



EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING SCHEME



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INTRODUCTION

In 2021 Foothold Cymru were successful in obtaining a grant to develop an Employee Volunteering Scheme within the organisation. Funded through Welsh Government and managed by the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), the Volunteering Wales Strategic Grant Fund aims to encourage a more strategic approach to the development of volunteering within organisations.

Our reason for applying for the grant was to allow us to explore the possibility of setting up our own EVS Programme. For a long time, we were aware that large charities attracted support from Corporates but for smaller charities this relationship was more difficult to establish.

Employee Volunteering Schemes (EVS) or Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) as it's sometimes known can be a very effective means of adding a range of specialist knowledge and skills to an organisation, or gain an extra pair of hands to help deliver the services on offer. At the same time, employers can derive a range of business benefits through encouraging their staff to get involved in volunteering during worktime.

EVS occurs when companies actively support and encourage their employees in voluntary activity within the local community. It is a partnership between the private, the voluntary and community and public sectors. Such arrangements have the potential to be mutually beneficial to an organisation and to the business with which we may partner.

However, developing such a partnership is not straightforward, and several factors must be taken into consideration if one is to be successful.

This guide has been produced based on our own experiences. It provides information on the benefits of ESV, and answers to the What, Why and How of implementing a successful programme.

It does not, however, aim to create a blueprint that, if followed, will automatically lead to a successful partnership. Each organisation is unique in terms of its delivery, management and volunteering needs - whilst each business will have expectations of the returns it can generate through employee volunteering. Ensuring that both are met are key to developing a successful partnership.

Hopefully, this guide will help you explore some of the issues around EVS in greater depth and come to an informed decision as to whether you wish to develop a business partnership. At the same time, it will provide useful pointers as to how it might be achieved successfully. For us it's been an interesting journey and we have learnt a great deal from the process.

Good Luck!

Mike Theodoulou
Chief Executive
Foothold Cymru

WHAT IS AN EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING SCHEME?

Basically, an employee volunteering scheme (EVS) is a means whereby a business enables its employees to contribute to their local community through volunteering activities undertaken within normal working hours.

There are several models of EVS:

Individual Opportunities	Practical
Mentoring Befriending Becoming a trustee Fundraising	Donating of equipment or furniture Providing transportation Developing a garden In-kind Support
Team Events	Administration
Organising an event Involvement in an environmental project Renovating a community building	Marketing / social media Help with ICT Pro-bono

Increasingly, we are seeing EVS whereby a business offers its staff the opportunity to carry out volunteering activities on an agreed number of days each year. These might be undertaken within a local charity or voluntary organisation with which the business identifies, so wishes to support. Alternatively, they may allow the employee the freedom to volunteer with an organisation of their own choosing.

The range of activities can be very broad, from ongoing weekly support to one-off activities such as repainting a community venue or planting trees. Quite often, these activities are viewed by businesses as team building or team challenge events for their employees. Often charities are able to earn income from team challenge events as they charge corporates for the time spent with the organisation.

An EVS that provides on-going support may involve activities such as providing mentoring programmes, acting as a trustee, providing professional support and expertise and assisting the organisation in the delivery of its core work.

WHY SHOULD YOUR ORGANISATION GET INVOLVED?

All parties can get considerable benefits from an EVS.

Voluntary organisations can gain from:

- Accessing specialised or additional skills that can help enhance their governance, business development, management and service delivery.
- Having the benefit from fresh pairs of eyes that might identify improvements to the organisation's working practices, or suggest new areas of activity.
- A new source of volunteers brings new energy, ideas and enthusiasm.
- Accessing additional resources that can increase the level of services provided.
- Having increased exposure to, and understanding of, their work, thereby generating additional support and appreciation of what it is aiming to achieve.

The businesses can gain benefit from:

- Increased employee motivation and performance.
- An improved view of the business by its employees and more positive attitude towards it.
- Improved local reputation and integrity.
- The additional skills, experiences and insights gained by employees through volunteering.
- Being able to demonstrate their commitment to corporate social responsibility.

