

Annual Report 2021

People and Work annual report 2021

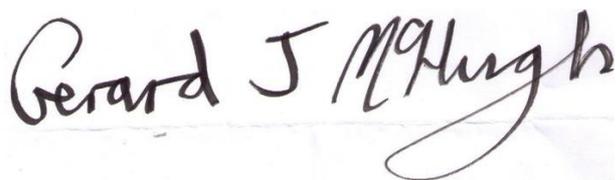
Foreword

I am writing this in May 2021. The last 12 months have been unprecedented, tragic for some. Throughout this period People and Work has continued to work for the people of The Rhondda and across Wales, though face to face contact has been restricted for long periods, with certain projects particularly affected. Some projects have been able to pivot to help in the Covid situation. Staff have embraced the working from home model, though it is recognised that a hybrid work model is needed for staff to fully operate and develop, going forward. We are now in a far better place in terms of the vaccine and covid infection rates and it is hoped that this improvement will continue.

The economic situation is uncertain, but it must be recognised that there will be a fall out in terms of business failures, unemployment and particularly in available employment opportunities, especially for young people.

Unemployment in The Rhondda has doubled in a year. People and Work recognises that employment is the key focus to improve people's life chances. Education, training and support for people to get into the labour market and secure jobs are the key ingredients of our work.

Financially, People and Work is in a good position at this point, with enough funding sources and research contracts secured. It remains to be seen how the funding landscape might change. People and Work also needs to work on its lobbying role, in developing relationships with, and persuading other organisations of, what is needed and what works, given its long experience.



Gerard McHugh
Chair, Board of Trustees

Introduction

People and Work seeks to make a difference through two core functions:

- to promote the value of education and learning (for all age groups) as a tool for tackling inequalities and promoting employment, through a programme of community-based action research projects and social enterprise; and
- to undertake commissioned research and evaluation work for the public and third sectors in Wales addressing inequalities in areas such as education (formal and informal), health and employment.

People and Work's self-generated action research and social enterprise work is funded through charitable trusts and funds. Earned income comes from commissioned research and evaluation work done for the public and voluntary sectors. Any surplus earned through the research and evaluation contracts goes into action research work that aims to build understanding of effective ways to tackle the causes and effects of poverty, especially in relation to education, health and employment outcomes.

- Dr Duncan Holtom heads up the research team working with Rhodri Bowen, senior researcher, and Heather Pells.
- James Hall heads up our project and partnership work working with James Watts-Rees, Tomas Jenkins, Rhian Edwards and Ethan Jones.
- Natasha Burnell leads on social enterprise and environmental sustainability.
- Ann Churcher manages our administration.
- Sarah Lloyd-Jones is the director and works with our Trustees – Ged McHugh (Chairperson), Jan Huyton (Vice-Chairperson), Phil Watkins

(Treasurer), Gareth Lewis, Christala Sophocleous, David Rees, Mary-Ann McKibben and Gordon Davies.

When we wrote our last annual report it was hard to imagine that the COVID-19 lockdowns would continue for another year but, like most charities, we have adapted to the restrictions over the last year and focused on what we could do, rather than what we could not.

We have all become used to working with Zoom and Teams and the whole team has been working from home for most of the last year. We are now making cautious steps towards opening up, planning new work with the community, meetings with partners and opening the Rhondda office. Our survival as a full team through this period has been greatly helped by the support of the Rank Foundation, which acted swiftly to support the sector, and we are very grateful to them. We are also grateful to the flexibility of the National Lottery Community Fund, that allowed us and our partners in the Llechi, Glo a Chefn Gwlad network to reshape our work to meet the restrictions imposed by lockdowns and the new community needs that emerged.

Our work in the last year has focused on employment and community economic development, with a focus on sustainable development; mental health and well-being; supporting the voluntary and community sector in Wales, especially around evaluation; and digital exclusion. Inevitably these themes overlap and much of the work has been able to touch on all of the themes. The thread of 'learning' and developing the skills needed for communities and individuals to thrive has been woven through all the work and as we look forward to the next five years we are building on what we are learning.

Employment and Community Economic Development

In the last year we have started evaluations of three ESF funded programmes to support people in, or into, work:

- In Ynys Môn the Expanding Môn's Horizon's programme targets people who are in low skilled or insecure work to build on their skills and find better work;
- Skills @Work is an anti-poverty programme working in Cardiff, Newport and Monmouthshire with people who are in employment but have low skills;
- The Journey2Work programme works to develop the employability of people who are economically inactive and/or long term unemployed in Newport, Cardiff and Monmouthshire.

