

Annual Report 2023/24

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Welcome from our Chairman and CEO

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud of the progress we've made towards our vision of a Wales free from poverty, where social, economic, and environmental justice is within reach for all. The challenges we face, both globally and locally, are profound, but so too is the resilience and determination of the communities we serve.

In these difficult times, our mission has never been more urgent. Families across Wales are struggling with the impact of economic uncertainty, environmental challenges, and social inequalities. Yet, despite these obstacles, we continue to witness extraordinary acts of solidarity, hope, and transformation. Our work, guided by our core values and strategic priorities, has had a tangible impact on empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and driving sustainable change.

This year, we expanded our efforts to not only meet immediate needs but also to address the root causes of poverty and inequality. Through our focus on education, environmental justice, and community development, we are creating long-term pathways for growth and resilience. We are proud of the collaborations we've formed and the progress we've achieved, but we know there is much more to do.

At a time when funding from Trusts and Foundations is under severe pressure, we're delighted that several new funders – including King Charles III Charity – have chosen to invest in Foothold's work, adding to our existing portfolio of prestigious funders. This reflects both our commitment to coproduction with our community, and our investment in a team and systems which are dedicated to ensuring quality and continuous improvement.

We are deeply grateful to our staff, volunteers, Board, Steering Committee members, partners, funders and supporters. Without your unwavering dedication, none of this would be possible. Together, we are making meaningful strides towards a fairer, greener, and more just Wales, a Wales where we have played our part in supporting essential change.

Thank you for standing with us. We look forward to building on this momentum in the coming year and continuing our journey toward a brighter future for all.



Mike Theodoulou, Chief Executive Officer



Fred Roberts, Chair of Trustees

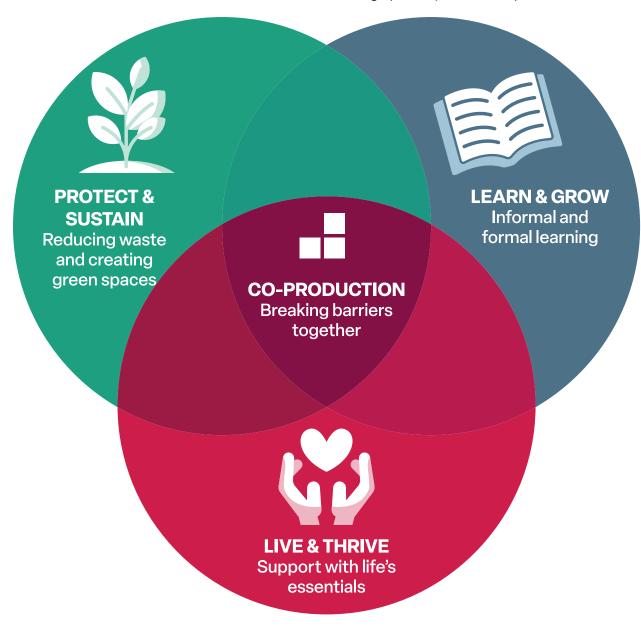


Foothold Cymru is a social justice organisation, established over 30 years ago. Our vision is of a Wales where every individual enjoys a decent standard of living, free from poverty, with social, economic and environmental justice for all.

Our mission is to support people to address the causes and consequences of poverty and inequality, through designing our services with, not for, individuals and communities most affected by these issues. We support people to thrive, not just survive. Our services change lives and are grouped under the three themes:

- Live and Thrive
- Learn and Grow
- Protect and Sustain

These are the areas which our community members tell us present the biggest challenges for them and where our evidence and feedback shows we are making a positive, sustained impact.



Each one is a vital part of our journey towards our vision of a Wales with social, economic and environmental justice for all; each area is connected, so our response must be too.

This work is underpinned by our recognition that the solutions, and the skills to put them in place, are often to be found in the lived experiences and understanding of the people and communities affected. Our recognition finds expression in projects that develop the capacity of individuals to contribute and our determination to put co-production at the heart of all our work. Our objectives and activities reflect the charity's principles, which are:

Our principles

Community: Strong communities as loci for mutual support and the realisation of individual potential.

Human enterprise and endeavour: as the drivers for individual and communities to address the challenges they face.

Sustainable development: through which the security of future generations is protected by the responsible practices and use of resources of the current generation.

Education: both formal and informal, as a means by which individual potential can be realised.

Our strategic priorities

Collaboration: We believe partnerships are essential for creating meaningful change. By working together with communities, businesses, other charities, and the public sector, we can pool resources and develop comprehensive solutions to social, environmental, and economic challenges. Collaboration makes our efforts more effective and inclusive.

Transparency: Openness builds trust. We maintain transparency in our operations and decision-making to keep our stakeholders informed and involved. This approach reinforces our commitment to a just and fair Wales.

Sustainability: We focus on long-term solutions that benefit current and future generations. By integrating sustainability into our work, we aim to create lasting positive change for people and the environment in Wales.

Empowerment: We empower individuals and communities to shape their own futures, amplifying voices that are not always heard. Through education, skill-building, and advocacy, we provide the tools to support people to overcome hardship and inequality. This enables everyone to actively participate in achieving social justice.



Impact report – Timeline highlights from the year 2023/24:

This year has been both busy and exciting for Foothold Cymru! Staying true to our commitment to tackle the causes and consequences of poverty and inequality, we launched new volunteer and environmental projects, supported people of all ages through informal learning and activities, and provided families with access to affordable food, helping them make ends meet.



AVIVA

Nominated by Davies Craddock for a £5k grant in the AVIVA Community Awards-and we won!



Llanelli 1/2 Marathon

Tata Steel and Davies Craddock staff participated in the Llanelli 1/2 Marathon, raising thousands to support our work.



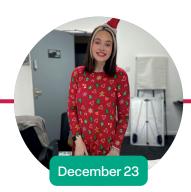
Website Launch

Launched our new website, designed by local agency Tinint giving a more accessible and accurate image of the services we provide.



BBC Wales feature

BBC Wales featured us, showcasing how Foothold Cymru is helping communities tackle the costof-living crisis, especially in ensuring no one goes hungry.



Christmas

Staff packing Christmas gifts for the Children and young people we support.

Here are some highlights:





Time Together

Time Together After School Clubs launched, providing free extracurricular activities for over 150 children throughout the project.