Employees can benefit from:

- Feeling positive about themselves and the fact that they are helping to make a difference.
- Gaining new skills and experiences.
- Gaining more confidence.
- Seeing improvements to their mental health and wellbeing.

And lastly, but equally importantly:

- Service users and the local community can benefit from enhanced and increased levels of activity.

IS IT FOR US?

Partnering with a business to run an EVS is, therefore, a potentially valuable proposition for a small voluntary organisation, as it can provide much needed additional resources and expertise.

However, before making the first moves, it is worth taking time to consider a few practicalities.

a) What are our volunteering needs?

- Do we need additional volunteers, and, if so, in what capacity? Do we need management and business skills, help with service delivery, etc.
- With what frequency do we need volunteers?

b) What are the resource implications?

- Managing additional volunteers can be time consuming, which could detract from other activities, such as service delivery.
- There could also be cost implications in the form of travelling or other out of pocket expenses, or, for example, the need to purchase PPE for certain activities.

c) What are the legal implications?

- It will be your organisation's responsibility to meet the requirements of safeguarding legislation, including undertaking DBS checks where required.
- Where appropriate, health and safety risk assessments will need to be completed and adequate health and safety training provided prior to volunteering activities commencing.

d) What will the business expect to see in place?

- An indication of what is expected of them and what activities are planned.
- Confirmation that their employees will receive appropriate support in their volunteering.
- Evidence of health and safety and other relevant policies.
- Adequate facilities - e.g. rest areas, toilets, refreshments, etc.
- Appropriate insurance cover, where necessary.
- Details of appropriate training and support.

This list is not exhaustive, rather, it is intended to give some indication of the things that need to be considered in hosting an EVS. You may think of others that are appropriate to your organisation.

It is essential that you discuss these with your trustees / board, management team and staff before deciding to proceed.

If that decision is positive, and you decide to host an EVS, you will also need to be aware of some of the challenges you may face in making it successful.

WHAT DO BUSINESSES WANT FROM AN EVS?



Whilst different businesses want different things from Employee Volunteering the following are commonplace requirements:

- Confidence that your organisation understands their time and business pressures. Business owners need Charities to demonstrate that they understand the constraints of both time and resources, that business owners work under. This is often aligned to a clear need for the EVS to have a positive impact on their business. For example, there are often community benefit sections within tenders that businesses need to satisfy.
- Clear guidance from your organisation about how EVS can enhance your work and what you want from collaborating with a business.
- A diverse range of volunteering opportunities so business owners, if interested, can choose the best fit for their organisation.
- That responsibility for induction, training and managing employer volunteers' rests with your organisation and not the business.
- That as an organisation you are proactive when there are new initiatives or activities for which you need support. Often an employer may not have the time or experience to approach you with ideas, so go directly to them, with a clear outline of what you need.
- Understand when a business says no. They have their normal business demands to meet and do not have the resources to help. This is particularly relevant in the aftermath of Covid and Brexit.
- Smaller businesses often prefer ad-hoc one-off activities and are reluctant to commit themselves to a long term relationship as they do not have the resources to do so.

MAKING IT WORK



Hosting an EVS comes with several potential challenges. It is important that you are aware of these before setting out and to think of how you will plan to meet these. Don't forget that your organisation and the business both aim to gain benefit from the arrangement, so ensure that there is agreement on what is expected from the EVS from the outset.

These are some of the things you need to ensure.

1) Make sure that the needs of your organisation are protected

When hosting an EVS, there is a risk of making compromises to accommodate the needs of the business, at the expense of your organisations.

For example, some businesses prefer to support one-off team challenge type events through which a larger number of employees can become engaged at one time - seeing it as an opportunity to evidence social value, or to benefit from team building activities. However, such an activity could create challenges for your organisation, not least having to manage a team of volunteers whom you've never met before and with no idea of their abilities.

Conversely, your organisation's needs might revolve around specific skills gaps in terms of marketing, accounting, IT, planning and finance; or to do with on-going service delivery.

