led by CTM University Health Boards Public Health Team to take the Active Travel

Charter through organisational governance structures for approval and sign up to the Charter, to make it easier for staff to commute using public transport, cycling or walking. With the official launch due to take place in Summer 2025.

Working on the Climate Change Emergency

Our PSB members will devote their March meeting to exploring the findings

of the risk assessment in more detail how they, as senior leaders will respond to ensure we work together to address climate risk in our communities. RCT Climate Action Network are working on a webinar for groups across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area to highlight the key areas from the assessment and how community groups and networks can be involved.

We are also setting up an engagement group for organisations who work with young people across CTM. This will be a ‘Community of Practice’, where ideas, resources and opportunities to involve young people at a senior level of public services can be shared and developed. If you, or your organisation would like to learn more or be involved, get in touch via the email address below.

We look forward to providing future updates where we will provide more detail on each of our projects. If you’d like to know more, or would like to talk to a member of the PSB support team, please get in touch at: CTMPSB@RCTCBC.GOV.UK



GELLIDEG FOUNDATION

VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION

Are you ready to make a difference and become part of our team?
 Whether you have a lot of time to give or just one hour per week, we are confident that we have a role that will be suitable for you!
 We would love to hear from you - together we can make a difference in our communities

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Community Pantry Volunteer Every Tuesday 1pm - 4pm

Every week we host a very busy Community Pantry in our Wellbeing Centre. The Pantry is open on a Tuesday morning, Tuesday afternoon and Friday afternoon, and we are particularly looking for support from a Tuesday afternoon.

You will work alongside other volunteers to:

- help stock and restock shelves.
- support members to choose their items within the pantry
- help them pack their goods

For this role we will be looking for someone who is pleasant by nature, well presented, fit & healthy

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Food Collection Volunteer Mon, Thurs & Friday between 10am & 12.30pm

This role will support our Community Pantry by collecting donated food from local supermarkets such as Lidl. The food will support our Community Pantry which operates all day Tuesday and a Friday afternoon. All out of pocket expenses will be covered and you will be reimbursed for mileage at the rate of 45p per mile.

We don't expect you to cover all of the days, you can just cover the days when you have time available but having access to a vehicle is essential for this role.

CARERS SUPPORT PROGRAMME MUSIC BINGO LEAD : 1PM - 3.30PM

Our Monday session fills our Hall with singing and music from all genres as we play our weekly Music Bingo. Each week participants are given a sheet listing different artists and songs from across the ages. By us playing a few cords of a song, they have to guess the name and/or the artist, and check if they have either on their sheet. If they are on their sheet, they mark it off - the first one to mark off all the artists and/or songs wins a small prize.

This is a fun and different take on traditional bingo and fills the air with songs & laughter and we are looking for someone to deliver this session.

If this role is of interest to you the main duties are:

- help set up the room for the activity
- choose a different Music Bingo theme each week
- make up the Music Bingo Sheet listing the artists and/or songs
- find the song to go with your choices to give the clues
- join in with the singing and encourage others to have fun

We are looking for someone who has an outgoing personality, who is chatty, pleasant and outgoing for this role.

DEMENTIA SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Drivers Assistant Every Monday 9am - 12.30pm

Every Monday morning we host a fantastic support session for people with early onset dementia and their carers. These sessions provide activities that help keep people with dementia and their a carers to stay active, connected and supported. As part of this service we offer a door to door pick up and drop off service for participant.

We are looking for a **drivers assistant** to support the minibus driver to:

- escort the driver on the bus
- help the driver to navigate the safest/quickest route
- assist passenger on and off the minibus.
- help to clean/sweep the bus after each journey.
- complete any driving, vehicle or record logs
- ensure everything runs smoothly

We are looking for someone who has an outgoing personality, who is chatty, pleasant and patient for this role.

If you would like to know more about any of these opportunities then please give us a ring on (01685) 383929

Gellideg Foundation Group

The Wellbeing Centre, Canol-y-Bryn, Gellideg, Merthyr Tydfil. CF48 1ND

www.reallygreatsite.com

PAPYRUS NEEDS YOU!

PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide is the UK charity dedicated to the prevention of suicide and the promotion of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people. PAPYRUS exists to reduce the number of young people who take their own lives, by shattering the stigma surrounding suicide and equipping young people and their communities with the skills to recognise and respond to emotional distress.



We do this in three ways:

supporting those who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, equipping communities through suicide prevention training and awareness raising, and influencing government policy on a local and national scale.

