

The Compassionate, Creative, Co-productive Community Hubs Pilot Project 2016-2019 Interim Report

A4W Innovation C.I.C



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Welcome

It is with great pleasure that our staff team present the half way stage report on the progress of this exciting, innovative, community development pilot project.

The theoretical idea is one thing, the putting of that initial construct into practice can be quite a different project as other peoples understanding, personal bias and habitual patterns come to the fore.

It has not been all plain sailing by any stretch of the imagination. The project has taken a lot more preparation time for each session and a lot more personal physical and emotionally energy within some sessions than initially thought. Each session has also created a significant amount of extra administration and research work in a way that we had not fully anticipated when we costed out the initial proposal.

That said, it is fair to say that all the hard fought for lessons have informed, shaped, and continued to develop our practices as we progress through each weekly session with each one of our community groups. Creating something that is providing a “lifeline” for many people in our rural communities.

There are still a few wrinkles to iron out but on the whole, all of these glitches pale into the shadows when compared with all the positive outcomes and achievements that have been accomplished. We know our partners testimonials and our participants feedback in this report will clearly illuminate this.

In offering up this report we wish to publicly acknowledge that non of this would have been at all possible without the initial funding of this pilot project by Cynnal Y Cardi as well as the continued support of their staff and board members.....

We also acknowledge our most sincere and grateful thanks to a whole host of individuals, supporters, partners, champions, family and friends at all levels of our rural communities, who have generously and unreservedly given of their time, experience, skills and knowledge to make this initiative so successful, so rich and so rewarding. Knowing none of it would be as rich, valuable and productive, if it was not for all of our amazing, warmhearted, generous participants who, in being brave enough in the first place to come over the doorstep and try something new and then stay, entering wholeheartedly into the spirit of the initiative to give back 100% and more.

The Vision

A4W envisaged the initiation of, the creation of, and the continued development of a network of interlinked community hubs in the heart of each one of our rural communities.

A local, weekly, inter-generational, activity based, social drop in, run by members of the community, for members of the community in the local community centres.

A hub to which GP's and 3rd sector organisations can refer people and disseminate or gather information at the grass roots level.

Compassionate

A safe place for any person from the local or surrounding communities, drawn from a wide range of different social backgrounds and interest areas; be they carers, cared for, lonely, isolated, bereaved or community volunteers can access 'their' community.

Creative

A local resource for local people of all ages and abilities, to attend, to have a go at a wide variety of creative activities on offer, to have a go at something new to them.

Co-productive

A place where each person has an opportunity to share their own skills, knowledge and experiences with the rest of the group. Unlocking the assets within our communities. .

Community

A group in the local community who come together to create, make, prepare and celebrate a wide variety of seasonal celebratory community events.

A place where visitors and tourists can pop in, to have a go at various creative activities, purchase local made artifacts and get a unique informed sense of place, sense of local culture by talking with group members.

A4W Innovation

C.I.C

A4W Innovation aims and Objectives are:



Facilitation, Creativity and Legacy

A4W have three main framework areas we pay close attention to in initiating, creating and building groups sustainability

Facilitation

Arrival, Welcome, Personal Development, Group Dynamics, Ethos, Unconditional Regard, Witnessing, Active Participation and support, Training to support others.

Creativity

A Main activity, a wide range of activities, of which most will be new to people who may have tried a number of crafts, creates a level playing field. Active participation, exploration, play, experimentation, encouraging working with the breath, mindful practice, being in the moment with no judging of the process and relax into flow state.

Building Legacy

- Once an individual has experienced success, glimpsed their potential, there is a permanent change throughout the whole of that persons life.
- Strong group bonds are forged, social networks and community dynamics start to be woven.
- There is a marked increase in personal and group co-production, resilience, reciprocity.
- The development of shared community skills, assets and potential.

A4W core practice has the Welsh Assembly Governments 5 Ways to Well-being and Thomas Tallis School's Five Creative habits of Mind as key themes.

Project Outline

- We said we would like to initiate A4W Compassionate Communities Hubs in eight local village halls.
- Support each one of them to establish themselves as a small community based co-operative.
- Facilitate our Compassionate Communities training and empowerment toolkits at those community hubs.
- Initiate a rolling out of Compassionate Communities training and empowerment toolkits by our member groups, to other local groups in other surrounding villages.
- To service the setting up of hubs and new hubs through a mobile equipment, tools and materials co-operative lending scheme.
- To research, evaluate, measure and monitor the social impact, the training has upon participants and their communities.

The differences that we are looking to make in the communities are:

- Strengthening and widening existing rural community social networks.
- Increase accessible, social, creative participatory activities for all ages and abilities.
- Reduce social isolation and social exclusion.
- Develop 'social capital' and greater appreciation of age and experience thorough inter-generational working.
- Link existing social groups and networks together through community driven projects.
- Promote local, social and economic sustainable initiatives and development.
- Build a collaborative and integrated community based infrastructure.
- Support good mental health.

The A4W Compassionate Community Training & Toolkit

A4W will facilitate a series of weekly training modules to each community group over a 20 week period that strengthen personal resilience, increase physical and mental well-being, cultivate a positive mental attitude and promote reciprocity. Activities that cultivate an understanding of a sense of self, a sense of other to build empathy and compassion. Enabling groups to become self sustaining.

A4W will also facilitate the provision of a range of new social creative activities in which participants learn transferable skills and techniques, engage in creativity and exploration of tools and materials, develop a growth mind-set and a positive team dynamic. Create artifacts for sale enabling groups to be self financing.

Through our weekly facilitation of the groups A4W will work with a number of self selecting Group Volunteers who will be the unofficial leads for that group and our Pioneer Lead Volunteers who are our trained volunteers who attend different groups outside their community to support a group either in its formation or with new creative activities once the group has become established.

Both Group and Pioneer volunteers will be trained in the A4W manner of facilitation so they can best embody the key principles and model best practice.

We said that the training will consist of:

Personal development training

Physical fun participatory games and memory games

Creativity training

Mindfulness training

Linking with Wales Co-op creating an inclusive co-operative groups

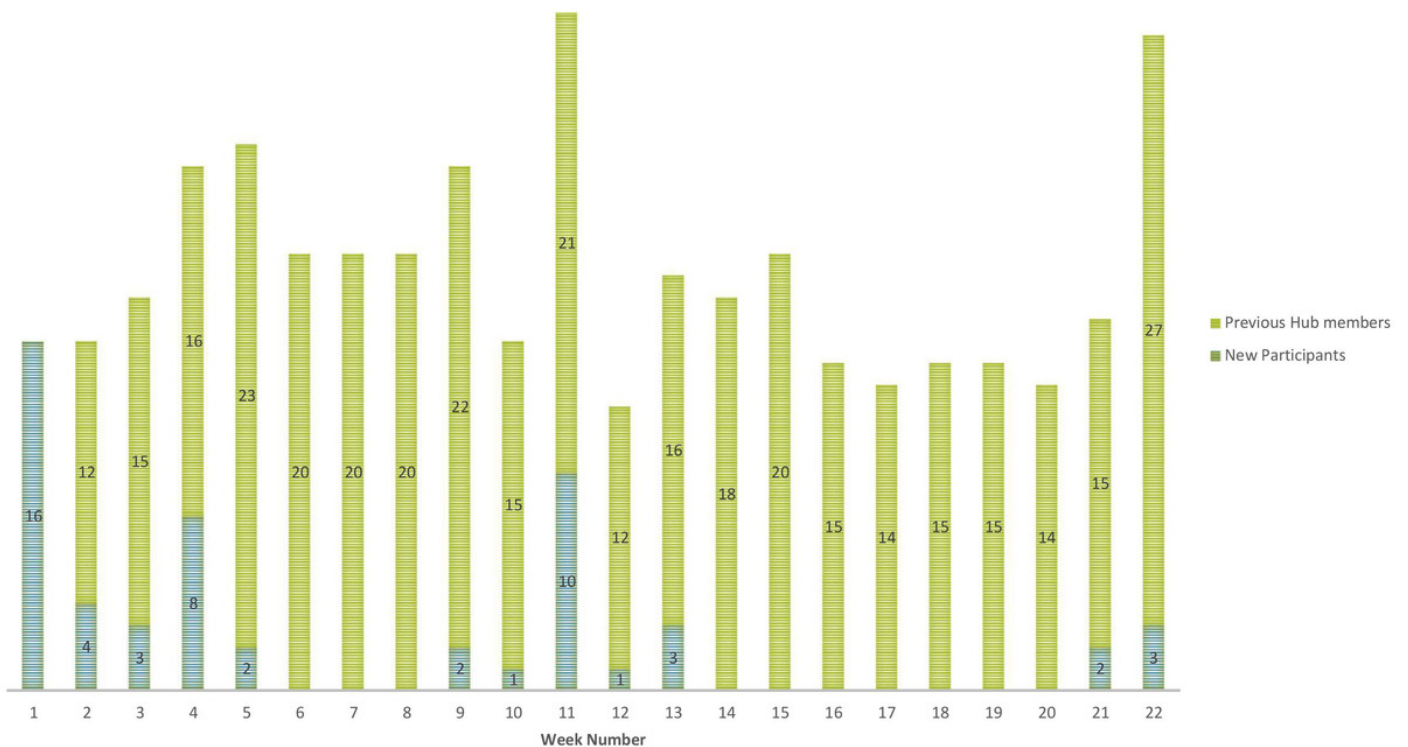
IT training

Dementia Friends Training

Gorsgoch

A4W began the project at Gorsgoch, which is a very rural Welsh speaking farming community, evidence of need was very apparent when the group grew to over 30 participants in three weeks, the majority of the participants came from surrounding villages, from as far as Lampeter, Cribyn, Llanybydder, Drefach, Plwmp, Pontsain, and Prengwyn, we only had three people from the village of Gorsgoch. This group has been the most challenging but also has achieved a huge amount and we learned a lot from our experiences delivering this training. The group had very successful well attended open days and have had support from the local council. The group is still running successfully and are financially stable, attracting new people and look to continue into the future.