We have built on the research we did in 2019 on the [employment and skill support needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales](#) when we were commissioned by the Welsh Government to understand the local/regional labour market skill gaps and opportunities for refugees to increase their employment prospects within Wales. The report is available on the Welsh Government website: <https://gov.wales/restart-refugee-integration-employer-engagement-opportunities>

In late 2020 we launched our own project to support people whose employment had been affected by the pandemic. The Green Light programme is supporting people in Rhondda who have 'fallen through the gaps' of employment support provision. There are no eligibility criteria and the project works with people in employment or not working. It has the flexibility to respond to individual needs and in the first six months has supported 35 people with needs as wide as gaining a CSCS card to be able to work on building sites, supporting someone who had held the same job for twenty years only to be made redundant during the first lockdown to write a CV and develop a job search strategy, and helping

people tackle diverse barriers that get in the way of finding employment, such as accommodation, inability to go online and lack of confidence. One young person had been on an engineering apprenticeship until she was laid off during the first lockdown. Green Light helped her to find temporary work and kept supporting her until she found a new engineering apprenticeship. The project is delivered mainly by Tomas Jenkins, who has a trainee placement with People and Work funded by the Rank Foundation. Tomas is pursuing a qualification in counselling alongside his work. It is also secured a grant from Confused.com to fund support for the participants.

Sustainable community economic development

People and Work have employed three young community leaders from Rhondda over the last year, two of whom have been funded by the Rank Foundation's Time to Shine programme, as part of the Llechi, Glo a Chefn Gwlad project. This project brings together nine partners from across Wales that each focus on community economic development and the foundational economy, whether it be place-based work to build enterprise and skills, supporting small local businesses and social enterprise, and/or tackling poverty and the exclusion experienced by carers. People and Work facilitate this project as well as our Rhondda work, being one of the partners, and throughout the last year we have met weekly, sharing experience and knowledge. Partners have responded to the pandemic by providing emergency and sustained community support, helping local businesses to survive and tackling the crisis facing young people's employment in various ways, including three partners taking on Kickstart funded trainees in the Spring of 2021. People and Work is offering three Kickstart traineeships in Rhondda based on our work with digital inclusion, sport and fitness, and retail.

We have continued to focus on skills development, particularly on coding skills and developing coding clubs for children and young people. During the lockdowns Ethan Jones developed an online platform via YouTube, to provide skills training in coding.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8_1xSsVRH4CJ9ndun8Cw7Q/featured

Rhondda Web

Our research with Building Communities Trust (BCT) and the Llechi, Glo a Chefn Gwlad partnership on how Welsh communities responded to the first lockdown ¹started to illustrate the impact of digital exclusion for people who were isolated at home, children who needed to access schoolwork online and people looking for jobs. This led to the development of the Rhondda Web project to develop people’s access to the skills, equipment and data they need to function online. We were successful in securing funding from the Moondance Foundation to enable Ethan to stay with People and Work after completing his Time to Shine leadership placement and, with additional funding from the Rank Foundation to buy equipment, he is now delivering Rhondda web, providing people with access to digital equipment and data and training on how to use them.



PIAS

The PIAS (Play it Again Sport) social enterprise aims to promote opportunities for people in Rhondda to become physically active by selling affordable sports kit and using the income generated to fund activities. PIAS has struggled this year both with sourcing donated sports clothing and kit (the main source was via collection bins in leisure centres and during the last year such centres have been closed or, when open, did not allow the bins) and with selling (the main outlet, Too Good to Waste in Ynyshir, was closed for much of the year). Nevertheless, the enterprise has continued to develop, focusing on its second aim of promoting sustainability and environmental changes. PIAS secured

¹ [A Community response to Covid-19 \(peopleandwork.org.uk\)](https://peopleandwork.org.uk)
[Ymateb Cymunedau i Covid \(peopleandwork.org.uk\)](https://peopleandwork.org.uk)



additional funding from the climate action programme of the National Lottery Community Fund to buy an electric car and to establish a charging point in Rhondda which has been installed at . The car is being used to promote the use of electric vehicles, as well as providing transport for people to access fitness activities.

Building on this theme, PIAS is supporting a group of local people interested in setting up a zero-waste shop in Rhondda, alongside a well-being centre that creates opportunities for people to get active. The aim is for the group to become independent over the next 18 months, leading a new

Rhondda enterprise.

Shaping a new economy for Wales

We drew upon our research and partnership work, and also interviews with key stakeholders, to develop a think piece for the WCVA exploring [the role of the voluntary sector in shaping a new economy for Wales](#), given the impact of Brexit and also the pandemic.

Mental Health and Well-being

Well-being has long been a key area of concern for People and Work. It provides a valuable framework for thinking about people and communities holistically as it includes mental and physical health, economic and social/emotional domains. We have long been clear that targeting only one or

two of the domains is ineffectual and where possible our approach is to support all three. Poor mental and physical health, for example, form significant barriers to accessing good employment and good social and emotional support helps combat low self-confidence and the stresses of starting a new job, therefore all our project work is underpinned by an understanding of the importance of well-being.

The rising incidence of poor mental health being seen in the community during the lockdown periods has prompted project staff to undertake specialist training in supporting conversations with people who are struggling and as identified above, one has started his training to become a counsellor.

The research team has completed an evaluation of the CAMHS In-Reach to Schools pilot project for the Welsh Government. The study involved talking to schools and mental health services in three pilot areas in Wales. The reports can be accessed on the Welsh Government website: [Cymraeg](#) [English](#). The research team also completed a [Review of the evidence for all age mental health services](#) (for the Welsh Government), intended to inform the development of mental health services for young people in Wales.