Volunteens

Our Volunteens project kicked off, offering nearly 300 young people the chance to volunteer in their community.



Summer of Fun

Our first Summer of Fun club provided free activities, breakfast and lunch for over 80 families throughout the summer.



Fruit and Veg Hub

Marked the end of our successful pilot Fruit and Veg Hub, delivering locally grown produce to public sector kitchens across Carmarthenshire, demonstrating how public procurement can work to support small growers.



National

Celebrated our incredible

Volunteer Week

volunteers during National Volunteer Week.



Commuity Cooking Workshops

Our weekly Community Cooking Workshops remained popular, providing hot lunches in our Warm Hub and keeping the community fed and warm.



Full Circle Project

Our first Full Circle Community Litter Pick saw 34 volunteers collect over 40 bags of rubbish! Helping to transform Llanelli into a Zero Waste Town.



Bright Sparks

Our Bright Sparks project distributed refurbished laptops and phones to families in need, repurposing and repairing waste destined for landfill.

Trustees' Report

Achievements and Performance



Our vision of a poverty-free Wales drives us to alleviate hardship by addressing both immediate needs and tackling the root causes of deprivation. We empower local people to develop their own solutions, from community-run food hubs to sustainable gardening projects, fostering an environment where individuals and families can thrive. Our priority is to build long-term resilience, ensuring everyone can reach their full potential, with no one left behind.

Why we are needed

Carmarthenshire faces growing levels of poverty and deprivation, often exceeding national averages:

- In 2022-23, 34.5% of Carmarthenshire households lived in poverty, compared to the Welsh average of 33%. The 8th highest level of poverty in Wales.
- This represents a stark 6.3% increase from the previous year, with 29,444 households now affected.
- 12% of Carmarthenshire households experience material deprivation, higher than the Welsh average of 11.3% (2021/22).
- Three areas in Carmarthenshire rank within Wales' top 100 most deprived: Tyisha (17th), Glanymor (68th), and Bigyn (84th).
- Child poverty remains critical, with 31.3% of children affected, placing Carmarthenshire 10th highest in Wales.

The relentless rise in living costs has created unprecedented challenges, particularly for those already struggling financially. The surge in energy and food costs during 2023/24 has intensified pressure on family incomes, making our work more crucial than ever.

*Stats taken from the 'Carmarthenshire Tackling Poverty Plan 2023'.

What we do

- Reduce household costs: Our Community Food Stores, clothes and school uniform exchanges, and holiday clubs help lowincome families stretch their budgets.
- Enhance financial literacy: We empower individuals through money management courses, equipping them with essential financial skills.
- Provide energy advice: We support households in reducing energy costs, promoting both financial and environmental sustainability.
- Offer mentoring: Our Family Guides provide tailored support to families struggling on low incomes, helping them navigate challenges and build resilience.
- Co-produce with lived experience: We actively collaborate with individuals who have experienced poverty, co-producing services to ensure they are accessible, relevant, and truly effective.

Our impact this year

- Generated £678,809 in individual household savings, directly improving the financial stability of our community members
- Supported over 2,500 individuals through our food services, reducing food insecurity in Carmarthenshire.
- Conducted over 100 energy advice sessions, helping families lower their utility bills by an average of 15%.
- Provided financial literacy training to nearly 300 individuals, with 80% reporting improved money management skills.
- Engaged over 50 volunteers with lived experience, enhancing the relevance and accessibility of our services.
- Advocated for policy changes, contributing to local government initiatives aimed at reducing poverty.

Through these efforts, we've not only provided immediate relief but also empowered our community members to build a more secure future. Our work continues to be vital in the face of ongoing economic challenges, and we remain committed to our vision of a poverty-free Wales.





We envision a Wales where economic progress and environmental stewardship go hand in hand. Through our strategic zerowaste project, delivery initiatives such as our e-waste project, and a range of community-led work such as local food-growing schemes and litter picks, we champion environmental justice while amplifying the voices of those often unheard. While government policies are essential, true change happens at the local level. We promote a circular economy by providing opportunities for communities to engage in activities that reduce waste through repair and reuse.

Why we are needed

- Local people often lack the resources and opportunities to adopt circular economy practices, complain of being excluded from climate change discussions, and resent solutions imposed by government at all levels.
- Our community is increasingly recognising the links between cost savings and zero waste initiatives such as repair and recycling, and is requesting help to respond to this.
- Air quality in built-up areas is poor.
- Limited access to green spaces.
- Fly-tipping and litter in local areas, including areas of natural beauty such as beaches and parks.

What we do

- E-Waste solutions: Train young people to repair electronic devices, diverting waste from landfills. This enables us to provide refurbished technology to community members who are digitally excluded.
- Community repaint store: Offer recycled paint at low cost, reducing waste and making home improvements accessible.
- Arts and crafts scrap store: Provide a space for exchanging craft materials, promoting creative reuse.
- Swap events: Host community item exchanges, fostering a culture of reuse.
- Tool library: Offer tool lending services and collect unused tools for community use.
- Clothes and uniform exchange: Facilitate the exchange of children's clothing and uniforms.
- Composting initiatives: Provide a community composting site and education on home composting techniques.
- Repair cafés: Host events where volunteers help fix broken items, promoting repair over disposal.
- **Upcycling workshops:** Teach techniques to transform discarded items into useful products.
- **Zero waste education:** Conduct workshops on reducing waste in everyday life.
- Community garden: Grow food sustainably, supporting our community fridge and teaching home gardening skills.

Our impact this year

- Diverted 25 tonnes of waste from landfill, including e-waste, food, textiles and paint.
- Educated over 500 community members on zero waste principles, with 73% reporting reduced household waste.
- Organised a variety of exchange events, with nearly 2500 items finding new homes and destined for reuse.
- Repaired nearly 500 items, extending their lifespan and saving resources.
- Through these initiatives, we've not only reduced waste and resource consumption, but also fostered a strong sense of community and environmental responsibility. Our work continues to be crucial in building a more sustainable and equitable Wales, demonstrating that environmental action can go hand-in-hand with social and economic benefits.





At Foothold Cymru, we believe strong communities are the foundation for positive change. Our focus is on empowering local people to come together, identify shared challenges, and develop their own solutions. We do this by building skills, fostering collaboration, and tapping into existing community strengths.

