

**Carmarthenshire  
Association of  
Voluntary  
Services**



**Annual Report  
2020 - 2021**

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## Board of Trustees

- Gillian Wright (Chair) – Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association  
Wyn Llewellyn (Vice-Chair) – Coleg Elidyr  
Philip Westcott (Treasurer) – Gwendraeth Aman Blind Social Club  
Bill Martin – Five Roads and District Village Hall  
Dorothy McDonald – Dementia Carers Support Group (to 12.02.21)  
Hugh Edwards – Llanelli Hydrotherapy Pool  
Peter Loughran – Age Cymru Dyfed  
Jayne Pritchard – Carmarthenshire County Council Representative (Observer)  
Cllr. Cefin Campbell – Carmarthenshire County Council Nominee (Observer)

## Staff

- Marie Mitchell – Chief Officer  
Alud Jones – Volunteering Officer  
Clare Pilborough – Engagement Officer  
Gwyneth Lewis – Finance Officer  
Jackie Dorrian – Development Support Officer / Health and Well-being Officer  
Jamie Horton – Community Volunteering Development Officer  
Jane Hemmings – Volunteering Officer  
Louise Morgan – Office Co-ordinator  
Sandra Williams – Support Administrator  
Sarah Herbert-Jones – Development Support Officer  
Sian Johnson – Support Administrator (to 30.04.2020)  
Tom Haskett – Volunteering Support Assistant



# Foreword and Welcome

## Joint Foreword and Welcome

CAVS Chief Officer, **Marie Mitchell** and CAVS Chair **Gillian Wright**



It is once again a pleasure to present CAVS Annual Report. As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, we experienced a year unlike anything we've ever witnessed before, we could never have imagined the journey that lay ahead of us and the Third Sector in Carmarthenshire.

The CAVS team had the dual role of supporting the sector in Carmarthenshire with their response to the pandemic whilst also delivering our regular services. Along with staff working from home, embracing new technology which was received mere weeks before the pandemic, our services moved online in order to provide as comprehensive a service as possible however we were still available by telephone to support those who weren't able to join us online.

As has been the pattern in recent years, the demand on our services is ever increasing and throughout the pandemic we have continued to deliver the full range of services expected from a County Voluntary Council but in a different way.

We have continued to work closely with strategic partners, at times even closer than we have done in the past due to the requirements of the pandemic. At the same time, our work with our fellow County Voluntary Councils and Wales Council for Voluntary Action has continued, as part of Third Sector Support Wales, a network of support organisations for the whole of the Third Sector in Wales providing a service under the four pillars of Engagement and Influencing, Volunteering, Good Governance and Sustainable Funding.

We hope you enjoy our Annual Report, it provides a snapshot of what we have achieved during the year and we hope you are inspired by the wealth and breadth of services provided by CAVS from our core functions through to our projects. As we look towards the future, we can celebrate the Third Sector response in Carmarthenshire, highlighting how important the sector is.

To find out more about what we do please visit our website [cavs.org.uk](https://cavs.org.uk) where you can also discover more about membership opportunities and how you can become involved in our work.



## CAVS is the County Voluntary Council for Carmarthenshire

The Objects of the Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services are:

**“to promote all, or any of the Charitable purposes, or those which now, or hereafter may be deemed by law to be charitable for the benefit of the community in Wales with particular preference for the county of Carmarthenshire, through the medium of both English and Welsh.”**

Registered Charity No. 1062144

Company Limited by Guarantee 3348742

## CAVS is part of Third Sector Support Wales

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the Third Sector in Wales. Our shared goal is to enable the Third Sector and volunteers across Wales to contribute fully to individual and community well-being, now and for the future.



### Registered Office

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# Key Achievements 2020-21

## Good Governance

Number of organisations supported with direct advice and information



## Sustainable Funding

Amount of funding awarded to organisations following support from CAVS



Amount of funding awarded and distributed to organisations by CAVS



## Volunteering

Number of volunteers supported to enter into a volunteering opportunity



Number of volunteers who have signed up to a volunteering opportunity



Number of volunteers who have registered to volunteer online



## Engagement and Influencing

Number of attendees at partnerships/forums/networks/events facilitated



## Learning and Development

Number of participants on digital training courses





### Working from home

The CAVS office was closed from Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and remained closed all year. All staff continued to work from home throughout the year. We adapted our work to provide our regular services in new ways. This involved upskilling our staff and Trustee board to work effectively with Teams and Zoom.

All information was now only shared electronically, all communications with colleagues were on-line and all meetings were hosted virtually - Teams and Zoom were used to meet with people in groups as well as individually.



### Support in the time of COVID

In CAVS' usual role, supporting Carmarthenshire's Third Sector, our work generally falls under 4 pillars: Good Governance, Sustainable Funding, Volunteering and Engagement and Influencing. Our other main support categories, Learning and Development and Health and Well-being, lie across these pillars.

This year, in addition to providing these core services to support the Third Sector, we also needed to be a trustworthy source of guidance and reliable information on anything and everything pandemic related.



We received a broad-spectrum of queries from the general public as well as from organisations, from 'How can I support the community as a volunteer?' through to 'How can I get food delivered to my house?', or 'How can I get to hospital to give birth?'.

There was a huge amount of continually evolving information to manage on the numerous new community services being provided and ways for people to get support. This information needed to be continually assessed, categorised and shared.

# Our COVID-19 Response

## Information sharing

### Guidance documents

As soon the Welsh Government instructed everyone to work from home CAVS staff worked intensely to set out guidance to support community groups and the Third Sector as quickly as possible.