Therefore, mutual understanding on what the EVS will involve will be essential. To help achieve this, when making initial approaches to a potential business partner, you will need to:

- Give a clear indication of what your objectives are in hosting an EVS and ask the business what theirs are.
- Be specific about what volunteering opportunities you have to offer, including issues such as areas of activity and levels of commitment.

2) Make sure that the EVS doesn't become a financial burden to you organisation

Hosting an EVS could have significant resource implications for your organisation, including those associated with engaging, supervising and training volunteers. In addition, there might be costs relating to administration, health and safety and risk assessments.

Therefore, when working with a business to develop an EVS, you will need to bear these costs in mind and to quantify them before deciding if it is going to be financially viable.

You will also need to:

- Prepare a detailed breakdown of these costs for the business and include them in preliminary discussions. The business may not fully appreciate the extent of these costs.
- Negotiate with the business to see if they can contribute to the costs.
- Consider scaling back on any planned activities to make the EVS financially viable, bearing in mind that the business will still expect to derive benefit from it.

3) Establish clear understanding about what the EVS will involve and how it will be managed with the business

As indicated, businesses will expect to derive some degree of benefit from entering an EVS, whilst, at the same time, having limited knowledge of your organisation and what it does. Therefore, when engaging with a business, you will need to be able to identify these and outline how they can help. Think of things like:

- In what areas do you need additional volunteering support?
- What opportunities for skills and personal development do they offer?
- How you will help the volunteers achieve these.

4) Develop a partnership agreement with the business

It is essential that common understanding of what the EVS will offer and how it will be run is achieved from the outset. This will help avoid misunderstanding down the line. This includes:

- Outlining the roles and responsibilities of each partner. For example, a commitment by the business to make employees available at agreed times and dates, and for your organisation to ensure that volunteers will be utilised as agreed when with you.
- What induction and on-going training will be provided to the volunteers?
- How will they be managed?
- What insurance cover will be provided, and by whom?
- How the partnership will be reviewed and managed - e.g. frequency of review meetings; identified leads within each partner.
- How causes for concern will be addressed - e.g., if the business feels that the volunteer is being under-utilised on their placement, or feels that they are deriving no benefit from it.

HOW CAN WE GET INVOLVED?



We've broken the process down into the six steps that worked for us.

Step 1 - Preparation and Planning

- Clear Rationale.

Be clear about why you want to engage with Employer Supported Volunteers and that there are clear benefits for your organisation.

Step 2 - Buy-in From All Levels Within the Organisation

- Support from everyone in the organisation is important. Make sure that Trustees and senior management are committed to the ESV. Discuss with all staff and build on the links you currently have. In a perfect world you will have the capacity to assign someone in the charity to take responsibility for promoting business volunteering.
- Get buy-in from staff by helping them to see the long-term potential. Demonstrate how a one-off decorating session could convert into a long-term volunteering relationship and on-going business support.
- Ask team members for their ideas in supporting and engaging volunteers. Get people involved, contributing their experience and skills to maintain relationships with employee volunteers; make it part of everyone's agenda. Don't forget to talk to your existing volunteers, they may be able to generate ideas for volunteering and provide employer links.
- Identify what your organisation would deem a success and put measures in place to track and report on this.
- Manage expectations; welcoming employee volunteers is not going to transform your work overnight, so start cautiously with what results your team can expect.
- Monetise the value of volunteer roles. For example, how much would you have to pay for advice, support work given by employee volunteers?

Step 3 - What Can We Do?

- What activity makes sense for the organisation? Put together a list of opportunities within the organisation where an EVS would add value.
- Gaining an understanding of the pros and cons of different models of EVS projects is important to enable employers to select the most appropriate approach
 - First time volunteers like a one-off, time-limited opportunity. A pilot!
 - Evenings and weekends get around some of the barriers employers face in releasing staff.
 - Group activities are often popular where colleagues and friends can volunteer together.
- What size of group can your organisation facilitate?
- Which Risk Assessments and insurances need to be sorted out?
- Pay particular heed to Safeguarding and any DBS requirements, particularly if beneficiaries are involved.
- How can you maintain an ongoing relationship with the business?
- Do you have enough resources?
- The ESV will need to be as cost effective as possible. As mentioned, it is important not to underestimate the number of staff and volunteer support time that may be required to make this work.