GORSGOCH



Gorsgoch

Challenges and Interventions

The rapid growth of the group, including people with very different needs including physical disability and dementia.



We brought in a large group of volunteers to support those with greater needs within the group, the group then became used to a lot of support .

Managing the costs of materials for such a large group before funding became available.



We had to manage this using A4W's own stock of materials and resources.

A large number of pioneer volunteers, who travelled quite a distance to attend and support A4W, withdrew after the twenty weeks.



To counteract this A4W put in a lot of extra time to support the group and help them through the difficulty, including a lead volunteer to support the group in the first few months on a weekly basis. If we use Tuckman's group dynamics model to look at the group, they had gone through the Forming, Storming and Norming phases and at the end of the twenty weeks they were Performing. However, following the loss of facilitators and volunteers they were in a cycle of forming and storming for several months. The ongoing support combined with new people joining the group means that the group are now back at the Norming phase.

Poor mental health, strong characters coping with loss, anger and emotional distress.



One to One support and addressing issues within the group-work, also signposting to services..

The wide range of needs that had to be met to ensure the group was inclusive and participatory for all.

We planned and prepped a number of activities for each week to ensure there were accessible activities for everyone.

The group got used to lots of creative activities and saw this as a norm. Once they began working on their own they still wanted lots of choice however no one wanted the responsibility of storing and looking after lots of bags and boxes.

After discussion with the hall committee they agreed to allow the group to store boxes in the cupboard, through ongoing support the group they have now reached a stage of managing their needs and requesting help / more materials tools when required

The majority of the members not local to the village, living in outlying villages.

Encouraging new people to join to readdress the balance by popping into the local pub and chatting with locals. We tried changing the day of delivery, inviting local people to the open days and discussing with the group the challenges within the community, enabling people to express their feelings but not colluding. We also encourage the use of and learning of basic Welsh on a weekly basis.

Frailty and illness meant that the majority were in deficit and needed input, having very little to give out to others.

The frailty of the group members meant that the moving of tables on their own was beyond their physical capabilities.

After discussion with the Hall management team they agreed to leave tables out.

Fears about what the group would be able to do after the twenty weeks.

A4W put together starter kits for approximately five activities to help carry the group forward with their own tools and materials.

Learning gained from the Gorsgoch Hub

Moving people out of the comfort zone during the training is crucial

Learning from this group was to discourage people from wanting to teach their skills early in the programme, to wait until after the twenty-week phase and encourage it then. The project is about nurturing the assets already held in the communities, and building on what is already there and at Gorsgoch we had a few members who rather than taking part in weekly activities were very keen to bring their own skills to share in the group and peer mentor the other members. We welcomed this initially, however, we found that this resulted in these particular members keeping control, staying in their comfort zone. Therefore they didn't move into growth mindset, remaining in fixed mindset (Carol Dwek).

To be clearer about time-span and exit strategy from the outset

Previously our age groups consisted of predominantly younger people (20's-50's) and for this age group the thought of signing up for a ten week project proved to be daunting. Using this prior knowledge we told the group that we would have five weeks and then see how it went, we have continued to break up the programme into five week blocks and checked progress at the end of each block with a reflective assessment of progress, however we have been a lot clearer and talked about the exit strategy from the start. The difference with working with much older isolated people is that they are much keener to have longer term commitment because they are lonely. We realised that by having the five week blocks, and then carrying on, there was almost an expectation that the group would be like this indefinitely.

GORSGOCH HUB

The Successes



1

Supporting such a large number of participants with such varying needs successfully.

The personal growth that a large number of the participants achieved.

2



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The new support networks, increased number of friends and sense of connectedness that participants achieved.



4

The gardening project, the group have created a small bed of flowers and vegetables at the rear of the hall, which they all contribute towards.



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The amount of new skills learned and shared





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Encouraging people to cook and bring in food to share around the table each week, which the group have continued with.

The group have hosted fundraising stalls at two community events – Gorsgoch Summer Fair and Christmas Fair.

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Community Music Wales are interested to come and run a project with the group in 2018.

The members are supporting each other outside the group, lift sharing, helping each other out, sharing meals.

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The positive and supportive relationship developed with the hall committee. The group are interested in more physical activity, we have contacted Sport Wales Community Chest to look at accessing funding to bring in gentle exercise classes such as chair yoga and Tai Chi, the hall committee will support the bid.



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The inclusion of new people “this group has been so brilliant for our family, we moved here just before Christmas and the group enabled us as a family to meet new people and become connected within the community. Through the groups I have met more people in three months than I did in 14 years in London”

Sarah Keane, home educator, Cwrtnewydd

Five of the volunteers have been interviewed by Aging Well Wales and contributed their feedback to a pamphlet on the positive aspects of volunteering, which will be circulated Wales wide

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The Gorsgoch Hub is still running, are skill sharing, are financially stable and are encouraging more people to join.

Social Media Quotes and Feed Back

Gorsgoch

"It is a very important thing that you have created in Gorsgoch and glad that you are using our facilities"

Rhian Jones Hall committee 25.09.17



"Hi Sara,

I'd really like to thank both yourself and Mike and the team at Arts4wellbeing. We very recently moved to Ceredigion from South East London not knowing a soul. Within weeks however, your groups at Gorsgoch and Coedybryn which myself and two children have been attending have been amazing at providing us with an important network of friends. We have been made to feel so welcome and already part of the wider community. We have also had great fun learning new skills and we really enjoy the shared lunches at Gorsgoch and are looking forward to attending many more sessions and making many more friends."

SK 06.02.2018

"I just want to say thank you so much for your energy and creative ideas!

Over the past year I have attended many of your sessions in the local community - both as a participant in Feelgood Friday at the Powerhouse and also as a volunteer at your Compassionate Community hubs in Ceredigion. I love to see the way the participants grow in enthusiasm and creativity, unlocking so much potential in sharing creative ideas. I love your methods and the circle gatherings that you hold - I feel these are key to help people to really connect, I know that they really enjoy your sessions too, and I have learned so much.

For me, all this has resulted in many new friendships; it has given me new insights into being an active member of my own community and it has really inspired my own creativity. I am now feeling more able to try new ideas, and to feel more confident on my own creative journey. I feel you have unlocked my potential! "

SL, Pioneer Volunteer



"So today I'm going to a home school art class to introduce the children to silk painting and show how it can be relaxing. I'm really nervous and hope I can do it as well as Sara Wentworth"

RW 08.11.2017

"I noticed a advertisement for Art for Wellbeing meeting in Gosgoch which is two villages away from me. I don't usually try anything on my own , anyway got in my car and thought I will give in a try.

As I opened the door I received a warm greeting which made it great. For the first day I only stayed short while, I have been every week since I have learnt how to do many things like silk painting, pyrography, but most of all friendship.

As a group we all work together and if we can help someone who may have a problem we discuss it within the group Would like to thank Sarah and Mike"

RM



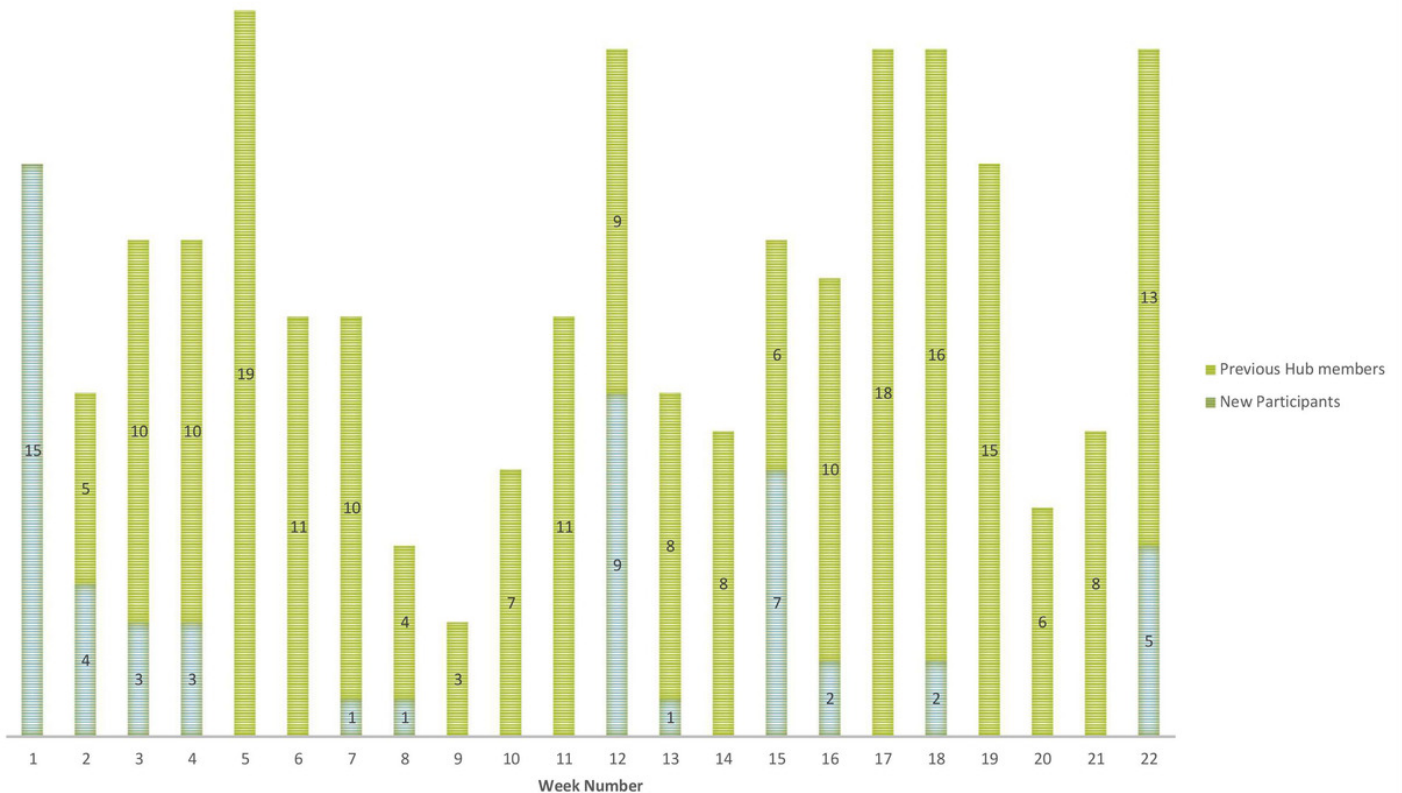
"I have found the most beneficial aspect of the Arts 4 well being project has been the social interaction and the lunch. Sharing a meal has a deep psychological binding effect that goes well beyond any craft activity. Observing other members of the group, they seem to enjoy creating things together and get a sense of achievement from completing a joint project, for example the garden"