Why we are needed

- In Wales, 25% of people aged 65 and over live alone, increasing their risk of social isolation and loneliness. By 2030, it's projected that 1 in 4 people in Wales will be aged 65 and over.
- Areas with strong social connections show up to 15% lower mortality rates.
- Communities with higher social capital are 2-5 times more likely to recover quickly from disasters.
- Volunteering contributes an estimated 1.7 billion annually to the Welsh Economy.
- 32% of Wales's population lives in rural areas, often facing issues of isolation and limited access to services.
- Areas with strong community development show up to 30% higher levels of trust between residents.

*Stats taken from WCVA National Survey of Wales 2023

What we do

- Volunteering programmes: We create diverse volunteering roles that allow individuals to contribute their skills and time whilst building meaningful relationships, experience and new skills.
- Shared spaces: We work with communities to establish and maintain spaces and groups that serve as a physical gathering point for socialising and sharing experiences.
- Capacity building: We provide training, mentoring and hands on experience to help community members to develop leadership, project management and problem-solving skills. Our approach focuses on identifying and leveraging existing community strengths and resources.
- Community cohesion events: In partnership with Llanelli Multicultural Network, we host events that bring together people to celebrate diversity and promote understanding.
- Co-production: We bring diverse community members together regularly to collaboratively design solutions that meet community needs.

Our impact this year

Our community-focused initiatives have yielded significant positive outcomes across various aspects of community life:

- We established four new food alliances in rural Carmarthenshire to tackle food insecurity, building a sustainable legacy.
- Our various community initiatives supported over 500 individuals to connect, with 83% reporting increased community engagement.
- Our volunteers contributed 5,000+ hours during the vear.
- The co-production and lived experience groups we facilitated have directly shaped local projects, like our Community Food Hub in Llanelli and our Children In Need funded project "Build On Red".
- Our partnership events with Llanelli Multicultural Network improved intercultural awareness for 75% of participants.
- Using social return on investment methodologies, we've calculated that our activities delivered £5.40 for every £1 invested in the organisation.

These outcomes demonstrate tangible progress in building stronger, more cohesive communities across Wales. By empowering local people, fostering connections, and building on community assets, we're contributing to a more resilient and engaged society. Our work continues to address the pressing need for increased civic participation while nurturing a sense of belonging and shared purpose among residents.



In Wales, education and lifelong learning are crucial for social mobility and economic justice. By increasing engagement with learning, we empower individuals to gain essential skills and knowledge, enabling them to succeed and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Education serves as a pathway out of poverty, allowing everyone to aspire to and achieve a better future.

Why We Are Needed

- The NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate for 16–18-year-olds in Wales was 6.6% in the year ending March 2024, increasing to 14.5% of people aged 19 to 24.
- In Carmarthenshire, 31.3% of children live in poverty, placing it 10th highest in Wales for child poverty rates.
- 12% of adults in Wales lack basic digital skills.
- Wales lags behind other UK nations in reading, mathematics, and science according to the 2018 PISA results.
- Only 67.9% of working-age adults in Wales were qualified to at least Level 2 in 2021, lower than the UK average of 78.2%.

*All the statistics here are from ONS data.

What We Do

- Afterschool clubs and activities: Engaging extracurricular programmes exploring arts, sports, and STEM, as well as promoting soft skills such as teamwork, problem solving and communication skills.
- Life skills training: Workshops on cooking, housekeeping, and personal development.
- Employment & career guidance: CV writing, job search techniques, interview skills workshops, internships, and placements.
- Workshops and courses: Diverse learning opportunities in arts, crafts, cooking, and gardening.
- **Financial literacy workshops:** Programmes on budgeting, saving, and understanding credit.
- Parenting support workshops: Equipping parents with strategies to support their children's learning.
- Digital skills training: Providing free access to computers and infrastructure, Wifi, and digital skills training.

Our impact this year

- 76% of participants reported increased confidence in tackling new challenges.
- Afterschool and young volunteer programmes engaged nearly 400 young people, with 85% showing improved confidence and skills.
- 90% of workshop attendees reported gaining new skills directly applicable to their daily lives or career prospects.
- Financial literacy workshops and support helped 180 individuals create personal budgets.
- Digital inclusion initiatives provided internet access to 100 previously unconnected households.





We remain focused on addressing the high levels of poverty and deprivation across the county, particularly in the most affected areas, whether rural or urban. With over a third of households living in poverty, and child poverty rates exceeding the national average, our work is more important than ever. In 2024/25, we will expand our support services to help more families and individuals gain access to essential resources, including financial advice and employment opportunities.



The scale of the challenges we face demands a collective effort. In the coming year, we will focus on strengthening our partnerships with local authorities, businesses, community groups, and other charities to maximise our impact. We will also explore new funding opportunities to expand our services, ensuring that we are well-positioned to respond to emerging needs in the community.



Education and skills development

Building on our work to close the attainment gap and support young people's futures, we will enhance our programmes aimed at improving educational outcomes and lifelong learning. By collaborating with local schools, training providers, and employers, we will provide pathways for young people to engage in education, training, and meaningful employment. Our goal is to reduce the percentage of school leavers not in education, employment, or training (NEET) and ensure that young people in Carmarthenshire have the skills they need to succeed.



A vision for social justice

Our overarching goal remains to create a Carmarthenshire where everyone can thrive. By promoting social, economic, and environmental justice, we aim to build stronger, more resilient communities. In 2024/25, we will continue to amplify the voices of those we support, advocating for policies and initiatives that promote equality and justice across the county.

As we move into the next year, we are motivated by the progress we have made and inspired by the resilience of the people we serve. While the road ahead may be challenging, we are confident that by working together, we can make 2024/25 a year of meaningful change for the communities we serve.



Environmental challenges, including flooding and pollution, continue to threaten the wellbeing of our communities and the natural environment. In 2024/25, we will strengthen our focus on sustainability, working with local partners to support biodiversity, reduce waste, and recycle, reuse and repair. Our commitment to reducing carbon emissions will continue, as we aim to contribute to Carmarthenshire's progress toward lower CO² emissions and climate resilience.





Case Study: Bright Sparks – Tackling Digital Exclusion

The Bright Sparks project, funded by Hubbub and Virgin O2, provided invaluable support to those experiencing digital exclusion in the community. The initiative focused on training young people to repair donated technology, which was then redistributed to local residents in need. This approach not only developed technical skills in young people but also directly benefited those who could not afford essential tech devices.

