

Helping Hand to Volunteer End of Project Report

January 2024 - March 2026



"It has been great to work with Jordan and Mantell Gwynedd over the past two years. The partnership has been invaluable in helping individuals find their place in our community through volunteering. The volunteers who have been referred to us have made a real difference and we are so grateful for their continued contributions."



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1. Project background



The Helping Hand to Volunteer Project was funded by the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) through Gwynedd Council between January 2024 and March 2026.

The project was based with the Gwynedd Volunteer Centre at Mantell Gwynedd with the focus on supporting individuals to access volunteering opportunities. As the local County Voluntary Council, Mantell Gwynedd's role is to support the voluntary sector and volunteers in Gwynedd.

The main aim of the project was to provide one-to-one support for individuals with additional support needs, including neurodiversity, disabilities, mental health challenges, learning difficulties, individuals who are unemployed, to help them engage and benefit through volunteering. The support was tailored to each individual and included:

- Identifying suitable volunteering opportunities
- Assistance with completing application forms
- Visits to volunteering locations
- Providing a "helping hand" to ensure volunteers feel confident and supported.



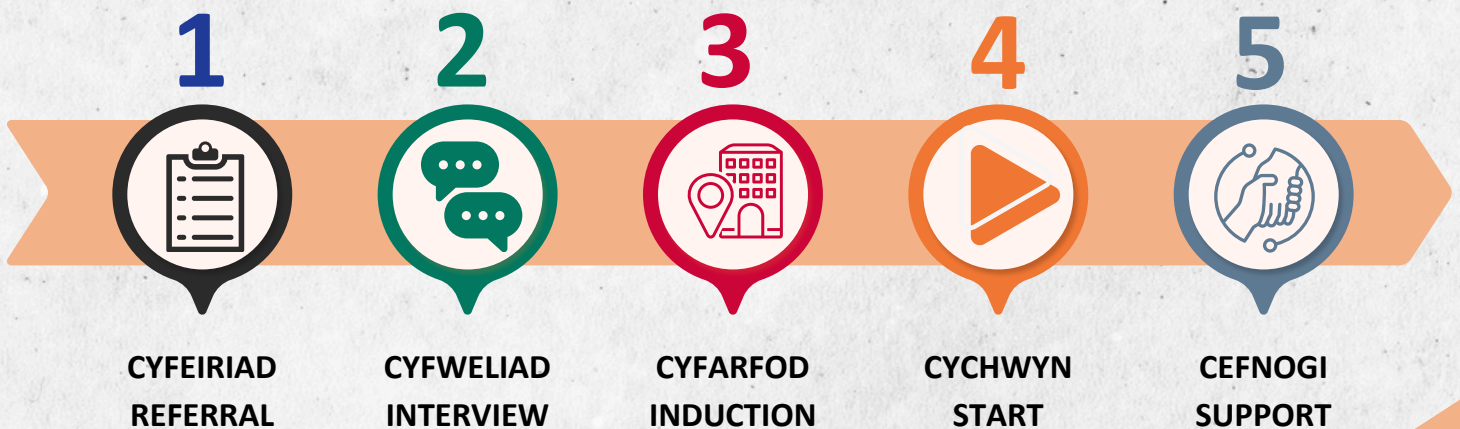
Before an individual starts volunteering, the project follows a series of structured steps to ensure intensive support is provided and a suitable placement is successfully arranged.



The steps included:

- 1. Referral** - individuals are referred to the project through agencies, organisations, or self-referral.
- 2. Interview** - assessing needs, interests, and any additional support requirements.
- 3. Induction** - preparing the volunteer for their placement, including guidance and expectations.
- 4. Start** - beginning the volunteering placement with personalised support.
- 5. Ongoing Support** - continuous guidance and monitoring to ensure a positive volunteering experience.

Through this personalised approach, the project ensured that volunteers received the guidance and encouragement needed for successful participation and contribute a positive impact in communities.





2. Individuals who received support

The project supported 176 individuals over a period of two years between January 2024 and March 2026.

The project focused on the Arfon area in north Gwynedd with a small number of additional referrals from Dwyfor and Meirionnydd reflecting a wider demand for the service across the county.

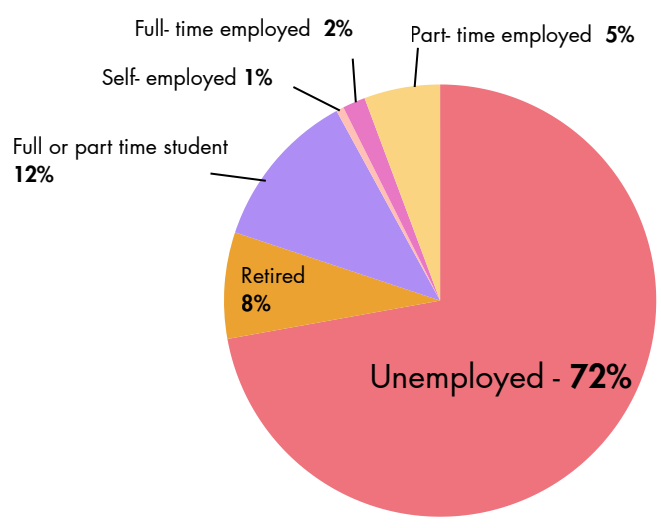
January 2024 - March 2025



April 2025 - March 2026



Here is an analysis of the individuals supported:

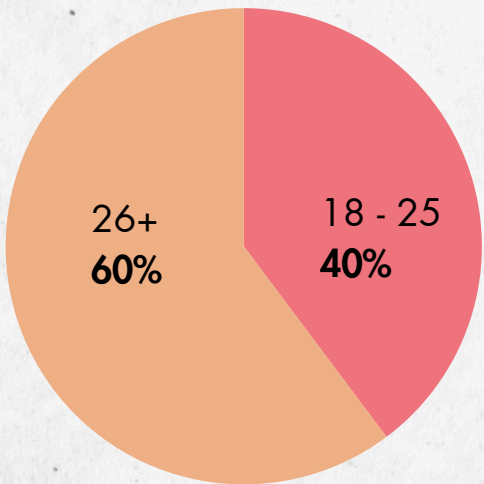


Employment Status

- Self-employed - 1
- Full-time employed - 3
- Part-time employed - 10
- Retired - 14
- Full or part time student - 21
- Unemployed- 127