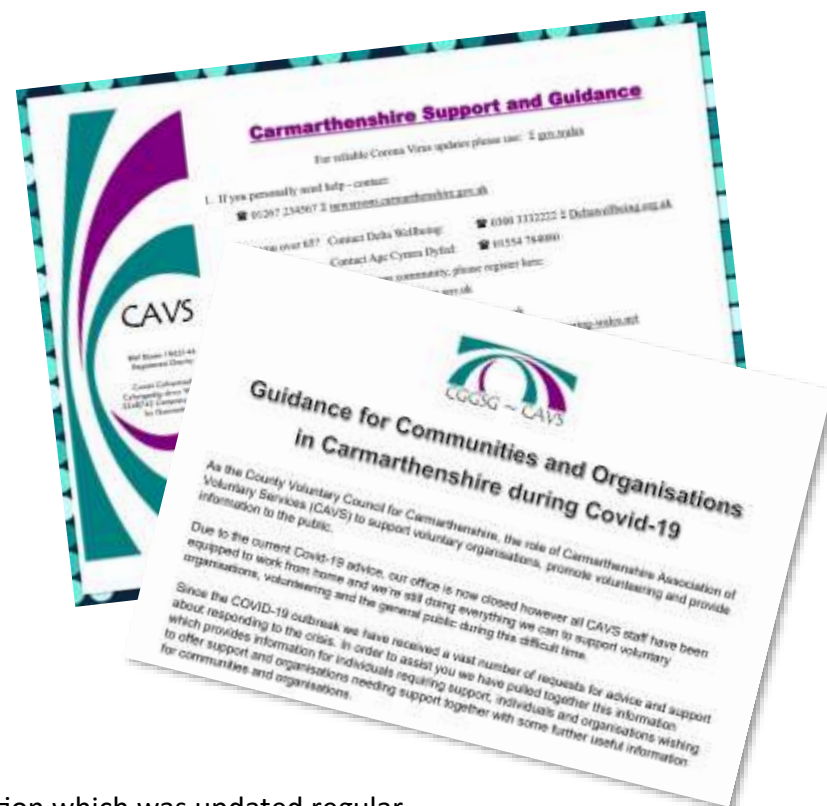
In partnership with Carmarthenshire County Council, we issued 'COVID-19 Guidance for communities in Carmarthenshire' which gave general advice and covered topics such as safety, practical steps, emotional support, how to become a volunteer, guidance for new volunteers, informal volunteering etc.

We later followed this with an updated document, CAVS 'Guidance for Communities and Organisations in Carmarthenshire during COVID-19', which provided information for individuals and organisations requiring support and for individuals and organisations wishing to offer support. Many organisations had put their own systems in place so this guidance was a tool to reaffirm and assist with that.

### CAVS Website

We set up a dedicated COVID-19 area on CAVS website to share all new guidance and information which was updated regularly. As well as the latest COVID-19 updates, the website provided a wide range of information, covering subjects such as:

- ? Who to contact
- ? Community Centres reopening
- ? Community Support
- ? Running your organisation during the pandemic
- ? Support available from different organisations
- ? Finances
- ? Older people
- ? Young people
- ? Mental Health and Well-being support and activities
- ? Coronavirus related Scams





### Carmarthenshire Third Sector COVID-19 Response meetings

In June and July 2020 and February 2021, meetings were held inviting all third sector organisations to discuss the needs and concerns of organisations as a result of COVID-19. The topics considered included acquiring PPE, social distancing at work, funding, volunteering and reopening etc.



### COVID-19 Funding

This year the funding landscape was very different as a considerable number of COVID-19 specific funds were introduced. CAVS compiled and shared information on these new funds as well as managing and distributing several local grant schemes.

### Volunteering and Community support

The pandemic restrictions caused a dramatic fall in formal volunteering and an increase in informal volunteering, alongside the emergence of new community support groups.

These changes particularly affected the work of CAVS Community Volunteering Development Officer and CAVS Volunteer Centre who adapted their work to provide support and guidance in response to these new demands.



## Telephone Befriending Scheme

Just before the first lockdown, the local authority's Commissioning Officer approached CAVS about setting up a telephone befriending service. It was recognised that there would be many people shielding or self-isolating for a considerable period with little or no contact with the outside world.

CAVS is the administrative partner for Carmarthenshire United Support Project (CUSP) ([See p12.](#)) 'Home from hospital, home not hospital', a partnership of eight voluntary organisations committed to assisting people to live independently.

It was felt that a new telephone service would be a valuable addition to the existing activities of this project (transport, domiciliary care, crisis support, inter-generational arts project) and it was quickly set up.

**Over 100 volunteers were quickly recruited, including 9 Coordinators.**



**97 people were allocated a volunteer and some of these are still receiving the service.**

Volunteers were recruited on [volunteering-wales.net](#) and by word of mouth through CUSP partners.

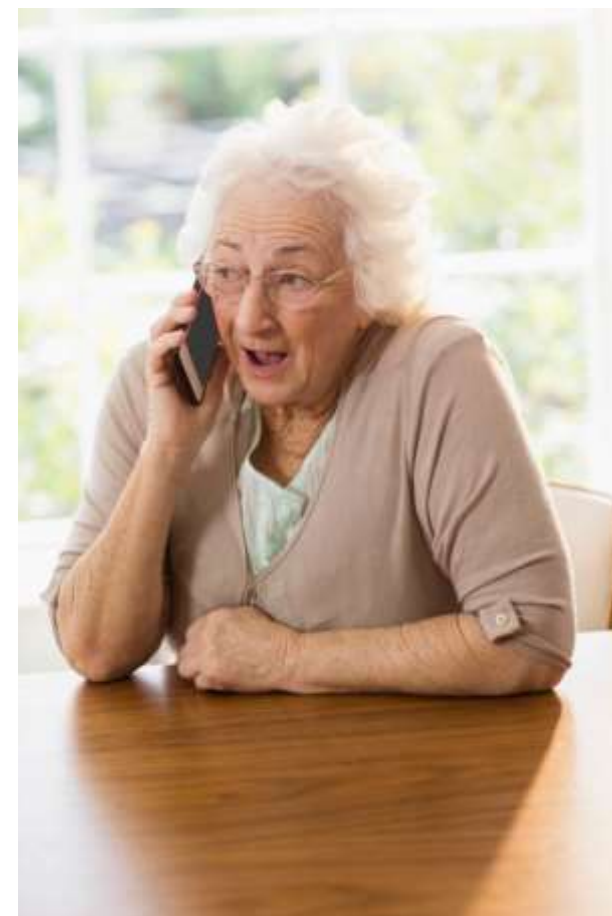
'We were inundated with offers of interest; we had to take down the opportunity from the website after just 2 days.' 'The people who stepped forward are unbelievable, with such experience as well as commitment and time to offer.'

'There was a broad spectrum, including nurses and other professional people. Even people who are themselves shielding have been willing to volunteer'.

The service is for any age, not just for older people. It has helped younger people with anxiety or other mental health issues and has worked with homeless people and with those with issues relating to alcohol and substance misuse.