Step 4 - Finding and Approaching a Potential Business Partner

- Contacting potential partners is the critical first step in preparing EVS projects. Organisations have a variety of sources from which to identify potential partners. These include:
 - o Chamber of Commerce / Trade.
 - o Corporate Social Responsibility networks.
 - o EV networks.
 - o Business Clubs.
 - o Talk to other voluntary organisations and find out what has worked for them, where have they found business partners?
- If you have identified a potential EVS partner do your research into the business.
- Try to identify a mutual point of contact who could introduce you in the first instance.
- If going in cold, start with a clear outline of your aims, what you are looking for and what you could offer the business. Explain why you have approached them and why you feel you could be a good fit for one another
- Often a business will have a history of involvement with your organisation or have a particular interest in the work you do. For example, a garden centre may have an interest in building a sensory garden; whilst a construction company is a good fit for any building or renovation work.
- Remember a business may have barriers to taking part and it would be wise to acknowledge these in your initial communication.
- Outline clearly how a business partnership could progress, next steps etc.
- Don't assume that only large organisations have an interest or capacity in employer volunteering. Small businesses have smaller budgets and less employees, but they can be more flexible and responsive due to less complex infrastructure and red tape.
- Be ready. If a business approaches you, you need information and guidance ready to go. A simple business pack with examples of volunteering opportunities and how you recognise corporate supporters is a good starting point.
- Consider if there are ethical considerations that you need to bear in mind. Issues such as whether the business interest or approach goes against the values of the organisation should be taken into account.

Step 5 - Managing Volunteers

The successful involvement of Employer Supported Volunteers will often depend on the level of support required. At the minimum you should:

- Introduce them to the organisation, covering Health and Safety, layout, toilets, fire exits, kitchen facilities and use of equipment.
- Take the opportunity to tell volunteers about the work of the organisation and how their volunteering will impact on your organisation.
- Allocate a member of staff or regular experienced volunteer to support and supervise activity.
- Provide feedback and remember to thank volunteers and their employer.

Step 6 - Evaluation and Feedback

Both the organisation and employers need to assess whether EVS was a worthwhile activity for their organisation.

The following questions make a good starting point:

Charity /Voluntary Organisation:

- Did the result match the aim of the volunteering activity?
- Was it a positive experience for the voluntary organisation and its beneficiaries?
- Have there been measurable impacts on the organisation and its stakeholders?

Employer:

- Did it improve their profile?
- Did it better help the business understand the need in the community?
- Did it improve teamwork and leadership?
- Did it enhance employee skills?
- Were there other unexpected positives resulting from the volunteering?

Employees:

- Will they continue to volunteer in some capacity?
- Did the volunteering provide them with new challenges and skills or enhance existing skills?
- Did they find it worthwhile?
- Did they enjoy it?



CONCLUSION

We hope this document has been of use to you in deciding whether or not to look at setting up an EVS scheme and some of the issues you will need to consider.

As a final bit of advice, we would ask that you never underestimate the time an EVS will take to set up; even when there is a pre-existing relationship with a business.

On balance we've learnt a lot from our journey and would recommend dipping a toe in the water.

Good luck with your journey.