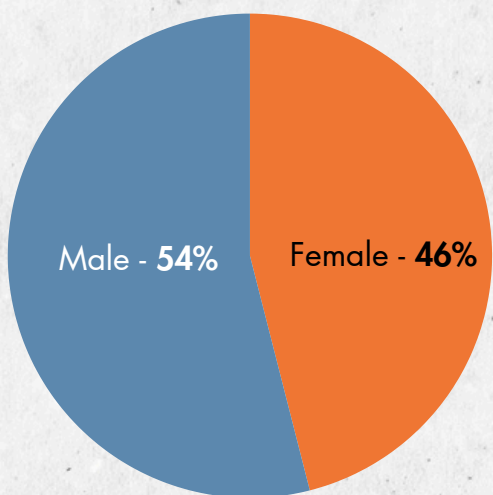


Age



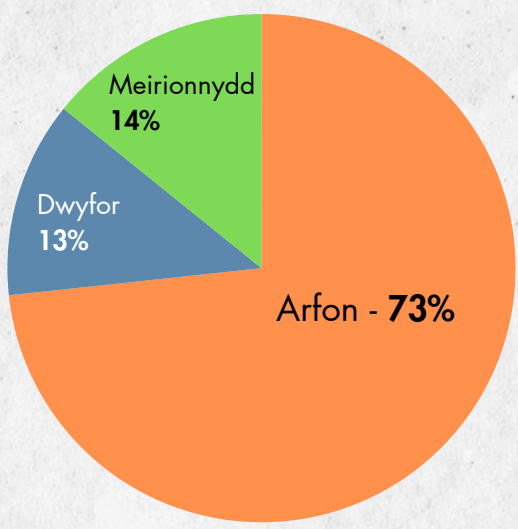
Aged 18–25 - **70**
Aged 26 and older - **106**

Gender



Male - **95**
Female - **81**

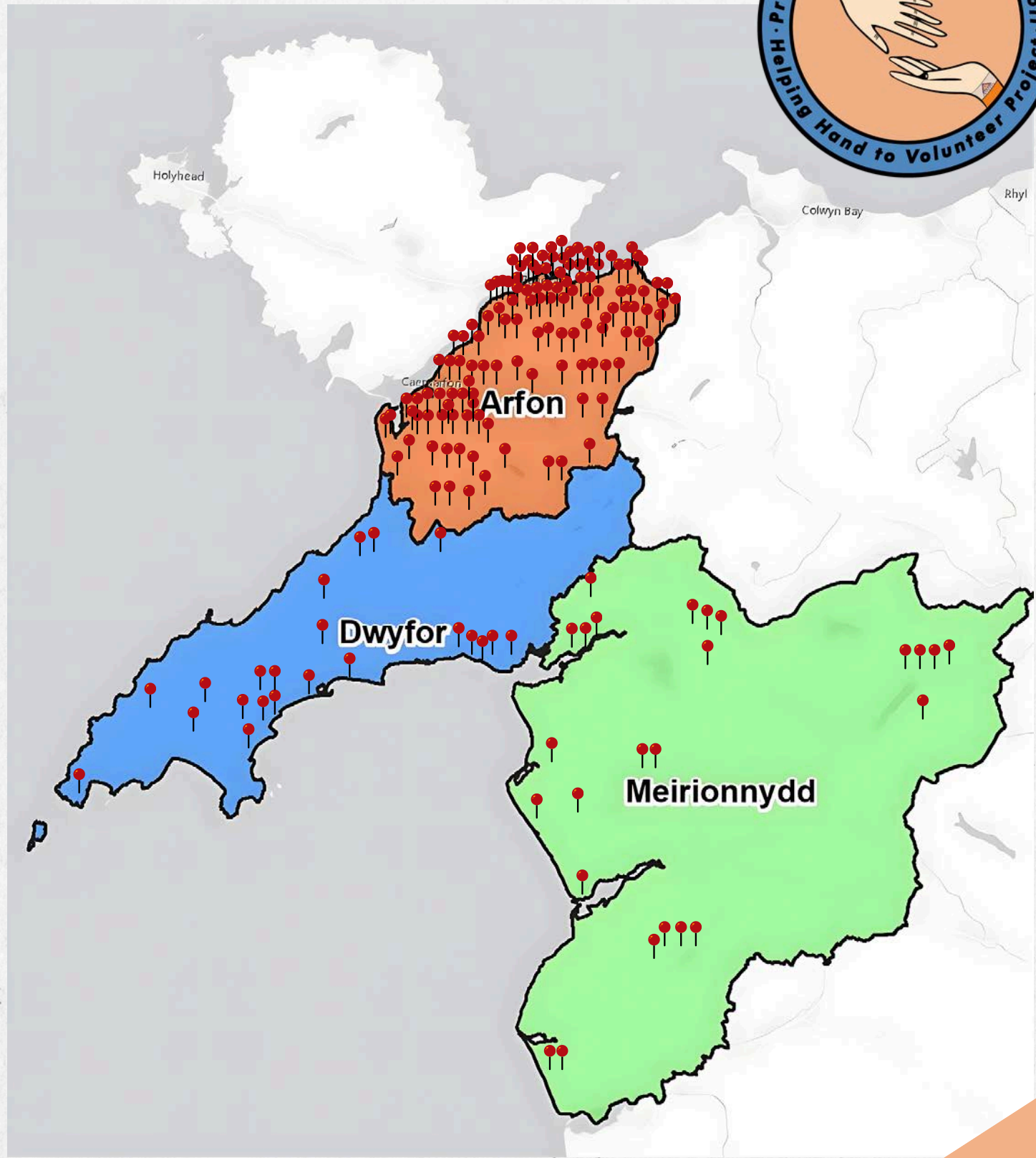
Where in Gwynedd



Arfon - **129** individuals
Dwyfor - **22** individuals
Meirionnydd - **25** individuals



