

People and Work

Annual Report

2025

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People and Work

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Objectives and activities

People and Work's objects are the advancement of education by carrying out and/or assisting in carrying out research and study into social and economic problems for the benefit of the general public; and to promote education in all matters related to community organisations.

We have always viewed all learning as education and have, over the years, worked closely with communities to support them to use research to make changes. 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
- 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 work is funded through charitable trusts and funds. Earned income comes from commissioned research and evaluation work is done to support the public and voluntary sectors. Any surplus earned through the research and evaluation contracts goes into action research work. Both areas of work aim to build understanding of effective ways to tackle the causes and effects of disadvantage, especially in relation to education, health and employment outcomes.

Achievements and performance

Cenhedlaeth Rhondda Generation

People and Work have continued to support a group of Rhondda residents as they develop a new charity, called Generation Rhondda, focused on developing wellbeing across the Rhondda Valleys. Over the last year we have employed the five core leaders and five local trainees to build the work, with funding from Pen y Cymoedd, the Waterloo Foundation, the Moondance Foundation, Global Charities Make Some Noise, the Shared Prosperity Fund RCT, Link and the Rank Foundation. In 2024 they registered as a non-profit limited company and began the process of registering as a charity. They took on their first employees and currently have four staff. The plan is for the group to be fully independent of People and Work by the Autumn of 2025.

Their approach focuses on working with people in Rhondda to develop all aspects of wellbeing including health and fitness, learning, arts and creativity, employment and digital inclusion. Over the last year the group have moved towards working with whole families and, increasingly, running activities in the evening and weekends to open access up to people who cannot get involved during the working day.

They have continued to focus on how they work with other organisations locally and have developed close working links with 29 local groups and organisations. After consideration they have decided against trying to secure a core venue as by taking their activities to partner venues they are supporting the viability of others and ensuring that there is local access. They travel to communities rather than asking community members to travel to them.

They have secured funding from the Rank Foundation and a National Lottery Community Fund grant and are working to secure further funding.

The key programmes currently being run during 2024-25 by Generation Rhondda were:

Employment support

The employment support project has continued to help people access employment through job searches and developing their CVs. The drop-in support sessions have been developed to target specific groups including college students and parents. Working closely with the Rhondda Digidol programme, people have been supported to access online services and opportunities.

Tom Jenkins, who leads the employment support work, identified a need to work with young people still at school to raise their understanding of employment opportunities and what they could do to access better work before they leave school. In the last year Tom has run pilot programmes called STRIVE in schools with young people, inviting local employers and entrepreneurs along to talk to them. The evaluation showed positive responses from pupils and teachers - *"STRIVE has helped me with what I think I will need the most support with after school by making me realise that there are more ways to become successful in life"* (young person involved in the pilot). This work will continue with the new charity and in 2025 the plan is to work with two more comprehensive schools in Rhondda.

Reading Rhondda Darllen

Reading Rhondda has continued to run family reading sessions in schools, pre-school and youthwork settings working with an average of 90-100 children and their families on a weekly basis. In 2024 the project worked with twelve schools, including a special needs school and continued to support three other schools. Schools are encouraged to take over the running of the sessions when they can, with parents volunteering to organise activities and read the books. With funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund a support worker, Claire Davies, was employed who could deliver the work through the medium of Welsh, which has allowed the project to work with families in two Welsh medium schools in Rhondda and run bi-lingual pre-school and community sessions. This was especially valued where parents and carers do not themselves speak Welsh as it supported them to see how they could still help with their child's education.

“Introducing Welsh into the sessions has been a brilliant welcome for families who don’t speak Welsh or little ones who will be attending Welsh settings. Picking up a new word or phrase helps along with the help of the books that we can take home. Claire has been welcoming in every session and my daughter always loves going and singing her Welsh songs along with all the actions.” (Parent who attends the pre-school sessions)

Books are given away at family sessions and many families bring them back to swap them. In addition, an old phone box has been stocked with books and the community encouraged to use it and, with a grant from Interlink, 10 little library boxes are being



made with the idea that these will be filled with the free reading material and that communities will be able to take and give to the box on a more regular basis, thus reaching a wider audience than those who are able to attend the sessions. The project has linked with Men’s Shed Cymru who have, so far, kindly made two of the little library boxes and are working on the remaining 7 with one having

been made by a grandparent at one of the schools.

The project linked with Treorchy Comprehensive School art department where the students are working with the families at the primary schools to create a design unique to their school and draw and paint the boxes. This will also help the 6th form students gain their Welsh Baccalaureate for which community hours are needed.