At **HOPELINE247 – PAPYRUS's dedicated suicide prevention helpline** – our trained advisers work on a safety plan with young people aged 35 and under who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, to help keep them safe for now. We also launched our BSL support service on our HOPELINE247 and use translators if English isn't your first language.

PAPYRUS: The Prevention of Young Suicide are looking for volunteers from Merthyr to raise awareness of the prevalence of young suicide by running presentations in your local area to encourage open and honest conversations around suicide.

Responsibilities:

Manage Stands/Stalls: Represent PAPYRUS at various events and gatherings across the Region. Manage stands or stalls to provide information and resources on suicide prevention.

Facilitate Suicide Prevention Presentations: Deliver suicide prevention Presentations with a Q&A to local and regional organizations, sharing valuable knowledge and strategies to prevent young suicide.

Attend Training Opportunities: Participate in training sessions provided by PAPYRUS to enhance your skills and knowledge, ensuring that you are well-prepared to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Spread Hope: Act as an ambassador for PAPYRUS, spreading the message of hope and resilience in the face of young suicide. Help combat the stigma surrounding this critical issue.

Collaborate with Agencies: Work collaboratively with other agencies and organizations to provide a wraparound service that is person-focused and supportive to those at risk.

Benefits of Volunteering:

Training: Gain valuable suicide prevention training and expertise.

Support: Receive regular check-ins with your Area Volunteer Coordinator or another PAPYRUS representative to ensure your success.

Flexibility: Enjoy flexible volunteering opportunities, allowing you to choose events and activities that suit your schedule.

Reimbursement: Expenses for travel and food can be claimed on a weekly basis, ensuring that volunteering doesn't create a financial burden.

Networking: Connect with other passionate volunteers both in person and online.

Recognition: Receive recognition for your efforts, celebrate achievements, and earn certificates acknowledging your dedication to this vital cause.

Requirements:

You must be over 18 years of age.

Email Interest: danielle.taylor@papyrus-uk.org

Join Us as a Volunteer for the Merthyr Tydfil Children's Literature Festival 2025!



The Merthyr Tydfil Children's Literature Festival 2025, the UK's largest celebration of World Book Day, is looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help make this extraordinary event a success!

This exciting festival will take place on **Thursday, May 1st, 2025, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, across 21 venues in Merthyr Tydfil town centre, welcoming over 3,000 children for a day filled with creativity, inspiration, and learning.**

Why Volunteer?

By joining our team, you will play a vital role in bringing literature to life for young readers, inspiring a love for books, storytelling, and the arts. Your contribution will help create a magical experience that fosters creativity and community spirit.

How You Can Help:

We need volunteers to assist in various roles, including:

- **Event Stewards** – Guide children, families, and guests between venues.
- **Workshop Assistants** – Help facilitate engaging activities and interactive sessions.
- **Parade Marshals** – Support the grand parade featuring 3,000 children in costume.
- **Venue Support** – Provide assistance Penderyn Square and other key locations.

Festival Highlights:

- **Theme for 2025:** "Wales is great, we can achieve."
- **Opening Ceremony:** 9:30 AM, St. David's Church, Merthyr Tydfil
- **Parade:** 9:30 AM, celebrating Wales through costume and performance
- **Special Guests:** Renowned authors, poets, flash mobs, musical acts, and even Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!
- **Workshops:** Over 200 sessions across 21 venues



Get Involved!

Your time and dedication will make a lasting impact on the children and the local community. Gather your team, bring your enthusiasm, and be a part of this inspiring celebration of literature and creativity.

To sign up as a volunteer, please contact us today! Charity1@stephensandgeorge.co.uk or call **01685 377688**

Thank you for your support – we can't wait to celebrate with you!

Lot's going on with Invest Local Ynysowen!

At Invest Local Ynysowen, we have been busy with community engagement, collaboration events and planning!

Weekly Community Drop In Sessions

Laura, the Invest Local Ynysowen Development Officer, holds a weekly community engagement drop in session at Aberfan for anyone to pop along and find out more about Invest Local, to ask for advice and guidance or just to have a natter. Through these drop in sessions, we've engaged with numerous new groups that are active in the Ynysowen area, supported with funding and project development, supported a group with governance and helped groups access key information.

Pop along on Tuesdays between 10am – 12noon to find out more!

Invest Local Ynysowen...the story so far!

On Tuesday 11th February, we held an open event for the community, to pop along and find out about Invest Local – what's already been done, what's happening and the plans for the future. Through this event, we also recruited four new volunteers for YES – Ynysowen Events and Social group!