Referrals are made by the local authority, Delta Wellbeing, and by local voluntary organisations such as Age Cymru Dyfed, and Carers Trust, as well as family members.

Volunteers are allocated by CAVS staff on the basis of clients' requirements. Some volunteers have recognised counselling skills, for example. Some clients just want someone to chat to, others have more complex needs.



## Joint working

The last twelve months have been exceptionally busy, working with our partners, Carmarthenshire County Council, Hywel Dda and Public Health Wales, as well as our colleagues in TSSW.



### Bevan Commission - Welsh Health Hack

In November 2020 CAVS presented a pitch “Growing our Strong Community” and with CHAI Community as a partner, we progressed to the next stage. Although we were not directly successful in receiving funds to move forward, CHAI Community were able to be linked with another project in Hywel Dda which was focusing on Long COVID.



### COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

CAVS linked in with Public Health Wales to ensure the Voluntary Sector was taken into account during the roll out of vaccinations to those organisations offering face to face provision.



### Connect Wales

The [Connect Wales website](#) was set up as a place to allow Social Prescribers, Community Connectors and others working in the field of Health and Social Care to make connections. (See p24.)



### TSSW Health and Social Care Leads

We came together with Health and Social Care colleagues from CVCs across Wales and from WCVA, to tackle several issues.

## Health and Well-being Network

The aims of this network are to:

- ♥ allow third sector organisations (working in the field of health and well-being) to support the implementation of the Carmarthenshire Well-being Plan.
- ♥ link with the work of CUSP
- ♥ share information on what’s happening in health and well-being in Carmarthenshire

This year we have seen an increase in the number of people and organisations attending the network. Many organisations have shared with us what they have been doing to keep in contact with those who they work with.

We had three meetings of the network with presentations from projects and organisations including:

- ♥ Growing the Future Project (National Botanic Garden)
- ♥ Alzheimer’s Society
- ♥ CUSP and Home from Hospital (British Red Cross)
- ♥ Hope Project (Age Cymru)
- ♥ Side by Side Cymru Project (Mind Aberystwyth)
- ♥ CarmDAS Carmarthen Domestic Abuse Services
- ♥ CHAI Community App
- ♥ Carmarthenshire Food Network

## Carmarthenshire United Support Project (CUSP)

CUSP is a third sector collaborative partnership which aims to support people to live well and independently and reduce the impact of disability and ill health.

CUSP targets people aged 18+ at risk of losing independence through poor health or increasing frailty. Its aim is to prevent their needs from developing further, to slow down deterioration, help them regain independence and provide an effective route to statutory services only when they are needed.

The project aims to connect individuals back to their community and provide practical solutions that support and maximise independence. CAVS is pivotal to the partnership being a success and provided the secretariat for the continued development of the programme.



### Service Activity

When the first COVID-19 lockdown was announced our commissioner temporarily ceased the CUSP service and asked the CUSP team to focus instead on providing surge capacity for Home from Hospital service. This was to free up as many beds as possible in hospital. As a result of this request the CUSP service was temporarily suspended from 23rd March - 15th June 2020.

All local groups and community services were closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic so CUSP was unable to operate in the usual way and support people to connect to community based services, activities and support. The service continued to provide face to face support (in line with COVID-19 guidelines) to many service users, especially those who were lonely, isolated, and very vulnerable. However, many service users feared face-to-face meetings and the service model therefore was also adapted to provide telephone support.

During the period April 2020 - March 2021 the CUSP team undertook nearly 650 hours of telephone support alone compared with 120 hours the previous year.

<b>247</b>	Total number of referrals received from hospital (- 46.8% decrease on last year)
<b>227</b>	People supported to be discharged from hospital (-36% decrease on last year)
<b>280</b>	Support visits undertaken during the year
<b>902</b>	Support hours delivered during the year
<b>3924</b>	Support activities/ interventions undertaken with service users during the year

## Online Learning

There was no face-to-face training this year, all the sessions were held via Zoom which was a steep learning curve for most students and presenters alike.

The main sessions held this year were all relevant to life during the pandemic.

The Basics of Mental Health Awareness series, delivered by WWAMH, covered Anxiety, Bipolar Disorder, Compassion, Schizophrenia, Spirituality, Suicide Awareness, Talking about Death and Dying and Mental Health in the time of Coronavirus.

A session on Safeguarding for Community Networks was held to support the many community groups which were set up during the year and regular Connect to Kindness Awareness sessions were held as part of the Connect to Kindness project to highlight the reciprocal benefits of being kind.



## CAVS Learning Portal



In January 2021 we started to develop a new website and Learning Portal with funding from the Welsh Government Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering. (See p28.)

The **Learning Portal** was launched with four e-learning volunteering courses targeted at volunteer managers and volunteers: Volunteer Management, Confidence Building, Confidentiality, Staying Safe.



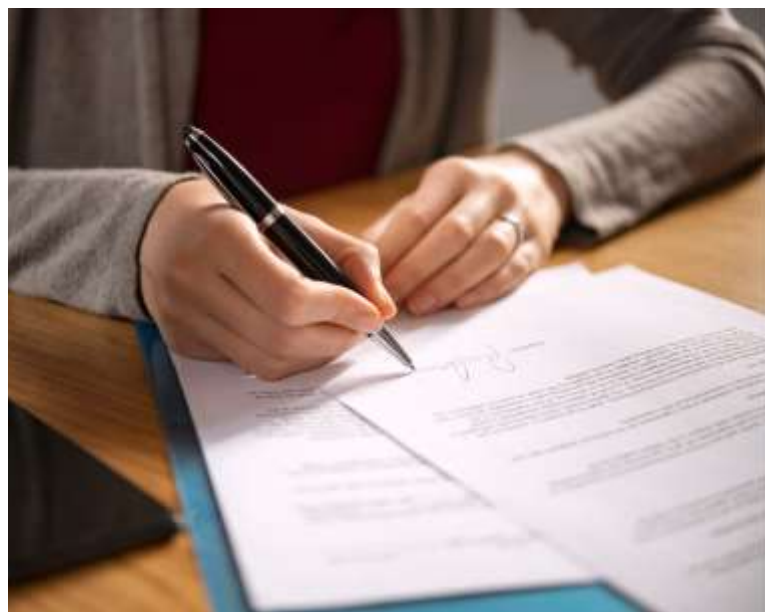


## Governance Support

CAVS offered support to a wide range of community groups, voluntary organisations and community centres to help them start up and/or run their organisations effectively and follow good governance practices.