In 2024 Natasha Owen, project leader, developed the approach further, while still keeping a focus on reading, looking at ways to involve families in wider activities.

Cooking sessions were set up in partnership with Pentre Comrades Club and families make meals together, reading the recipes and trying new ingredients.

Working with Welcome to Our Woods, outdoor sessions have been developed for families with under five year olds. A grant from the National Lottery Community Fund enabled People and Work to employ Carmen Todd-Jones to focus on wider aspects of family involvement and promoting outdoor activities. Working with PIAS Lles these have led to a series of Wild Play days. These sessions are usually at the weekend and involve reading a book and exploring nature.

Rhondda Digidol

Rhondda Digidol has been developed to help tackle issues around digital inclusion in Rhondda. A key factor to the Rhondda Digidol work is working alongside individuals and groups to support them to make the best use of current digital opportunities for friendship, shopping, work, health, education and communication. The project helps to tackle digital inclusion through the provision of devices, data and the necessary knowledge to use them effectively.

With funding from Link the project were able to take on two staff members for a year to run events, one-to-one sessions and workshops to support 179 people in Rhondda to access digital technology.

In total, the Rhondda Digidol project has supported 1977 individuals over its three years of funding from the Moondance Foundation. Of these 306 were supported with bespoke one-to-one support and this group is very evenly balanced across age groups. The needs of people for digital inclusion vary but the evaluation of showed that dealing with key activities like booking a doctor's appointment, accessing a bank account or booking tickets was the most common, closely followed by employability, which encompasses digital skills as well as job search and applications.

Outcome met per Rhondda Digidol participant

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Key activities of life	N/A	55	53	108
Learning/ Education	27	8	5	40
Social Connection	10	15	5	30
Employability	28	49	27	104
Advice	7	3	1	11
Other	2	4	8	14

Access to digital technology has been helped through donating or loaning devices. Through membership of the Good Things Foundation, Rhondda Digidol has been able to give away 172 data pre-loaded sim cards to local people struggling to afford

to access the internet. The project also takes in and re-purposes digital devices and has provided 52 notebooks and laptops to local people:

The borrowed tablet has changed my situation a lot. I no longer have to walk one and a half hours to attend the library to job search every day. (Rhondda Digidol participant)

Rhondda Digidol will continue to offer digital support to individuals and community organisations and clubs including gaming and coding groups.

Fit and Well

With funding from the Global Charities Make Some Noise programme and the Shared Prosperity Fund, and working alongside PIAS Lles (see below) which is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Fit and Well delivery has worked with schools, community sports clubs, youth services and partners to provide Rhondda people with the opportunity to benefit from the social and health benefits of physical activity. It has also, this year, supported two local people to develop their skills and set up their own fitness enterprises – Active Education CIC and Curl Fitness.

School sessions have included working with a special needs school and primary and secondary schools across Rhondda. Summer programmes have brought the whole Generation Rhondda team together to offer sessions around sports, gaming and crafts with sessions drawing in up to 40 young people.

Walking rugby and football sessions are weekly and tournaments have been arranged for both sports. There are walking groups and a running group that meet weekly. On average the activities involve over 90 people each month.

PIAS

Established nearly seven years ago, PIAS (Play it Again Sport) takes in donated sports clothing, shoes and equipment and either gives it away or sells it very cheaply to broaden access to physical and wellbeing activities. Any surpluses generated are used to fund activities in Rhondda. In the last year 2200 items have been donated to PIAS and 1500 items have been either given or sold at low cost. Donations from the Cardiff half marathon and from donation bins across Rhondda Cynon Taf have been added to with a new donation bin at Swansea University Sports Village.

'Pop-up' shops have been identified as a good way to generate sales, linking in to activities that partners are planning and using a 'pay as you feel' model. PIAS works with Money Manage Wales to donate any items given which are not sportswear, but which can still be used, to them – filling their need and repurposing excess stock.

Currently PIAS is being managed by the PIAS Lles leader, Natasha Burnell, and in 2025 the plan is to transfer the initiative to the new Generation Rhondda charity.

PIAS Lles

PIAS Lles is the evolution of the work that PIAS promoted and is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund from February 2023-January 2028. The main targets of this project are:

- Sustainability hubs – support local groups/organisations to promote an awareness of climate change and what people can do to make a difference (support community led activity)
- 50.000 tonnes of sports kit diverted from landfill
- 500 people involved in community wellness (sport, physical movement and well-being)
- 30 local leaders trained and delivering local activities
- 6 monthly local newsletter/reviews – provide a progress report
- environmental work to support community activity in environment-led and engaging groups and support them in the work they do, and to become self-sufficient (support with bank accounts/getting constituted etc).