One of the most poignant stories came from a local care team supporting a non-verbal client. His tablet, crucial for communication, had broken, and he was unable to afford a replacement. The situation caused significant distress for both him and his carers. Bright Sparks stepped in to provide a refurbished tablet at no cost, restoring his ability to communicate. This intervention reduced his isolation and brought immense relief to his care team. In another instance, a young man who had lost his possessions in a house fire received a repaired laptop from Bright Sparks. With this device, he was able to continue his online training, job search, and access entertainment, even while in temporary accommodation.

The project also reached older adults. During the Big Giveaway event, a woman in her 60s received her first-ever laptop, allowing her to take that first step to overcome digital exclusion. Additionally, a young girl who had recently started secondary school received a laptop, enabling her to complete her homework. One particularly moving moment came when a Syrian refugee woman waited an hour before the event opened to secure a laptop for her children. The relief and gratitude she expressed highlighted the profound impact of this initiative on her family's future.

The success of Bright Sparks extended beyond individual cases. The project partnered with local schools to provide workshops on basic computer maintenance and repair. This not only enhanced the sustainability of the initiative but also inspired some students to consider careers in technology. Furthermore, Bright Sparks collaborated with local businesses to secure regular donations of outdated but functional equipment. This partnership not only increased the project's capacity to help more people but also raised awareness about digital exclusion in the corporate sector.

The project's impact was quantifiable and significant. Over its first year, Bright Sparks refurbished and distributed 104 devices, trained 26 young people in tech repair, and diverted an estimated 500kg of e-waste from landfills. The initiative also hosted community workshops supporting 119 local people to learn more about how to prevent ewaste.

Bright Sparks both diverted substantial e-waste from landfill and provided essential tools and restored dignity and opportunity to those facing digital exclusion. By addressing the environmental and social aspects of technology use, the project created a model for sustainable, community-driven solutions to digital inequality.





Foothold Cymru, in partnership with the Llanelli Multicultural Network, organised a groundbreaking event in February 2024 to address recent racial tensions in the community. The initiative aimed to unite young people and families from diverse backgrounds, strengthening community bonds and highlighting shared values through creative expression and cultural exchange.

The centrepiece of the event was a collaborative graffiti wall themed around "What home means to me". This artistic project provided a powerful visual representation of unity, allowing young participants to express their thoughts on belonging. The wall became a symbol of shared identity, transcending cultural differences.

The inclusive gathering featured a range of activities designed to celebrate diversity and foster understanding:

- Cultural storytelling sessions encouraged participants to share personal experiences, building empathy and cross-cultural
- Interactive stations showcased artifacts, traditions, and cuisines from various cultures, celebrating the community's rich diversity.
- Live performances featuring music and dance from different cultural backgrounds energised the event.
- A cultural exchange zone facilitated the swapping of cultural items, promoting connections and perspective-sharing.

The impact was profound. Over 200 attendees from at least 12 different cultural backgrounds participated. Post-event surveys revealed that 95% of participants felt their understanding of other cultures had improved, while 89% reported a stronger sense of community belonging.

Nia*, a 15-year-old participant, reflected, "I've lived in Llanelli all my life, but today I learned so much about my neighbours' cultures. It made me realise we're all part of one community."

The event successfully reminded attendees that shared values and a sense of belonging far outweigh divisions. Young people reported feeling a deeper connection to peers from different backgrounds, with the graffiti wall standing as a lasting testament to the power of collaborative art in bridging cultural divides.

This case study demonstrates how creative, culturally sensitive initiatives can effectively address community tensions and foster unity. By combining art, storytelling, and cultural exchange, Foothold Cymru created a platform for young people in the town to embrace both their individual identities and the diversity around them. The success of this event lays the groundwork for a more cohesive community in Llanelli. It provides a replicable model for other communities facing similar challenges, showing how engaging young people through creativity and cultural appreciation can build lasting bridges and promote social harmony.





Carly*, who is in her mid-thirties, is married and the mother of 4 children. Carly falls into the group often described as, "just about managing". Whilst increased prices and stagnant wages are taking their toll on her family financial situation, through stringent household management and budgeting Carly makes sure her family get by. This was not always the case: having had her first child at 17. Carly found herself a single mother when her son was only a year old. She explains that these were tough times and that she had often struggled financially and if it wasn't for the support of family she would often have had to do without.

Carly joined Foothold Cymru in the summer of 2023. She had seen a social media post describing our Food Hub services and initially signed up as a member of our Community Food Store. She not only liked the environmental aspect of using surplus food but also the opportunity it gave her of making her family budget go that much further, particularly towards the end of each month when finances become very tight.

Whilst visiting the food store Carly was made aware of some of the other services delivered by Foothold Cymru. Carly, who described herself as a 'not very good confident cook' hesitantly agreed to attend one of our cooking on a budget course to see how she would get on. To her surprise, she had a great time and learnt a lot about preparing and cooking healthy meals on a budget.

As weeks passed, Carly's confidence blossomed, evident in her increasing participation and leadership within the sessions. Encouraged by her newfound culinary skills and burgeoning confidence, she took the leap to become a Food Hub Volunteer. Months down the line, Carly has emerged as one of the organisation's most dedicated volunteers, actively contributing to community cooking sessions and assisting in the preparation of meals for the community warm hub.

Additionally, she finds enjoyment in supporting parents and children alike during summer holiday clubs, fostering connections and promoting healthy eating habits.

When asked about her motivation for volunteering Carly reflected, "It's just giving back isn't it, I had help and now I enjoy helping other people".





Case Study:

Building community connections through volunteering

Emma*, a 24-year-old single mother, struggled with financial hardship and isolation while raising two young children. With limited support and few employment opportunities, she sought ways to build her confidence, develop new skills, and connect with her community. She discovered our organisation through a volunteer at Foothold, who encouraged her to join in with one of our workshops.

Emma joined our community cooking scheme, initially helping out in the kitchen. Although she had no formal training, her passion for food and her eagerness to assist others made her a natural fit. As her confidence grew, and after earning her food hygiene certificate, her responsibilities expanded to preparing ingredients, leading workshops, and supporting other participants during cooking sessions.

Through volunteering, Emma developed skills in food safety and kitchen management, while building strong connections within the community. The experience empowered her, reducing her isolation and providing a renewed sense of purpose. It also opened doors to potential careers in catering and hospitality, inspiring her to pursue catering studies at college.