APPENDIX A - ABOUT Foothold CYMRU

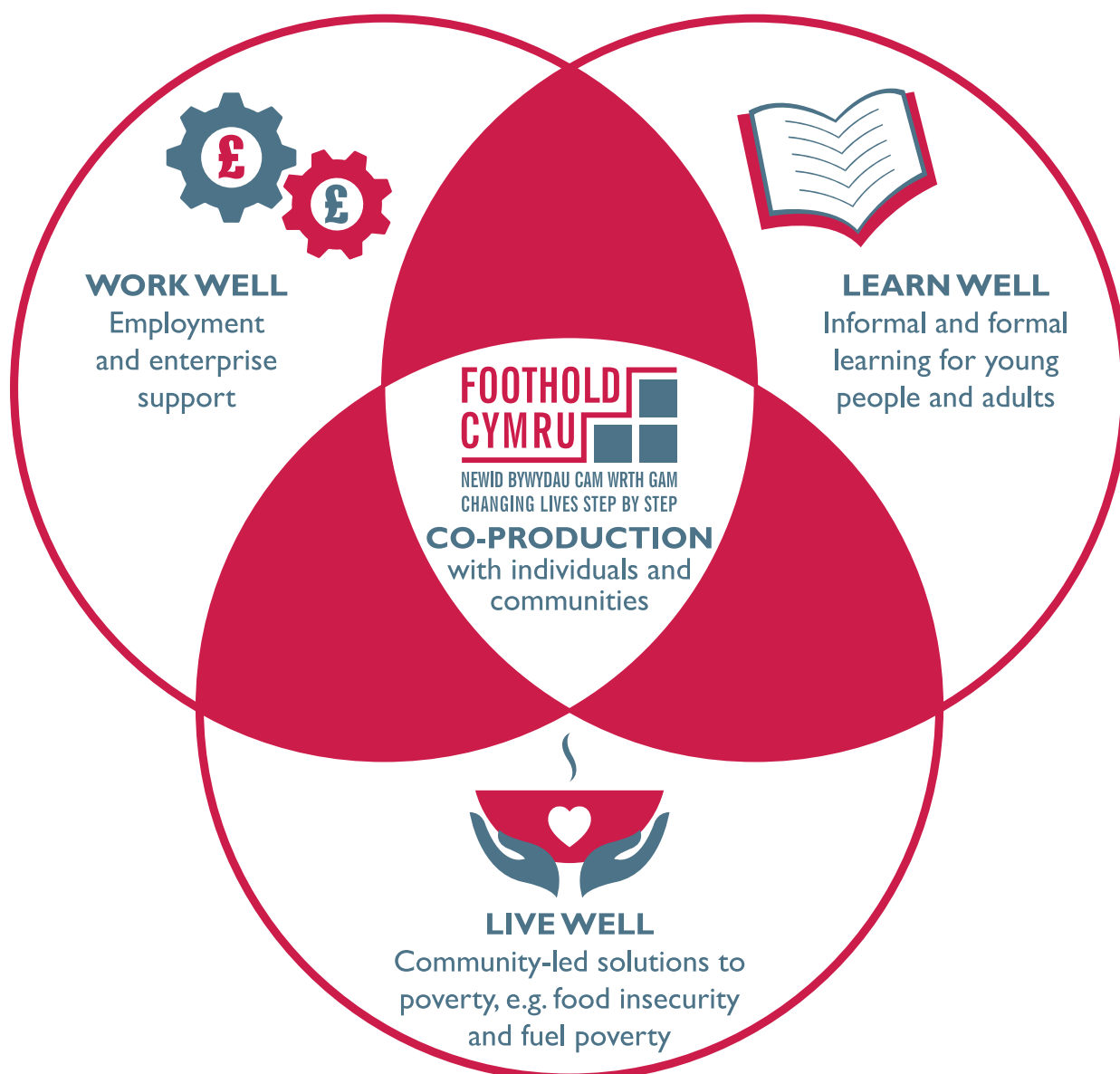
Foothold Cymru is a social justice charity. A community-based organisation working to reduce poverty and inequality through helping people exercise their own strengths and skills to achieve lasting change.

Mission

Our mission is to improve people's lives through addressing both the causes and consequences of poverty and inequality. We design our services with, not for, individuals and communities most affected by these issues.

What We Do

We focus on three interlinked areas:



Live Well:

We offer a range of services that supports financial inclusion. This ranges from access to affordable food, support for those in fuel poverty, budgeting, access to clothes, books and toys, art and craft materials for children and young people, laundry facilities, home decorating materials and tools and much more.

Learn Well:

We understand a traditional learning setting doesn't work for everyone. We offer a range of formal and informal learning opportunities for young people and adults who've have been failed by the traditional system.