During 2020-21 CAVS received an unprecedented number of enquiries, many of which were about understanding the COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines for offices, community buildings and permitted activities in public spaces.

Several organisations took advantage of lockdown closure to update their governing documents and policies.



We provided direct information and guidance on:

- ✓ choosing the right legal structure and governing document, developing charitable objects or community benefit purposes
- ✓ registering as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with the Charity Commission or as a Community Interest Company (CIC) with Companies House
- ✓ eligibility of new CICs for public funding if they could demonstrate community benefit, track record and a management committee of 3 minimum (not sole traders)
- ✓ coverage of information and support services across Carmarthenshire by mapping all the town and community councils
- ✓ COVID-19 regulations and guidance including permitted activities, risk assessments, hall hire agreements, hygiene, ventilation, social distancing, signage for Carmarthenshire's 120 Community Centres
- ✓ trusteeship through two meetings during Trustees Week in November and by promoting the Charity Commission's 5 Minute guides for Charity Trustees
- ✓ model constitutions for a small charity, CIO or CIC
- ✓ safeguarding, risk management, data protection/GDPR, insurance
- ✓ preparing to negotiate Capital Asset Transfers
- ✓ holding AGMs and other meetings virtually
- ✓ financial management
- ✓ insurance

**Number of organisations supported with direct advice and information**





## Funding Support

**CAVS aims to support organisations to secure and generate the resources they need to grow, survive and be sustainable.**


**COVID-19 funds** During 2020-21 there was an extraordinary number of new COVID-19 emergency response, resilience, and recovery funds (over 100). Many traditional funders closed their usual grant schemes and focussed instead on fast-track COVID-19 funding. CAVS compiled summaries of the complex funding criteria and eligibility for these new funds and disseminated information directly to special interest groups or via CAVS website and e-bulletin.

**Local Grant Schemes** CAVS managed local grants schemes funded by Welsh Government via Third Sector Support Wales, Comic Relief, the West Wales Care Partnership, and the Heart of Wales Community Resilience Fund.


**National Schemes** We provided background information and comments on Carmarthenshire applicants to the national schemes managed by WCVA such as the Voluntary Services Emergency Fund (VSEF). We also monitored grants coming into Carmarthenshire via the Wales Funder Forum.


**Amount of funding awarded to organisations following support from CAVS**



 We gave direct information and guidance to individual groups and organisations on:

- emergency COVID-19 related funding
- trusts and foundations, including tips on how to search [Funding Wales](#) and other free funding websites

 We provided comments on draft funding applications to strengthen them.

 We ran several workshops with the National Lottery Community Fund to increase awareness of the Awards for All scheme and the People and Places funding programme.

# Sustainable Funding



## Community Changers Fund

This funding was available for organisations along the train line from Pembrokeshire to Neath and Port Talbot, providing a chance to make a difference to the local areas near to the train stations. CAVS administered the grant on behalf of the community rail partnership, South West Wales Connected.



## Care Homes Connecting People Grants

This was the first time we had been asked to be involved with the dissemination of a grant scheme for Care Homes. Together with our colleagues in PAVS and CAVO, we encouraged Care Homes to make use of funding for Digital Connectivity and Visitor Space to allow family and friends to visit in comfort.



## Carers Support Innovation Fund

These grants were available to third sector organisations in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire who provide services and activities to support unpaid carers. CAVS worked regionally with PAVS and CAVO to assess applications.



## Friend in Need Fund

CAVS was the lead organisation for promotion of this fund across West Wales, working collaboratively with PAVS, CAVO and Pembrokeshire County Council. We disseminated grants to organisations to encourage befriending across the region. There were some incredible projects that found innovative ways to ensure people were connected.



## Heart of Wales Line Community Resilience Fund

CAVS was invited to assist with this small grant available for organisations working near to the train line. This was a collaboration between agencies in Powys, Shropshire, Carmarthenshire, and Swansea.



**Amount of funding awarded and distributed to organisations by CAVS**



**£85,281**

## Meet-the-Funder

A new initiative during 2020-21 was the development of online 'Meet-the-Funder' events open to all third sector organisations across Wales, which have temporarily replaced CVC funding fairs. We signposted CAVS members and others to Meet-the-Funder events hosted by BBC Children in Need, Welsh Government Community Facilities Programme, Sport Wales, Local Giving (Crowdfunding), PAVS, Garfield Weston Foundation, Community Foundation Wales, Moondance Foundation, The Waterloo Foundation and National Lottery Heritage Fund amongst others.

## LocalMotion

LocalMotion is a joint initiative by six funders who wish to collaborate in facilitating systemic, positive change in six locations facing economic, environmental, or social challenges (many of which have now been exacerbated by COVID-19).

The six funders are:

- Lloyds Bank Foundation
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- Lankelly Chase Foundation
- Tudor Trust
- City Bridge Trust

Their goal is “To use our collective experience and resources to support local people to address social, environmental and economic priorities selected and driven locally and derive as much learning as possible from that process”.

CAVS is supporting this LocalMotion work as Carmarthen is one of the six designated locations. We have had several Core Group meetings this year with partners to outline the 'What, Where, How and When?'.

## National Lottery Community Fund Coffee and Chat sessions

We have had to think differently over the last twelve months. In order to engage with more groups and organisations we have been working closely with the NLCF Funding Officer. We set up specific sessions to give information about funding that was available during COVID-19 and felt that this informal way of engagement would attract more people to attend.

Following interest in these sessions we also held more detailed workshops, and this has led, we believe, to an increase in funding received in Carmarthenshire. These sessions also helped with the setting up of future third sector networks such as the Children and Young People Network.



## Supporting Volunteers

During this extraordinary year CAVS volunteering team were kept busy fielding an unparalleled number of enquiries from would-be volunteers. Particularly towards the start of the pandemic, the number of emails and phone calls from people wanting to volunteer their time to help their fellow citizens was astonishing.

