

Press Release: **Strict embargo - Tuesday 5th December 2023**

Wales Facing National Volunteer Crisis

Today Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) have announced that Wales is facing a volunteering crisis.

This International Volunteer Day, the Chief Executive of WCVA announced that the voluntary sector in Wales is struggling, with 90% of representatives of voluntary organisations from across the country stating they have volunteer recruitment issues.

'The combination of a global pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis has led to a drastic drop in the number of people volunteering across Wales.' Says Ruth Marks, Chief Executive of WCVA.

'Some people haven't returned to volunteer since the pandemic, others have lost their confidence. The economic crisis also means that people are increasingly having to prioritise other activities.

'It means that charities and volunteer groups across Wales are struggling, but people are missing out on the benefits of volunteering too. We know that volunteering is proven to reduce loneliness, to improve mental health and helps people gain new skills.'

A recent survey by WCVA showed that 90% of representatives of voluntary organisations had recruitment issues. More than 80% also reported retention issues. The main barrier for new volunteers was reported as lack of time, followed by lack of awareness of what opportunities are available.

Mally Roberts from Llanrwst has been volunteering for five years with Blind Veterans UK in Llandudno, a charity that helps vision-impaired ex-Servicemen and women to rebuild their lives after sight loss.

'I do two things here, I help the members settle in and get about, taking them on trips and so on. And I also take photographs of the members when we're out on trips as I'm currently doing a photography degree.'

Mally is originally from Capel Garmon, and having retired after 23 years working for the police and nine years with the RAF he was keen to give something back to the community.

'I get so much out of helping here. They're such great people, they never complain! None of us know what's around the corner. I'm only 57 but, who

knows, maybe in a few years I'll need someone's help, but right now I can help someone else, and that's incredibly important to me.'

21-year-old Samiya Houston from Torfaen also volunteers in her local community with Sight Cymru.

'I was born with sight loss so I first started getting involved with Sight Cymru as a service user, because I wanted some help to get around independently, to catch the bus and the train by myself. Once I was discharged by them, I then went on to volunteer with them.'

As part of her volunteering work, Samiya goes into local organisation and business to deliver sight loss awareness training, to raise awareness of common sight loss conditions and present solutions to barriers that individuals with sight loss might face at their business. She also goes into primary schools to deliver prevention talks to young children.

'Volunteering makes me feel really, really good,' says Samiya, who won the 2023 Torfaen Young Volunteer Award. 'It gives me such a warm and fuzzy feeling to know that I can go out and help the community and give something back and educate about sight loss. I would definitely recommend volunteering to other young people, it can develop your confidence and so many other skills too, like customer service and communications. Also, it's a really good thing to put on your C.V!'

Anyone interested in volunteering should head over to the newly-designed Volunteering Wales website, says Ruth Marks, Chief Executive at WCVA.

'There are 19 county voluntary councils across Wales, and we have all worked together to make the Volunteering Wales platform as user-friendly and easy-to-use as possible. If you're interested in volunteering you can register for free on the website, and search for opportunities that suit your interests.'

'Charities and organisations can also register on the website for free too, posting their volunteering opportunities, so it's really easy to find volunteering opportunities in your local area. Of course, you can also search for Welsh-language volunteering opportunities. Head over to www.volunteering-wales.net to see if there's anything there that might work for you.'

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- WCVA is the national membership body for voluntary organisations in Wales
- Interim data from a WCVA survey November 2023 of 142 representatives of voluntary organisations in Wales, final raw data available on request from 1 December 2023 under embargo
- Volunteering Wales Website: www.volunteering-wales.net
- For photographs of those quoted or to arrange interviews contact Casia Wiliam on 07973612966 / casiawiliam@live.co.uk