Key highlights for this year are:

- engagement with adults has increased by over 100 people
- engagement with children has increased by 200
- the reach to children in schools has increased by over 1000
- launch of Zero @ The Shack May 2024
- launch of Siop Y Llyn February 2024
- Festival of Wellbeing in January 2025

- Over £300,000 has been raised with other local organisations to develop their health and wellbeing and environmental provision.

Thye plan, where possible, is to support other groups to develop activities that support the environment and this year PIAS Lles has supported the development of sustainability hubs developed by Pentre Comrades Club (Zero@the Shack) and Cambrian Village Trust (Siop y Llyn).

In January, to coincide with people making their New Year Resolutions, a Wellbeing Festival was run in Rhondda. The idea behind this was three-fold:

1. Promote local businesses and organisations – support them during a typically 'quiet' month by giving them guaranteed business and the opportunity to reach new groups who might not know about them or typically engage with them.
2. Support the health and wellbeing of local people during a notoriously challenging month financially and mentally.
3. Create a large impact event to promote PIAS Lles and increase reach and engagement for all parties involved.



Over 150 people participated in the Festival in activities including:

- Life drawing
- Pottery
- Canoeing
- Contrast Therapy (sauna & ice baths)
- Meditation

- Mountain Biking
- Money Management
- Yoga

PIAS Lles has worked with Generation Rhondda to run some joint activities including outdoor activities with families. It has also run cost of living/sustainability workshops in partnership with Swansea University and Pentre Comrades Club.

Evaluation and Research

People and Work works with the public and voluntary sectors to provide evaluation and research that can help to improve lives. We focus on qualitative work that meets with the charity's overall objectives and are committed to work that enables clients to develop their work to support people as effectively as possible.

During the last year we have worked on a range of important areas including:

- the evaluation of the Invest Local programme run by Building Communities Trust - [Dathlu a Gwerthuso - Celebration and Evaluation](#)
- An evaluation of the Autism Code of Practice - [Evaluation of the Code of Practice on the Delivery of Autism Services | GOV.WALES](#)
- A formative evaluability assessment and evaluation of the Young Person's Guarantee for the Welsh Government (publication awaited).
- Meddwl Ymlaen – a five year programme to develop improved support for mental health with young people in Gwynedd and Ynys Môn run by Barnardos
- TAPI – a programme run by GISDA in Gwynedd to support young people
- Dementia support - a coherent approach across five voluntary sector organisations to support people with dementia and their carers led by Age Cymru West Glamorgan;
- Hawlio Heddwch - an evaluation of a programme to celebrate the centenary of a Welsh women's peace petition for Academi Heddwch Cymru.
- Support for North Wales CAMHS to evaluate their School's In-Reach work.

Structure, governance and management

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and does not have any share capital.

The Trustees are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and are:

Christala Sophocleous

Phillip Watkins (Treasurer)

Jan Huyton (Vice Chair)

Gerard McHugh (Chair)

David Rees

Claire Vallance

Staff

In 2024 James Hall retired. James had worked for People and Work for 16 years, joining in 2008. He developed and managed some of the most important community work People and Work has done, including a programme around community learning in Glyncoch and the work in Rhondda which is now becoming independent. James has left a significant legacy in the communities he worked with and is sorely missed at People and Work. We wish him a very happy retirement.

Duncan Holtom heads up the research team working with Rhodri Bowen, senior researcher, and Emma Preece. This team is further supported by a small group of freelancers who we have worked with over a number of years. This group includes Alain Thomas, Leon Quinn, Val Williams and Amanda Williams. Although the research team is small it undertakes important work that, evidence shows, has an impact on both policy and practice in Wales.

Natasha Burnell leads on the PIAS and PIAS Lles work.

During 2025 the Generation Rhondda team gradually migrated across to their own organisation and People and Work continues to maintain strong links with them. James Watts-Rees led the Fit and Well school and sports work for People and Work and is leading on the development of Generation Rhondda.

Tomas Jenkins led the employment programme for People and Work and continues to do so for Generation Rhondda.

Ethan Jones has continued to lead the Rhondda Digidol programme for Generation Rhondda and provides People and Work with digital support.

Natasha Owens led the Reading Rhondda for People and Work and has now moved to work with a partner of Generation Rhondda.

One year traineeships involved Lucas Evans, Heather Gavin Jenkins, Claire Davies, Raylee Caviell, Scott Jones and Carmen Todd-Jones.

Sarah Lloyd-Jones is the director and Company Secretary
Ann Churcher is the administrator.