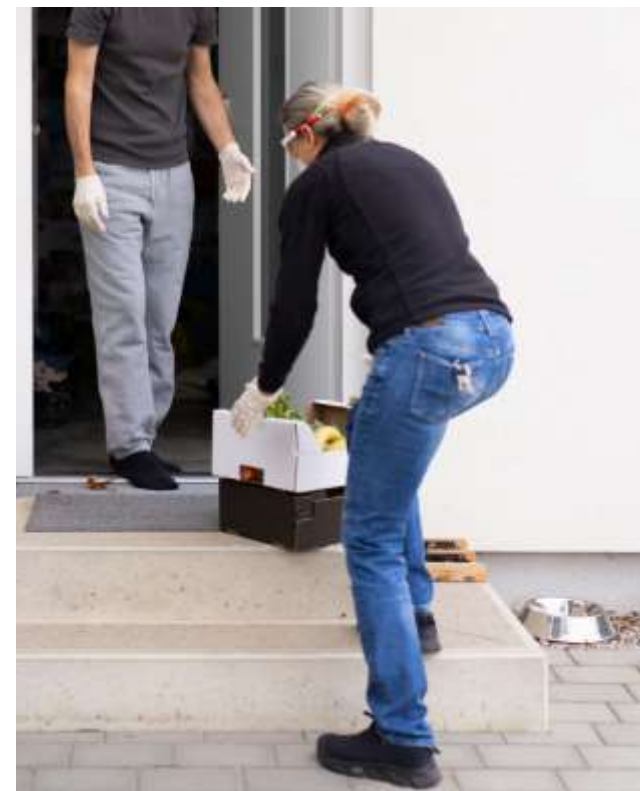


**The number of people registered as potential volunteers on Volunteering Wales increased from 775 in March 2020 to 2036 at the end of March 2021, in Carmarthenshire alone.**

We posted a CAVS COVID volunteering opportunity on the [volunteering-wales.net](https://volunteering-wales.net) website and in a matter of months dealt with many hundreds of queries from individuals wanting to support others and their communities. This came at a time when the majority of regular volunteer involving organisations were having to suspend volunteering projects in line with COVID-19 restrictions and Welsh Government guidance. We signposted volunteers to opportunities which were starting to operate remotely and were able to involve new volunteers.

We were also able to signpost to occasional large-scale volunteer recruitment drives, including over 110 volunteers for the creation of four “Field Hospitals” by Carmarthenshire County Council, 30 volunteers for new Food Banks that were created, and dozens of volunteers for various activities with Hywel Dda Health Board.

The large number of offers to volunteer meant that many individuals were not able to find the type of placement they were looking for. We kept in touch with all registered volunteers with regular up-dates and information to ensure they knew they were valued and not forgotten. With a clear need developing for support with everyday tasks for those isolated and elderly members of the community, we also suggested to many volunteers that they consider volunteering locally with one of the informal mutual aid groups that were rapidly springing up throughout the County. These groups were being supported by CAVS Community Volunteering Development Officer ([See p22.](#)) and we were able to share information about groups in the volunteer’s local neighbourhood.



**Number of volunteers supported to enter into a volunteering opportunity**



**236**



## Supporting Organisations

In spite of a very difficult situation for many volunteering projects, who were unable to operate their services remotely and with many staff members being furloughed, after a time more opportunities for volunteers did start to develop. Those volunteer involving organisations who were able to, developed innovative new ways of delivering their services by telephone and digital means.

We were able to refer volunteers to CAVS Telephone Befriending scheme, supported by CAVS Health and Well-being Officer Jackie Dorrian, to Carmarthenshire County Council Field Hospitals, to Leonard Cheshire Disability and to Hywel Dda's Volunteering for Health Project.

In addition we responded to a number of food banks and volunteer driver projects who were looking for urgent volunteer re-enforcements as they experienced record demand for their services. We have also helped a number of organisations to create or update their accounts on Volunteering Wales in preparation for resuming volunteering activities.

## CVON (Carmarthenshire Volunteer Organisers Network)

Because the pandemic led to a constantly changing situation with regard to restrictions and recommendations regarding volunteer and service user safety, we increased the number of CVON meetings to include informal catch-ups as well as regular meetings. We met five times during the year instead of the usual three times.



We had in-meeting discussions and shared ideas that had worked for different groups to keep in contact with their volunteers and support their well-being when they were unable to be actively involved. We had presentations from Kathleen Kelly Local Motion, Liz Bickerton, consultant, Piers Lunt from Tywi Gateway Trust and Jamie Horton, CAVS Community Volunteer Development Officer.

**Number of volunteers who have registered to volunteer online**



**638**



# Volunteering - CAVS Volunteer Centre

## Joint working

CAVS Volunteer Centre have continued to support partnership work with the Public Service Board Strong Connections Delivery group and the related Volunteer Working Group.

### Regionally:

During this period of remote working, CAVS Volunteering officers have been liaising closely with Volunteer colleagues with other CVCs both regionally and nationally, with regular regional catch up, information sharing and mutual support meetings with colleagues in PAVS (Pembrokeshire) and CAVO (Ceredigion). We were invited to take part in a regional Volunteer Fair hosted by CAVO on YouTube in November.

## Welsh Government Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering

CAVS was awarded funding from the Welsh Government to support volunteering after the impact of the pandemic. The volunteering team were involved with the wider CAVS team and partners in helping to put an application together for this funding, which was used to enable the work of consultants in developing a Carmarthenshire-wide Volunteering strategy.

Another part of the work involved the development of a website and [Learning Portal](#) for volunteers and organisations. This has allowed us to make the Volunteer Centre's current training offer fully accessible. At the end of the year work is still progressing on this platform, but in time, our existing courses: Volunteer Management, Confidence Building, Confidentiality, Staying Safe, Preparing to Volunteer and Volunteering for You, will all be available bi-lingually on the Learning Portal. We hope to add further training courses in the future. The digital training will not replace in-person and on-line training – but will be an additional way to access training in a flexible learner friendly way.

### Nationally:

Volunteer Centre staff from CVCs across Wales have been holding regular meetings. This has been a time of strengthened links even when we were not able to meet in person. It has allowed Volunteering Officers across Wales to discuss ad hoc issues that have emerged during the pandemic as well as allowing us to discuss more fully the items coming up at the quarterly Volunteer Practitioner Network (VPN) meetings. We have attended and contributed to these regular Network meetings with two Volunteering Officers attending meetings when possible.