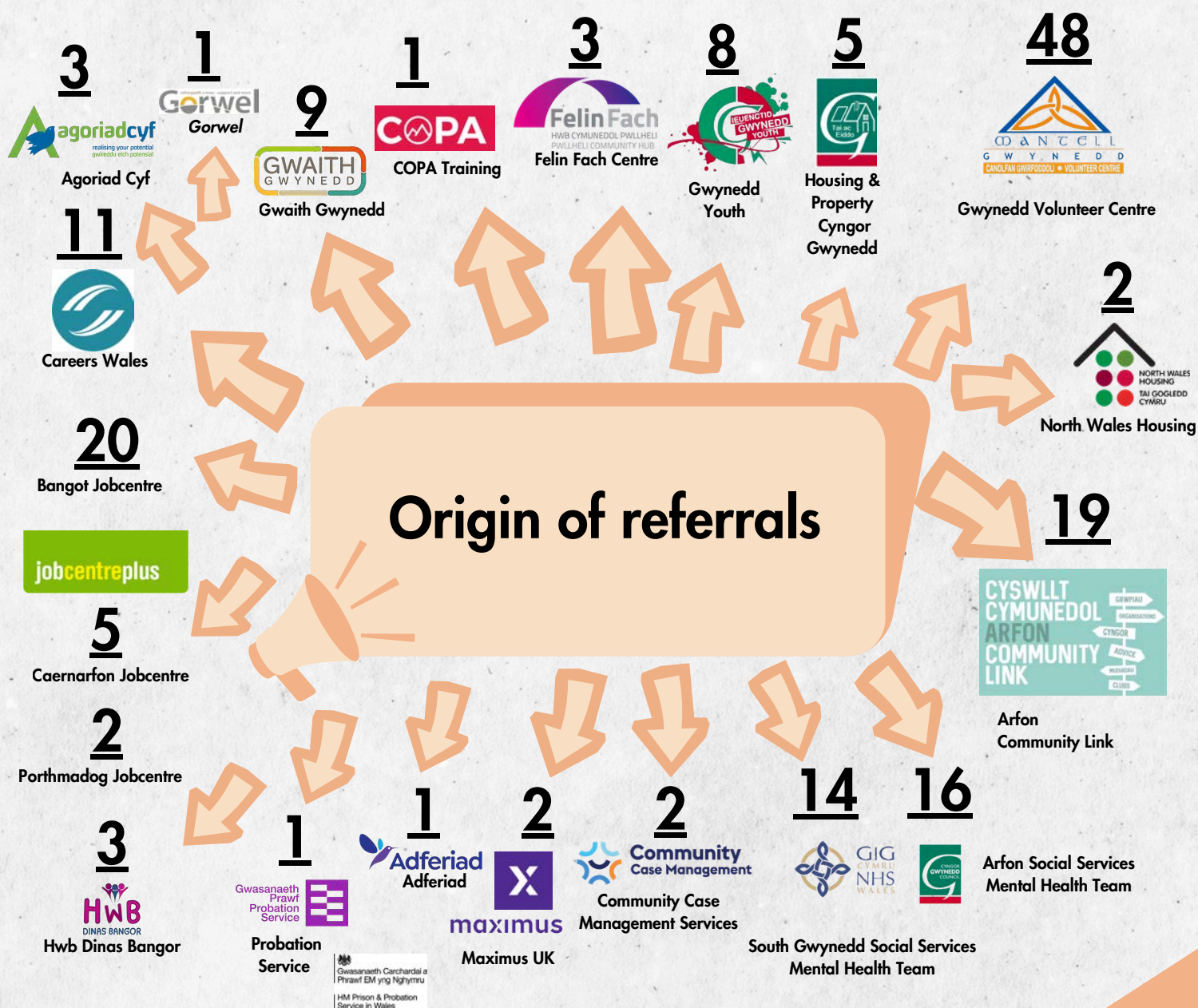
Location of referrals





3. Referrals to the project

The project collaborated with a number of agencies throughout Gwynedd. Referrals were mainly received from those who required additional support, who were not in education or training, unemployed and anyone who needed a boost to participate in daily activities and become better connected to their local community.



4. Organisations that have welcomed individuals to volunteer



Siop elusen Ambiwylans Awyr Cymru
Wales Air Ambulance charity shop,
Bangor, Caernarfon & Tywyn.



Yr Ysgwrn,
Trawsfynydd.



Proiect Ffrindiau'
Newydd Project.



Rheilffyrdd Llyn Tegid.
Bala Lake Railway,
Llanuwchllyn.



Siop elusen Age UK
charity shop,
Bangor.



Siop elusen Sense
charity shop,
Bangor & Caernarfon.



Asynnod Eryri
Snowdonia Donkeys,
Tregarth.



Arfon
Foodbank
Together with Trussell
Banc Bwyd Arfon
Arfon Foodbank,
Caernarfon.



Rheilffyrdd Ffestiniog ac
Ucheldir Cymru
Ffestiniog & Welsh
Highland Railways.



Siop Ogwen,
Partneriaeth Ogwen.



Siop elusen Scope
charity shop,
Bangor.



Banc Bwyd Cadeirlan
Bangor Cathedral
Foodbank.



Siop elusen Cats Protection
charity shop,
Porthmadog & Caernarfon.



Ymddiriedolaeth GIG Prifysgol
Gwasanaethau Ambiwylans Cymru.
Welsh Ambulance Services
University NHS Trust.



Ymddiriedolaeth GIG Prifysgol
Gwasanaethau Ambiwylans Cymru.
Welsh Ambulance Services
University NHS Trust.



Pontio, Bangor.



Siop elusen RSPCA charity
shop, Pwllheli.



M-SPARC #ArYLon
M-SPARC #OnTour,
Bangor.



GISda, Caernarfon.



Banc Bwyd Blaenau
Foodbank, Blaenau
Ffestiniog.



Canolfan Abbey Road
Abbey Road Centre,
Bangor.



Marie Curie Cymru. Ysbyty
Gwynedd Hospital, Bangor.



Antur Waunfawr
Antur Waunfawr.



Siop elusen Ymchwil Cancer Cymru
Cancer Research Wales charity shop,
Caernarfon



Porthi Dre,
Caernarfon.



Lleisiau o Ofal Cymru
Voices from Care Cymru.



Gwynedd Ddigidol
Digital Gwynedd,
AbilityNet



Siop elusen Oxfam
charity shop,
Porthmadog.



Siop elusen Tenovus
charity shop
Bala & Pwllheli.



Siop elusen Ty Gobaith
Hope House charity shop,
Bangor.