Work Well:

We provide employment and enterprise support in response to our community's needs. As part of this we offer a range of employability training and paid work placements.

Underpinning our work is the knowledge that our planet is fragile and in crisis and sustainability is key to all the work we undertake.

APPENDIX B - CASE STUDIES

FAS and Foothold Cymru

Fire and Security Alarms (FAS) in Carmarthen was established in 2005 to meet the security needs of businesses and homeowners throughout South and West Wales.



Owners of FAS, Emyr Evans and Timothy Humfryes, have both been in the electrical and security industries since 1989.

Tim qualified as an electrician having served his time as an apprentice. He has specialised in fire, intruder, CCTV and electrical work for more than 20 years.

Emyr has a degree in electronics and has been specialising in intruder, nurse call and door access systems since qualifying as an apprentice in 1989.

They combine to make a team dedicated to providing a high quality and professional service to all their customers.



FAS supplied all Foothold Cymru buildings with security and fire alarms, and when they heard about our new Toolshed, they fitted CCTV in the workshop but did not charge the charity for labour, so that money could be spent on more tools and benefit the families we work with.

Having an existing relationship with FAS, asking the owners to join the Working Group was a forgone conclusion. Emyr was able to talk about his experiences in supporting small voluntary and charity groups and the difficulty faced by small businesses in providing on-going support. Emyr concludes “it’s always easier to provide a one-off contribution. But an ongoing commitment is difficult when you only have a small team and a busy business.”

Despite their hectic schedule FAS was happy to explore with us how an SME could be part of our EVS pilot programme. As we discussed various options it quickly became apparent that to fit in with FAS’s busy schedule an on-going commitment to offer Pro Bono work was the most obvious solution. Additionally, they were interested in helping us with fundraising for some of our forthcoming appeals. From Foothold Cymru’s perspective Pro Bono support for our core Health and Safety and Security activities was a hugely attractive proposition and would represent a substantial saving on our running costs. Already, advice and in-kind donations have been supplied and we are delighted with our new partnership with FAS, which translated an ad-hoc arrangement into an on-going commitment where each side understands the boundaries of the relationship.

Given their interest in fundraising on our behalf we asked FAS if we could be their Charity of the Year and we are currently in discussion as to how they can fundraise on our behalf. Discussions have centred around the local Llanelli Half-Marathon and other appeals we have planned for the remaining year.

For such a small business who are so busy, they have been extremely helpful and supportive of Foothold Cymru, and we are looking forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship.

T.A.D Builders Ltd. and Foothold Cymru

T.A.D. Builders Ltd. is a building and civil engineering firm who have been responsible for the successful delivery of a diverse range of prestigious projects throughout South Wales for both Public and Private sector clients. The company is a well-respected family company based in Furnace, Llanelli.

T.A.D. is run by two of its founders, Anthony & Delwyn Jones, who are proud to have the next generation of their family members taking a very active role in the day to day operations of the business. In doing so, they are ensuring that the company motto - "Building on Traditional Values", is maintained.

The Company is committed to long term relationships with its Clients and has a straightforward approach to customer care - essentially they treat their Clients as they would like to be treated themselves. Not only do they have a well-deserved reputation for high quality work, they are also known for supporting young people in the communities they work in.

T.A.D. took part in the initial focus group and research into Employee Volunteering Scheme with Foothold Cymru, and were keen to be involved. They wanted to give something back that the young people would use and enjoy, so having looked at all the projects within Foothold Cymru, they decided to build a Brick BBQ at the Foothold Cymru Community Garden.



The Community Garden is used to teach young people on Foothold Cymru projects how to grow their own food, harvest, and then produce nutritious meals with what they have grown. A BBQ was a perfect addition, as the young people could then not only cook the produce they had grown but share meals and socialise in a safe outdoor space. Many of the young people Foothold Cymru work with have social anxiety issues, and a BBQ was the ideal way to introduce them to group meals and socialising.