## Celebrating Volunteering

**Across Wales:** CAVS Volunteering Team were involved in creating a Thank You video of CEOs and volunteering staff across Wales praising the efforts made by volunteers during this year, valuing long standing volunteers as well as the new volunteers who made themselves available during the crisis.



**Carmarthenshire:** Closer to home, alongside CAVS staff and Trustees, we put together another video of our own, highlighting the outstanding work done by voluntary groups across the county, during the pandemic .



**West Wales:** We then created a third film, this time to say Thank You to everyone who volunteered across Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion as a region.



# Volunteering - Community Volunteering Development

## Community Volunteering Development

The West Wales Regional Partnership Board developed a regional response to the Welsh Government's 'A Healthier Wales' programme in the form of a bid for £18m to support transformation activity across the region and at local level linked to the Area Plan and to Hywel Dda University Health Board's Health and Care Strategy.

Under the priority of Creating Connections for All the focus during the year was on the development of activities to incentivise active citizenship and nurture connections to alleviate the loneliness and isolation that exists in many of our communities.

### Adjustments and learning curves

Lockdowns in the early part of 2020 meant that establishing Local Action Hubs to respond to the health and social needs of individuals and encourage spontaneous and informal volunteering needed to be viewed differently.



Online working enabled close links with community groups and the development of a support network for Facebook COVID-responsive admins and coordinators. CAVS 'Community Connect' group swelled to over 50 members and hosted a weekly support meeting online. The purpose was to offer emotional and practical support, present peer partnership opportunities whilst also inviting a plethora of guest speakers who might be able to

offer ideas for community relief. This community of interest network allowed CAVS to link and signpost groups and individuals to food, volunteers and more hyperlocal outreach.

With formal volunteering opportunities reducing there was a keen local call to action. CAVS was able to offer practical assistance with guidance and recommendations of 'informal volunteering in a pandemic'. Guidance including 'walking your neighbour's dog safely', 'general safeguarding', 'being a good neighbour' and 'setting up a community network' was distributed widely and complemented official volunteering ID cards and other campaigns. Being virtually available to groups and individuals, who might never have contacted CAVS, enabled us to embed ourselves whilst exploring new ways of working and new future possibilities.



Key points raised during this period included the need for volunteering to be extremely flexible, that short sharp bursts of volunteering worked better than the usual linear options and that the absence of bureaucracy made volunteering a more attractive option. It was also very apparent that people who were not 'typical' volunteers became involved in their community action.



## Celebrations

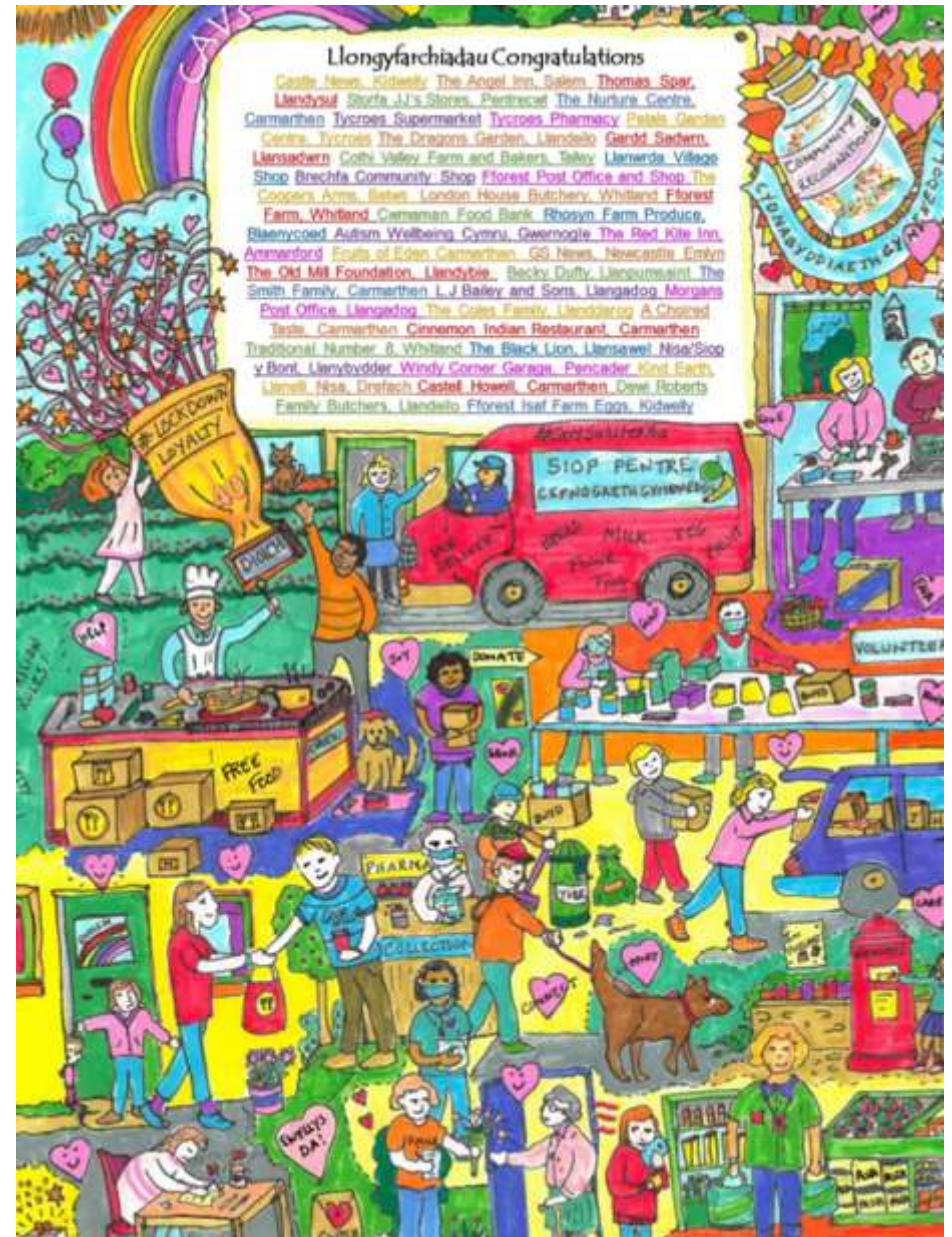
Community cohesiveness and resilience was at its best throughout this reporting period and this role enabled us to highlight, celebrate and share the incredible responsiveness of Carmarthenshire residents. Not only were we able to share 29 community Good News stories, we recognised 40 businesses through our 'Lockdown Loyalty Legends' awards, most whom linked directly with community volunteering groups and 31 groups/individuals through our 'CAVS Recognises Community' awards.

## Community

The concept of developing community action hubs needed to be revised as the idea of accessing a physical facility, and coordinating activity, was no longer possible. Instead, connections were made within Llandeilo, Hendy, Tycroes, Llanedi, Newcastle Emlyn and Laugharne. Funding was available to support community activities, mapping of resources, development of newsletters and other communication mechanisms to bring local people together; the idea of an action hub transmuted to reflect the needs of a community unable to physically meet but still requiring the connections.

## Funding opportunities

The COVID-19 Response Fund for community groups created opportunities for 7 individuals/groups to be supported up to £250: Lucy Green, Bryn WI, Llandybie WI, Simon Lewis, Laugharne Community Support Group, Rhandirmwyn and District Community Association (RDCA) FB Group and Salem COVID-19 Volunteer group.



# Volunteering - Community Volunteering Development



## Connect to Kindness

The Connect to Kindness campaign is a regional partnership looking at the science behind kindness and ways in which we can celebrate and share our experiences.

### [Connect to kindness - Welcome to Connect to Kindness](#)

The regional team developed resources to be shared and we have been encouraging individuals, community groups and businesses to make their pledge and participate in an online awareness session with Sue Smith, Community Connector Plus.

We encourage everyone to join us on our Facebook group where we share local stories and celebrate kindness across Carmarthenshire:



### [Cymunedau Cysylltiedig Sir Gâr Connected Communities Sir Gâr](#)



## Connect Carmarthenshire

Connect Carmarthenshire is an online platform which brings together residents across the county to support one another. This informal volunteering route has a time banking element, a listing option for community events and the potential to develop community teams.







### [Connect Carmarthenshire - Supporting Carmarthenshire](#)





## Networks

As well as specific COVID response meetings three new third sector networks were established this year in response to needs identified. The aim of the themed networks is to allow organisations working in similar fields to share information and support each other.

-  Children and Young People Network (NEW)
-  Community Centres Network (NEW)
-  Food Network (NEW)
-  CVON- Volunteer Organisers Network
-  Environment Network
-  Health and Well-being Network

**Number of attendees at partnerships/  
forums/networks/events facilitated**



**441**



### Children and Young People Network

The inaugural meeting of this group was held in February 2021, giving organisations working with children and young people a voice and a place to come together to raise issues.



### Community Centres Network

In July 2020 we recognised the need to provide up to date information for the many people responsible for running Community Buildings in Carmarthenshire and so started to hold regular meetings in order to share the guidance. Three meetings were held during the year and were of continued importance as many changes and updates to the official guidance were being issued. These informative meetings were well attended and provided a chance for the Trustees and staff concerned to meet and discuss complicated issues regarding restrictions and reopening.



### Carmarthenshire Food Network

In February 2021 CAVS Community Volunteering Development Officer ([See p22.](#)) facilitated the first meeting of the Carmarthenshire Food Network. The meeting boasted over 60 people, bringing together the many foodbanks and food share programmes, hot food projects, community growing groups and wider community support and generated enough interest to sustain a number of further cluster meetings. Whilst we are in the early stages of this community of interest working to connect, share and support one another, we are confident that this network will gain traction and be a grassroot voice for the county.

# Engagement and Influencing



## Environment Network

The aim of this network is

- to allow third sector organisations involved with environmental issues to share information and to collaborate to achieve common goals.
- to allow groups to follow the progress made by the Healthy Environment PSB delivery Group in the implementation of the Carmarthenshire Well-being Plan.

During the year, 3 meetings were held. In addition to sharing information within the network, the group started to discuss what the focus, aims and potential work of the Environment Network could be. The main areas of future collaboration were seen to be raising awareness and providing support, information and guidance to the wider Third Sector. The Green Stories Campaign was launched to gather and share good examples of what was already being achieved by groups locally.



## CVON - Volunteer Organisers Network

A network for people working with volunteers in the voluntary and statutory sector throughout Carmarthenshire. The purpose of CVON is to assist in the provision and development of an effective volunteering service in Carmarthenshire. Organisations have an opportunity to discuss problems, share experiences and ideas, learn about each other's work and receive information about current volunteering issues. [\(See p.19\)](#)



## Health and Well-being Network

A network for third sector organisations to share information on what's happening in health and well-being and to collaborate to make a difference to people's lives across Carmarthenshire. [\(See p11.\)](#)

## Other meetings

### Carmarthenshire Third Sector COVID-19 Response

In June and July 2020 and February 2021 meetings were held inviting all third sector organisations to discuss the needs and concerns of organisations as a result of COVID-19.



### Valuing Carmarthenshire Trustees

In November 2020 meetings were held to support Trustees to share an overview of new guidance available for Trustees from the Charity Commission and to provide an opportunity for Trustees to share experiences and ideas and discuss any issues affecting them during the pandemic.

### Carmarthenshire Digital Projects

A meeting was held in September 2020 to find out more about the Digital projects happening in Carmarthenshire and to discuss ways of working together, signposting and future collaboration and to identify gaps in provision.



## Joint working

During 2020-21 CAVS worked closely with statutory partners to ensure that the voice of the sector was heard in the county. Feedback to the sector was through our networks and through CAVS website, e-bulletin and social media.

CAVS Chief Officer sat on the Public Services Board.

## Carmarthenshire Well-being Plan

The **Carmarthenshire Well-being Plan 2018-2023** was approved in May 2018 and delivery groups were then formed to implement the plan focussing on the four key well-being objectives.



**Healthy Habits** - People have a good quality of life and make healthy choices about their lives and environment.



**Early Intervention** - To make sure that people have the right help at the right time; as and when they need it.



**Strong Connections** - Strongly connected people, places and organisations that are able to adapt to change.



**Prosperous People and Places** - To maximise opportunities for people and places in both urban and rural parts of our county.