Emma's personal experience of hardship allowed her to relate to other participants, making the cooking classes more inclusive and engaging. Her enthusiasm and commitment were instrumental in helping us expand our cooking programme, reaching even more members of the community. Her personal growth also encouraged others to get involved.

Emma's story illustrates the transformative impact of volunteering, benefiting both individuals and the organisations they support. She gained valuable skills and confidence, while the charity thrived thanks to her passion and unique perspective.

Emma reflects on her journey: "Volunteering in the kitchen has given me a purpose. It wasn't just about cooking – it was about connecting with people, learning new skills, and feeling part of something bigger. Now, I can see a future for myself and my kids that I never thought possible before. This experience has truly changed my life."





Case Study: Amplifying Unheard Voices in Climate Action

In January 2024, Foothold Cymru orchestrated a groundbreaking "Climate Conversation in Llanelli", bringing together local people to discuss climate change and explore pathways to a fairer, more sustainable future.

The event's most significant revelation was that many participants felt unheard in the climate debate. For most, this was their first opportunity to share thoughts on climate change and initiatives like Net Zero. This underscored the critical need to involve a broader range of voices in climate conversations.

Participants engaged in small group discussions across four thematic stations: Transport, Food, Community Involvement, and Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. They highlighted several barriers to sustainable living, including poor public transport, limited access to green initiatives, and economic constraints. Despite these challenges, there was strong enthusiasm for community-led solutions, with ideas ranging from food resilience projects to waste reduction initiatives and resourcesharing programmes.

The Climate Conversation directly influenced Foothold Cymru's ongoing Full Circle project, aimed at supporting Llanelli's transition to a Zero Waste Town. Participants' input is now shaping this three-year initiative, ensuring it aligns with community needs and aspirations.

Personal stories highlighted the event's significance. For example, one participant, Sarah*, shared, "This was my first time discussing climate change. I never thought my voice mattered, but now I see how my daily choices can make a difference." Another participant, Rhys, added, "I've always felt climate talk was for others, not me. Today, I realised we all have a role in creating a sustainable Llanelli.'

By amplifying marginalised voices and fostering communitydriven solutions, Foothold Cymru is setting a model for inclusive climate action across Wales. This case study demonstrates that effective climate action must involve and empower all members of the community, especially those traditionally excluded from these crucial conversations which serve as a foundation for ongoing social improvement.





Eva*, a 17-year-old with ADHD, initially approached the Build on Red project with scepticism. Having struggled in traditional education, she doubted that adults would take young people seriously and felt disconnected from her hometown of Llanelli, which she saw as plagued by drug misuse, poverty, and lack of opportunity.

The Children in Need-funded project aimed to empower youth aged 14-19 to address social issues. Focusing on youth mental health post-Covid lockdown, young people chose three initiatives: creating a mental health awareness campaign on social media, creating a wellness garden, and lobbying to increase mental health resources.

Despite her initial hesitation, Eva became increasingly engaged. She spoke passionately about how poverty, bullying, and social inequalities contribute to mental health struggles, describing a "learned worthlessness" in her town. Her involvement grew as the project addressed these issues through various activities.

The project's early sessions focused on building confidence and recognising strengths. Eva received training in communication techniques, budgeting, and social action dynamics. These educational components reignited her interest in learning and gave her tools to engage more deeply with the project.

Eva's transformation was remarkable. She evolved from a quiet observer to an active leader, contributing significantly to social media plans, wellness garden design, and even participating in filming to share her experiences.

Her growth is captured in her own words: "Build on Red is my life," and "I feel more confident in myself and how I talk to people." Eva even named the project "Build on Red," which was voted in by the group, marking her emergence as a strong voice within the initiative.

This case study demonstrates how re-engagement with education, when rooted in personal interests and social impact, can lead to profound personal growth. Eva's journey from scepticism to leadership illustrates the power of youth-led initiatives in fostering confidence, skills, and community engagement.





In a small North Carmarthenshire village, Ruth*, a single mother of two, faced significant challenges in providing for her family's dietary needs. Her young daughter's gluten intolerance, combined with their rural location, created a perfect storm of difficulties. Living 30 minutes from the nearest supermarket, Ruth struggled to access affordable gluten-free options for her daughter's school lunches. The local shop's prices were three to four times higher than supermarkets, and gluten-free products were scarce. This situation made it impossible for Ruth to fully utilise free school meals and made social events challenging, risking her daughter's isolation.

Through a local organisation, Ruth discovered Y Fasged Siopa Project, a project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, to tackle hardship caused by rural isolation. The service provided handpicked gluten-free items, including cakes, pasta, pies, and cereals, as well as ingredients for homemade treats. This solution not only offered significant cost savings compared to the local shop, but also eliminated time-consuming trips to distant supermarkets.

The impact on Ruth's family was profound. The service resulted in considerable household savings and increased the variety and enjoyment of meals for her daughter. Regular deliveries reduced feelings of social isolation stemming from dietary restrictions, and both mother and child eagerly anticipated each box's arrival. Ruth shared, "Thanks to Y Fasged Siopa, I haven't had to resort to a food bank to afford the extra costs of meeting my little girl's special dietary needs."

This case study highlights the critical role of targeted food services in addressing rural food insecurity, particularly for families with special dietary requirements. Y Fasged Siopa not only provided essential nutrition but also fostered a sense of inclusion and normality for Ruth's family. The service demonstrates how innovative solutions can bridge gaps in rural food access, improving quality of life and reducing financial strain for vulnerable families.





The Family Guides Project, funded by the Moondance Foundation and Trusthouse Charitable Foundation, aims to support low-income families needing additional assistance. The Taylor family exemplifies how this initiative can make a significant difference.

Tim, Sharon*, and their four children face multiple challenges. Tim, the sole earner, manages ADHD while working. Sharon, unable to work due to chronic illness, hopes to return but struggles with debilitating pain and exhaustion. Their oldest daughter, Helen has Asperger's and receives Personal Independence Payment (PIP) but faces difficulties securing a college placement, whilst the two younger children also have complex health issues.

Despite Tim's income and Universal Credit, the family's financial situation is precarious. Tim's struggles with bill management and financial planning have led to substantial debt. Their daughter Aurora excels academically but exhibits volatile behaviour at home and awaits an ADHD assessment. Sharon's physical health issues are compounded by emotional struggles and lack of personal time.