Ymddiriedolaeth
Genedlaethol
National Trust
Castell Penrhyn
Penrhyn castle,
Bangor.



Castell Harlech castle,
Cadw.



Banc Bwyd De Gwynedd
Together with Trussell
Banc Bwyd De Gwynedd
South Gwynedd Foodbank,
Barmouth.



Yr Orsaf,
Penygroes.



Y Robiniaid. The Robins.
Ysbytai - Gwynedd, Eryri, Alltwn,
Bryn Beryl & Dolgellau - Hospitals



Freshfields, Nebo.



Cymdeithas Eryri
Snowdonia Society.



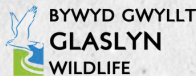
Age Cymru.



Ffrindiau Pier
Friends of Bangor Garth Pier



Galeri,
Caernarfon.



Bywyd Gwyllt Glaslyn
Glaslyn Wildlife,
Porthmadog.



Siop elusen Croes Coch Prydain
British Red Cross charity shop
Bangor, Caernarfon &
Porthmadog.



Siop elusen O Law i Law
charity shop,
Caernarfon.



5. Social impact

As part of measuring social value at Mantell Gwynedd, six key results have been identified for the work of the Gwynedd Volunteer Centre.



Following in-depth discussions with volunteers, these outcomes were agreed as the most relevant to measure using a social value framework and which were assessed on an annual basis for this project.

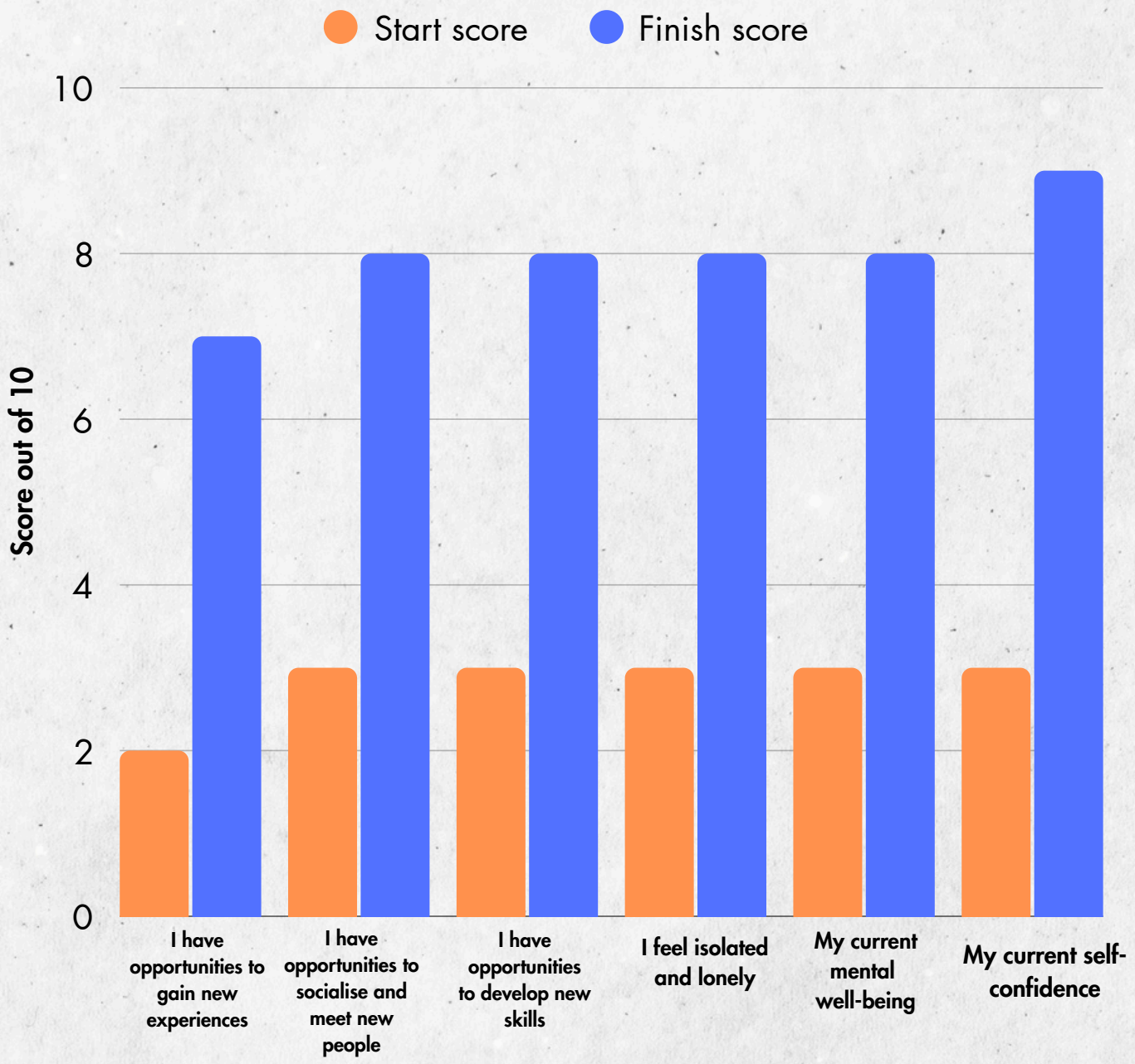
These outcomes were incorporated by recording scores at the start of the intervention and the end in order to track and demonstrate the level of change experienced by volunteers. Each statement is rated from 1 (low) to 10 (high).

Of the 176 people supported by the project, **125** individuals or **71%** as a percentage sample, had a start score and a finish score

Outcomes	Percentage of people experiencing change (%)	Start Score	Finish Score	Change
I have opportunities to gain new experiences	98%	2	7	5
I have opportunities to socialise and meet new people	98%	3	8	5
I have opportunities to develop new skills	96%	3	8	5
I feel isolated and lonely	99%	3	8	5
My current mental well-being	96%	3	8	5
My current self-confidence	100%	3	9	7



The graph below illustrates the changes at the start and after at least three months of volunteering for each outcome, measured over the two years of the project's lifetime.



Outcomes



6. Project case studies

Case Study 1 - Simon

From Volunteering to University placement

Since February 2025, Simon from Abergwyngregyn has been volunteering one morning a week at the British Red Cross charity shop in Bangor. What began as a small step into volunteering has grown into an inspiring journey of achievement, development, and confidence-building.

