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Walsingham Support Community Solutions

Forge Fach Friends Lunch Club

The Forge Fach Community Centre in Clydach, Swansea is a community hub which provides services and activities for local residents. Run by Walsingham Support Community Solutions (WSCS), the Forge Fach Community Centre places emphasis on, and designs services which help tackle loneliness and isolation, including exercise classes, arts and crafts sessions and a summer time kids club.

To further tackle loneliness and isolation in the Swansea valley area, WSCS delivered a successful luncheon club pilot in December 2018. While the pilot was a success, a lack of accessible transport meant that not as many local people as possible could attend, especially those who have a disability and those who live a few miles away from the venue.

WSCS then approached CTA's Connecting Communities in Wales team and a range of partners and stakeholders, including Age Cymru Swansea Bay and Clydach Senior Citizens to discuss options around funding possibilities to ensure that everybody in the community who would like to attend the luncheon club could do so unrestricted by transport barriers.

Following an initial meeting, it was decided that the Connecting Communities in Wales team would define costs, develop a proposal and write a bid for funding to the Big Lottery Fund, Awards for All grant scheme, to enable WSCS and partners deliver a weekly luncheon club that would include funds to utilise local community transport operators.

In March 2019, funding from Awards for All was approved enabling WSCS to access £10,000 to deliver a one- year luncheon club project. The Forge Fach Friends luncheon club has since helped many older people to break the cycle loneliness and isolation faced by many in the area, especially for those who have lost a partner or are restricted by illness/mobility. The project has greatly improved older people's wellbeing and enabled people to make lasting friendships, bringing people together and building stronger relationships across the community.

As of September 2019, over 170 older people have benefited from the luncheon club and associated activities built into the project, including a very popular tea dance. Building community transport into the project, by hiring in local community transport operators, such as Swansea Community Transport has helped make this project a success.

“The project means a great deal for all stakeholders involved in the luncheon club,” said WSCS Director Clare Bugler. “It gives me great pride that WSCS, working in partnership with the Connecting Communities in Wales team, were able to secure the funding to be able to establish the luncheon club and bring happiness and enjoyment for many older people in the area every week and we have even been able to extend the luncheon club to 2/3 times per week as demand continues to grow.

“The project has made a real difference to the lives of the older people and we have many repeat attenders who come along every week because they enjoy the company of the other service users, volunteers and staff. The luncheon club gives older people an opportunity to get out of the house, talk to people and the project really gives them something to look forward to every week”.

About Connecting Communities in Wales

The Connecting Communities in Wales project is run by the Community Transport Association and funded through the Welsh Government Rural Communities Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government, and aims to support community transport in Wales through creating new partnerships, bringing funding into the sector and creating new transport networks.

You can find out more about Connecting Communities in Wales at ctauk.org/CCIW.