FK

Ferwig

This has been a very successful hub from the outset, the group embracing new learning, with a 60/40 split of Welsh speakers to English speakers, there has been an excellent connection with creativity, community, language, culture and heritage, and an understanding of the key principles of the Cymunedau Caredig Project which the group have taken forward with great strength and enthusiasm.

FERWIG



Ferwig

Challenges and Interventions

The fact that a very small group had already formed and had been meeting once a month since our taster the year before.



Rather than parachuting in we went in gently and asked if the group would like to be involved in Compassionate Communities to which there was a wholehearted yes, as although the group had continued they were struggling for new ideas and skills .

The size of the venue.



The venue is quite small however because we weren't catering with diverse needs we could easily work with one or two activities a week. The group grew gently, so the space was fine

The venue was costly.



Towards the end of the project, the hall committee gained more insight into the Compassionate communities project and we were able to negotiate a much better price for the group to continue.

Attracting males to the group.



We have managed to attract males into the group occasionally, however group are quite happy being an all female gathering.

Reaching people in the locality



We encouraged the group and the hall committee to spread the word and have reached people as far away as Beulah and Llangoedmor.

A desire to be exclusive once the group had been running for ten weeks.



The group were so happy open and relaxed together that fears were expressed that more people joining would threaten that dynamic. However we had new people joining and supported the group through that and it ceased to be an issue, they are now very welcoming and promote the group to attract new members at local events .

The transition.



A4W had been very clear about the exit strategy from the outset and although there were worries about monies and taking on the responsibility of running the hub themselves, they had raised quite a lot of money at the Christmas fair. The group members are on the whole experienced and capable and they carried on through the transition without too much difficulty with only minimal support from A4W.

Fears about what the group would do after A4W had withdrawn.



A4W supplied the group with starter kits of tools, 'how to' instruction sheets and materials.

Learning gained from the Ferwig Hub

Space

There wasn't the space at Ferwig to have such a lot of tools and materials, we learned that we do not need to fit so many things in, (obviously at Gorsgoch we had the issue of so many people and very different needs and we needed a lot of activities to ensure inclusiveness). We learned that it works to allow more time and space for activities and to be more playful



Exit Strategy

That being a lot clearer about the programme and exit strategy worked well, with this group we managed their expectations a lot better .

FERWIG HUB

The Successes



1

The group have gone from strength to strength

The group have achieved personal growth and now have a group can do attitude.

2



3

They have had successful open days with support of local councillors



4

The group are in a good financial position after a Christmas fundraiser, weekly raffle and various pop up shops where they are using the skills learned within the group to raise money for the group





5

The group has shown growth, attracting new people and are keen to adhere to the whole vision for Compassionate Communities.

New support networks have been formed.

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Members have visited other hubs to share their skills and experience of transition with tips on how they made the transition work smoothly for their group. They have also helped initiate and welcome people in Welsh.

The group have engaged well with the school committee and are all working together to increase community cohesion.

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The group have forged a good relationship with the Hall committee who have been very supportive and will work with the group to apply for Community Chest funding.

The group are engaging with the community at every opportunity, promoting the hub, raising awareness and fundraising through sale of work

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Moving forward the group have engaged with other craftspeople to come in to teach skills at their group and have trips planned to Skomer Island and to the Henllan POW church this Spring.



Social Media Quotes and Feed Back

Ferwig

"I called in with the craft club this morning and they are buzzing!! A hive of activity making Christmas crafts to sell - fantastic"

Annette Morgan, Ferwig Hall Committee

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"A4W came into our lives on a taster day in Ferwig last year. Mike, Sara and Kate were so friendly and encouraging that before we knew it our Group had been formed. We have learned many new skills but even more importantly we've learned how to be part of a loving and caring community. Many strong friendships have been formed, often by people who had moved into the area and had felt very isolated and also those suffering ill health. We can't imagine life now without A4W. I hope it grows and continues in its outstanding success"

LW

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"Sara, Mike and Katy give us plenty of encouragement with all our art work, nothing is any bother to them. If they don't have the materials today they will bring them next week. I've had lots of comments about my enamelled necklace, people asked me if I had brought it. A big thank you to you all, Diolch yn fawr"

WJ

"Thank you for bringing Compassionate Communities to Ferwig. I have attended most weeks since the first taster day and now look forward to Thursdays. I have had the opportunity to try new crafts and discuss varying issues and ideas. In the process I have made lots of lovely new friends. Before attending I lived in Ferwig but now I truly feel part of the community, so all in all I think you can say your idea is a resounding success. Good luck with your plans on expansion and may you continue to spread love and care across Wales."

HC



I would like to thank Arts4wellbeing for the craft sessions they have been running in the old school at Ferwig, near Cardigan. I have been so lucky to have enjoyed using equipment I would not normally have access to, making new craft and meeting some lovely people. Your staff have been so welcoming, understanding and generous, providing lovely refreshments and a few hours of relaxing 'me time'. I have made some really good friends and we do hope to continue meeting in the future. Thank you for all your help and for just being there!"

DL

"Thank you Sara and Mike for all your hard work with Hen Ysgol Y Ferwig.

The first pop-up session last year has grown and developed in to something very positive for the Ferwig community and we are very grateful to you both for all your energy and enthusiasm.

best of luck with all your future projects"

Annette Morgan, Ysgol Hen Y ferwig Committee



"Dear Mike and Sara

I look forward to every Thursday as the Arts & Wellbeing is on, as it gives us a chance to do different crafts. I enjoy meeting everyone, have a chat and a cuppa. My Grandchildren and I having a go at different crafts, it's very enjoyable. Time goes so fast. Thanks for all your work and patience with us"

PD

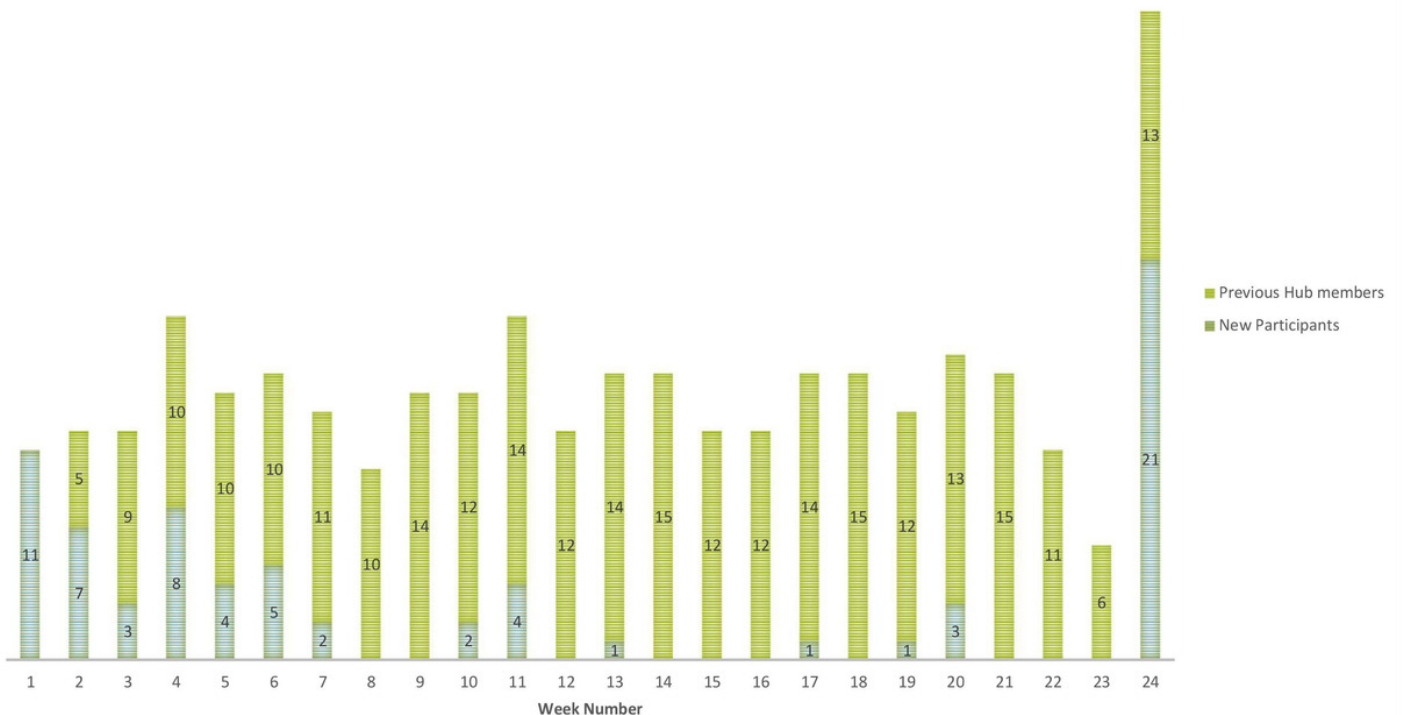
Coedybryn

Rural farming community with quite a number of retired Welsh and English people in the village, with people also accessing the group from outlying communities.