The Family Guides project has provided comprehensive support for the Taylors. Sharon now participates in Foothold Cymru's social activities, including cooking classes, arts and crafts groups, mindfulness walks, and drop-in sessions. To address their financial difficulties, the family receives weekly budgeting sessions and has been referred to Turn to Us for additional support. They also access Foothold's Community Store for affordable, healthy food and plan to utilise other services like the Tool Library and uniform exchange.

The project has helped Aurora secure a college interview and ensured her ADHD referral is back on track. The younger children now participate in free after-school clubs and ageappropriate activities. The children have been referred to Young Carers, providing Sharon with personal time and the children with access to additional social activities and support.

As the Family Guides project continues to assist the Taylors, the goal is to gradually reduce support as they become more self-sufficient and confident in managing their challenges. This holistic approach addresses not only the family's immediate needs but also works towards long-term stability and well-being.

The Taylor family's story highlights the complex interplay of health issues, financial struggles, and social challenges that many families face. It also demonstrates how targeted support can make a significant impact, providing practical assistance and empowering families to build resilience and work towards a more stable future.

Strategic Report

The organisation





The charity's objectives are to develop the capacity and skills of members of socially and economically disadvantaged communities in Wales, enabling them to better identify and meet their needs, and to participate more fully in society. This is achieved, but not limited to, the following:

- Equipping disadvantaged or excluded individuals with the skills and competencies necessary to take responsibility for meeting their own needs and those of their communities.
- Delivering formal, informal, and community education programmes that offer disadvantaged individuals' opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications or develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for independent living and the labour market.
- Promoting, providing, and facilitating volunteering, training, and work experience opportunities for unemployed or underemployed individuals facing challenges in the labour market.

The Board Functions of the Board

The Board of Trustees fulfils the following functions:

- Control of the charity, its property, and funds.
- Responsibility for the charity's overall governance and strategic direction.
- Development of the aims, objectives, and organisational goals in line with the legal and regulatory framework of the sector and the charity's governing document, striving for best governance practices.
- Upholding the fiduciary duty, ensuring public confidence and trust.
- Interviewing, appointing, and monitoring the work of senior staff. All trustees must sign a Code of Conduct and a Declaration and Register of Interest form.

Main Responsibilities of the Board

- Managing performance and risk: Developing and reviewing the organisation's strategy, objectives, performance, statutory compliance, and risk while ensuring ongoing impact measurement.
- Leadership and strategy: Leading the organisation's vision, mission, values, and strategic direction.
- Strategic planning and implementation: Agreeing on coherent strategic plans and timetables, monitoring performance, and reviewing outcomes and impact.
- **Communication:** Promoting the organisation's work to external partners, stakeholders, and audiences.
- Equality and diversity: Championing equality and diversity throughout the organisation, particularly when working with disadvantaged communities.
- Safeguarding: Monitoring the charity's conduct to ensure safeguarding standards are upheld.

Appointment and Induction of Trustees

The articles of association state that the number of Trustees shall be no less than 3 and (unless otherwise determined by ordinary resolution) with no upper limit. Currently, there are 12 Trustees on the Board, who serve as both charity Trustees and Directors of a company limited by guarantee, governed by charity and company law.

Appointments are overseen by the Governance Committee, and Trustees serve an initial three-year term, with the option for re-appointment unless exceptional circumstances apply. Attention is paid to ensuring a wide range of skills and diversity, including gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and sexuality. We also prioritise recruitment of local people with lived experience, all of which enriches the skills, knowledge and experience of the board.

All new Trustees undergo an induction process that includes meetings with the Chair, CEO, and Senior Management Team, visits to projects, and detailed briefings on legal obligations under charity and company law, as well as Foothold Cymru's specific policies. An annual skills review informs training and recruitment strategies.

Board and Committee Structure

The Board of Trustees plays a crucial role in the governance and oversight of our organisation.

Board Meetings

Our Board meets quarterly. These regular meetings allow the Board to stay informed about key developments, make timely decisions, and maintain effective oversight. Throughout the year, average attendance was 82%.

Committee Structure

To enhance efficiency and provide focused attention to specific areas, we have established a committee structure that supports the Board's work:

■ Finance, Risk, Audit and People Committee

Meeting quarterly, this committee oversees financial management, risk assessment, audit processes, and human resources matters. It ensures financial stability, monitors potential risks, and reviews audit findings to maintain organisational integrity.

■ Governance Committee

Meeting quarterly, the committee is responsible for maintaining and improving governance practices. It reviews policies, assesses Board performance, and ensures compliance with relevant regulations and best practices.

■ Safeguarding Committee

Meeting as required, the committee is dedicated to protecting vulnerable individuals associated with our organisation, including by developing and monitoring safeguarding policies and procedures.

We have recently established two new committees which will be meeting quarterly.

■ Operational Performance Committee

This committee focuses on evaluating and improving the organisation's operational efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring that our programmes and services align with our strategic goals.

Community Engagement and Volunteering Committee

Tasked with strengthening our connections with the community and optimising our volunteer programmes, this committee develops strategies to enhance stakeholder engagement and maximise the impact of our volunteer efforts.

Board Effectiveness

The structure adopted by the organisation allows our Board to:

- Maintain regular oversight of organisational activities.
- Delve deeply into specific areas through committee work.
- Make informed decisions based on comprehensive reports and recommendations from committees.
- Respond promptly to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- Ensure a balanced focus on various aspects of Foothold's governance.

Further details on Board and committee membership are available on our website.

The Senior Management Team

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is appointed by the Trustees to oversee daily operations, with delegated authority for operational matters such as finance, employment, and performance management, as approved by the Board. The Board monitors and controls all delegated work through regular reporting.

The CEO is supported by a Deputy Chief Executive and a Senior Management Team, who are responsible for delivering the charity's projects and services. The SMT includes a Finance Manager who administers the charity's accounts, and an operations manager who oversees the efficient running of projects and services.

As of the financial year-end, Foothold Cymru employed 18 staff members on part-time or fulltime contracts. The organisation is a Real Living Wage employer and is committed to transparency. maintaining an 'open door' policy where staff are encouraged to engage with organisational activities, strategy, and performance.