As T.A.D. have expert bricklayers, they were keen to get involved and provide this facility for the young people. Work has started on preparing the area in the garden by laying a concrete base, and in the next few weeks the builders will create a new facility for the young people which will be used every week.

Delwyn explained why T.A.D. were keen to be involved with the Employee Volunteering Scheme: “We are fortunate as a company that we can support communities, we are able to do and we want to give something back. Young people and their development are especially important to us, so when the offer to work with Foothold Cymru was offered we jumped at the chance!”

For Foothold Cymru, working with T.A.D. has been a new and beneficial opportunity to work closely with a new partner as part of the EVS scheme. An important project has benefited from a brand new, purpose built, BBQ which will prove a fantastic resource to the young people we work with and allow us to do more to support increased food poverty resilience amongst young people in the community. We also hope that it will be the start of an ongoing relationship with T.A.D.



TRJ Supporting Foothold Cymru



TRJ was started by Thomas Richard Jones in 1935 when disillusioned by working for others, decided to go alone and started what was to become a highly successful and well respected family run business. The Company became limited in 1971 with the brothers working alongside Mr. Jones Senior until his retirement in 1973.

In the 1980s Huw's sons, Dafydd and Owain, both took an active role in in the business, followed by David's son, John. Three generations of the same family are now leading the company into the 21st Century.

The company's motto "Building on a firm foundation" is testament to the efforts put in by senior generations and is a tribute to their legacy.



Foothold Cymru already had an existing relationship with TRJ. When we opened the first ever tool lending library in Carmarthenshire, they very generously supported Foothold Cymru with donations of Tools and Personal Protective Equipment that were added to the library and made available for members to loan.

We reconnected again with TRJ as part of our work around Employer Volunteering. A change of staff meant that Stuart Thomas was appointed to connect with local charities and community groups and he became our main contact as we explored together how we could set up a mutually supportive EVS programme with the business.

Stuart explained how TRJ's Corporate Volunteering aims were aligned with the geographical areas they were working in. Most of TRJ's contracts stipulate that volunteering work was to be carried out in the

communities they were working in. This meant they were now restricted in the support they could provide, but they remained very positive about helping a local charity.

Foothold Cymru were in the process of setting up a new community repaint store as part of our Zero Waste Hub. We were in need of some expert help in setting up the repaint store and also to do some much needed painting and decorating within the Zero Waste Hub.

Steve, the painter from TRJ, joined staff for a day in May 2022, and after ensuring all the newly delivered paints in the repaint shop were stored correctly and safely, he made short work of refurbishing our interior corridor and created a painted feature wall in the tool library.



Not only did he carry out a professional painting job, but whilst doing so gave advice on painting, preparation and cutting in to the Foothold Cymru work placements, who will be working in the repaint shop.

The Foothold Cymru staff and work placements will now be able to pass on this new knowledge to customers of the store, and show them the quality of the recycled paint that was used on the walls of the corridor. This will help so many of our families save money, as they can refurbish their own homes cheaply and with expert advice passed on from TRJ via Foothold Cymru.

Further Reading / Resources:

The following links are a great resource to help you on your way:

EVEN Publications: Employee Volunteering.

<https://www.europeanvolunteercentre.org/evenpublications>

Employer Supported Volunteering: A guide produced by CIPD to support employers.

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/volunteering/employer-supported-factsheet>

Volunteering is the Business: A study detailing employers' and employee's attitudes to workplace-based volunteering.

Volunteering to Learn: An in-depth study capturing the educational and personal development benefits for employees who volunteer.

[volunteering-to-learn_tcm18-9086.pdf \(cipd.co.uk\)](#)

Time Well Spent: This is a report of a 2019 survey carried out by NCVO which benchmarks current corporate volunteering activity and presents the challenges and benefits of such schemes.

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/volunteering-policy/research/time-well-spent>

The website of Business in the Community in Wales:

<https://www.bitc.org.uk/business-in-the-community-cymru/>

The Current State of Corporate Volunteering - a Third Sector Perspective: A 2018 study published by the Corporate Volunteering Network.



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