Simon's path to volunteering started with support from Glyn at the Gwynedd Youth Service, who encouraged him to explore opportunities to help grow his confidence and develop his social skills after leaving school.

To find the right volunteering placement, Simon was supported by Jordan at the Helping Hand to Volunteer project in Mantell Gwynedd. After discussing his interests and goals, Jordan suggested a few opportunities that could offer structure, a friendly environment, and the chance to learn new skills without being too overwhelming.

Since starting his role, Simon has embraced a variety of duties, from sorting donations to preparing displays. More importantly, he has steadily grown in independence and confidence. A milestone achievement has been his ability to travel alone by bus from home to the shop, something he felt he could not undertake at the beginning of his volunteering journey.





His commitment was recently recognised with a 25 hour and 50 hour certificates through the Gwynedd Volunteer Scheme. A significant accomplishment in recognition of his dedication and development.



Through volunteering, Simon has made huge progress in preparing for his future. Recently, he's been offered a place at Keele University to study Physics with Astrophysics. Although passionate about science, Simon once lacked the confidence to consider higher education. Thanks to his commitment, personal growth, and the encouragement of those who have supported him, he now feels ready to take this exciting next step.

Reflecting on his journey, Simon says:

"Jordan from Mantell Gwynedd made the whole process of finding a suitable volunteering opportunity very smooth. There are many people like me who want to learn new skills, grow confidence, improve mental health or contribute to society but need a little boost to help them get started. The Helping Hand project has been fantastic in giving me this support and encouragement."

Simon's story is a powerful example of how volunteering with the right support can unlock potential, build confidence, and open doors to exciting new opportunities. His personal growth, achievements from certificates to university placement, show just how far he has come in a short space of time.





Case Study 2 - Dorin

Making a difference one meal at a time

As a volunteer with the 'Llond Bol!' initiative run by Yr Orsaf in Penygroes, Dorin has made a key contribution to the local community. 'Llond Bol!' is a project that provides free meals to anyone living in the Dyffryn Nantlle area every Wednesday afternoon at the village Memorial Hall.

Dorin's role includes helping with the preparations, cooking, serving food, and ensuring everyone feels welcome and comfortable. This project plays a vital role in fostering a sense of community, belonging and connection among the residents of the area.

Dorin was supported to join this role by Jordan from the Helping Hand to Volunteer project. Dorin wanted to volunteer to be part of the community, to foster a sense of purpose and reduce feelings of loneliness. He also hoped that giving back to the community would contribute to improving his confidence and general mental wellbeing. Volunteering with 'Llond Bol!' has proven to be a perfect role as Dorin gets to do what he enjoys the most - cooking!





Before starting his volunteering journey, Jordan and Dorin met with staff, Llio and Trey, who led the sessions. During their conversation, they agreed on what support and adjustments were needed for Dorin to be able to fulfil the role.

As someone who has faced several health challenges over the years, which have affected his mental wellbeing, and who has also received support from the Arfon Social Prescription scheme. The support has included help with attending medical appointments, general advice, and encouragement to take an active part in volunteering in the community.

"Volunteering has made me a much happier person. It has given me a sense of purpose in life, and I now feel useful and valued. Being part of the community here in North Wales has really lifted my spirits. As someone who is originally from Romania, 'Llond Bol!' helped me feel at home. Volunteering here makes me very happy. It has greatly improved the quality of my life", said Dorin when reflecting on the difference volunteering has had on him.





Case Study 3 - Rhiannon

A friendly voice, a brighter day

Rhiannon Williams from Aberdaron began volunteering through the Helping Hand to Volunteer project with the primary goal of supporting her mental health and managing anxiety. Given her circumstances, she opted for volunteering from home. Rhiannon received ongoing support from Canolfan Felin Fach and the mental health team at Ysbyty Alltwen, which played a key role in helping her engage confidently with volunteering opportunities.



Rhiannon volunteers with the Friend in Need scheme, a telephone befriending service specifically designed to support older people who are lonely and isolated. In this role, she maintains weekly contact with individuals, providing companionship and emotional support.

At the start of her volunteering journey, Rhiannon completed an initial wellbeing questionnaire and rated her mental wellbeing at 3 out of 10. After more than three months of volunteering, she completed the same questionnaire, reporting a significant improvement to 7 out of 10.



Reflecting on her experience, Rhiannon shared:

"The reason I started volunteering was because of my mental health, and I also suffered from migraines. I wanted to do something to improve myself. I am now much more confident and able to take on other activities. At the beginning, I didn't have any confidence in myself and didn't know what to do with my time. Volunteering has allowed me to do something for others, which makes me feel better about myself. The Gwynedd Volunteer Centre helped me discover what kinds of volunteering suit my abilities, and the Helping Hand to Volunteer project has been incredibly supportive. Without them, I wouldn't know about the range of volunteering opportunities available."



Rhiannon's experience demonstrates the positive impact volunteering can have on mental wellbeing, confidence, and personal growth. With structured support, remote volunteering can provide meaningful engagement and a sense of purpose for individuals managing anxiety and other mental health challenges.



Case Study 4 - Aaron

Long ears and big hearts, Aaron's volunteer story with the donkeys

Aaron was referred to the Helping Hand to Volunteer Project through Careers Wales to gain new experiences and support his social development. Together with his mother, he met with the Gwynedd Volunteer Centre to explore options that suited his interests and abilities. Aaron expressed a preference for outdoor volunteering, having already gained experience in a charity shop, and was particularly interested in opportunities involving animals.



Through the Gwynedd Volunteer Centre, Aaron became involved with the Snowdonia Donkey Sanctuary, where he had previously attended an adult learning Wales session and was familiar with the environment. With support from the Gwynedd Volunteer Centre, Aaron attended an initial visit to the sanctuary to help build his social skills, meet the staff, and get to know the donkeys before formally starting his volunteering role.





Aaron's volunteering duties at the sanctuary include assisting with the daily care of the donkeys and supporting the ongoing maintenance of the site. Through this hands-on work, he has gained valuable skills in animal care, learned practical techniques for day-to-day maintenance, and developed a genuine passion for supporting and caring for the donkeys.



Volunteering has provided Aaron with opportunities to build confidence, engage socially, and develop new skills in a meaningful and supportive environment.