## We also worked with a wide range of partners and partnerships, including:

- Carmarthenshire ACL Partnership
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- Carmarthenshire Integrated Services Board
- Carmarthenshire Syrian Refugee Task Group
- Cross Hands Health and Well-being Centre
- Grŵp Cefn Gwlad
- Hywel Dda University Health Board
- Llanelli Wellness and Life Science Village
- Public Health Wales
- (Hywel Dda) Stakeholder Reference Group
- University of Wales Trinity Saint David
- West Wales Care Partnership

This year CAVS Chief Officer continued to Chair and be the expert lead for the Strong Connections Delivery Group and CAVS also represented the Third Sector on the other delivery groups.

# Engagement and Influencing

## Welsh Government

### Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering 2020/21

In December 2020, CAVS with support from Carmarthenshire County Council and Hywel Dda, submitted a successful bid for the Welsh Government Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering.

The main elements to this work, which started in January 2021, were:

#### A Volunteering Strategy for Carmarthenshire

The development of a Volunteering Strategy for Carmarthenshire involving CAVS, Carmarthenshire County Council, Hywel Dda and other Public Service Board (PSB) partners, to sustain the volunteering and community action witnessed throughout the pandemic and to ensure more sustainable models of volunteering.

#### Digital support for volunteering

A digital solution to support the needs of both volunteers and volunteer involving organisations in the Carmarthenshire. This consisted of a new purpose built website for volunteering with an online training section based on CAVS existing courses. The e-learning courses are for organisations and volunteers as well as individuals who need support to become volunteer ready.

## Syrian Refugee Task Group

To **March 2020** a total of



had been resettled  
throughout the county in:

- ⇒ Ammanford
- ⇒ Carmarthen
- ⇒ Garnant
- ⇒ Glanamman
- ⇒ Llandeilo
- ⇒ Llanelli
- ⇒ Kidwelly
- ⇒ Pontyberem
- ⇒ Saron
- ⇒ Tycroes

**Due to COVID-19, the Home Office had stopped the resettlement of any additional families during 2020/21 financial year.**

In **March 2021** we were preparing to receive two new Syrian families under the new UK Resettlement Scheme. (They subsequently arrived successfully in April and May 2021).

The Syrian community has adapted to life under COVID, as many of us have, by learning to do things using IT. The families with children in school were provided with laptops by Carmarthenshire County Council and the adults also used these to continue their English lessons on-line.

## Sharing information

The CAVS e-bulletin was sent out regularly throughout the year with a specific section for COVID-19 as well as the usual sections focussing on News, Events, Training, Funding, Consultations, Volunteering and Third Sector Jobs. People can sign up to the e-bulletin via the CAVS website.

The CAVS website, e-bulletin and social media were used to share the latest COVID -19 updates and guidance from Welsh Government and Public Health Wales. This was alongside news of developments in the Public Sector, details of consultations, campaigns, public engagement events and information from partners and third sector organisations with the aim of raising awareness and encouraging and promoting active involvement with local issues and concerns.



## Infoengine

CAVS worked with other CVCs to continue to develop and promote **Infoengine** as a primary source of online information about third sector services across Carmarthenshire and Wales. Infoengine provides an easy way for third sector organisations to have a web presence and promote their services online.

This year organisations were encouraged to promote their COVID -19 support services on Infoengine, tagged with the keyword COVID, so that they could be easily identified when people were searching for local support.

# Engagement and Influencing

## Funding Wales [funding.cymru](http://funding.cymru)



Find funding for your charity or community group using our free online search engine.

## Infoengine [infoengine.cymru](http://infoengine.cymru)



Infoengine is the directory of third sector services in Wales. Register your service or find services in your community.

## CAVS [cavs.org.uk](http://cavs.org.uk)



## Volunteering Wales [volunteering-wales.net](http://volunteering-wales.net)



Register your voluntary organisation and volunteer vacancies. Search for opportunities.

## TSSW [thirdsectorsupport.wales](http://thirdsectorsupport.wales)



Free resources designed to help you stay informed, improve your knowledge and connect with others.

## Third Sector Resources



Age Cymru Dyfed	Cartrefi Cymru	Llanelli Free Evangelical Church	Race Council Cymru
Alzheimer's Society	CDAS	Llanelli Hydrotherapy Pool	Radio Glangwili
Antur Teifi	Cerebra	Llanelli Rural Council	Really Pro Ltd
Arts Care Gofal Celf	Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs	Llanelli Town Council	RNID
Arts Council of Wales	Coleg Elidyr	Llanfynydd Village Society	The Black Mountain Centre
Awaydays Coastcare	Coleg Ty'r Eithin	Llangadog Community Centre	Threshold DAS Llanelli
BAROD	Cyngor Cymunedol Llangennech Community Council	Llansawel Recreation Field & Hall	Tir Coed
Bro Myrddin Bowls Club	Diverse Cymru	Llanybydder Family Cente	United Counties Agricultural & Hunters Society
Brynaman Lido Limited	Ferryside Social Enterprise Group (FSEG)	Menter Cwm Gwendraeth Elli Cyf	Versus Arthritis
Canolfan Gymunedol Ystradowen Community Centre	Five Roads and District Village Hall and Park Association	Menter Gorllewin Sir Gar	Wales Council of the Blind
Cardigan Youth Project	GABS (Gwendraeth Amman Blind Society)	Myddfai Community Hall & Visitor Centre	West Wales Woods
Care & Repair Carmarthenshire	GABS VI Bowls	National Botanic Garden of Wales	WWAMH
Carers Trust Crossroads Sir Gâr	Gwili Railway	Neuadd Bro Fana / Ffarmers Village Hall	
Carmarthen Arts	Gwynfe Community Hall Association	Neuadd Gymunedol Talog	
Carmarthen Youth Project	Hafan Cymru	New Pathways	
Carmarthenshire 50+ Forum	Heart of Wales Traveller's Association	Old Mill Foundation	
Carmarthenshire Counselling Service	HUTS Workshop	Parkinson's Society	
Carmarthenshire Federation of Women's Institute	Kidwelly Town Council	Pencader Family Centre	
Carmarthenshire People First	Llamau	Peniel Community Association	
Carmarthenshire Shopmobility Caerfyrddin	Llandovery Town Council	People Speak Up	
		Plant Dewi	
		Pontyates Welfare Association	



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