Initially we experienced quite a cultural divide within the group, which through introduction of playfulness, learning and using basic Welsh in the circle with the help and support of Welsh speakers, group work and skill sharing we have gradually overcome the difficulties so that now people come to the group as people, skill share and support each other. We have had a large number of people from farming families, children and grandchildren that have accessed the group and had very positive experiences. We had a visit from local Councillor Maldwyn Lewis and the Rev Carys Ann to officially open the celebratory event, the Cymunedau Caredig project was flagged up at the following county council meeting.

Arts4wellbeing received a letter of thanks for outstanding community work in bringing communities together from the chair of the County Council.

COEDYBRYN



Coedybryn

Challenges and Interventions

Reaching people .



Engagement taster day to raise awareness, social media, word of mouth and leafleting.

Engaging with an existing craft group using the hall.



Would have liked to engage with this group and encourage them to be part of the Compassionate Communities Hub, however it has not proved possible as yet, most of this previous group are from Newcastle Emlyn.

A cultural divide, prejudice and personal bias.



At the outset it was a challenge to achieve integration, half the group from Welsh farming backgrounds, Swansea Welsh, English speakers and a South African. We tackled this through group work, story sharing and skill sharing and have greatly improved cohesion within the group now.

Only a small number of the group taking responsibility to help, and negative feelings from these members about the group continuing as they didn't want to be the ones clearing away every week .



Over the weeks we reduced the amount of work we did setting up to encourage others in the group to take personal responsibility. This intervention had a positive impact and the ones who were planning to withdraw have stayed with the group.

Frailty and illness, and lack of transport means that people are often unable to access the group if the friend that drives is unwell .

We have set up a Facebook page so that the group can share information, chat with each other and arrange lifts. The ones able to drive are ringing around and picking up those who need a lift.

Transition to independence and worries about finances as the hall is costly.

Having an Frailer membership is a challenge from the financial point of view as due to illness within the group the members are only just able to cover costs, we have encouraged the group to hold a weekly raffle and are planning to look into financial support from other areas, local business, council etc to help the group through this difficult stage.

It hasn't been possible to form a supportive relationship with the hall.

We have just sent an email to the treasurer of the hall explaining the project again and asking for negotiation on price.

The very isolated people who are living in poverty and who are at most need will be put off accessing the group if there is a membership fee for everyone.

We have suggested donation box for those who can afford to contribute but realise the donations are very small in this village .

Learning gained from the Coedybryn Hub

Book Share

The community book share only works after transition when the hall allow a shelf to be used at the venue as the books are too heavy to transport every week..

Funding

That we need to have a back up plan in regard to funding to support transition as due to illness this group has been and continues to be very depleted, at least half the group if not three quarters are suffering from illness or falls currently. Also they haven't had the back up of the funds made at the Christmas fair like the former groups, finances are very tight for people in this group and these are the people we need to be supporting.



COEDYBRYN HUB

The Successes



1

Inter-generational group working very well with ages between 11 and 93.

Improved cultural and community cohesion.

2



3

They have had very successful open days with support from the local councillor.

Personal growth for a large number of participants.

4





5

New support networks, increased number of friends and sense of connectedness.

Skills sharing across the generations.

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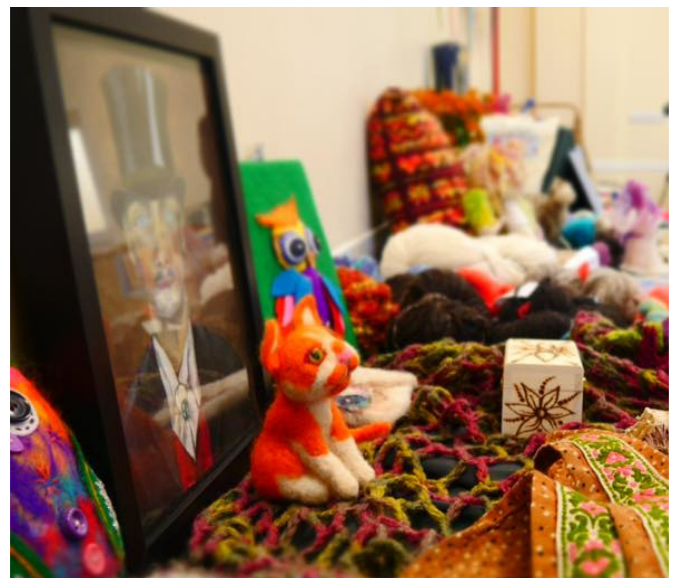


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The group has three male participants and two male volunteers, one of the men would like to set up a Men's Shed initiative and is keen to help make the group more accessible for men

There is a strong base of skill-sets within the group

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The group have exchanged details and are contacting each other, checking on each other and seeing who needs help.

We have the engagement of a young volunteer of 15 years old, also two of volunteers have been offering Reiki healing to the group members.

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They warmly welcomed members of the Ferwig group who came to share their experience of transition .





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Very strong lead group volunteer who completely understands the vision for Compassionate Communities .

The group are involved in digital storytelling project with UWSTD.

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Through awareness raising about the project at this group's open day A4W received an official letter of thanks from Ceredigion Council. The group has also been visited by Carys Mai from Plaid Cymru, Ben Lake is very much in support of the work.

The group are fundraising with a raffle each week and want to carry on and make it work.

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Social Media Quotes and Feed Back

Coedybryn

"I would gladly donate to such an amazing group! When I walked through the door this week I felt shit, but you smiled the most genuine smile at me and I was just so relieved to be there. Too mushy? Alright, you and Mike have the spontaneity, energy and imagination most people can only dream of!"

S 6/10/17



"First of all I am better again today , going to the meetings at Coedybryn has had many benifits for me ,when you are old your life becomes narrower ,I have found friend ship and kindness ,and greeted with a smile ,there is a feeling of unity ,also learning new crafts,I will be going whenever possible"

MM



"I love the Arts4Wellbeing project! it has introduced me to so many lovely people in my area that i had no idea were there. We really look forward to meeting every week, for some people it may be the only time they leave there house and for others it may be the only time they get to sit down and take some time out for themselves. There is so much laughter and support in the group that is heart warming to see and it can only be a huge benefit to our community"

SM

"Last Tuesday I was feeling so low I didn't want to go out of the house, I had burst pipes in the attic one day then the fox killing my lovely chicks.

Next day I was really down and out, but Sharon phoned and said you must come we're having visitors at the group today from Coedybryn, and I had made a box full of cakes so I thought I'd better go

But when I got there I was -000000 on the scale and when it was time to go home I was up to a 10 thanks to Mike and his jokes ,I love my Tuesday mornings out clubbing made great friends there"

IS



"Social isolation and anxiety mean I have become cut off from society. I've lost my support network of friends, possibly due to being viewed as being a bit of a jinx, having lost 4 people in the space of eight months. The Coedybryn session I attend gets me out of the house, it gives me something to look forward to. Though I get apprehensive at the thought of going, I make the effort, knowing I will feel better at the end of a session. The sessions are a way back into society, they bring me back from a dark lonely place "

DE



"Fabulous — creative, compassionate, alive, warm , welcoming — what our communities need — everyone needs to support this work"

Eve Warburton, UWTSD

"I thoroughly enjoyed the event last week it was very heart-warming for me to witness productive community work being taken to such small rural communities.

I am keen to link up with you and look how we can work together to make caring communities a reality across Ceredigion.

Can you let me know when you may have some time to talk more?

Please, please, please invite me to any more events you are having like that it was a very productive day in getting the message out that there is support for cares out there if they want it."

Sara Humphreys, Carers Support and Development Officer



"Thank you very much for the invitation — I enjoyed myself immensely. It was a pleasure to see the Compassionate Communities at work, and to experience the joy it brings to individuals of different ages and backgrounds. I look forward to seeing Ben on Friday to share my experiences of the event with him, and hopefully Ben will be able to attend at some point in the future"

Carys Ben Lake PA

"Thank you again for extending the warm welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon in your company at Coedybryn. It's great to see community led ideas develop and flourish and to observe first-hand how they have a positive effect on people's lives.

I'll be in touch again soon as I plan to write a press notice to include a few project developments/successes."