"Jordan's support gave Aaron the much-needed skills and confidence to be able to volunteer. He was able to show Aaron what was expected of him during his volunteering and made him feel at ease."

Zoe Cardwell, Aaron's mum.





Case Study 5 - Sara & Annie

Friendship, Confidence, Community.

Sara and Annie's Story



Sara and Annie began volunteering at the Age UK charity shop, where they help sort donations, transport items to the shop floor, and create attractive displays for customers. Annie is Sara's best friend, and Sara attends with a support worker.

Their volunteering journey began through a referral from community care management. The project officer met with Sara and her case manager to understand her disability, assess her skills, and identify suitable volunteering opportunities.

Once Sara started, her enthusiasm and the positive impact it had on her life inspired Annie to join her. Now, they volunteer together, supporting each other and sharing the experience.





Through their work at the shop, both Sara and Annie have gained confidence and developed a sense of belonging. They have become valued members of the team, contributing not just practically but socially, and building strong relationships with colleagues and customers. Their volunteering has helped them develop invaluable social skills, including communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which extend into other areas of their lives.



For Sara, volunteering provides a sense of purpose and a feeling of being useful in the community. She reflects on the experience with gratitude:

"I'd like to thank everyone involved for making me feel so welcome and accepted. This includes Jordan from Mantell Gwynedd, Melanie from CCMS, Erin, my support worker, and Marc, Jen, Derek, and the team from Age UK Bangor."

Sara and Annie's story demonstrates how volunteering can benefit the wider community and transform volunteers' lives, fostering confidence, friendship, and a sense of accomplishment.





7. Celebrating volunteers

Over the past two years, the volunteers who have been supported through the Helping Hand to Volunteer project have given their time generously, and the project officer has hosted heartwarming festive afternoons to honour their dedication and contributions.



Around 90 volunteers, along with their carers and parents, attended the events, where certificates were presented in recognition of their ongoing commitment and the many hours, they have devoted to supporting the community. During this time, volunteers have assisted local organisations such as food banks, charity shops, community hubs, and other essential services, making a real difference in people's lives.

Christmas 2024 celebration event





Christmas 2025 celebration event



In addition to these celebrations, the Gwynedd Volunteer Center holds the annual Gwynedd Volunteer Awards ceremony as part of the Volunteers' Week celebrations. Some of the project's volunteers also had the opportunity to receive certificates during the events in 2024 and 2025





8. Project feedback



"It has been great to work with Jordan and Mantell Gwynedd over the past two years. The partnership has been invaluable in helping individuals find their place in our community through volunteering. The volunteers you have referred to us have made a real difference to the food bank, and we are so grateful for their continued contributions! On a personal note, Jordan, your support has been incredible. Many of the volunteers would not have taken that first step without you! You have been a colleague amazing, and your work has had a huge impact."

Lola Linley

(Volunteer Co-ordinator, Arfon Foodbank).



"At RSPCA Gwynedd, the partnership between our organisations has had a meaningful impact in supporting individuals to engage with their communities and also in supporting us through a difficult time in terms of volunteering, increasing our participation and reducing our problems! Through the Helping Hand to Volunteer project, we have seen more confidence and participation among individuals who might otherwise have faced obstacles to participate, and as a result less stress on our own workload. This collaborative approach has strengthened pathways to volunteering, benefiting the individuals and the wider animal welfare projects we serve. Working with Jordan has been an extremely positive experience, he shows professionalism, clear communication, and a real commitment to supporting others. His approachable nature and dedication have played a key role in the success of our joint efforts, and we greatly appreciate his contribution to our ongoing partnership with the Helping Hand to Volunteer scheme, Mantell Gwynedd."

Luned Hughes

(Volunteer Co-ordinator, RSPCA West Gwynedd Branch).



"Our partnership with Mantell Gwynedd has played a key role in helping individuals gain confidence, reconnect with their communities, and take their first steps to meaningful volunteering. Working with Jordan has been a pleasure - his commitment, reliability, and person-centred approach have made working together easy and really effective."

Meg King

(Homelessness Prevention Support Officer, Gorwel).





"This project has shown itself to be extremely useful to me as a Nacro project worker. Jordan has worked together with me and with my service user to find a volunteering opportunity that is relevant to the service user's interests. The volunteering opportunity has given structure to the service user's life, this has enabled her to grow in confidence and socialise with others while doing something she enjoys."

Gwenllian Davies
(Project Worker, Nacro).



Nacro

"It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Jordan on the 'Helping Hands Project'. We have worked closely over the time to recruit Robin volunteers across hospitals in Gwynedd including Ysbyty Gwynedd, Ysbyty Eryri and Dolgellau hospital. Jordan was a huge help to me in getting a meeting organised with Dolgellau, he triumphed where I had failed and this has resulted in Robins now volunteering there. Jordan has taken the time to understand the role of the Robin Volunteers. Understanding the specific requirements of a potential volunteer and also the process that a Robin volunteer has to go through. Jordan came along to a Volunteer training session where he supported two new volunteers and participated in the training for clarification of the application process. Jordan and I have faced a few problems such as IT issues, DBS concerns, mental health challenges and some language barriers but we have worked together to find a solution to these issues. We have worked closely together in all aspects and now thanks to Jordan I have new Robin volunteers who are thriving in their role as Robins. Thank you so much for all your hard work."

Hannah Coles
(Robins Volunteers Coordinator).



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board



"Jordan and I have worked closely together to support volunteers in the Friend in Need project in Age Cymru. Working with Jordan has been a very positive experience, and he has a particularly effective way of working with volunteers. He is a credit to the success of the Helping Hand to Volunteer project."

Fiona Douglass
(FiN Support Officer, Age Cymru).





"The support of funding for volunteer projects, the referrals of volunteers, and acting as a central point for volunteer enquiries has been immensely valuable to us at Porthi Dre, a community hub with over 60 volunteers on our books. We are very grateful for the work that Mantell Gwynedd does to support us and other organisations in the local area. Jordan has been excellent in bringing residents to the hub and meeting with our team to explore opportunities to volunteer and give back to the community. We greatly appreciate his professionalism and his ongoing support for our work as a charity."

Cai Samuel

(Research & Development Officer, Porthi Dre).