Additionally, a wellbeing officer supports staff by providing information, organising wellbeing events, and offering general support.

Volunteers

The charity was supported by 72 volunteers in 2023/4. Their skills and knowledge have been crucial in delivering our activities. We began the process of gaining Investors in Volunteering accreditation, which we aim to complete in 2024/25.

Good Governance

We comply with the Charity Governance Code in all material respects and have a programme for continual improvement.

Raising Concerns

Foothold Cymru has a whistleblowing policy that allows staff and volunteers to report concerns, alongside other processes such as grievance procedures. Complaints, grievances, and whistleblowing matters are fully investigated, and appropriate management or disciplinary actions are taken when necessary.

Ethical Policy

Our ethical policy provides a framework for the ethical execution of our charitable purposes. It helps the charity and its Trustees recognise and address ethical issues and conflicts.

Safeguarding

We have established systems to protect vulnerable individuals. This includes a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, a Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy, a safeguarding code of conduct, and an online safeguarding policy. Trustees, staff, and volunteers undergo Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) checks and safeguarding training, based on the appropriate level for the role. The work of the organisation is overseen by a Safeguarding Committee, chaired by a Trustee. The committee oversees safeguarding policies and reports to the Board annually with an action plan.

Fundraising

Foothold Cymru raises funds from individuals, donors, and companies. Fundraising activities represent 2% of our annual income, and no complaints were received regarding fundraising activities in 2023/24.

Risk Management

The Trustees have identified the major risks faced by the charity, aided by a robust risk management process. Risks are prioritised based on likelihood and impact, with mitigation strategies in place. Adequacy of protection measures is reviewed by the senior team and trustees quarterly.

Public Benefit

Trustees refer to the Charities Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities. As required by the Charities Act 2011, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

Pay Policy

Trustees do not receive remuneration but may claim reasonable expenses. The charity has a remuneration policy to ensure fair pay for staff. A revised pay structure was introduced in April 2023 based on recommendations from our Remuneration group, a subcommittee of our Finance, Risk, Audit and People Committee.

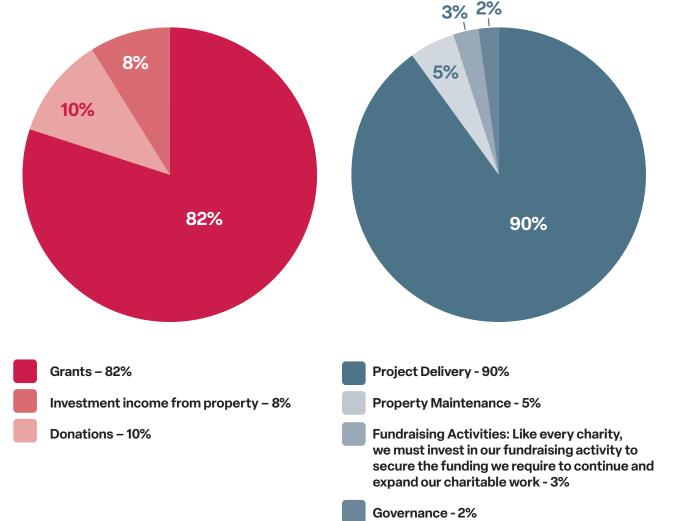
Financial Review

Our Finances



Where we spend our income

We are reliant upon the generosity of all our supporters to fund our charitable activities. Our income is made up of grants, donations, trusts and foundations, investment income and in-kind contributions e.g. food donations.





Financial performance and position

The charity delivered a solid financial performance in 2023/24 against a backdrop of challenging economic circumstances, characterised by increased competition for grants and reduced availability.

Our total Income was £877,188, a slight decrease from £889,671 in 2022/23. Total expenditure was £844,145 compared with £836,897 in 2022/23, generating an overall surplus of £33,043, compared to £52,774 in 2022/23.

Our financial strategy as laid out in our business plan was to:

- Diversify our income streams.
- Secure the grants required to deliver our services.
- Minimise the cost of our central/core team.
- Maximise the income from our property portfolio.
- Leverage in corporate support through in-kind and financial support.
- Ensure all projects have a realistic, costed, sustainable exit strategy that allows our services to continue without the need for grant funding wherever possible. This is normally through the development of a social enterprise either run by Foothold Cymru or local volunteers.





Reserves Policy

During the year, the Board of Trustees reviewed our reserves policy, following the guidelines set by the Charity Commission. The review process involved the following:

- Clarification of what constitutes our charitable reserves.
- Assessing the assets that are essential for our operations.
- Evaluating potential financial risks and their implications.
- Reviewing sources of income to ensure sustainability.
- Looking at our future plans and financial commitments.

As per our 2023/24 accounts, our unrestricted reserves total £619,920. The majority of this is represented by the two properties we own, which are rented out to generate income. We currently have 14 rental units available. On becoming a charity in 2020 (transition from a company limited by guarantee), the Board of Trustees reassessed our need for free cash reserves in line with Charity Commission guidelines. The reserves policy, approved by the Board in 2020, and reviewed annually, requires a plan to achieve and maintain 6 months of operational expenditure (core costs)

Since all our projects are time limited, with clear exit strategies, the cash reserves are earmarked to maintain non-project activity and development. As of the end of April 2024, this figure stood at $\mathfrak{L}103,730$, representing 5 months of expenditure. This represents significant progress, and we are on track to reach our target figure by 2024/25.



Foothold Cymru continuously reviews risks through the Board, committees, and senior management team. Risks are categorised by impact and likelihood, with quarterly updates provided to the board. Key risks identified by the organisation are:

- Cyber protection, including risk of a cyber attack.
- Income generation challenges due to difficult economic conditions.
- Recruitment issues.

The controls Foothold Cymru has in place are as follows:

Cyber protection:

Controls in place:

- Robust IT infrastructure with regularly updated security protocols.
- Regular staff training on cybersecurity best practices.
- Implementation of multi-factor authentication for all systems.
- Regular security audits and penetration testing.
- Incident response plan in place for potential breaches.
- Data encryption for sensitive information.
- Regular backups stored securely off-site.

Income generation:

Controls in place:

- Diversification strategy to reduce reliance on any single funding source.
- Dedicated business development team focused on developing new income streams.
- Building and maintaining strong relationships with current funders.
- Exploration of social enterprise opportunities.
- Development of a reserves policy to ensure financial stability.
- Regular financial forecasting and scenario planning.
- A viable business model that protects project legacy.

Recruitment:

Controls in place:

- Competitive salary and benefits package to attract qualified candidates.
- Proposed internship and apprenticeship programmes to develop future talent.
- Flexible working arrangements to appeal to a broader candidate pool.
- Investment in staff development and training to retain current employees.
- Regular review of job descriptions and person specifications.
- Use of specialist recruitment agencies for hardto-fill positions.
- Development of a strong employer brand to attract job seekers.

Additional risk management measures in place include:

- Quarterly risk register reviews by the Board and senior management team.
- Clear risk ownership and accountability within the organisation.
- Regular staff training on risk management procedures.
- Continuous monitoring of external factors that may impact the charity's operations.
- Annual review of insurance coverage to ensure adequate protection.
- Compliance checks to ensure adherence to relevant regulations and standards.

By implementing these controls and regularly reviewing their effectiveness, Foothold Cymru aims to mitigate key risks and ensure the continued delivery of its services to communities, families, and individuals in the communities it serves.

Our Thanks

Our funders

In conclusion, we would like to thank the funders, foundations, trusts and business partners that have supported us:

Aviva

BBC Children In Need

Carmarthenshire County Council via Welsh Government Poverty Fund

Comic Relief

Crest Ceilings

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Garfield Weston Foundation

Henry Smith Charity

Hubbub Foundation

Julia and Hans Rausing Trust

King Charles III Charitable Fund

Landfill Disposals Tax Communities Scheme

Lloyd & White Insurance Brokers

Masonic Charitable Foundation

Moondance Foundation

National Grid

People's Postcode Lottery

Svlvia Adams Charitable Trust

TAD Builders

Tata Steel

The National Lottery Community Fund

Trusthouse Charitable Foundation

Vinci Construction

Vinci Foundation

WCVA

Welsh Government

Our volunteers

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to our dedicated volunteers who have significantly contributed to our charity's work throughout the year. Their support has been essential to various aspects of our operations, including:

- Driving services for collecting and delivering food as part of our food resilience work.
- Assisting in our community kitchen.
- Tending to our community garden.
- Managing our Pantry service.
- Supporting our Circular Economy initiatives.

These, and many other important tasks, help keep our charity running smoothly.

Their commitment has enabled us to continue serving our community effectively whilst also providing volunteers with valuable skills, social connections, and confidence.

Recognising the evolving landscape of volunteerism, we have adjusted our volunteer programme to offer more flexibility and a wider range of opportunities. We now provide:

- Mini volunteering experiences for those with limited time.
- Taster days for individuals interested in learning more about our work.
- Traditional roles with weekly or daily commitments.
- Specialised positions that utilise unique skills and experiences.

This variety of options allows individuals to find a way to contribute that suits their availability and interests.

We are also pleased to have welcomed more volunteers with lived experience of poverty and financial challenges to our organisation this year. Their insights have enhanced our understanding of the communities we serve, allowing us to provide more relevant and effective support. This inclusion has deepened our connection with those we aim to assist.

To all our volunteers, whether you have been with us for years or have just joined, and whether you contribute regularly or occasionally, your efforts are truly valued. You play a crucial role in our organisation, and we appreciate your time and support. Your contributions make our work possible and positively impact the lives of many in West Wales.

As we look ahead, we are hopeful about the future and the continued positive change we can achieve together with our dedicated team of volunteers. Thank you for sharing your talents with us.

Our people

At the core of our charity are the dedicated individuals who contribute to our mission. With a team of approximately 20 staff members, we are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace that reflects the communities we serve.

Our team comprises professionals with a range of skills and experiences, each playing an important role in delivering our programs and services. From project co-ordinators and outreach workers to administrative staff, every position is essential to achieving our goals and meeting the needs of those we support.

We recognise that investing in our staff is crucial for our success. Throughout the year, we have focused on providing professional development and training opportunities, allowing our employees to enhance their skills and grow in their roles. This commitment to continuous learning not only benefits our staff but also strengthens our organisation.

Collaboration and teamwork are key aspects of our workplace culture. We encourage open communication and the sharing of ideas, creating an environment where everyone feels valued and able to contribute. Our staff members regularly participate in team meetings and activities, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.

Together, our staff and volunteers form a network that enhances the services we provide and increases our impact in the community.

As we reflect on the past year, we appreciate the hard work and commitment of our team. Their dedication has been vital in navigating challenges and achieving our objectives. We look forward to continuing to support our people and maintaining a positive workplace culture as we work to make a difference in the lives of those we serve.



References

In conclusion

The Trustees are pleased to present their Annual Report together with the financial statements of the Charity for the year ending 31st March 2024.

They are also prepared to meet the requirements for a Directors' report and accounts for Companies Act purposes. The Charity Commission entered the Company onto the Register of Charities with the Registered Charity Number 1188696 in March 2020.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) as amended for accounting periods from 1 January 2016.

Administrative Details

Registered Company Number

02633128

Charity Number

1188696

Registered Office

The Lord Arthur Rank Centre

Trostre Road

Llanelli

SA14 9RA

Trustees

F. S. Roberts (Chair)

J Lewis

D J Powell

P Freeman

Rev J E Phillips

K L Owen

P R Piana

S Kays

Dr M Goodfellow Smith

J Rees

K Thomas

Company Secretaries

Janice Morgan

Mike Theodoulou

Bankers

HSBC

Accountants

Charles & Co **Chartered Certified**

Accountants

3 Murray Street Llanelli, SA15 1AQ



66

Last year I couldn't afford new shoes and coats for my children. I felt so embarrassed, so useless. Foothold, with no fuss, stepped in and were able to help.

Participant Stronger Together



Getting to the end of the week and not having enough money for food is the worst. You panic, you can't sleep, it's scary. Knowing I can use the shop at Foothold has helped so much. I don't feel so bad.

Village Store Member





I feel like the project helped me with me confidence a lot. Got me out of the house, gave me a sense of wellbeing. It was nice to try something different.

Volunteens: Be Heard Be Helpful Participant









The Lord Arthur Rank Centre, Trostre Road, Llanelli, SA14 9RA **6** 01554 779910

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All images are Foothold Cymru stock photographs and do not relate to our Volunteering in Wales project Foothold Cymru is a charity registered in England and Wales number: 1188696. Company registration number: 02633128.