Rachel, Cynal y Cardi



"A Big Thanks to all at Arts4Wellbeing for organising yesterday's fantastic event at Coedybryn. Good to see you both again and what an incredible turnout!

It was a real pleasure to meet everyone and in particular, help one or two in the community to access Nest support. I have referred 2 eligible residents to the Nest team this morning which is a fantastic outcome from our point of view. Please do continue to inform me of any events where a Nest presence would be useful."

Peter Hughes, NEST Partnership Development Manager

"The project has helped me personally and is helping my confidence levels, which were quite low, I think. Participating in crafts and especially "the circle" has glued together new friendships, which I think everyone would like to see grow and flourish. I think that having people of different ages and interests together is so beneficial in many ways, and gives the group a family feel about it"

JH



"Always a pleasure to attend your events, so full of life and positivity. I really admire your work and think it will prove a cornerstone to the Resilient Communities everyone is talking about. Onward and upward!"

Chesca, CAVO



"Pethau hyfryd wedi ei gwneud gyda bobol lleol, ac yn neic gweld bobol yn cymysgu gyda'i giydd Carys. Cynghorydd Mike James, Llandudoch
Diolch am y croeso a phob llwyddiant am y dyffodol"

Co. Councillor Mike James, St Dogmaels Pembrokeshire



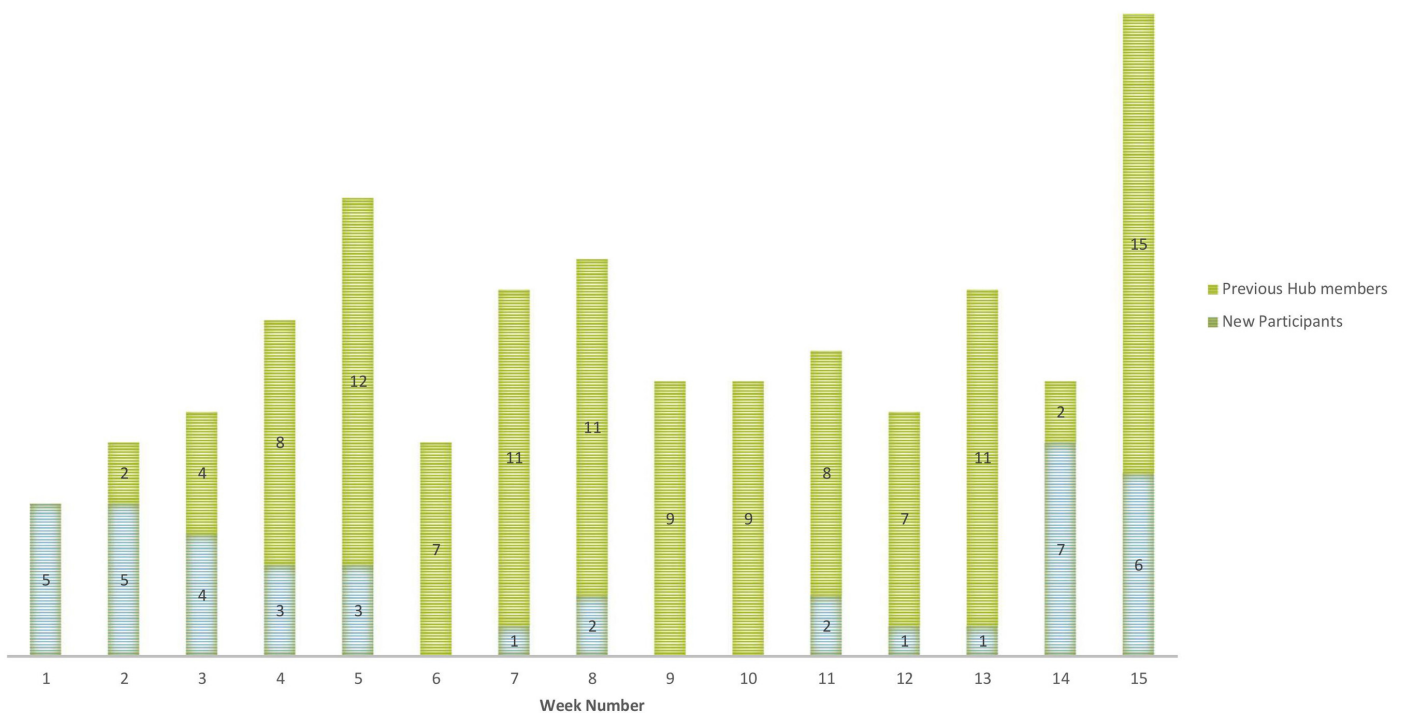
"An Immersive introduction to Carers Support in Ceredigion, Diolch"

Julie OT

Llechryd

From only two people turning up for the taster day, the Llechryd group has gradually grown on a weekly level and due to fact that the project has such a good reputation that agencies are now socially prescribing. We have had referrals from Red Cross, Gwalia, Cruse Bereavement support and the South Ceredigion Frailty Team plus the members are suggesting it to people living with depression that they feel will benefit. It has had at least one new member joining every week. People are coming from a wide area – Pentrecagal, Crymych, Betwys Ifan, St Dogmaels, and Hermon.

LLECHRYD



Llechryd

Challenges and Interventions

The hall is very large and cold.



We use the smaller committee room, kitchen and lounge area.

The hall is quite expensive.



We don't think this will be an issue as there are always a lot of members so the cost can be easily distributed.

Difficulty engaging with males.



We have two men that visit however it is a predominantly female group .

Wide range of needs – stroke survivors, carers , poor mental health, disability and bereaved.



From the outset the members have been very compassionate and supportive of the more vulnerable and frail within the group .

Very large, ever growing group.



We will have to work for longer to support the group as it has doubled in the last few weeks, the group are very much on board with the ethos and vision of compassionate communities .

LLECHRYD HUB

The Successes



1

They have a very strong supportive group dynamic.

Large number of group volunteers.

2



3

Wide range of ages from thirty somethings to 80+.



4

Extremely supportive and welcoming to new vulnerable participants.





Attracting a lot of interest and referrals from 3rd sector.

5

Very positive open day, visit from a community councillor and from Hwyl Dda University Health Board.



6



7

There is a lot of interest in the group from the local council and a good relationship with the community council who have requested the group take on a project to regenerate the community notice board, which will commence when the group go independent led by Sara.

Large number of the participants embracing the ethos of Compassionate Communities.

8



9

One member has signed up to be an A4W volunteer at our Llandysul Feel Good Friday group.



10

A husband of one of the members who attends the group from time to time, retired head of art, is now volunteering teaching a course at another group for carers, people with life limiting health conditions, bereaved and lonely.



Social Media Quotes and Feed Back

Llechryd

"What an uplifting adventure! Thank you Sara for guiding us all through, with a beautiful souvenir of our journey. So looking forward to Wednesdays with you and Mike and our group. Thank you "

IV 16/11/2017

.....

"Loved it today everyone! Am actually getting my silk framed I love it so much. Thank you everyone.xxx "

DN 16/11/2017

.....

"Just wanted to say how great today was at your overwhelmingly positive, predominantly female gathering!! Such a lovely group of people who were so honest and up front and massively welcoming. I have nothing but praise for the work you are doing for the rural communities, if I can help and I'm available and you can contact me, just ask"

RJ 29/11/2017

.....

"It's been....A laugh! Happy People, Creative, a treat of space to be"

R 18/10/2017

"The A4W group in Llechryd benefits me in so many ways. The welcoming feeling you get as you walk through the door makes you feel amazing straight away. The social mix of people of all ages from all walks of life is a rewarding experience to be part of. The social aspect is definitely one of the best things about the group. Also you meet people who are facing battles different to your own which gives you a different aspect on life. The group supports people who have health issues, are socially isolated or are recently bereaved. Yet we all come together, help each other and form friendships. Mike's circle time/ group chat at the start helps everyone feel at ease and able to open up to each other in an upbeat way. It feels therapeutic. The arts and craft sessions with Sarah give a sense of achievement at doing something new. I personally had never tried batik, decoupage, needle felting or pyrography before. I now have started doing needle felting at home and wish to pursue it as a hobby. It is a relaxing thing to do if feeling stressed or down during the week. It feels great to be part of something so uplifting, caring and friendly and I really look forward to coming the group each week"

JP



"Lovely! I was really nervous and hoped everyone would be warm and welcoming. And they were! You forget everything, no clock watching. It gets you away from your intense environment"

CE 18/10/2017

"My life has changed for the better, I now have a sense of self worth and purpose, after years of not doing or finding something just for me, I plucked up courage to open the door to the Wednesday session of Arts4wellbeing. The welcome from Sarah, Kate & Mike soon broke down any misplaced sense of "Help, what am I walking into, and is this for me?" When, oh yes, it was so definitely for me and also for anyone who would feel the benefit of, meeting new caring friends, sharing lively and friendly conversation, with lots of heart warming laughter, when maybe their day would be spent alone, to have a go at such a wonderful assortment of crafts taught by Sarah, Mike & Kate, there for you every step of the way, to guide, instruct and encourage. I now look forward to Wednesdays and meeting my new friends every week. I am on a journey that is seeing caring friendships develop and confidences grow by spending this time together in creative wellbeing. I really love learning new creative crafts, having the time to start and finish a project is very satisfying and good for my self worth. I find watching new skills develop in my new friends, very rewarding, and sharing ideas, great! Its important to talk and this is encouraged by Sarah & Mike who make you feel comfortable and give you the confidence to be ready to listen, to share or to contribute to the thought provoking, stimulating and amusing conversation. I enjoy sharing lunch, feel some people, might not spend time eating alone, and the buzz of conversation with company is great"

IV

"I was invited along to Arts 4 Wellbeing the first time they came to our village and enjoyed the new friends along the way. Discovered how to use paint on silk, felting and many other things. On some occasions I was down and the class lifted me up. So although I don't make it every week I know they will be there the following week and I look forward to seeing them all again. Nothing is ever too much trouble, lovely people. Thank you"

CD

.....