Working with the Welsh Voluntary Sector

We continue to provide evaluation support to the Invest Local programme run by BCT. Starting in 2017 we are working over 10 years with BCT to support the 13 communities in the programme to capture the learning from the support and investment (£1million per community) that they are accessing. In 2020, the focus of the evaluation shifted to explore how communities and the programmes responded to the pandemic. This led to a jointly commissioned piece of research, by the Building Communities Trust and the Llechi, Glo a Chefn Gwlad partnership, which [explored community responses to the pandemic](#), across seven Welsh counties (Bridgend, Cardiff, Gwynedd, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Pembrokeshire and Wrexham). And work with Interlink exploring community responses in RCT.

We have also, this year, completed an evaluation of a five-partner voluntary sector project aimed at tackling isolation and loneliness amongst older people in Powys. The partners were Credu Carers, Citizens Advice Powys, Age Cymru

Powys, RVS and Accessibility Powys. Over three years they worked together to share learning and to build connections that benefit the older people they work with. Their aim was to develop a model of strengths-based, person-centred working and People and Work provided ‘critical friend’ and evaluative support alongside the project.

Other evaluation work being done within the voluntary sector include the Creating Progress project run by Spectacle Theatre in Rhondda Cynon Taf; a ‘training the trainer’ programme being run across Wales by Community Music Wales; the Mamwlad project run by Care and Repair Powys and Age Cymru Powys; and a home support programme being run by Age Cymru West Glamorgan.

People and Work facilitate the Talwrn network of voluntary sector leaders across Wales. The group have continued to meet every other month but meetings have been online. As well as sharing learning from our work, the group explores issues of relevance to the sector and is currently exploring processes around capturing the value of community work.



The Llechi, Glo a Chefn Gwlad partnership², convened by People and Work, grew from the discussions within Talwrn. It aims to develop the capacity of the partners and also to share our learning with the wider sector in Wales. The project is also providing 27 people

with a valuable opportunity to spend a year working in their own community and build community development skills.

Partnerships

² [Slate, Coal and Countryside - Talwrn](#)
[Llechi, Glo a Chefn Gwlad - Talwrn](#)

People and Work assumes partnership working in all its activities and much of this report reflects that – whether it be with research colleagues, social enterprises, local authorities or other third sector groups and networks. James Hall leads on this for the Rhondda work (through the Stronger Rhondda informal network) and also links in with some networks beyond the traditional third sector. In Rhondda James Watts-Rees, Natasha Burnell and James Hall are all on the Boards of other organisations as a way of sharing learning, resources and best practice. James Watts-Rees is on the Board of Spectacle Theatre, Natasha Burnell is on the organising committee of St. Anne’s Champions for Ynyshir (and helps organise things with others in the village) and James Hall is on the Boards of Create Your Space (Welcome to our Woods) and Cambrian Village Trust. James Hall also represents People and Work with networks convened by the Bank of England in Wales and Cardiff University Business School, and has been asked to contribute perspectives on the impacts of economic change in disadvantaged communities on a regular basis. He has also linked up one of the Business School professors and her students with Treorchy Chamber of Trade via its chairperson and there are now undergraduates and post-graduates basing some of their research into local economics on the transformation of Treorchy in recent years.

Future proofing our systems

The COVID crisis has placed a great deal of strain on a rather old IT system, whilst also making our online connectivity more important than ever. With support from the Rank Foundation, People and Work has been able to move from an office based server to a cloud based system that is secure and more robust. James Hall (who is the IT Manager) worked with our IT support specialists (BccIT) to move all our IT infrastructure and storage to the cloud (i.e. hosted off site). As well as the benefit of having IT provision that is updated in real time rather than every five years (with the associated capital costs), migration to the cloud means that People and Work can operate in any office or home with a secure internet connection. We have also migrated our Cardiff landline to a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) line, keeping our local number and this also does not require us to be in any particular location. This opens up

a range of options for us to consider where our registered office is based in future (and this is likely to remain in Cardiff).

Next steps

We will be continuing to focus on employment, skills, well-being and sustainable development in the coming year, with a particular focus on place-based work and community economic development. Rhian Edwards, our leader on the Llechi, Glo a Chefn Gwlad project, is spending 2021 capturing how people of the Rhondda have experienced COVID-19 and the lockdowns. She is interviewing people and sharing their stories to build a strong picture of what has happened and what needs to happen now to build a stronger community going forward.

The PIAS project will hopefully launch as an independent initiative this year, with continuing support from People and Work.

We are hoping to build on the Green Light and Rhondda Web projects to develop a stronger skills base and promote local enterprise.

We will also continue to work with partners from across Wales to build greater understanding of what works in promoting community economic regeneration.

People and Work plan to produce a series of short papers to stimulate debate about the issues that we see from our work.

LinkedIn organisation page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/people-and-work-unit>

Twitter: @PoblGwaith

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pawu1984

