



FOOTHOLD CYMRU IMPACT REPORT 2022

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We have on occasion used stock photographs and changed identifying details in order to protect the privacy of our beneficiaries.

Foreword

We are pleased to present Foothold Cymru's Impact Report for 2021/22. During the year individuals, communities and society as a whole have continued to navigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the worst may in many respects be over, the pandemic continues to create challenges for families in particular those living on low incomes.

There has been a horrific rise in the cost of living in the last twelve months due to many factors and this has hit households who were already struggling hard. Many of these households are now expected to pay hundreds of pounds more per year in bills - money they simply don't have. We stand together, and alongside other charities and people experiencing poverty, to say it's simply not right that in the sixth largest economy, globally, there are so many people, who cannot afford to put food on the table and come the winter will struggle to heat their homes. Poverty should never be normalised as a fact of life.

In the face of the growing demands for our services and diminishing resources for the sector, we are sincerely grateful to the board of trustees for their continued wisdom, insight and contributions. The board remain committed to its governance role and will continue to support the relief of immediate need as well as creating just solutions to tackle the root causes of poverty. We are also delighted to report that during the year we were able to welcome four new trustees to the board, increasing numbers and diversity and giving us access to an increased range of skills, experience and knowledge.

As always, on behalf of all the Trustees and the Executive Team, our thanks go out to the amazing staff and volunteers who go that extra mile to make a real difference to lives and livelihoods. We'd also like to extend our sincere thanks to our lived experience working groups, local people whose ideas and strengths drive everything we do. We never forget that local people know their community the best and that everyone has something valued and unique to contribute.

To our funders we hope that this report demonstrates how we have used the generous resources that you have entrusted to us to not only respond to the cost of living crisis but also to continue in collaboration with local people to drive forward long-term sustainable change.

We end our message on a sad note. This year we saw the death at the age of 67 of Gerald Davies our New Business Director. Gerald joined Foothold Cymru nearly 20 years ago. A valuable member of Foothold's Senior team, he was also a friend and mentor to those that worked with him. A man of principle with a strong sense of social justice, the pain of his loss was, and still is, palpable amongst those who considered him a colleague and a friend. Gerald will be remembered by a memorial fund that is being set up in his name to carry on the philanthropic work he started in the Philippines, a place that he had hoped, on his retirement, would be his new home.



Mike Theodoulou
Chief Executive

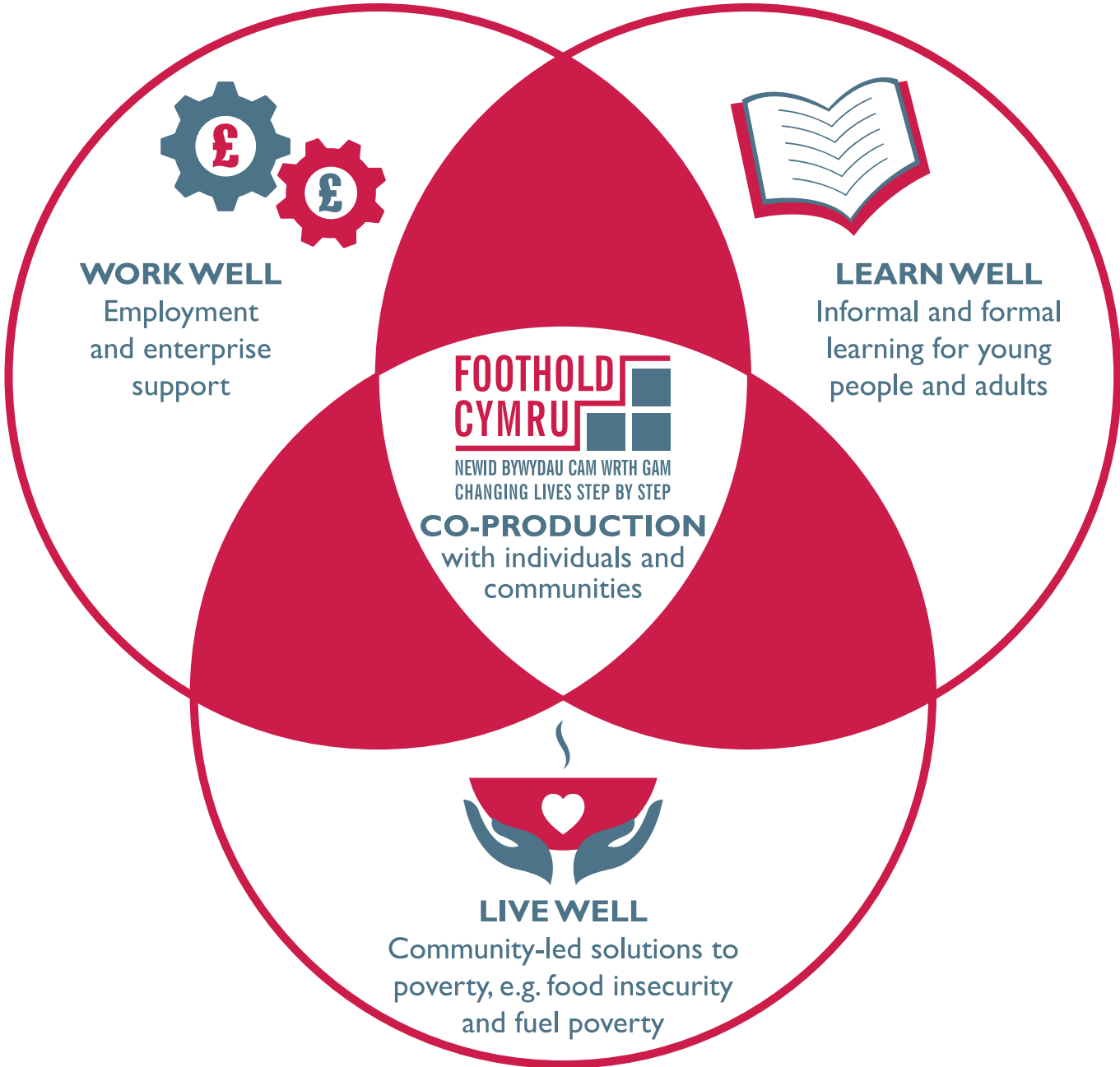


Fred St. John Roberts
Chair

Executive Summary

About Foothold Cymru

Foothold Cymru is a social justice organisation. Established over 30 years ago, our vision is to create strong, cohesive communities where individuals have the power to thrive and not just survive. To do this we address both the causes and symptoms of poverty and inequality by designing our services with, not for, individuals and communities most affected by these issues, so they have the skills to overcome challenges and develop resilience. Our work is broken down into three areas of activity as outlined below:





About Our Work

We run services and deliver projects which provide the support needed to promote our strategic objectives; we help people to 'live well', 'learn well' and 'work well'. Similar themes underpin all of our projects and we work across four key areas:

- **Food Resilience and Growing** - we aim to build food resilience in the community, tackling the immediate needs of families who are struggling to put food on the table and helping them to develop the skills that will enable them to have a more sustainable and secure access to food in the future.
- **Zero Waste Hub** - we aim to help people to tackle the rising costs of living by encouraging recycling, upcycling, sharing and exchanging, giving members ways to reduce household costs and maximise hard-pressed family incomes. This also helps to reduce waste, having a positive environmental impact too.
- **Education, Training and Employability** - we aim to provide socially and economically disadvantaged people with the opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies required for independent living and for the labour market, by providing education, training and work experience opportunities.
- **Community Capacity Building** - we aim to bring the community together to share with and support each other through our volunteering and befriending projects. We also aim to develop the capacity of individuals to contribute and empower them to put their skills, experience and knowledge to good use for the benefit of the community.



The Impact of Our Work

As set out in this impact report, Foothold Cymru has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on its beneficiaries over the last year. The report sets out five key findings in relation to Foothold Cymru's impact in 2021/22:

- 1. Reduced Household Expenses** - members have experienced a reduction in their household expenses, through access to cheaper food at the Food Store, the opportunity to recycle, upcycle and share and the support with money management skills. The total household savings equate to over half a million pounds (£550,160).
- 2. Reduced Waste** - members have learnt new ways to reduce their waste and have had the opportunity to share and recycle household items. 41 tonnes of waste has been diverted from landfill as a result of our services.
- 3. Developed Skills and Experience** - across the community, people have developed new practical and employability skills and have had the opportunities to engage with new experiences, including volunteering, work experience and befriending. 84% of members have learnt new skills and 55 people have moved on to employment.
- 4. Improved Health and Wellbeing** - members are feeling more supported, valued, accepted, connected to the community and more confident to explore opportunities, which has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on the wellbeing of people across the community. 67% of members reported positive changes in their mental wellbeing.
- 5. Increased Community Cohesion, Capacity and Resilience** - bringing people together to share, support each other and meet people they would not usually mix with has had a positive impact on community cohesion and on the capacity of the community to work together to solve common challenges. 88% of members feel there are more people they can go to if they need help and 59% feel more connected to their community.

1. Why We Exist

Established over 30 years ago, we exist to tackle the causes and consequences of poverty and to build the capacity and resilience of the people and communities affected. In this section, we outline some of the current challenges facing communities across Wales and highlight the areas that we are working to address through our range of programmes.



1.1. Poverty and Food Insecurity in Wales

Almost 1 in 4 (23%) people in Wales live in poverty, the highest rate of the four UK nations¹. People living in poverty spend a higher proportion of their incomes on essential items and often pay extra to access essential goods and services, such as food, fuel and credit - a phenomenon named the poverty premium. This intensifies the problem and, as a result, people living on low incomes are often unable to afford the essentials required to live an active and healthy life. Of those living in poverty, 1 in 5 people are living with food insecurity, meaning that they cannot afford enough nutritious food to live an active and healthy life.

1.2. Cost of Living Crisis

The well-documented 'cost of living crisis' is likely to make the situation worse for thousands of households already living in poverty across Wales. As prices rise at a faster rate than incomes, more families across Wales will have an income that isn't sufficient to meet their basic cost of living. Inflation is on the rise, causing a rapid rise in living costs. Given that the lowest income households spend a higher proportion of their weekly expenditure on essentials, they are hit harder by rising costs. For those already struggling to make ends meet, the cost-of-living crisis will push many into the 'eating or heating' dilemma, if they are not already there.

1.3. Wellbeing and the Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on wellbeing across Wales. During the first lockdown in 2020 mental health conditions rapidly increased; in April 2020 28.1% of Welsh people suffered severe mental health issues, compared to 11.7% before the pandemic².

Those living on the lowest incomes have been the worst effected by deteriorating mental health since the Covid-19 pandemic. The average mental wellbeing score deteriorated by 39% for lowest-income earners compared to the pre-Covid-19 period, contrasted to a 6.5% deterioration for the highest-income earners over the same period, widening the gap between the lowest and highest-income earners³.

¹<https://www.jrf.org.uk/data/uk-poverty-rate-region>

²https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2533762/COVID-19-Mental-health-FINAL-08-07-2021.pdf

³https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2533762/COVID-19-Mental-health-FINAL-08-07-2021.pdf

1.4. Community Cohesion

In recent decades communities across the UK have experienced a decline in the sense of community, but relationships and community cohesion can play a vital role in economic security. Deep social trends are causing a decline in community connectedness, for example a decreasing number of people are reporting they have someone to rely on, that they swap favours with others in the community or that they talk to their neighbours⁴.

Evidence shows that more connected communities can foster better economic security and social inclusion. Our relationships and our connections to the community can influence our mental wellbeing as well as our economic security, for example if we have nobody to turn to for help when times get tough. The declining sense of community can have detrimental effects on the wellbeing and economic security of those living on the lowest incomes. Given the ever-growing challenges caused by the cost-of-living crisis on low-income families, community connectedness is needed now more than ever.



2. How Do We Help?

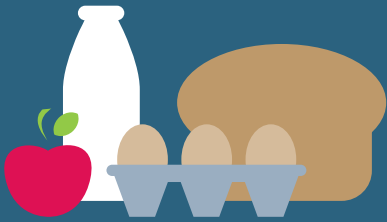
Economic, social and educational inclusion are embedded throughout our services. We help people to ‘live well’, ‘learn well’ and ‘work well’ by delivering projects across four key areas: (1) Food Resilience and Growing, (2) Zero Waste Hub, (3) Education, Training and Employability, (4) Community Capacity Building.

2.1. Food Resilience and Growing

In order to tackle the high levels of poverty and food insecurity in Wales, we provide healthy foods at low prices, so that families can afford to access the foods they need for a balanced and healthy diet. We also support families to become more food resilient, by helping them to budget and introducing them to growing their own foods. We aim to both tackle the immediate needs of families who are struggling to put food on the table, and to help them to develop the skills they need to have a more sustainable and secure access to food in the future.

⁴<https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/stronger-together-indispensable-role-human-relationships-economic-security>

Foothold Cymru's Food Resilience and Growing Programmes



Community Food Store - The store is stocked through surplus fresh and store cupboard food via FareShare, local wholesalers, supermarket surplus and community growing schemes. The emphasis is on fresh nutritious food, supporting people to make lasting and sustainable changes to their diet. Households can visit the store weekly, and for £3.50 have access to a range of food stuffs. A typical saving is between £20-£27 on retail value per visit.



Food Delivery Service

Weekly food boxes are delivered to community collection points in rural Carmarthenshire for families and households to collect.



Food Waste Workshops

Food Waste workshops cover budgeting, smart food preparation, food labelling, nutrition, smart shopping, storage, all helping to reduce food waste.



Cookery Courses

The Community kitchen offers a range of educational cooking and nutrition courses to help people to develop their cooking skills and introduce them to new recipes.



Garden and Skills Programme

The growing schemes and skills programme helps families to learn how to grow produce in small spaces at home.



Community Composting Site

The community compost site is used to encourage local people to compost their food and household waste.



Home Growing Support

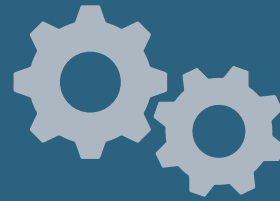
Gardening kits are provided to encourage people to grow food at home.

Foothold Cymru's Zero Waste Hub Programmes



Repair Café

In the Repair Café, people can bring along broken or damaged items and the volunteer repairers will try to fix it, for free, reducing waste and saving them money.



Bike Maintenance

Qualified bike technicians will help identify issues with people's bikes and with guidance, they will learn the skills needed to successfully fix or replace parts; giving old cycles a new lease of life.



Clothes Exchange

The preloved Children's Clothing and School Uniform Exchange ensures that children have access to warm, good quality clothing that they'll love to wear, helping families to reuse, create less waste and save money.



Library of Things

The Library of Things offers members free tools and equipment for hire to enable home improvements, repairs and general jobs around the home and garden.



Skills Exchange

The craft and chat group is one example of the opportunity for people to learn from others, share ideas and swap skills.



Community Re-Paint Store

The provision of high-quality recycled paint, enables families to decorate their homes and upcycle furniture for a fraction of the full-cost price.

Scrap and Textile Store

The store is a great resource for reused art and craft material kindly donated by the public and local businesses.



These Zero Waste projects help in lots of ways, including helping people to:



Share with and connect to others - this increases the sense of community connectedness, which brings wellbeing benefits as well as the practical benefits of sharing with others, instead of each buying new items when incomes are already stretched.



Reduce waste - learning how to reduce, reuse and recycle, make the most of existing resources rather than buying new things which in turn is not only good for people but good for the planet.



Develop new skills - the Zero Waste Hub helps people to develop practical skills to help maintain and improve their home at an affordable cost.



2.3. Education, Training and Employability

At Foothold Cymru we strongly believe in education as a way to break free of poverty. We also believe in the value of education and social mobility in alleviating child poverty by improving future educational outcomes. Through our various projects we deliver a range of accredited and unaccredited training including life skills, financial capability, capacity building programmes, alternative education, employability training, and personal development to help individuals to realise their potential. Our formal, informal and community education programmes provide socially and economically disadvantaged people with the opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications and / or develop the knowledge, skills and competencies required for independent living and the labour market.

Foothold Cymru's Education, Training and Employability Programmes



Employability Training

Employability training, paid and unpaid work placements, and volunteering prepares individuals for the world of work.



Life Skills

Young people are supported with financial management, practical advice and personal skills to help them to enable them to live independently.



Work Experience

Work experience placements provide people with the opportunities to develop their skills with relevant work experience.



Paid Work Placements

People, particularly those furthest way from the labour market are supported to secure a part time, 16-week work placement in an area of interest.



Work Preparation

Career advice, work experience and interview preparation supports people of all ages get back in to work.



Job Search Skills

Careers support helps people through the process of finding and applying to jobs and providing access to computers if needed.

These Education, Training and Employability projects help in lots of ways, including helping people to:



Develop new skills - our projects help people to develop essential life skills that will help them to live independently and also develop the practical skills and experience required for the labour market.



Increase their knowledge - our training courses help to improve people's knowledge in specific areas, as well as providing them with transferable knowledge that will benefit them in life, such as budgeting skills.



Feel supported - helping people to feel supported and cared about can have a huge impact on mental wellbeing, as well as giving people the confidence to explore new opportunities, such as finding a job.



2.4. Community Capacity Building

We develop the capacity of individuals and communities so that they are better equipped to overcome the challenges they face. We recognise that the solutions, and the skills to put them in place, are often found in the lived experiences and understanding of the people and communities affected. We also recognise that building capacity within communities makes them more able to adapt and deal with future challenges, creating a more sustained and long-lasting positive impact. Our projects aim to develop the capacity of individuals to contribute and empower them to put their skills, experience and knowledge to good use for the benefit of the community. Finally, we recognise the power of bringing people together to share experiences and support each other. We aim to support new friendships and increase understanding across generations by bringing people together from across the community.

Foothold Cymru's Community Capacity Building Programmes



Volunteering

The skills and knowledge of volunteers are a huge asset to the charity and the community. Volunteers work as mentors, offer employability support, pack food boxes, help sort toys and clothes and worked in our gardens.



Lived Experience Working Groups

Taking a strength based approach, the charity works with local people and communities to co-produce projects, building on their experience and insights to develop projects that are effective and support the community in the best way possible.



Youth Social Action Projects

Young people are empowered to look after their own wellbeing and that of their peers. Young people are also given a voice in their community and support to develop their knowledge and skills to take positive action.



Befriending

Generations are brought together, creating new friendships and understanding between the generations and giving people the chance to meet new people and make friends, share life experience and perspectives.



These Community Capacity Building projects help in lots of ways, including helping people to:

- ✔ **Develop skills and experience** - through volunteering, work experience and other development opportunities we aim to help people to develop their skills and experience so that they have the capacity and confidence to drive forward ideas that will improve their community.
- ✔ **Engage with new experiences and ideas** - the opportunities to meet new people, gain volunteering experience and work on interesting projects provides exposure to new experiences and ideas.
- ✔ **Share skills** - by bringing people together and supporting them to share skills and learn from each other we help local people to harness the skills already in existence in the community, sharing knowledge for the benefit of the community. A great example of this is our intergenerational work which sees older and young people learning from each other.
- ✔ **Feel valued and able to contribute** - bringing people together and giving them the opportunity to contribute in ways they may not have had the opportunity to do before helps them to feel valued, appreciated and more able to contribute.

3. Our Year in Numbers

3.1. Who Have We Helped?

In total we have supported **2,497** individuals during the year

In every 100 people we support, their economic status is broken down by*:

Employed



31%

Work Placement / Volunteer



16%

Unemployed / Looking For Work



29%

Full Time Carer / Parent



7%

In Education



9%

Unable To Work



2%

Retired



6%

During the past year we have supported the following*:

Food Resilience 2116	Food Growing 177	Zero Waste Hub 432
Volunteering 43	Befriending 44	Youth Social Action 79
Education & Training 493		Employability 61

**It's great to see beneficiaries accessing more than one service but it means that the total is higher than the total number of individual beneficiaries registered with us.*

4. Our Impact

We are proud of the impact of our work which we have captured under 5⁵ separate headings

- Reduced Household Expenditure
- Reduced Waste
- Increase Skills and Experience
- Increased Health and Wellbeing
- Improved Community Cohesion and Resilience

4.1. Reduced Household Expenses

The rising cost of living is making it difficult for people to meet their basic needs. Many of our members were already struggling to make ends meet before the soaring energy and food prices put further pressure on family incomes. Across our services we support people to make their money go further and to reduce their household expenses to relieve the pressure on their hard-pressed family incomes.

The services within the Zero Waste Hub help families to reduce waste but also to reduce their household expenditure, by encouraging people, and giving them the opportunity, to repair, recycle, re-use, upcycle and share household items. 72% of people who accessed our Zero Waste services found the support had helped their money to go further.

Services such as our repair café, clothes exchange and Library of Things all provide the opportunity to reduce waste, share with others and reduce household expenditure. Members were grateful for the opportunity to share with others and were pleased to gain the knowledge and skills that would enable them to make their money go further.

Our Community Food Store provides members with the opportunity to buy a variety of food at a reduced rate from the retail price, helping family budgets to stretch further and ensuring they can access enough food to get by. On average, families saved £27,41 per week on their weekly shop and 98% of food store users also found the shop beneficial in helping them to budget.

⁵As evidenced by a survey of our beneficiaries undertaken between April and May 2022 based on a sample of 20%

An important part of our education, training and employability support is in helping people to develop essential skills that will not only prepare them for the labour market, but also for independent living. One component of this is providing them with money management and teaching them how to budget. Many members referenced the importance of these new budgeting skills on helping them to keep on top of their household finances.

Combined, our services helped members across the community to save £500,160.



£550,160 in household savings across all members.

£27.41 saved an average per week on members' weekly shop.

96% of food store users said the store helped them to budget.

72% of Zero Waste Hub members found the support had helped their money to go further.

"Saving money on groceries has helped me to budget better."

"I always have something in my cupboard now to eat."

"I have learnt some cooking and money management skills."

"I have saved money by borrowing tools."

"The food is helping to keep the costs down as our bills are rocketing."

"Food store has helped with the weekly shop, making food and money go further."

"Helped money go further because of the shop. I'm less worried about feeding family because I know Foothold will help if things get tough. Things are hard and they help make life easier."

Ella's Story

Ella is a lone parent living with two teenage children (12 and 14 years of age) and an ancient, much-loved dog. Ella, lives in private rented accommodation and recently moved to the area after a relationship break. It meant giving up her job and starting out again away from her family and friends. Her only link to the area being that she visited on holiday when she was a child.



A move from one form of benefits to another left her without any money for several weeks and resulted in her struggling to live. Her grandparents helped but she is now faced with paying them back. The family live hand to mouth. She has support with her rent, tax credits and child benefit in addition to JSA. She's looking for a job but poor mental health means that she is struggling to take that step.

When it comes to food, she prioritises all her other bills first, gas, electricity, phones & Internet and all other expenses associated with two growing teenagers such as clothes, uniforms and toiletries. When all her bills are paid, she has about £25 / £30 to spend on food each week. Some weeks they go without electricity as they can't afford to feed the meter. Sometimes, they use candles and Ella jokes that its romantic and it gets the girls off the internet. She doesn't have access to a car and tends to walk everywhere to save money on public transport.

“I always make sure that the kids eat... but often that doesn't leave much for me. I visit the food banks - the ones that don't have the rules and I use [Foothold Cymru's] community store. To be honest it's a lifeline because I get fresh fruit and veg for free and they also top up with free toiletries and the like. They have also helped me with vouchers for the meter, dog food, and the kids use their computers which helps a lot. I always like going to the store because they are lovely and make me feel so much better about things. They listen to me, and I have a moan and sometimes a cry - but I always leave feeling better.”

Ella adds that she's lucky that she's a good cook, something she wants the girls to learn as well. She hopes to enrol them on the cookery courses that Foothold Cymru run at the Community Food Hub. She follows the recipes provided by the Community Store but she's also not scared to experiment with the more unusual raw ingredients that the Community Store often has available, that other hub users may be reluctant to use.

For Ella Foothold's Community Food Hub has made a tremendous difference to her ability to budget, not an easy job with two growing teenagers. Each week she saves around £25 / £30 on her shopping through using the store, money that goes towards making her budget stretch that much further.

4.2. Reduced Waste

At Foothold Cymru, we recognise that the continued degradation of our environment is not sustainable. Across our projects and services, we support people to reduce their household waste, not only to reduce their household expenditure but also to reduce the waste sent to landfill and have a positive impact on the environment. In total, 41 tonnes of waste was saved from landfill as a result of our services.

The education, training and advice provided around waste minimisation, including the food minimisation workshops, has helped families to embed habits to reduce waste, having a positive impact on their finances and on the environment. Across all our services 87% of people access our services found new ways to reduce waste.

Members have also developed their knowledge on how to recycle household items, they have had the opportunity to fix and upcycle them, and they have been encouraged to share and donate items that they no longer need, helping the community as a whole to reduce waste. The emphasis on waste reduction in a positive light also helps to reduce the stigma of acquiring 'pre-loved' items as a negative result of low household income.

85% of food store users made changes to reduce their food waste.

89% of members who used the Zero Waste Hub said they had learnt new ways to reduce waste.

41 tonnes of waste was saved from landfill.

"I have enjoyed being able to pass on working tools and not sending them to the dump."

"It has helped me save on my food costs because I didn't waste anything last week."

"Before, I would have gone shopping and bought what I fancied but now I write a list of what's needed. I'll seek out offers when before I wouldn't have and because of these changes I'm not wasting as much - and I am also saving money."

"Feel as if I am doing a little bit to help the planet and myself."

Melissa's Story*

Melissa* contacted the Clothing and Toy Exchange at Christmas after seeing a post about the project on Facebook. She is a single parent with five children and was struggling to afford any gifts for Christmas.

Melissa lives in a rural location, so could not access shops to get gifts for her children without an expensive and long 3-hour bus journey into town, and the additional delivery costs for online shopping made this unaffordable. She was stressed and very upset when she contacted the Toy Exchange staff, who immediately calmed her and assured her Foothold Cymru would be able to help.

After getting details about her children's likes and clothing sizes, staff put together some parcels of clothing and toys and delivered them to her home. Melissa was over the moon with the parcels, and her children had a fantastic Christmas. As they now had new toys, Melissa and the children collected toys they no longer played with and donated them to the Toy Exchange for others to have.

Melissa got back in touch with the Foothold Cymru again in March, as her eldest daughter had just given birth and wasn't ready for a baby. As her daughter had kept the pregnancy a secret, it was a complete surprise and nothing had been prepared, and she now needed some support. Melissa did not have support in place and so contacted Foothold Cymru staff as she didn't know where else to turn.

The staff put together a parcel of new-born baby clothes, a fleece blanket and a baby carrier seat so that the baby could be safely carried around as they did not have a pram. They delivered the parcel to her door, and then gave her information on how to get additional support for both her and her daughter.

Melissa said: *"I am so grateful for all the support I have had from Foothold Cymru. I didn't know where to go, but you have helped me see that there is still help, even with Covid making everything so difficult. I didn't know there were family centres around - this is all so new to me as I have never had to ask for help before, thank you."*

*Names have been changed to protect identity.



4.3. Developed Skills and Experience

Across our projects and services, local people have had the opportunity to develop their skills and gain experiences which not only prepare them for the labour market, but also develop essential life skills such as such as money management, gardening, cookery and DIY. Indeed, 84% of our beneficiaries said they have learnt new skills and had new experiences.

Crucially, we have provided people with the opportunity to get out of their comfort zone, whilst also feeling supported and valued. Many of the people we work with suffer from a lack of opportunity and this can hold them back. By providing people with the opportunity to develop skills, gain work experience and grow their confidence, they are in a much stronger position to go on to work and live a more fulfilled life.

We're proud of the fact that we supported 55 people to move successfully into employment following our support with skills training.



84% said they learnt new skills and had new experiences.

55 people in to work.

“Helped me gain confidence in employment and it has helped get out of my comfort zone.”

“Enjoyed learning new skills and take them through to the future work with me.”

“I’ve learnt new skills that will help me to help others in my volunteering role.”

“Thank you for giving me the opportunity of paid employment. I couldn’t get the opportunity before.”

“I have enjoyed learning and developing myself and my skills.”

Dan's Story

Dan joined Foothold Cymru as part of the First Impressions project. Dan told us: *“I left school and didn't know what I wanted to do, but I like IT and making animations so thought I could work in that way somehow. I don't have any qualifications or experience, so no one will give me a chance.”*



He had been unemployed for some time, and wanted to work in digital content creation, making videos and animations. Although he had some technical skills and knowledge, he had no real life experience or understanding of how marketing communications in organisations work. He needed to broaden his knowledge and work with a supportive team, so he was given a placement with the Marketing team at Foothold Cymru.

Under the guidance of Marketing and Fundraising Manager Emily, Dan started to make animated videos that could be used across the charity's social media platforms. To do this, he had to learn how to use several desktop publishing suites, and undertook training for this. He used his new found skills to produce a short animation to wish a Happy Easter to all Foothold Cymru's followers on social media, and it gained many likes and comments. He then expanded on these skills and made a short fundraising film, which outlined the work that Foothold Cymru does to help families in poverty.

From simple animations, Dan's skills grew and he started to film and photograph Foothold Cymru events, and make these in to short films and media ready content. His confidence was also growing, and from not saying anything when he first started, he was now giving direction to the people he was filming, asking them to stand and pose or carry out specific tasks for his videos.

Daniels final task as a placement was to create a video about Volunteering with Foothold Cymru, and he interviewed our volunteers and filmed them at work. He produced an effective film that has been shared across all our networks, and will hopefully bring new Volunteers in to join us.

Dan was so inspired by the people that he interviews for this film, that he signed up as volunteer himself, so that he can continue to gain experience and help families in need after his placement ends. He said: *“I want to help Foothold Cymru in the same way they have helped me. I now have experience and a portfolio I can use when applying for jobs. Thank you.”*

4.4. Improved Health and Wellbeing

The support provided to help people to reduce their household expenditure had an overwhelmingly positive impact on members' mental wellbeing; 67% of people said the support provided had helped to positively change their mental wellbeing. There is a clear link between reduced food insecurity and improvements in mental wellbeing, due to the reduced financial pressures and stress associated with food insecurity.

Importantly, the Food Store moves away from emergency food boxes and the crisis support offered by Food banks. Feedback from families highlights how they value the choice offered by the stores so that it feels like shopping in a normal grocery shop. They value the fact that they can make a small financial contribution to the food baskets. This restoration of dignity also helps to promote positive mental health.

It is clear by bringing the community together, our support has helped people to feel more connected, valued, understood and accepted. Many members talked about how the increased connection with the community had given them a motivation to leave the house and get involved. All of these improvements in community connectedness bring about positive changes in mental wellbeing, especially for individuals who otherwise feel socially isolated.

67% of people said the support provided helped to bring about changes in their mental wellbeing.

73% of people who attended the cookery course said they were eating more healthily as a result of the course.

98% of Food Store users said there were health benefits to having the opportunity to choose a varied food basket.

"Helped get out of the house, helped with mental health and doing activities."

"Helped my social anxiety - I joined in with a group for the first time in years."

"Helped me talk more, get out of the house more, helped with depression."

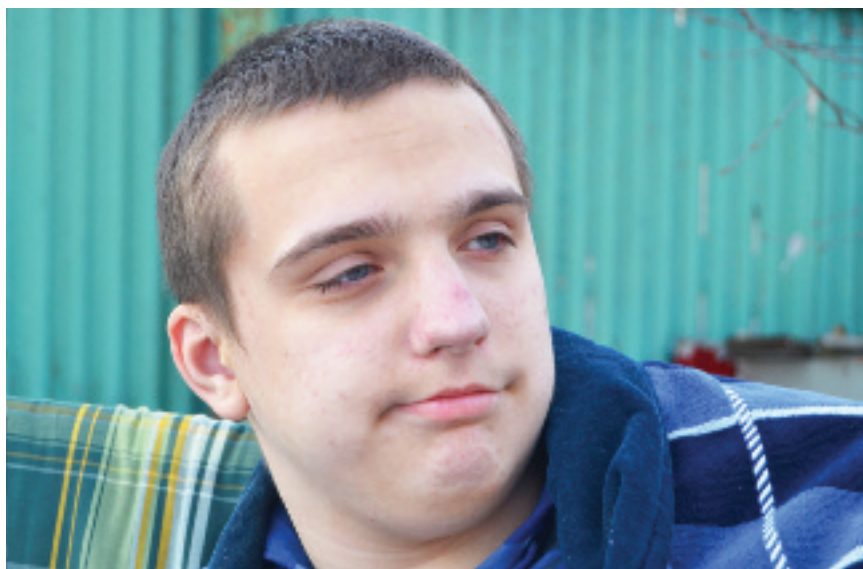
"I have more confidence, better at dealing with anxiety, made new friends."

"[The support has] helped my mental health. I've got better at socialising. I've improved my confidence it's got me to open up more and express myself."

"Boosted my confidence and made me want to do more things."

Brandon's Story

Brandon was referred to Foothold Cymru through the Carmarthenshire Connectors team who have been supporting him for some time. Brandon is autistic, and has some learning difficulties. He finds it difficult to engage with people and make new friends, and lives in an isolated part of north Carmarthenshire.



His support worker saw an advertisement for Foothold Cymru's 'My Mind' project on social media. My Mind is a peer-to-peer volunteering project aiming to support young volunteers to develop the knowledge and understanding they need to safeguard their own mental health and that of their peers. A key element of the project was the development of a film to promote positive mental health. Young people would be involved in script writing, film, acting and directing the film. Brandon a keen photographer was very excited to take part in the film. After an introduction and chat with Brandon and his mum on the telephone, he agreed to meet My Mind project staff in Carmarthen.

This in itself was a huge task for him, as this meeting meant that Brandon has to catch a bus into town, find the arranged meeting point and meet a new person who he had only spoken to on the phone. He gave project staff a good description of himself, and wore a green face covering so we would recognise him. Brandon handled this stressful situation well, and helped manage his anxiety whilst waiting by setting up his camera on a tripod and filming his view.

Project staff spent time getting Brandon to talk about himself and his likes, dislikes and hopes, using the shared interest of film and photography as a gateway to open the conversation. Brandon opened up and told staff how the camera helps with his anxiety, and he would reflect on the pictures he takes every day on his walks. We both called these strolls around his village his "worry walks" as they helped him focus and keep calm. He shared over 500 pictures he had taken for the My Mind project during the walks!

Brandon did not want to appear on film or narrate as he struggles with reading, so he decided to use the pictures from his worry walks to accompany his words on the film. He did ask that project staff take a picture of him with his camera so that he would have a memory and agreed to use it in a case study of his time with My Mind, which is a massive step forward for him.

Brandon really enjoyed taking part in the project and meeting project staff. His confidence increased tremendously which in turn improved his wellbeing and outlook on life.

4.5. Developed Community Cohesion, Capacity and Resilience

Communities are becoming increasingly disconnected, and people are often battling with their challenges in isolation. But there is power in community cohesion, bringing people together to provide support to one another and address collective challenges. By bringing people together, developing community cohesion and capacity, communities feel better connected, more together, stronger, able to weather storms through collective action and support. This leaves a legacy beyond the project support and makes communities more resilient.

Members overwhelmingly reported positive changes in community connectedness as a result of Foothold Cymru's work; 59% said they feel more connected to their community, 87% connected with new people and made new friends and 88% said they feel there are more people they can go to if they need help. All of these are clear indicators that the communities we are working with are becoming more connected.

Our members described the benefits of Foothold Cymru in bringing people together, giving them the opportunity to meet people they wouldn't usually get to meet, such as the inter-generational connections between pensioners and young people, make new friends, learn from others, share with and help other people. Many members talked about how the support they had received gave them the opportunity to help others and that they now feel part of the community. The feeling of being part of something, belonging to a community, feeling valued, understood and accepted all have a positive impact on mental wellbeing and can translate into wider benefits, such as greater economic security.

59% said they feel more connected to their community.

87% connected with new people and made new friends.

88% feel there are more people they can go to if you if they need help.

"This [support] has made me feel part of the community again."

"I enjoyed Interacting with young people. I felt accepted as I am."

"I feel more included and supported."

"The support has given me the chance to get out of the house and start integrating myself back into the community."

"I have got to know new people in work and we help each other to get jobs done."

Matthew's Story, a Foothold Community Store Volunteer

Matthew started volunteering at the Foothold Community Store after being referred by Workways.

Matthew had previously volunteered at the local Wildlife and Wetlands trust as a Greeter, helping and guiding visitors to the Trust, but due to Covid the Trust had to close to visitors and Matthew was left without his much loved volunteering role. This understandably left him sad, as he loved being around and talking to people, and he desperately needed to be amongst others again. Matthew told us:

“I need to be around people. I am in a wheelchair, so of course I need help to get around. My mum takes me places in the car, but I need my own ‘thing’. I like talking to people and want to be useful, not sat at home all day.”

He initially came along for an initial informal chat about the Community Store and how he could help, and Foothold staff were impressed with his enthusiasm and obvious Customer service skills. He makes people feel at ease and is very easy to speak to, just the type of personality that we needed in our shop!

During the chat, Matthew decided to join as a member of the shop too, as sometimes he struggled to make ends meet. He was so happy to sign up, and he uses the shop as a customer on a weekly basis. He said: *“I didn't know I could get help with food, so not only can I get help but I can give back.”*

Matthew has fitted in well and is an important part of the Community Store team. He helps take money from customers, fills in membership forms, stocks the shelves and gives nutritional advice and support, as well as lifting everyone's spirits with his cheerful nature!

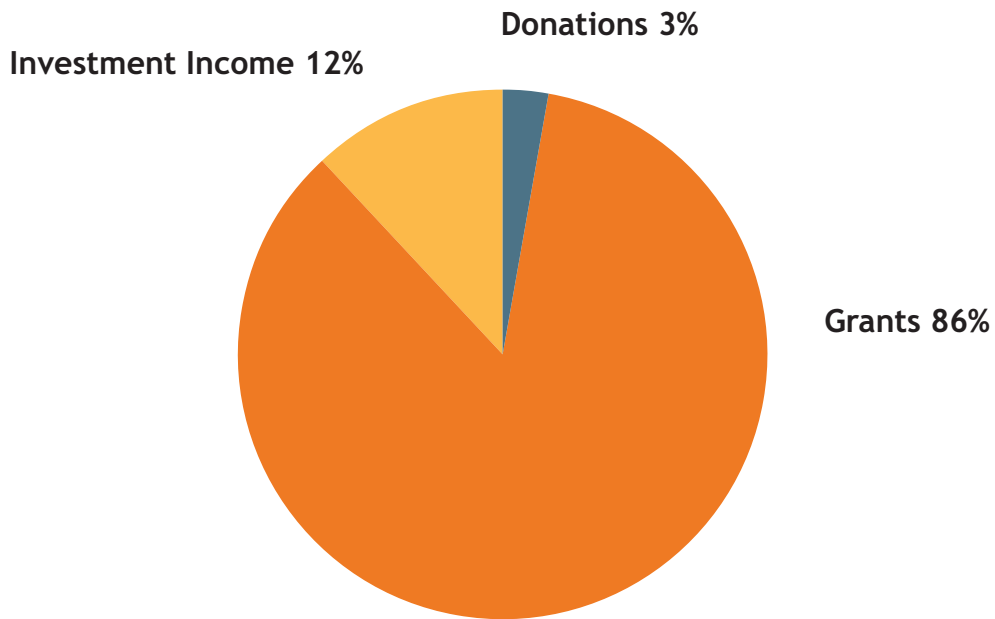
“I love to chat. I could talk all day! Even better when Im helping people. I really enjoy being here, and look forward to Thursday's at Foothold.”

Not only is Matthew an invaluable support in the Store, he has also grown in confidence and taken part in other services such as cookery with us, something he had not done before! He said: *“I do make the best fruit salad, even if I do say so myself!”*



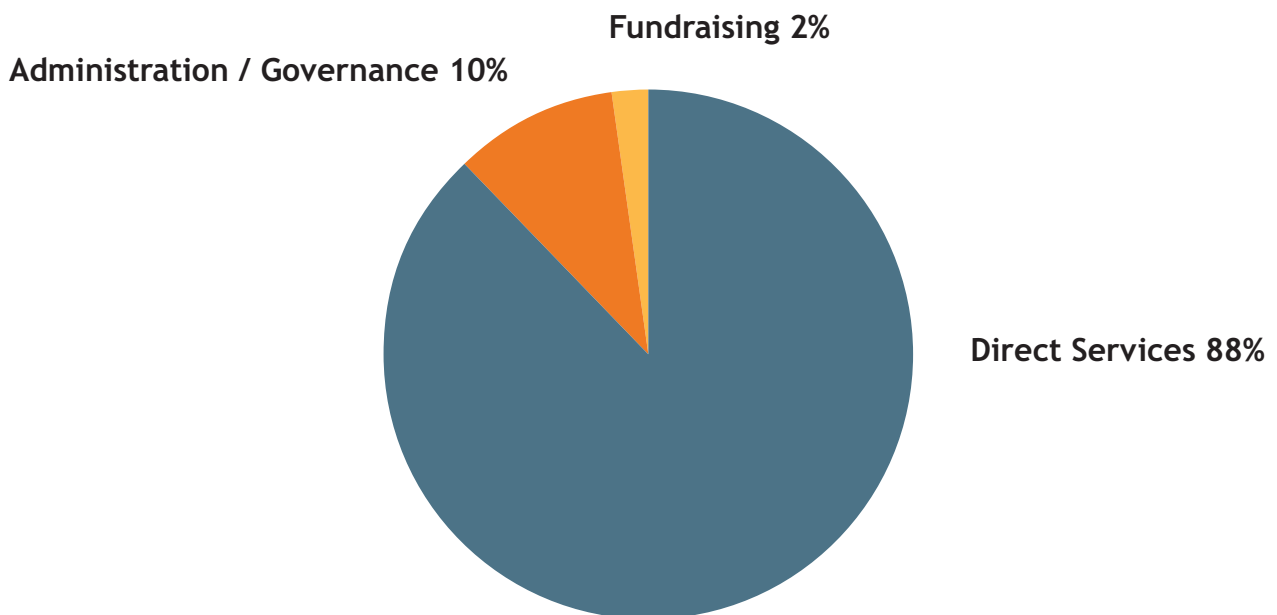
5. How We Raise Our Money

Our Total Income was: £904,795.00



5.1. How We Spend Our Money

Our Total Expenditure Was: £828,883.00



6. Reflections and Future Priorities

As set out in this impact report, Foothold Cymru has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on its members over the last year. As households have faced increasingly intense and complex challenges as a result of the soaring cost of living crisis, we have been there to provide urgent support to help them meet their basic needs, as well as supporting them to develop skills, confidence and resilience so that they are better equipped to deal with challenges in years to come.

Our reflections on the year highlight the key areas we have found to be important in effectively addressing the needs of the community in the last year.

6.1. Reflections

Combining support for the individual alongside efforts to boost community cohesion maximises the impact of interventions and builds community capacity and resilience.

We support individuals to develop skills, experience and knowledge and promotes increased community cohesion by bringing people together across the community. This creates a greater impact than supporting individuals in isolation. It means that by upskilling and educating people, they are in a better position to help others in the community. As one participant said, “Thanks to the support from Foothold Cymru I can now help others”. Foothold’s impact therefore reaches beyond the individual supported, demonstrating the importance of community cohesion as part of the solution to many of the problems communities are currently facing.

The importance of bringing people together can’t be understated.

We bring people together that wouldn’t normally meet, which increases understanding of others, provides the opportunity for skills exchange, develops support networks and increases the feeling of being accepted by others. This develops community connectedness, which has an overwhelmingly positive impact on mental health and economic security. We found that, as a result of Foothold’s support, 88% of people felt there were more people they could go to if they needed help, which is a huge wellbeing boost and provides an additional sense of security for those living in the community.

Framing waste reduction in a positive way reduces the stigma associated with low household income.

We emphasise waste reduction as a positive action individuals can take to improve the environment, as well as helping household budgets to go further. This helps to reduce the stigma attached with reusing items, such as school uniforms, and encourages people to feel more positive and empowered about waste reduction.

Recognising the power in opportunity.

We recognise that individuals and communities have the potential to address their own challenges, but they often lack the support and opportunity to do so. By providing the opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and experience we are supporting individuals and community to realise their potential and optimise what they have. Although the current situation requires us to often provide emergency support as people are hit by the cost-of-living crisis, we will continue to focus on providing opportunities for individuals and communities to develop capacity, resilience and to address their collective challenges.



The fallout from the pandemic and the soaring cost of living have created a very real crisis for many people and the situation is going to get worse.

Participants are already describing Foothold as a ‘life saver’, a ‘godsend’ and ‘angels’ and their needs are likely to get more acute in the coming months and years. Day by day we see an increase in demand for our services and will need to provide the immediate emergency support to help families get through the crisis. However, we will continue to balance this with support that empowers and builds capacity as it is only through the development of resilience do communities stand a chance to develop sustainable solutions to future challenges.

6.2. Future Priorities

Through the last year we listened to people and communities, running 12 lived experience workshops; and numerous consultation events. It has helped us understand what’s important to the people and communities we work with day to day.

It is clear that the priorities for the coming year will be the cost-of-living crisis and the devastating impact it is having on families; even those that previously just about managed.

All our support services, the way we work internally, and our partnerships will consider three interconnected challenges:

- Increasing household incomes:
- Supporting the mental and physical health of people in poverty.
- Co-designing and delivering projects and services that support people and communities to achieve a decent standard of living whilst minimising environmental impacts.



Concluding Statement

Although we are proud of our achievements and the impact we have on individuals, families and the communities with which we work, we are acutely aware that the challenges we all face will not disappear for a while yet.

While the demand for our services increases daily the resources needed to respond to this growing need are shrinking. Government at all levels has to respond and do so quickly. How this response is delivered is really important. Local, community based organizations have shown how quickly, flexibly and inclusively they can, and do respond, to demanding local and individual needs. Just look at how effective their response to the COVID emergency has been.

Our concluding message to decision makers is simple; accelerate the Localism agenda and support local, community based organizations to respond to the needs of local people at a local level, and do it now.

Thank You

We thank the following organisations for their support over the past year.



Cynllun Cymunedau y Dreth Gwarediadau Tirlenwi



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