"It's been interesting to see how some who have been coming along to the group have gained confidence in meeting new people, developing their inner creativity, and being opened up to new ideas. Some have been able to open up to the group about worrying, and happy, thoughts and about life generally, and they seem to feel it's a safe and confidential environment to do so. I have gained some new creative skills for which I am very thankful, and find the project very worthwhile and may it continue. You are both doing a grand job,

XXXXX "

RP

.....

"NCE GP surgery is very excited and will be sharing as soon as you start - your reputation is preceding you. You are very highly thought of by many Health professionals who really see the results of your amazing work".

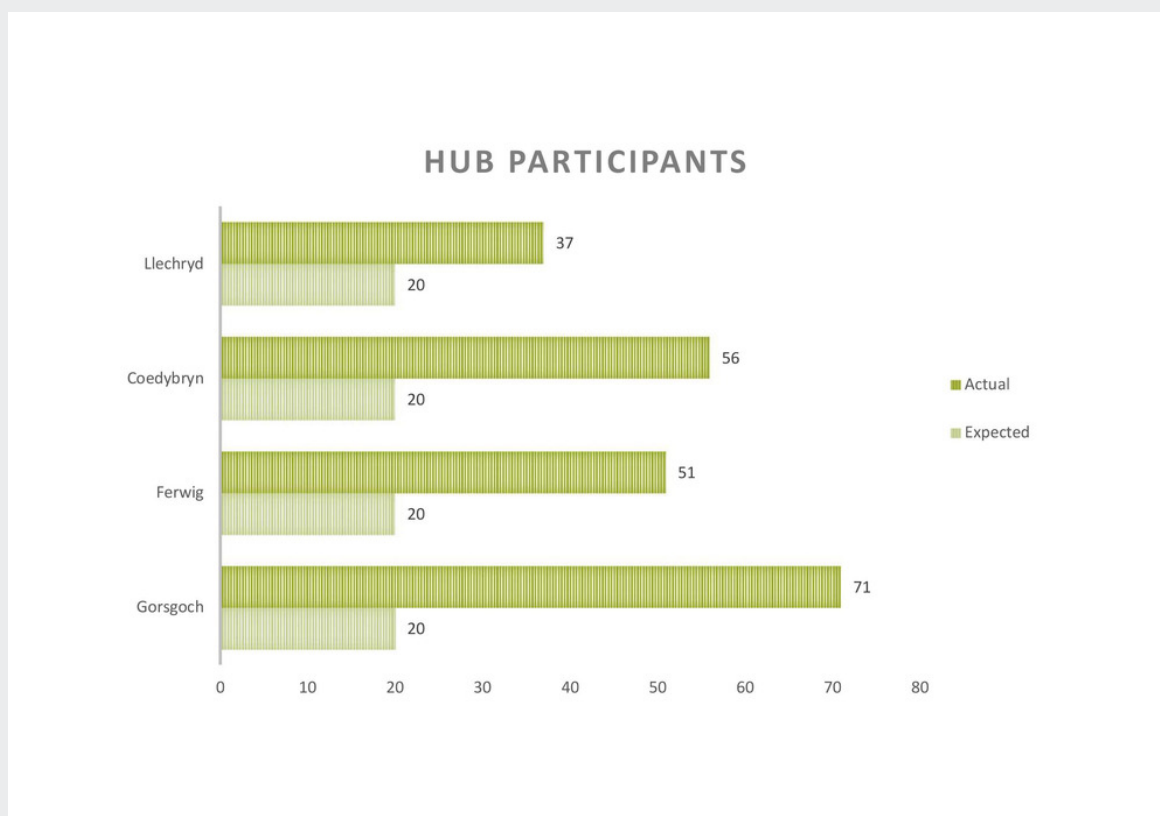
Sam Nichols, Third Sector Facilitator 19.02.2018

Project Achievements

The Compassionate Communities three year funded project is moving successfully into its second year, developing inclusive volunteer led social co productive hubs to support good mental health, general improved health and wellbeing.

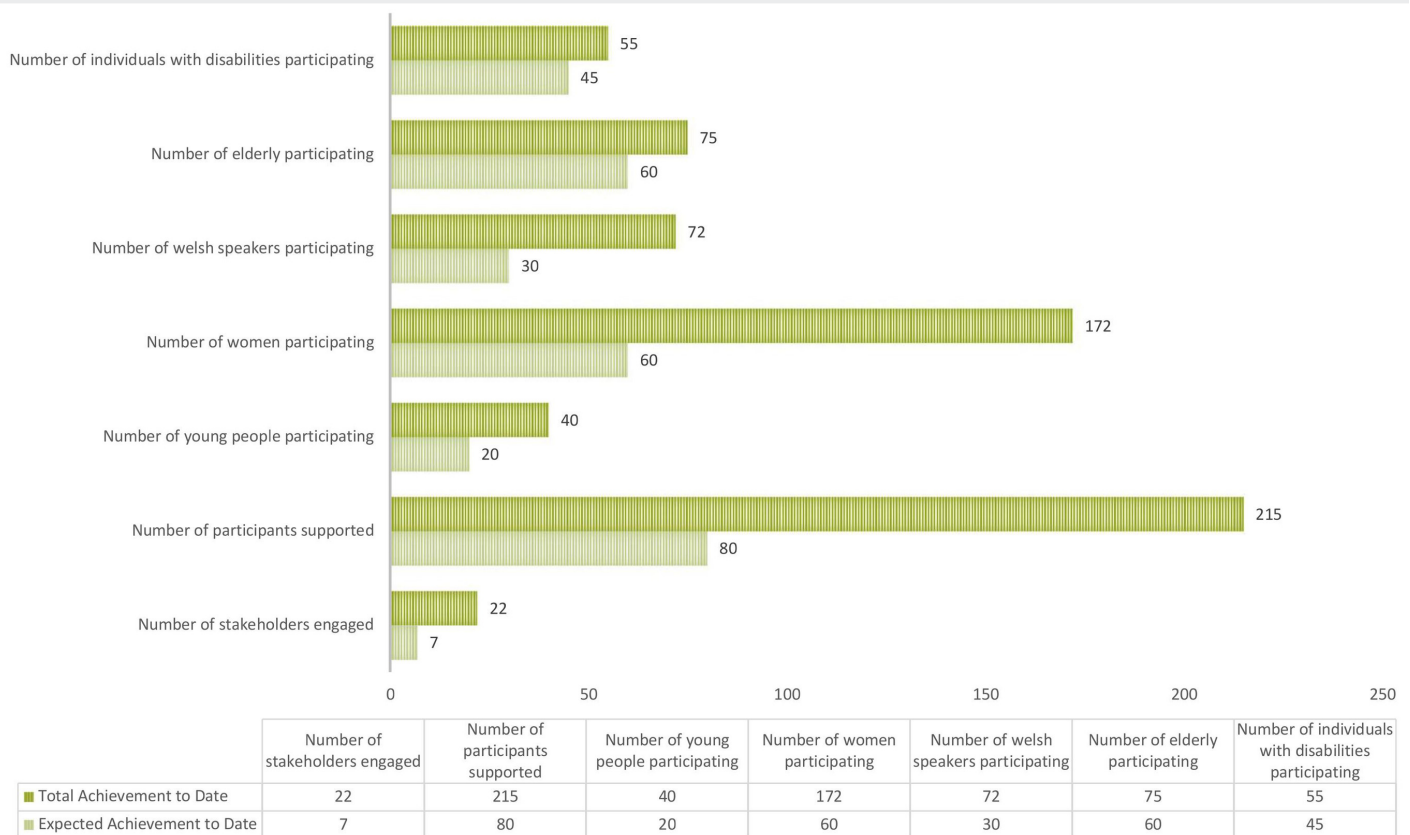
The project works with a wide span of ages from 15 – 93 years old and supports people with responsibility for caring, people living with life limiting conditions, stroke survivors, people living with dementia, people coping with loss and bereavement, people living with poor mental health.

Compassionate Communities actively supports people to overcome barriers to participation, learn new skills, develop increased confidence, develop a more positive sense of self and others, develop new friendship networks, engage with creative play and happiness, thus improving health and reducing isolation.



- Building co-productive hubs that are a centre for each rural community.
- Developing a co-operative community model.
- Increasing shared community sense of identity and place.
- Increasing quality of life through reconnecting older isolated people with sense of belonging and being of value within the communities

We said we would engage with 20 people per hub, a total of 80 across the 4 hubs. In fact we have engaged with over 215 people.