"We have greatly valued the strong partnership between our organisations over the past two years, which has made a meaningful difference in supporting individuals to connect with their communities and access rewarding volunteering opportunities. This collaborative approach has helped remove barriers and empowered people to build confidence, skills, and a sense of belonging.

Working with you personally has been an absolute pleasure; your commitment, professionalism, and genuine passion for supporting others have been evident throughout, making a lasting impact on both the partnership and the individuals we support."

Sharon Jones

(Support Worker, Canolfan Felin Fach).



"Jordan is very approachable for discussions prior to sending a referral. He thinks creatively to match the people who are referred with their interests and opportunities that allow their strengths to shine. Jordan is very person-centred and approachable in his communication style, which reduces people's concerns about volunteering. Many people I have referred have reflected on it as a positive experience, and have grown in confidence as a result."

(South Gwynedd occupational health team).





"It has been a pleasure working in partnership with Jordan Thomas from Mantell Gwynedd. Through his support, many of my clients at Agoriad Cyf have been able to access meaningful volunteering opportunities within the local area, which has significantly boosted their confidence and personal development. As a result of this growth, some individuals have even progressed into paid employment, reflecting the positive impact of these experiences on their skills and self-belief. Jordan is highly dedicated to his role and consistently goes above and beyond to support others, making him a genuine joy to work with."

David Hayes
(Job Coach, Agoriad Cyf).



"Over the past two years, we have had the privilege of working alongside the Helping Hand to Volunteer project at Mantell Gwynedd. Not only has it benefited the people but it has benefited us in terms of the amount of help and support available to gain new volunteers. Jordan has been very helpful and supportive to us and the volunteers he provides us. If we needed any further inquiries regarding the referred volunteers, Jordan was always happy to help us."

Mark Hunt
(Assistant Manager, Age UK).



"Working in partnership with Mantell Gwynedd through the Helping Hand project has been invaluable in supporting individuals to build confidence and engage with the community, while supporting their growth and their love for the Arts. I have really enjoyed working with Jordan. Working together has been efficient and supportive, helping to ensure that individuals move confidently into community roles and volunteering. Through great communication and understanding of each other's needs around our people, we have built a good working relationship."

Roseanne Mapp
(Senior Front of House Manager, Pontio).





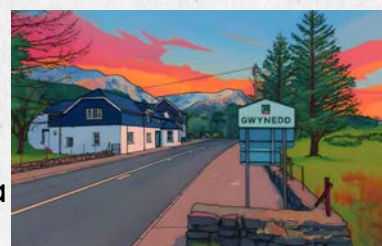
9. Reflections and moving forward



A review of the Helping Hand to Volunteer project over the past two years highlights the substantial positive effects on volunteers, while also drawing attention to the challenges associated with providing support in rural communities.

The project specifically supported individuals from the Arfon area in Gwynedd which accounted for the majority of referrals, with a smaller number coming from the Dwyfor and Meirionnydd areas.

The lack of rural transport links was a significant barrier to participation which is of course one of the main challenges for a rural county like Gwynedd. Many of the individuals supported did not drive, therefore relying on public transport. Naturally, this limits the range of volunteering placements that are available and within reasonable reach for everyone. In addition to this, long journeys or the need to walk significant distances to reach transport links can be particularly challenging for individuals with additional needs or disabilities.



Financial barriers also had a significant impact on participation in volunteering. Data from the findings of the Community Life Survey 2023 show that rising living costs and financial pressures limit the ability of individuals to participate in volunteering activities, particularly when organisations are facing their own financial challenges to reimburse volunteers for out-of-pocket costs such as travel expenses, food or childcare. As a result, the cost of living is having a significant barrier to volunteering, particularly among individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with limited income, leading to inequalities in access to volunteering opportunities (Community Life Survey, 2023).



A clear example of the challenges posed by reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses arose when an individual living approximately half an hour from the volunteering placement was dependent on public transport. The organisation, despite managing over 500 volunteers, stated that it was not in a position to reimburse travel or related expenses. Consequently, this created a practical barrier illustrating how even small recurring costs—particularly in the context of the cost-of-living crisis—can limit volunteering participation and disproportionately affect those reliant on public transport or with constrained financial resources.

As a result, a significant obstacle was created for the individual even though he was extremely keen to volunteer in an area he was passionate about. This reflects wider findings which show that out-of-pocket costs and the pressure of living costs can limit participation in volunteering, as indicated in the Community Life Survey 2023. The Project Officer intervened to explore what further support the organisation could offer. Following a significant effort to identify funding sources, both the organisation and the Project Officer succeeded in securing funding to support the individual.

In addition, the Project Officer contacted the community center that had originally referred the individual who provided further support by contributing towards the cost of a weekly ticket for the volunteer's transport. As a result, the individual was able to continue volunteering twice a week and overcoming a financial obstacle that might otherwise have led to giving up their volunteering role.

As a result of the positive impact through volunteering, the individual was subsequently offered full-time employment within the same organisation. This case study provides clear evidence of the project's value in addressing cost-of-living barriers through practical intervention. This supports the findings from the Community Life Survey 2023 that targeted financial assistance and effective local partnerships play a key role in overcoming barriers to engage in volunteering and moving towards sustainable employment.



Another challenge emerged in supporting an autistic person with complex support needs. The placement was not successful for various reasons, highlighting that not all volunteering placements are suitable for all individuals. The Project Officer intervened to identify an alternative solution and secure a more appropriate placement for the volunteer, ensuring that the support continues. Although the role of the Project Officer is to match volunteers with suitable placements, it was recognized that rematching and refining placements is a natural part of the process of providing intensive support for volunteers to succeed. This is consistent with wider evidence showing that effective matching and ongoing support is a key factor in sustaining participation in volunteering.

In order to respond effectively to any difficulties or issues that arose, the Project Officer had clear back-up arrangements, including alternative plans and quick redirection processes to ensure that individuals have suitable and sustainable volunteering opportunities. This flexible approach is important as data shows that a significant proportion of volunteers stop volunteering when the setting fails to meet their needs or when there is not enough support available (Community Life Survey, 2023).