Railway 200 collaboration event

On Tuesday 18th February, we supported a collaboration event for Railway 200, the national celebration of the first passenger rail 200 years ago. This was a Rock Painting workshop for the community, held by Taff Rocks in Aberfan. Taff Rocks were commissioned by the Three Valleys Community Rail Partnership and supported by Invest Local Ynysowen.

12 community members attended to paint the rocks, which were all train themed (there were a few Thomas the Tank Engines!) and these rocks will be placed along the Trevethick Trail in Merthyr, in celebration of Merthyr's rich history in the rail.

For information on any of the above please contact Laura or Verity at VAMT on Laura.Brosnan-James@vamt.net or Verity.Lewis@vamt.net

Easy Fundraising – Meet The Funder

Tuesday 25th March 10am-11:30am - online via Teams

Your easy route to unrestricted funding!!

Does your community organisation need additional funds in 2025? Come along to our free online session find out how your organisation can receive free unrestricted funding via funding platform easyfundraising.

In this informal session, Becky from easyfundraising will show you how your volunteers, staff and supporters can use the easyfundraising platform to raise donations for free for your organisation when they shop with leading retailers.

What to expect:

- A live demonstration of how it works
- Instructions on how to get your organisation set up
- Tips on how to raise as much as possible
- A Q&A session with Becky

Suitable for: anyone involved in fundraising for good causes of all shapes and sizes including voluntary groups, CICs, social enterprises, churches, schools, sports clubs and charities

It will be a friendly informal session and is open to any member of your team so please feel free to share this invitation.

Why not set up a free easyfundraising page for your organisation before the session? You can do that here: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/merthyr-tydfil>

About easyfundraising

Through easyfundraising, 8,000 online retailers will donate money to your organisation when your volunteers, staff and supporters shop with them. Anything from a weekly grocery shop to a family holiday can generate a free donation for you. Every 3 months you'll receive all the donations raised by your supporters and as it's unrestricted funding, you spend the money on whatever you need.

You will have the opportunity to ask questions and share your experiences too.

For more information and book your place by 18th March contact emily.whiteman-cranston@vamt.net

You Said, We Did – Training & Awareness Sessions

Last year we asked member what training and awareness sessions they needed to maintain the resilience of the organisation and support the delivery of their services.

Based on the responses received we delivered training and information sessions on the following:

First Aid, Paediatric First Aid, Business Planning, Data Protection, NSPCC Speak up Campaign, Disclosure & Barring Service Disclosure Workshop, ARA Youth Gambling and Gaming Harms Prevention Training, Committee Skills and Safeguarding Training.

We also invited a number of funders to deliver Meet the Funder sessions to ensure that you are able to access the information directly from the funder. These included:

Welsh Government Community Facilities Programme, Easy Fundraising, Sport Wales, Lloyds Foundation, Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation's programme, Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Merthyr Valley Homes, Coalfields Regeneration Trust – Breaking Barriers Fund, National Churches Trust, National Lottery & Awards for All.

For the coming year, 2025/26, we will be looking to develop funding surgeries with National Lottery and Awards for All based on a booking time face to face at our VAMT office. We will also continue with the Meet the Funder sessions.

However, we need to know how we can help you and your organisation to thrive in 2025!

Please tell us what training and information sessions will help you. Please contact karen.vowles@vamt.net

Are you interested in being a Voluntary Sector representative at Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councils Scrutiny Committees?



Be vocal and help make a difference... Become a Co-opted Member on one of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Scrutiny Committees.

Scrutiny is an umbrella term covering a wide range of roles with key legislative responsibility for:

- Holding the Cabinet to account
- Policy Review and Development
- Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Council and help drive improvements in services.
- External scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny Committees help ensure local public services are delivered effectively and efficiently and have wide ranging powers to investigate areas of local interest.

Scrutiny can question decision takers, call in expert witnesses or hear evidence from other local stakeholders. Investigations are not restricted to Council run services, any area of interest to the local community may be investigated by scrutiny.

The Council has five scrutiny committees:

- Corporate Support and Resources

- Neighbourhood Services, Countryside and Planning Scrutiny Committee
- Learning and LGES (Local Government Education Service) Scrutiny Committee
- Social Services Scrutiny Committee
- Regeneration and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee

There are currently vacancies for Voluntary Sector Co-opted representative on three Scrutiny Committees.

- Corporate Support and Resources Committee,
- Learning & Education,
- Social Services.

If you are interested in learning more about the role and responsibilities of Scrutiny Committee members, Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil will be holding a face to face awareness session on 20th March 2025 at 10:30am at VAMT. Light refreshments will be available.

To book your place contact karen.vowles@vamt.net

TEA AND TECH – ORGANISATIONS



Are you a community development officer or a community organisation?

Would you be interested in running tea and tech sessions to help members of your communities. An informal and relaxed opportunity to learn together, solve a problem and socialise with a like-minded group.

Digital Communities Wales is offering free training session in conjunction with VAMT to get you started.

Date : 10th April 2025

Time: 10am -1.30

Location: Voluntary Action Centre Merthyr Tydfil

To help you to support the people who need help, we can loan you some kit. The kit available includes tablets, laptops and smart speakers. We can also support you with some free data.



Stephanie.davies@cwmpas.coop

Cymunedau
Digidol
Cymru
Hyder Digidol,
Iechyd a Lles

Digital
Communities
Wales
Digital Confidence,
Health and Well-being

Darparwyd gan
Delivered by

cwmpas



Rhaglen
Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government
Programme

You can also contact karen.vowles@vamt.net if you require further information.

CTM Mental Health Forum

At the Voluntary Action Centre
1pm-3pm
Wednesday 26th March

To join the Forum or for more information contact sharon.jones@vamt.net

Health and Wellbeing Forum

At the Voluntary Action Centre
10am - 12pm
Wednesday 21st May
Wednesday 20th August
Wednesday 19th November

This Forum is open to third sector colleagues and aims to provide a platform for providing third sector services operating locally and regionally. It further serves to ensure engagement with the sector around strategic developments within both Merthyr Tydfil County Borough and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board area.

To join the Forum or for more information contact Ian.Howell-Morgan@vamt.net

Volunteer Managers' Forum

At the Voluntary Action Centre
10am - 12pm
Wednesday 7th May
Wednesday 10th September
Wednesday 10th December

To join the Forum or for more information contact frances.barry@vamt.net

Food Prosperity Network

VAMT was approached in Autumn 2018 by Food Sense Wales to establish a network, focused on food poverty in Merthyr Tydfil, a partnership approach involving third and statutory sectors.

The Network has gone from strength to strength supporting affordable food provision such as Food Pantries and Food Banks to develop, support each other, share good practice and ensure a co-ordinated approach to supporting communities and families. This was particularly evident during the pandemic and now during the ongoing cost of living crisis.

All meetings are via Teams at 10am
Wednesday 9th April
Tuesday 8th July

For more information on how to become part of this vibrant Network contact karen.vowles@vamt.net

The Children, Young People & Families Forum

At the Voluntary Action Centre
2pm - 4pm
Thursday 5th June
Thursday 18th September
Thursday 11th December

To join the Forum or for more information contact emily.whiteman-cranston@vamt.net

INFORM

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Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil • *Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Merthyr Tudful*

Farewell to Lesley

After many years of dedicated service, Lesley Hodgson has bid farewell to Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil as she embarks on a well-earned retirement.

Lesley has been an integral part of our team, known for her dedication, passion and expertise. Lesley has left a lasting impact on both colleagues and the wider community. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Lesley for her hard work, compassion and years of service. While we will miss her greatly, we are excited for Lesley as she enters this new chapter of life filled with relaxation, adventure, and quality time with loved ones.



BLOG AND BULLETIN UPDATE

Keep up to date with all the latest news via our Blog and Bulletins.

New Blog is up and running, have you subscribed yet?

Click vamt.net/en/updates/ scroll to the bottom of the page, enter your email address and click "subscribe".

If there is anything you would like to share on our Blog or in the Bulletin then please email Fran at frances.barry@vamt.net

That's all from VAMT for now.

We welcome any comments on this newsletter, they can be submitted to info@vamt.net

YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS MAGAZINE TOO!

To feature in the next edition of Inform please submit your articles to frances.barry@vamt.net by Friday 13th June 2025

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Claire Williams
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Frances Barry
Lead Officer – Volunteering
and Communications

Karen Vowles
Lead Officer –
Community Development

Susan Jones
Community Co-ordinator

Sharon Jones
Mental Health Service User
Involvement Officer

Emily Whiteman-Cranston
Community Resilience Officer

Ian Howell-Morgan
Community Co-ordinator

Laura Brosnan-James
Community Development
Officer – Invest Local Ynysowen
Programme

Verity Lewis
Community Rail Partnership
Officer

Diane Lewis
Business Support Officer

Board Members

Anne Roberts MBE
Kayleigh Nor-Val
Michael Ronan
Nicola Mahoney
Howard Jackson
Jeff Evans



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Third Sector
Support **Wales**

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The views expressed in this edition of Inform are not necessarily those of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil.
Croesawir erthyglau nail ai'n ddwyieithog neu'n uniaith Gymraeg.