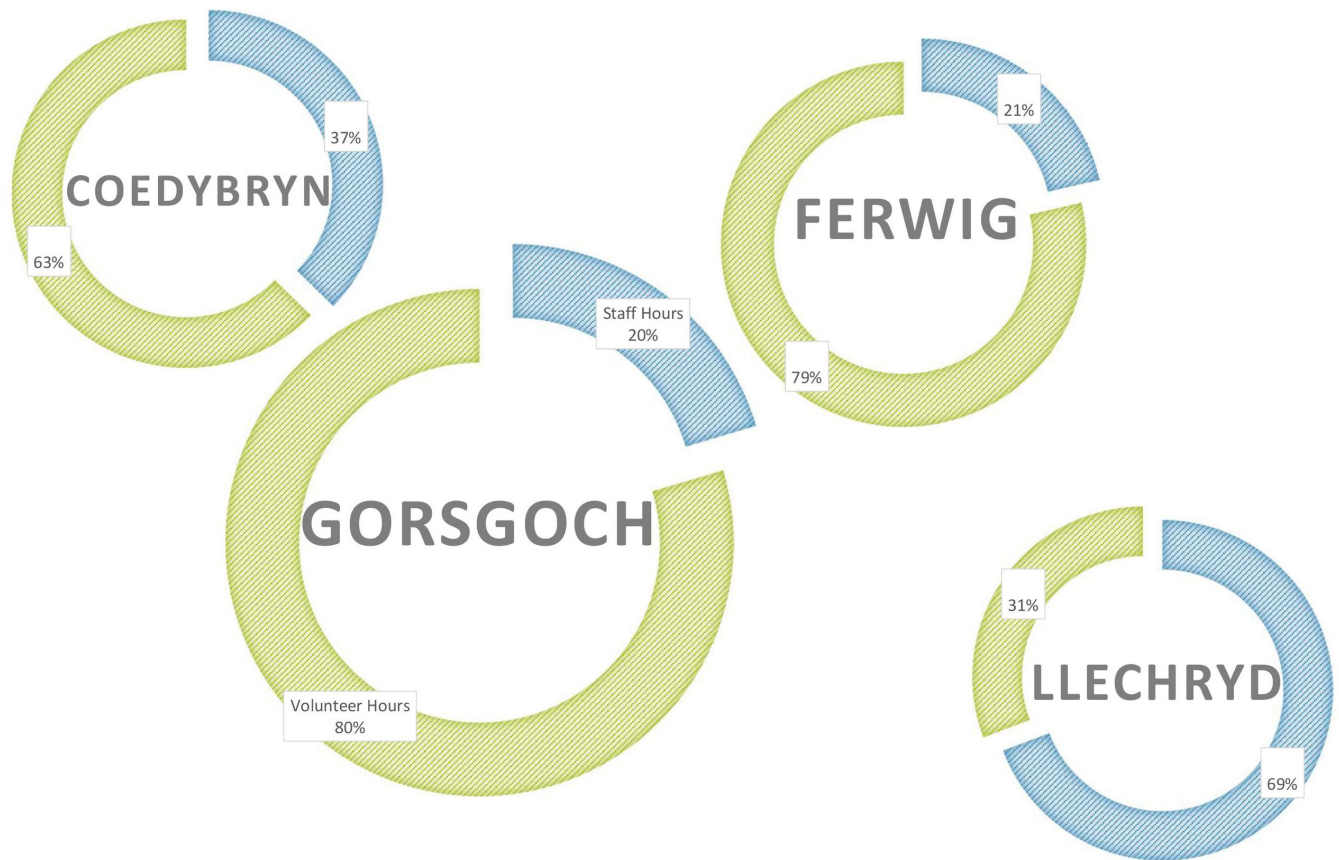
- Of whom we said 45 would be people with a disability, we have in fact engaged with 55 people who have self disclosed that they have a disability, we know that many of the participants do not see themselves as disabled
- We said we would engage with 60 elders and we have had 75 elders participate.
- We thought we would have 60 female participants overall and we have had 172 females engage.
- By being seen as an ‘English’ organisation we thought we anticipated a total of 30 Welsh speakers participating; we have in fact engaged with 72 Welsh speakers, all of whom have been supportive on the project in encouraging English speakers to start to use conversational Welsh. Two groups now have weekly bilingual opening circle with everyone participating .
- We said we would engage with 20 young people and we have doubled that to engaging with 40 young people.

- We stated we would have secured a total of 7 stakeholder organisations to engage with our groups at this stage of the project and we have engaged with 22 stakeholders. (All of whose feedback has been overwhelmingly positive in, how much easier it is to engage with their public, get their message across AND find out information relevant to their respective organisations at the grass roots level).
- The projection for these hubs over the next phase of the project is very positive. A number of Village hall committee members have been in touch either with the hubs directly or via A4W to request support to run community creative activities in the school holidays for parents and children.
- We have had approaches from community councillors asking if the hub would be interested in taking on the creative refurbishment of the village notice board.
- A4W have significant interest from a range of third sector agencies and organisations with new participants being referred to the hubs via the development workers.
- A4W are currently in conversation with Public Health Wales and a number of local GP surgeries pertaining to Social Prescribing.



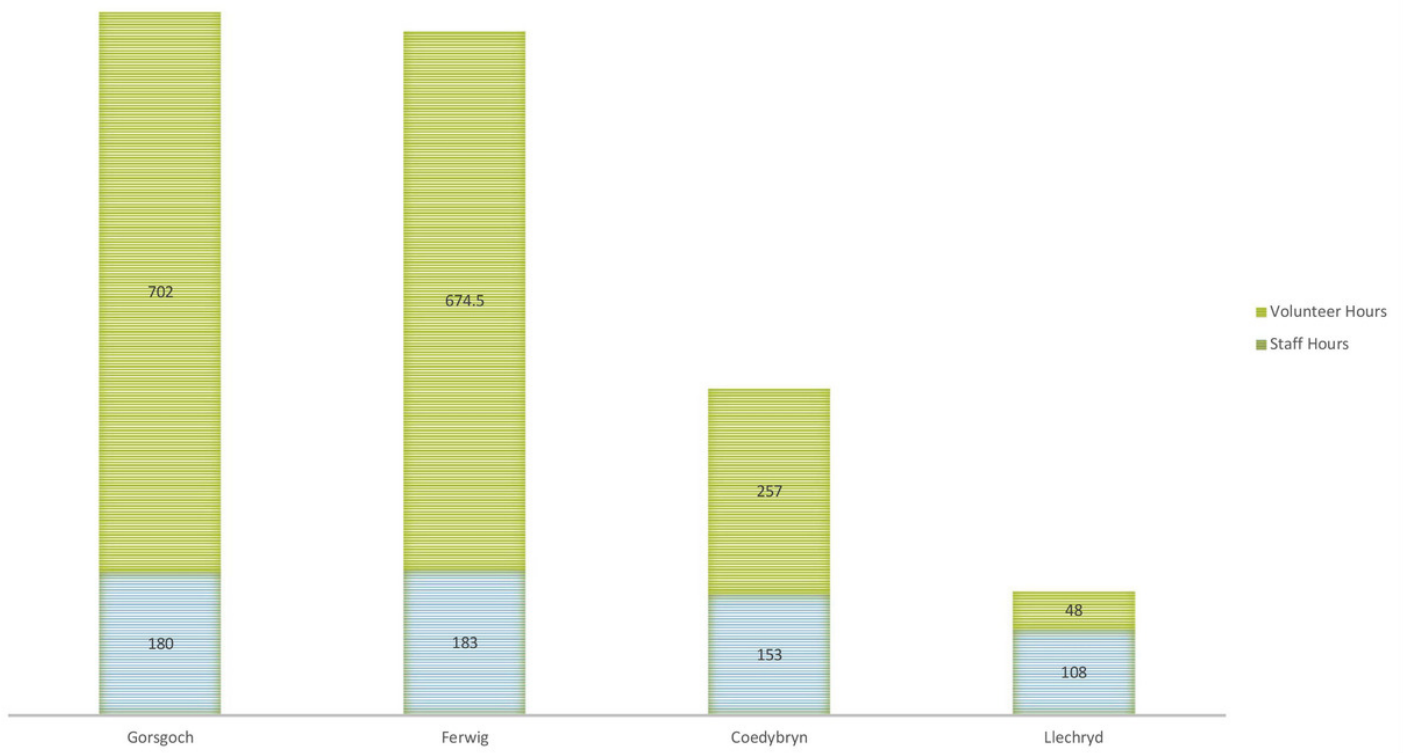
A4W Staff and Board members receiving their certificate for 'distinctive contribution to the community' awarded by the high sheriff of Dyfed Medwin Hughes

Group and Pioneer Volunteer training



- All three of the semi-independent groups have a regular weekly attendance of between 10 and 15 participants, with each one having between 20 and 30 signed up members.
- A4W have a very strong and growing pool of group volunteers and pioneer volunteers many of whom are interested in signing up for our volunteer training course being facilitated later this year.
- A4W have secured an Awards for All grant to roll out and facilitate our volunteer training as it was not possible to facilitate the training whilst we and our volunteers are busy supporting the participants at the hubs. (We have had several request from other agencies and organisations for their support workers to access this training as well)

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER HOURS



A4W have been approached by Public Health Wales to help recruit a number of volunteers from each hub to be trained in gathering information for Measuring the Mountain project which will be fed directly to Welsh Assembly Government giving a clear indication from community level of how well the Social Services and Well-being Act is being implemented. We are awaiting the training to be delivered.



Volunteers from the Gorsgoch Hub with Steve and Gareth from Ageing Well Wales

3rd Sector Organisations, Clubs and Societies



We said that we would develop a two pronged approach to pro-active engagement between agencies and community.

- That each hub would identify agencies that they need more information about and we would invite them to a session.
- That organisations and agencies with relevant staff ie. outreach workers would be invited to attend as many sessions as they can and those workers would join in as participants within the group. This would give them the opportunity to learn about individuals requirements and how their organisation can best support the community shoulder to shoulder. By listening, speaking individually to individuals and by gaining a deeper understanding of their client groups
- But also and more importantly, in line with the findings from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on the 'Kindness research, we will actively seek and promote, local clubs and societies to come and present what they do and offer to members and how people can join them. These presentations will be timetabled in for a calendar of various meetings of the hub throughout the years.

In Summary

A4W are now half way through this Cynnal Y Cardi funded three year pilot project. We set out to initiate, co-create and develop a sustainable network of four Compassionate, Creative, Co-productive, Community Hubs. A series of local, weekly, intergenerational, activity based, social drop in groups, run by members of the community, for members of the community in their local community centres. A hub to which GP's and 3rd sector organisations can refer people and disseminate or gather information at the grass roots level.

Upskilling

A4W have introduced most of our participants to a range of new (to them) crafts and creative workshops from the 20 plus different creative workshops that we have facilitated. Many participants have been inspired to engage with new hobbies, make new products and quite a number have gone on to raise significant amounts of monies from the sale of these new artefacts for themselves and their respective groups.

The National Archive department from the National Library of Wales has made contact; we are in discussion with them and our community hubs to explore ways forward, where participants will be trained in IT skills to enable them to collect and add relevant community data to the departments on line platform as well as the opportunity for Archivists visiting each hub and discussing the cultural history around the community.

Welsh assembly government have chosen the A4W Compassionate, Creative, Co-productive, Community hub project, to explore as a model of best practice, one of ten projects across Wales for case study into Volunteer led projects which reduce isolation.

Social Networking

Each of our communities are different therefore each hub is unique in character particular to it's geographical area. All share a similar ethos of being open and welcoming to newcomers, supportive and empathetic to those coping with challenges and difficulties. Providing supportive opportunities for people to have a go at something new or just spend time socialising.

Since the project began, many participants have linked up with group members in their village or from the surrounding villages, exchanging phone numbers and email addresses. Helping with lifts to hospital / doctors' appointments, or visiting a spouse in full time care. A number have arranged social outings together (A4W had a great turn out for the 12 hour sponsored Bowlathon from each hub, a fundraising event in Carmarthen for the Creative Starter Kits initiative.), people connect with new found friends on social media. Some participants now regularly visit each other at their respective homes for coffee, meals and socialising in between group sessions.

Creativity Starter Kits

A4W have started to make up a variety of Creative Starter Kits of tools, collating materials and 'how to' crib sheets that enable each hub to get started or carry on with a particular craft that they really engaged with during the training. The idea is that the groups do not have to use their small budgets to purchase expensive tools and materials, which then prevents them moving onto other new skills and projects, there is rarely space to store tools and materials at the village halls so it is a way to simplify and support the transition process .

Creative Lending Library

A4W have started to research possible funding opportunities to house and initiate a Creative Lending Library. Maximising the use of tools and materials , growing the assets, keeping resources moving around the communities to keep everything fresh and inspiring. We are incredibly grateful to many individuals and organisations who have already generously donated large amounts of books, tools, materials and equipment from their stores to this project. A4W also gratefully acknowledge the several bequests of equipment, tools and materials resulting from the death of a family member to our lending library. A4W plan to initiate the Creative Lending Library over the next phase of this project and link it in with networking with our Pioneer Volunteers taking their skills into the other community hubs.

Sharing the Knowledge and Learning

A4W promote the ideas and initiatives from each of the hubs as well as the creations, activities and events around the hubs daily on social media. We have a large significant professional body following our facebook page. We are continually sharing the learning and best practice that comes from our development work with the hubs with the third sector agencies and national organisations, through meetings and presentations.

Co-production Wales has chosen this project as a case study of good practice, with a potential for the study to be published in an international journal.

Five of our volunteer participants were interviewed by development officers from Aging Well Wales and we have a double A4 page feature in their new national Brochure around positive aging, we will be giving a presentation about Creativity in Building Community at the launch of the brochure in Aberystwyth on March 15th 2018.

A4W gave a presentation on Compassionate, Creative, Co-productive, Community Hubs for the Royal Commission Ancient Historical Monuments of Wales at the Launch of Community Engagement at The National Library of Wales last year.

A4W gave a presentation for Planed in St Davids about 'How Creativity can Help Build Community' at their Arts and Community conference.

A4W have just been approached by Public Health Wales -Sustainability Roadshow to give a number of presentations throughout Wales on our Community work by Malcom Ward, Principle Health Promotion Specialist, Policy Research and International Development, Public Health Wales.

Need and Demand

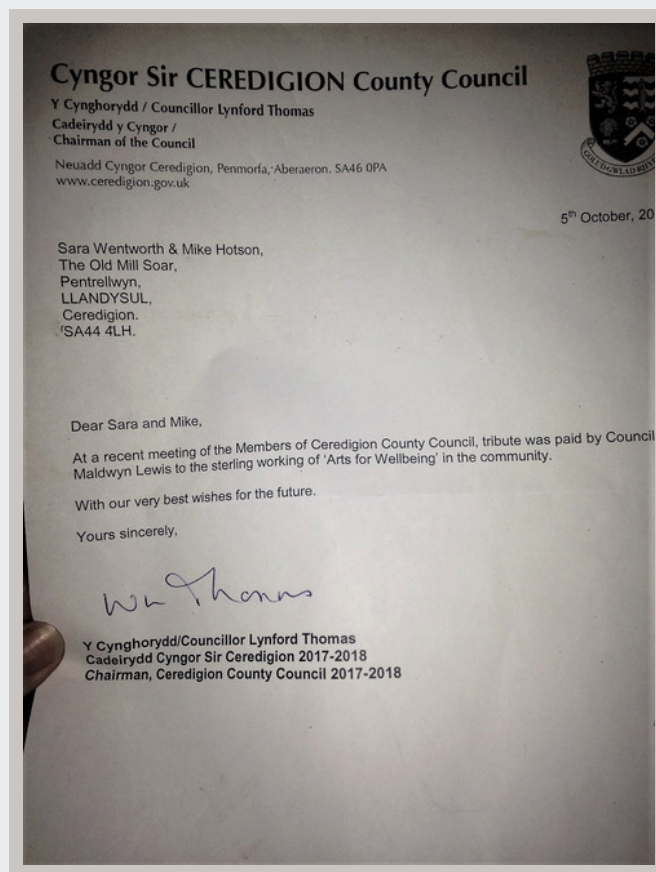
There is no doubt from the statistics of take up and participation in A4W's Compassionate, Creative, Co-productive, Community Hub training that there is a need for such a project in the heart of our rural communities.

With the steady attendance figures after the hubs go semi independent and new people starting to get referred to the hubs from the third sector organisations, evidence indicates there is a great deal of interest growing in this project as it rolls out. The fact that there is a large and growing number of group and pioneer volunteers wishing to and already beginning to take their skills out and network across the different community hubs, is again proof that there is a need and a demand for people to feel of use in their own and neighbouring communities.

There is very strong support from a variety of agencies and national organisations in this pilot project. Ideas and plans are already formulating to extend the project in different ways and roll it out to other communities and counties.

Feedback would indicate that this particular initiative is incredibly timely, ahead of the curve and doing what it set out to achieve, reducing isolation, supporting good mental health, happiness and co production in rural communities

Letters of thanks and support



To Whoever it may Concern;

Newcastle Emlyn GP surgery has been very pleased to see new Arts for wellbeing groups starting up in their area as the general feedback from patients is such a positive one that they are already compiling a list of patients in anticipation of the potential Aberporth group.

They have noted that several patients who currently attend the groups have been able to reduce their anxiety medication and have seen some patient's attendance at the surgery reduce. The frailty nurse for South Ceredigion has been able to refer several clients and even some of her patients carers to the groups. She is very pleased to have this resource available in her area. Frailty nurses in the North are now keen to see the expansion Northwards.

In visiting several of the groups I have been struck by how different they are. They have obviously been shaped by the people that attend and are unique to that community. This is a very good indication of the sustainable ethos behind the framework that each group works to, as well as the light touch guidance from the Arts for Wellbeing team

Samantha Nicholls

Hwylusydd Integreiddio'r Trydydd Sector/ Third Sector
Integration Facilitator
Cymuned/Community
Ceredigion
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Hywel Dda/Hywel dda University
Health Board

Tel: 07973 623831

To whom it may concern

I have had the pleasure of supporting and working with Arts for Wellbeing and witnessing the development of community groups in rural West Wales during 2017-2018. Their ability to draw communities together, inspire them through creativity and to draw out the skills and assets to create sustainable groups are rare and inspirational gifts that are much needed in these times of social fragmentation and loss of rural services.

Their work is vital to the Health Board agenda around Transforming Mental Health Services and the need to develop person-centred, Recovery-focused support at community level. The work they are doing is also leading the way for the Wellbeing agendas laid out in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act as defined in the Ceredigion Wellbeing Plan which identifies 2 key strands underpinning Wellbeing, namely:-

1. Building individual resilience
2. Building community resilience

They have also shown a great sensitivity in their work to local cultural history and the Welsh language and have succeeded (uniquely) in bringing together what are often parallel and separate cultures of locals and those who have moved to the area to create unified and vibrant communities.

There is a massive need for an expansion of this work for the reasons outlined above and I am pleased that they have been given funding to test this out and collect evidence of success in order to extend these programmes in the future.

Yours sincerely

Shon Devey

Gweithiwr Datblygu # Development Worker

WWAMH

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