Despite these challenges, the project has demonstrated positive results. Social value questionnaires completed at the start and end of the support show measurable improvements in volunteers' mental well-being, social skills and self-confidence, with a high number indicating an improvement in well-being and an increase in confidence or social skills. Feedback from parents and carers highlights the difference that volunteering and the project's support has made to the daily lives and independence of individuals, including a better ability to travel independently and interact socially.

Furthermore, referral agencies have taken advantage of the project's expertise in identifying appropriate locations for their service users, strengthening collaboration between services. At the same time, organisations have benefited from the increased involvement of volunteers which helps them continue to provide services in our communities. This reflects the findings of the Community Life Survey 2023, which shows that volunteers play a vital role in maintaining community services and strengthening social cohesion.



One of the key strengths of the project was the ongoing support provided by one full-time officer. Further to discovering volunteering locations for individuals only, the project has offered guidance, regular visits, and ongoing support to address any obstacles that may arise during their volunteering journey. This constant support has been key in ensuring that volunteering placements are positive, sustainable and beneficial for volunteers and host organisations.



Looking forward, what has been learned from the last two years points to opportunities to further expand the reach of the project throughout Gwynedd while continuing to build on the positive results that have been achieved. Additional funding has been approved by the National Lottery Community Fund to support the continuation and development of the project over the next four years. This investment will help to strengthen the support available to volunteers, increase the reach of the project throughout the county, and build on the positive impact that has already been shown in improving the confidence, well-being and social connections of individuals through volunteering.

The continuation of the project also supports the 'New Approach to Volunteering' and the new vision for volunteering (2025) from Welsh Government which aims to strengthen community resilience, improve well-being, and foster a culture of lifelong volunteering. This new vision for volunteering in Wales, which encompasses equality, diversity, inclusion, identity and Welsh culture, is directly in line with the mission of projects such as Gafael Llaw i Volunteering.



**The New
Approach to
Volunteering**





10. Acknowledgments

Adferiad

Adran Tai ac Eiddo Cyngor Gwynedd / Cyngor Gwynedd Housing and Property Department

Age Cymru

Antur Waunfawr

Banc Bwyd Arfon - Ymddiriedolaeth Trussell / Arfon Food Bank - Trussell Trust, Caernarfon

Banc Bwyd Bro Enlli, Pwllheli / Bro Enlli Foodbank, Pwllheli

Banc Bwyd Cadeirlan Bangor / Bangor Cathedral Foodbank, Bangor

Banc Bwyd De Gwynedd / South Gwynedd Foodbank - Trussell Trust, Barmouth

Banc Bwyd Ffestiniog / Ffestiniog Food Bank, Blaenau Ffestiniog

Bywyd Gwylt Glaslyn / Glaslyn Wildlife, Porthmadog

Canolfan Abbey Road / Abbey Road Centre, Bangor

Canolfan Achub Anifeiliaid Freshfields / Freshfields Animal Rescue Centre, Nebo

Canolfan Byd Gwaith / Jobcentre Plus, Bangor, Caernarfon, Porthmadog & Pwllheli

Castell Harlech, Cadw / Harlech Castle, Cadw

Castell Penrhyn / Penrhyn Castle, Bangor

Cymdeithas Eryri / Snowdonia Society

Cyfeillion Pier Garth Bangor / Friends of Bangor Garth Pier, Bangor

Cyswllt Cymunedol Arfon / Arfon Community Link

Galeri, Caernarfon

GISDA, Caernarfon

Gorwel

Gwaith Gwynedd

Gwasanaeth Ambiwylans Cymru, GIG Cymru / Welsh Ambulance Services, NHS Wales

Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol / Social Services - Cyngor Gwynedd

Gwasanaeth Ieuencid Gwynedd / Gwynedd Youth Service

Gwasanaeth Prawf / Probation Service

Gwasanaethau Rheoli Achosion Cymunedol / Community Case Management Services

Gyrfa Cymru / Careers Wales

Hwb Dinas Bangor

Hyfforddiant COPA drwy Goleg Menai Caernarfon / COPA Training via Coleg Menai Caernarfon

Marie Curie, Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor

Maximus UK

M-SParc, Bangor & Pwllheli

Partneriaeth Ogwen, Bethesda

Pontio, Bangor

Porthi Dre, Caernarfon

Prosiect Ffrindia' Newydd / Ffrindia' Newydd Project-Mantell Gwynedd

Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid / Bala Lake Railway, Llanuwchllyn

Rheilffyrdd Ffestiniog ac Eryri / Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways

Siop Elusen Age UK / Age UK Charity Shop, Bangor

Siop Elusen Ambiwylans Awyr Cymru / Wales Air Ambulance Charity Shop, Bangor, Caernarfon & Tywyn

Siop Elusen British Red Cross / British Red Cross Charity Shop, Bangor, Caernarfon & Porthmadog

Siop Elusen Ymchwil Canser Cymru / Cancer Research Wales Charity Shop, Bangor & Caernarfon

Siop Elusen Cats Protection / Cats Protection Charity Shop, Caernarfon & Porthmadog

Siop Elusen Hosbis Dewi Sant / St David's Hospice Charity Shop, Porthmadog

Siop Elusen O Law i Law / O Law i Law Charity Shop, Caernarfon

Siop Elusen Oxfam / Oxfam Charity Shop, Porthmadog

Siop Elusen Cangen Gorllewin Gwynedd y RSPCA / RSPCA West Gwynedd Branch Charity Shop, Pwllheli

Siop Elusen Scope / Scope Charity Shop, Bangor

Siop Elusen Sense / Sense Charity Shop, Bangor and Caernarfon

Siop Elusen Tŷ Gobaith / Hope House Charity Shop, Bangor

Snowdonia Donkeys, Tregarth

Tai Gogledd Cymru / North Wales Housing

Tenvous Charity Shop, Bala & Pwllheli

Robiniaid / Robins - Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Betsi Cadwaladr - BCUHB

Timau Iechyd Meddwl Cymunedol / Community Mental Health Teams - Cyngor Gwynedd

Voices from Care Cymru

With Gobaith C.I.C

Yr Orsaf, Penygroes

Yr Ysgwrn, Trawsfynydd





Wedi ei ariannu gan
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Funded by
UK Government

**Cafodd y prosiect hwn ei ariannu gan Gyngor Gwynedd
drwy Gronfa Ffyniant Gyffredin Llywodraeth y DU**

**This project was funded by Cyngor Gwynedd through the
UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund**