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The Community Magazine for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil

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[merthyr.gov.uk](http://merthyr.gov.uk)



**MERTHYR TYDFIL**  
County Borough Council

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol  
**MERTHYR TUDFUL**

Welcome to issue  
39 of Contact...



Welcome to issue 39 of Contact community magazine. As you will be able to see as you go through this issue, there are lots of exciting things going on in our County Borough.

Soon after taking on the role of Leader of the Council in 2012, it was apparent that the window of opportunity to secure M&S coming to Merthyr Tydfil was closing, and we had to work extremely hard to facilitate M&S coming to Merthyr Tydfil and I have been working closely with Huw Lewis AM and Carl Sargeant AM, the Minister for Highways at the time, to overcome difficulties with the road layout. However, I am now delighted to see how well the expansion of Cyfarthfa Retail Park is coming along.

This is a wonderful opportunity for the area and for local employment with an additional 120 jobs. The Council's Employability Team and other stakeholders have been working very closely with M&S over the past few months to provide the necessary support to those unemployed and to help them to secure positions at the new store. This is fantastic news for Merthyr Tydfil and we look forward to M&S opening their doors in October.

In September I attended the official opening of the new Waste Transfer Station in Pentrebach. You'll see articles on pages 4 and 5 with more information on the positive impact the new station and service is having on recycling in Merthyr Tydfil, but I just wanted to say a few personal thank yous...

Thank you to Welsh Government who provided £2m of funding and without whom this project would not have been possible.

Thank you to WRAP for working closely in partnership with the Council throughout the planning and implementation of the new service.

Thank you to all the staff involved for their continuous commitment, dedication and determination to implement the service change successfully and on time – there was just one year from funding award to service commencement, so this is something you should all be very proud of!

And last, but by no means least, thank you to you, the residents of Merthyr Tydfil for your cooperation with the changes and making it a success.

I would like to congratulate all the GCSE students for the best ever results this year! The figures have increased by 20% over the past three years.

I would also like to offer my congratulations to all of the young people who have received their key stage 4 results today. The results this year show an improvement which is a testament to the hard work of the students and staff and I am really proud of the progress that has been achieved.

On behalf of the Council I can confirm that our continued commitment to schools is at the heart of everything we do. We know that this investment in the young people of the County Borough is what is needed to make sure that people learn and fulfil their ambitions, and that Merthyr Tydfil is a place to be proud of.

Leader of Merthyr Tydfil CBC, Councillor Brendan Toomey

# Merthyr Tydfil celebrates GCSE results

This year more children than ever before have gained a good start in their learning and have achieved beyond expectations at every important stage in our schools.

The most important indicator, the Level 2 threshold inclusive (equivalent to 5 GCSEs A\*- C including English/Welsh and mathematics), has risen by nearly 20% since 2012.

Councillor Harvey Jones, Cabinet Member for Learning for Life, said: "At age sixteen, GCSE results continue to rise and councillors are once again extremely proud of the attainment of students across the County Borough. I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who has contributed to this success. Such improvements year on year cannot be achieved without the commitment and determination of parents, Governors, Headteachers, school staff and Local Authority officers to whom I offer my heartfelt congratulations.

"These achievements are particularly important because they are the platform for future success in the world of education, employment or training. In 2015 many more of our young people are able to access these opportunities."

Councillor Brendan Toomey, Leader of Merthyr Tydfil CBC also commented: "We are now even more confident that our journey is on the right path and our vision and direction for the future will deliver continued improvement. Our young people have already proven that our high expectations of them can be realised and we will continue to strive for even greater success."



Some of Pen-Y-Dre's record breaking Year 11 students with their proud Head of Year Mrs. Lorraine Morgan:  
From L to R - Whitney Davies, Abby Evans, Lorraine Morgan, Ellie Lewis, Rebecca Stone, Amyjayne Jones and Amy Rees



Daniel Blackford-Weir, highest achieving pupil at Bishop Hedley High School with 7 A\*'s, 1 A & 1 C



Ydfil  
 best ever  
 ts!



## Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

On the 1st April 2016 the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act comes into force. The Act will create a new legal framework that will:

- Make life better for people and their carers
- Make Social Care law easier to use
- Give people a stronger voice and more control
- Make sure people get the help they need to lead a good life
- Say what Social Services will be like all over Wales
- Make sure communities have a chance to offer their knowledge and experience

The Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act places a duty on the Local Authority and its partners to develop a range of services that will prevent or delay the need for care and support. This will mean that in future years we will see more people receiving support at home and within their local community.

The Social Services department will continue to provide support to those people who have the highest levels of need that “can and can only” be met by the Local Authority. This includes vulnerable older people, people with a mental illness and people who are not able to do things for themselves without support.

## Home to School Transport

Thank you to everyone who took part in the consultation earlier this year on the Home to School Transport for pupils with Special Educational Needs, a disability and/or a Medical Condition.

The report following this consultation was taken to Council on 9th September whereby the recommendations were accepted and the policy was approved and amended to ensure that all pupils with SEN, a disability and/or medical condition, access appropriate transport based on assessed need and not on provision attended.

The revised HTST policy for pupils with SEN, a disability and/or medical conditions will come into effect from 1st September 2016.

## Heritage and Regeneration Conference

The Heritage and Regeneration Conference is taking place this year on the 27th November in the Redhouse.

**For further information regarding the event please email [share@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:share@merthyr.gov.uk).**



Elliot Phillips is the top performer at Cyfarthfa High School with 9 A's and 4 A-s



Catrin Powney of Afon Taf High School achieved 3 A's and 7 As

# Recycling changes update

It's been a few months since the changes came into effect so we thought we'd update you on some of the great things that have been happening!

- So far there have been very positive results, with less waste being sent to landfill and better quality materials being recycled.
- We have an improved and extended depot facility, which enables us to sort and bale the recycling that is collected from the kerbside.
- Better quality materials and improved sorting facilities means that we have been able to explore markets to get the very best deal for Merthyr Tydfil taxpayers.
- We are also using more fuel efficient recycling vehicles and have not only retained jobs, but have generated jobs and training for local people.

## Thanks for recycling' says Council's Cabinet Member


Councillor Jones' comments come just four months after the introduction of the new kerbside sort system that asks residents to sort different items at home in boxes ready for collection. Recyclables are then taken to the council's new transfer station where any contaminated material is removed. The waste is then banded and stored ready for sale.

Councillor Jones said: "I want to thank the growing number of people from across Merthyr Tydfil who take time to recycle their waste. The new system has been a learning experience for both the Council and residents alike."

"All councils in Wales have to meet ambitious targets set by the Welsh Government to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill sites such as Trecatti."

"Improving our recycling rate is not only good for the local environment but it helps ensure more money can be spent on our essential front-line services – and not on hefty landfill taxes."

"Thanks to residents' help, we've increased our recycling rate between April and June this year to 57% – a rise of 6% since March! **And we are confident that, with your help we can increase this even further and reach the extremely challenging target of 58% by the end of 2015/16!**"



*Thanks to residents' help, we've increased our recycling rate between April and June this year to 57% – a rise of 6% since March!*



# Minister opens new Waste Transfer Station

Carl Sargeant, Wales' Minister for Natural Resources officially opened the new Waste Transfer Station on 17th September 2015. The event was attended by representatives of MTCBC, Welsh Government, WRAP and other Local Authorities.

The extended depot facility, which has been operational since June 2015, enables us to sort and bale the recycling that is collected from the kerbside, and has resulted in much better quality materials being recovered. Better quality materials and improved sorting enables us to explore markets to get the very best deal for Merthyr Tydfil tax payers.

**It's now more important than ever to reduce waste and recycle effectively, and we're asking residents to help us as much as possible by:**

- Rinsing containers, bottles and jars before placing them in recycling containers – clean recycling has a greater value
- Leaving items loose in the recycling containers so they can be easily sorted
- Recycling an even wider range of materials at Dowlais and Aberfan Household Waste & Recycling Centres
- Visiting [www.recycleforwales.org.uk](http://www.recycleforwales.org.uk) and find out how you can reduce your food waste and save money!

#### It pays to recycle:

- We get around £62 per tonne from the recycling you put in your blue bag; green/black box that will help sustain your collection services
- We pay £53 per tonne to treat the food waste you put in your blue food waste container
- We pay £28 per tonne to compost the garden waste you put in your green bag
- It costs £107.76 per tonne for disposal to landfill of the waste you put in your grey bin

#### The hard facts:

- In just 4 years there has been a 20% increase in the cost of dealing with waste that isn't recycled
- Disposal of waste from your grey bins currently costs us £107.76 per tonne so to dispose of this waste collected across Merthyr Tydfil costs us £5,000 per day - that's a massive £1.3 million per year
- Studies show that around 75% of household waste can be recycled at the kerbside



*Studies show that around 75% of household waste can be recycled at the kerbside*



# Project Riverside has a new name... Golwg Yr Afon

The new infrastructure at Project Riverside is well on the road to completion and is due to open later this year. The works will provide flood remediation protection to new and existing houses, a new access road and new road and foot bridges that will link the communities of Merthyr Vale and Aberfan together with a new Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) that was opened to the public in early August.

However, the new road had no name so an initial list of 36 suggestions from the local community and members of the Riverside project team was whittled down to 2 that were put to a public vote using social media. The result was a win for the new name of Golwg Yr Afon (River View) which will in time become synonymous with the Riverside vision to create a new vibrant, viable and sustainable heart for Merthyr Vale and Aberfan whilst also celebrating the beauty of the Taff valley.

Of course we should never forget the long and proud history of the site as the former Merthyr Vale Colliery and this is due to be commemorated too by moving the half pit wheel from the colliery currently installed in the grounds of Ysgol Rhyd y Grug to the centre of the new Bells Hill roundabout.

This will be joined by life sized wood carving of a miner to create a fitting memorial to the sites heritage.

Funded in partnership by the Welsh Government and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Project Riverside is a comprehensive scheme which addresses long term issues facing the area by providing opportunities for existing residents (relocation of flood affected residents, new school, bridge, access etc) but also new opportunities – housing bringing in new people will boost the local economy and benefit everyone. There is the potential to not only attract local people to purchase new homes but to provide commuter low cost housing due to the sites immediate proximity to Merthyr Vale railway station, which has speedy and regular access to Merthyr town and Cardiff, as envisaged by the Cardiff Capital Region Metro proposals. By the end of 2015 the site will be suitable and ready for housing development and there has already been significant interest shown by developers such that it is envisaged that redevelopment works will continue apace in 2016 and 2017.



*Relocation of  
flood affected  
residents, new  
school, bridge,  
access...*



# Retailers in Merthyr Tydfil are being encouraged to apply for Wales Retail Rates Relief

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will again operate a scheme giving local retailers extra business rates relief.

The Wales Retail Relief Scheme which was announced by the Welsh Government in April will provide relief on occupied premises, wholly or mainly used as retail properties, with a rateable value of £50,000 or less. Properties that could benefit include a wide range of shops, restaurants and cafes, and eligible businesses can claim a discount of up to £1,500 on top of any other relief available such as the Small Business Rates Relief that they may already be receiving.

Over 200 businesses in Merthyr Tydfil benefited from the Wales Retail Relief Scheme last year and the Council's business rates team will send application forms to identified businesses that may be eligible for this year's scheme.

The retail sector is changing, particularly due to internet shopping, and high streets across the country are facing a challenging trading environment. One of the Council's key improvement objectives is to support and invest in our town centres and communities to promote economic growth.

If you would like further information about the scheme or would like to make an application, then please contact the Council's Business Rates section at the address opposite.



Further information about the scheme can also be accessed on the following websites:

[www.merthyr.gov.ukgov.wales](http://www.merthyr.gov.ukgov.wales)  
Tel: 01685 725239  
Email: [revenues@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:revenues@merthyr.gov.uk)

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Business Rates  
Civic Centre  
Castle Street  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 8AN

*Over 200  
businesses in  
Merthyr Tydfil  
benefited from  
the Wales Retail  
Relief Scheme in  
2014*



# Community Cohesion at its Best!

Young people from Forsythia Youth Project and Bishop Hedley School have showed how partnership working and determination can lead to success.

Thanks to the group, which is based on the Gurnos Estate, work is now underway for a new zebra crossing on a busy road, additional lighting on a dark street and to close a subway in the area, in order for the whole community to feel safer.

Research they carried out as part of Citizens Cymru Wales and Cardiff University research project, which asked them to listen to their local communities, find out the important issues and then turn them in to local campaigns, identified those as three key issues in the area, so they jumped in to action, meeting with Police Commissioner, Alun Michael, Chief Inspector David Pert of South Wales Police and Gerald Jones MP, to highlight the issues.

A subsequent meeting with Merthyr Tydfil CBC Leader, Councillor Brendan Toomey and Local Authority officers, set the wheels firmly in motion and completion of the project is thought to be as soon as April 2016!

Councillor Brendan Toomey said: "The Zebra scheme is a fantastic example of community engagement from young people from the Forsythia Youth Project. For me, it was a privilege to be able to help facilitate the implementation of the scheme in its entirety and I would like to congratulate all the young people at the project for the way they have highlighted the difficulties that they were previously encountering in the area and for the very professional way they presented themselves; they are a credit to their community".





# Ffos Y Fran Community Fund

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council administers a Community Fund in respect of royalty payments received by the Council from Miller Argent Limited based on tonnage of coal extracted from the Ffos Y Fran Land Reclamation Scheme.

It has been agreed by Miller Argent in partnership with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council that applications for support from the Ffos Y Fran Community Fund be welcomed from interested parties. All applications must support local community projects with an educational, environmental or leisure emphasis. The Community Fund is split into 3 categories:-

**Small Fund** - The Small Grant Scheme is for applications of £1,000 or under. Application forms can be obtained from the Electoral Ward Division Councillors for your area.

**Intermediate Fund** - The Intermediate fund is for applications up to £5000. Applications must be able to demonstrate a proportion of match funding up to a maximum of 50% of the total project cost. Assessment panels are held 6 monthly with the next panel meeting in April 2016. Applications can be obtained from the Ffos y Fran Grants Benefit Fund Coordinator.

**Large Fund** - The Large Community is for applications of between £5000 and £500,000. This scheme is currently closed.

**For more information, please contact the Ffos y Fran Grants Benefit Fund Coordinator on 01685 725289 or ffostryfran@merthyr.gov.uk**

# CWM TAF community engagement HUB



"Helping you have your say and shape services in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf".

The Cwm Taf Community Engagement Hub exists to provide those who work, live or deliver services across Merthyr Tydfil and RCT with the opportunity to have their say about local services.

Be part of your community and tell us what you think. Together... we really can make the difference. **Join us now by visiting [www.cwmhafhub.co.uk](http://www.cwmhafhub.co.uk)**

# Firework show

**This year's Firework Skyshow will be taking place on Thursday, 5th November at Cyfarthfa Park.**

**Tickets are £7 for a family ticket for four people, if bought before the event and £2.50 per person if bought on the night.**

The gates will open at 5:45pm, with the display starting at 7:15pm. The Park will remain open until 9pm for the Fun Fair.

There will be shuttle buses available going from the Law Courts to the Park, starting from 5:30pm.







Got a **big** idea?  
New to business?  
Looking to **grow**?

Effect Merthyr Tydfil is here to provide **free** and **confidential** business support to new and existing businesses.

Do you have a **Big Idea? Energy? Passion?** Maybe it's about taking that first step and talking to someone. Effect Merthyr Tydfil can help.




**Jared Green** is your Enterprise Facilitator  
**T:** 07730 283812 or 01685 724919  
**E:** [jared.green@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:jared.green@merthyr.gov.uk)





The new Adult Community Learning brochure is now available. Visit [www.merthyr.gov.uk](http://www.merthyr.gov.uk) to download your copy today

# Have yourself a Merry Merthyr Christmas!

Join us for a fun filled season packed with festive food, shopping and entertainment.

i

## Christmas Market

12, 13 and 14 November from 9am - 5pm  
Market Place and St Tydfil Shopping Centre

Merthyr welcomes food and speciality goods traders from Britain and across the continent to its second Christmas Market. If you're looking for something a little bit different, then this is the place for you.

i

## Winter Market & Skating Rink

5 December from 10am - 5pm  
Penderyn Square and Redhouse

Take a glide around our artificial ice rink and sample the delights of our special food and craft market. There'll also be lots of festive entertainment and plenty for the kids to enjoy!

i

## Christmas Lights Switch On

14 November from 11am onwards

Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre

Treat yourself to a day of festive fun with seasonal entertainment, Santa, real reindeer, funfair, children's activities, craft and outdoor markets, festive music... and much more!

i

## Festive Fun At St Tydfil Shopping Centre

28 November	Ben & Holly
5 December	Christmas Snowman and Salvation Army Band
12 December	Santa with Merthyr Mendicants
19 December	Captain Barnacles







**Take a glide  
around our  
artificial ice  
rink**







# Vibrant and Viable Places Programme (VVP)

The VVP Programme is now in its second year of delivery. A successful stakeholder conference was held on the 26th June 2015 which enabled the stakeholders to have an input into the delivery of the Programme to outline what they think is working well and what can be improved.

The event was extremely successful with a number of presentations provided on the progress on key projects including the YMCA, Penydarren Park and the Gellideg Co-operative. Details of the event were uploaded onto Twitter throughout the day to highlight major developments that have been made during the past year since the VVP Programme was launched.

On the 21st July the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Lesley Griffiths AM, officially opened the Merthyr Tydfil Enterprise Centre (MTEC) along with Councillor Brendan Toomey, Leader of the Council and Huw Lewis AM. The MTEC is being delivered through a partnership arrangement between Merthyr Tydfil County Borough

Council, Tydfil Training and Taste of Enterprise and has been established to encourage Enterprise, Employment and Entrepreneurship. The centre is located at 114 High Street in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre. The project is funded through Welsh Government's Vibrant and Visible Places Programme.

The project aims to support new and existing businesses through a central point of contact. Project participants accessing the Enterprise Centre are assessed for both business and personal skill levels, with a specific Action Plan encompassing both elements designed for each individual during their support period. The project is unique as it links potential new business starts to appropriate

business advice and support and continues to improve the personal skills of the business owners. The project is aiming to help people access job opportunities and earn an income, aiming to develop skills and working with existing and new businesses to expand and progress new ideas. Job creation is a principal output for the project along with participants gaining a qualification, therefore linking strongly to the Tackling Poverty Agenda.

Included within the programme is retail finance for new and existing businesses to assist with capital purchases up to £5,000 at a 70% intervention rate. In addition to this, a Meanwhile Use Scheme is also available for new or expanding business to test trade new products in vacant properties across the

Town Centre, providing a low risk trading opportunity and enhancing the products and services on offer in the Town Centre. On 10th September 2015 Deli of the Valley opened for business located at 12 Market Square, as is the first Meanwhile Scheme that has been funded through the Programme.

The YMCA building in Merthyr Tydfil's future looks a great deal more certain now, after the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) allocated it £2.6 million in funding.

The money, along with £1.1m from the VVP Programme, will be used to bring the renowned building back into use after considerable time on the sidelines, with plans to convert it into 11 commercial units, which could result in the creation of more than 70 local jobs.





Built in 1911, the YMCA building has had as unusual a life as its quirky design would suggest. Designed by celebrated Welsh architect Sir Percy Thomas in 1911, the building, with its red brick and terracotta façade, has served as both a boxing gym and a dance hall. In fact, British boxing champion Eddie Thomas famously trained at the facility.

Jennifer Stewart, head of HLF in Wales, explained how the grant will put the building back on the map.

“With the right investment, historic buildings not only provide inspirational spaces where enterprise can thrive, they can also have a positive impact on local economies,” she said. Stewart added that HLF has played an important role in the town, noting

how it has invested over £6.5 million in projects such as Cefn Coed Viaduct, Canolfan Soar, Merthyr Old Town Hall, Cyfarthfa Park and the Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Claire Deacon, from recipients of the award the Carmarthenshire Heritage Regeneration Trust, said the money will “breathe new life into the building”, adding that it won’t be long before it is the “hub for economic and social activity in the heart of Merthyr Tydfil”.

Developments have started on the Miners Hall and the Theatre Royal, two key listed buildings within the Town Centre. Structural surveys have been undertaken on both buildings which will assist the local authority in developing the plans for the site in more detail.

It is anticipated that the Miners Hall will be mothballed and made structurally safe. The site adjacent to the Miners Hall, the Miners Arms, has recently been acquired by Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association and is currently being mothballed with a view to the site being developed over the coming years.

As you may have noticed, since planning was approved, work has started on the Labour Exchange and Pontmorlais Promenade Site. Wales and West Housing are currently demolishing the old Labour Exchange building whilst retaining the façade of the building. Wales and West Housing are also undertaking archaeological works on the site with the main infrastructure works due to start over the next few months.

A consultation on the design of the new Bus Station was held during late August/early September. The design team has included artist Chris Tipping who undertook research into the local area and developed a design that reflected the local landscape and former ironworks buildings and the light they emitted. The designs have now been finalised and a planning application submitted.



**Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government**

# Superfast Cymru...

...is transforming the Broadband landscape in Wales by bringing high speed Fibre Optic Broadband to the majority of homes and businesses across the country and it has arrived in many parts of Merthyr Tydfil.

All four telephone exchanges which serve the County Borough have now been upgraded to provide Fast Fibre Broadband. 97% of premises on Bedling telephone exchange can already access Fast Fibre Broadband, 98% of premises on Treharris telephone exchange can also access fibre with

Merthyr Tydfil exchange being on 91% and Ynysowen exchange on 93% respectively. So contact a communications provider to check if Superfast Broadband is available to your property.

## *i* The benefits of Superfast Broadband:

**For your home** – Superfast Broadband gives you quick and easy access to all the entertainment you could want. For example, getting up to speed on the week's TV with catch-up services. You can stream movies instantly or download HD films in minutes. And you can download tunes for your holiday or party playlist in an instant while you simultaneously, upload and share photos and videos of those special moments. The high-speed connectivity offered by superfast means working from home or anywhere remote from the office is always possible. Those faster upload and download speeds make accessing work documents hassle-free.

**For your business** – Work smarter, faster, better. Superfast Broadband has the potential to transform the way your business operates. The high-speed technology can help your business become more productive, more cost-effective and compete on a global scale. As well as benefitting from faster upload and download speeds, it'll give you access to new ways of working. Superfast Broadband allows you to do more over the internet meaning you can do business faster and reduce the need to travel. Do business with anyone, anywhere, anytime! Your customers will notice the difference too.

## *i* Upgrade today to feel the real benefits.

### Three steps to life in the fast lane:

1. Check your area is live at [superfast-cymru.com](http://superfast-cymru.com)
2. Contact your internet service provider
3. Upgrade today and live the superfast way

**To find out more about Superfast Broadband in Wales go to [www.superfast-cymru.com](http://www.superfast-cymru.com)**

Superfast Cymru is a partnership between Welsh Government, BT, UK Government and the European Regional Development Fund and is the largest of its kind in the UK.

*Work smarter,  
faster, better.  
Superfast  
Broadband has  
the potential to  
transform the way  
your business  
operates.*



**WE ARE  
MACMILLAN.  
CANCER SUPPORT**

# New service helps cancer patients to get advice on benefits



Shirley Melly is the new Macmillan welfare benefits adviser, who offers people diagnosed with cancer and their families advice on benefits and other important information.

The free and confidential service located at the Macmillan Cancer Unit in Prince Charles Hospital is available to patients, their carers and families to help them access their benefit entitlement and assist in maximising their income including assistance with grants.

Shirley said: "It's important that patients receive the amount of benefit they are entitled to. The financial pressures on our patients who are unable to work is a huge burden.

"Making sure these patients are receiving their correct benefit entitlement gives them some peace of mind and helps to ease their anxiety."

Susan Morris, the Macmillan Cancer Support General Manager for Wales, said: "The work of Macmillan welfare benefits advisers, like Shirley, is invaluable in supporting people diagnosed with cancer, who often face financial hardship at a time when they are vulnerable.

"Our welfare benefits advisers across Wales helped people claim £13.3 million in financial benefits last year. They also help people access grants from Macmillan.

"But the results from the first Welsh Cancer Patient Experience Survey show that more than half (56%) of cancer patients in Wales are not offered enough information about welfare benefits advice.

"It is vital that people living with cancer are signposted to good quality specialist and timely welfare benefits support to help them cope and manage the financial impact of their diagnosis."

**To access the service you can email at [shirley.melly@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:shirley.melly@merthyr.gov.uk) or telephone 01685 725094.**

*"The financial pressure on our patients who are unable to work is a huge burden"*





# M&S Merthyr Tydfil brings

As part of the recruitment process, M&S has been keen to recruit from within the local area as much as possible and has been working with a number of organisations, including Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Job Centre Plus and its M&S Marks & Start\* partners – Remploy, Prince's Trust and Gingerbread – to seek out highly talented and enthusiastic staff to join its team.

Marks & Start is a programme which aims to give those who are unemployed a confidence boost and reconnect them with their skills before giving them work experience with one of the UK's biggest high street retailers. M&S has been working with Remploy (supporting people with disabilities and health conditions), Gingerbread (helping lone parents) and Prince's Trust (working with young people between the ages of 16-25).

M&S has also teamed up with the Employability Team at Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to develop a bespoke package of training that provides all the tools needed for jobseekers to be successful. Services include support on interview techniques and online applications, insight and advice on what M&S looks for from its staff and specially organised visits to see behind the scenes at its busy M&S Cardiff store on Queen Street.

Furthermore, M&S store teams from across Wales joined forces to makeover the Retail Training Facility at Merthyr Tydfil's Neighbourhood Learning Centre, further enhancing the store's commitment to supporting applicants from the local community. Designed to offer jobseekers the chance to gain hands-on shop experience, the Retail Training facility has

been redecorated and rebranded as an M&S store and staff from the retailer's Cardiff stores have been on hand to give tips on great customer service.

David Bowen, Store Manager at M&S Merthyr Tydfil, said: "We're all very excited about the opening of our new store here in Merthyr Tydfil and are especially delighted that we have been able to recruit so many people from the local area. At M&S, we really cherish the opportunity to become a part of the communities in which we operate and that's not just about offering our customers the best service we can, but also providing great career opportunities for local people."

M&S Merthyr Tydfil will open at 10am on Thursday 29 October at Cyfarthfa Retail Park. The store will be open between 8am and 8pm Monday to Saturday, and 11am and 5pm on Sundays, with access to free parking.

**Helen Walsh, from Merthyr Tydfil** (pictured second from the right) will join the town's new M&S store team as a Womenswear Customer Assistant when the store opens this October

Having previously worked for Hoover Candy at its services and maintenance call centre, Helen was made redundant in January 2014 and had since struggled to find a new job.

Being out of work for so long had knocked Helen's confidence, so she





...to seek out highly talented and enthusiastic staff to join its team.

# ings 120 new jobs

leapt at the chance to benefit from the services open to M&S applicants at the Merthyr Tydfil Neighbourhood Learning Centre.

Helen said: "My step sister works at the centre and when I heard they were helping to recruit for Marks and Spencer I begged her to put me forward. I've grown up with M&S and absolutely love it. It used to be a treat day out for me and my mother to visit the store at Culverhouse Cross and it's a brand I really trust.

"I'd found it hard to find work after being made redundant at the beginning of last year and was starting to think employers are only interested in hiring younger people. When I found out that M&S was actively looking to recruit people from the local area and were providing support and guidance on what they were looking for from new employees, I was over the moon.

"Everyone at the Neighbourhood Learning Centre has been so helpful. Providing insight into M&S, how they operate and what the customer assistant role entails – it really helped to boost my confidence for my interview.

"The opening of an M&S store is a huge thing for Merthyr Tydfil and I'm so pleased to be a part of it. I really believe that M&S value the experience that older people like me can bring to the role and I can't wait to welcome our customers to the Womenswear department on opening day."

**Jane Gregory, from Trelewis,** (pictured third from the right) had always worked in office-based roles but after deciding it was time for a career change earlier this year she found herself out of work for five months.

Jane said: "I was keen to find a new role which would enable me to feel more part of a team. Finding a new job was really difficult though, and I started to lose belief in myself and what I could offer.

"When I found out they were planning to open an M&S store in Merthyr Tydfil, I knew it could be the perfect opportunity for me and made sure the Job Centre put my name forward straightaway.

"The help the Neighbourhood Learning Centre provided ahead of my interview was invaluable and I can't thank everyone enough. They provided guidance and took us through role play scenarios so we could really get to know the M&S brand values and how they approach customer care. We even got to go behind the scenes at M&S Cardiff to get a feel for what working at M&S would be like.

"To me, M&S is a brand which stands for quality. It's really respected and I feel so proud to be able to say I work for them. I'm a real person and the idea of working in a retail environment where I'll get to interact with customers and work as part of a team is really exciting."

# Cwm Taf Safeguarding Boards

It is recognised that if the partner agencies that CAN make a difference to people's lives work together then more can be achieved and more people can be helped and protected.

The Cwm Taf Safeguarding Boards are statutory groups that bring together a range of agencies to ensure that:

- Adults who are at risk of abuse or neglect are protected and that action is taken to prevent them from becoming at risk of abuse or neglect. This work is carried out by the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Adults Board.
- Children are protected from risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm and are prevented from becoming at risk. This work is carried out by the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board.

## **i** Safeguarding Adults

Everyone aged over 18 should be able to live free from fear and harm and to have their rights and choices respected. Some adults are less able to protect themselves than others, and some have difficulty making their wishes and feelings known. This may make them vulnerable to abuse.

Adult abuse is when a person is treated in a way that makes them feel frightened or unhappy or is harmed, hurt or exploited by another – particularly by someone they know or should be able to trust.

The person responsible for the abuse could be anybody and the abuse can happen anywhere. Abuse can be the result of a single act or may continue over months or years. Abuse can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering.

## **i** Safeguarding Children

The safety and welfare of all children – known as safeguarding – is everyone's business.

Most children generally enjoy a happy childhood within their own family. Unfortunately for some, this is not the case. There are some children who are vulnerable - due to reasons such as personal or family circumstances, mental, emotional or physical ability - and need the efforts of all - friends, family, teachers and other professionals, to ensure that they are safe and protected from harm.

This harm could come in many forms, from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, exploitation or neglect.

## **i** Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a type of child abuse. It can happen to any child or young person. It happens when a young person is encouraged, or forced, to take part in sexual activity in exchange for something, such as presents, money, alcohol, or simply emotional attention.

## **i** How does it happen?

Sexual exploitation can be hard to recognise because often it feels like that you are in a good relationship with the person – or people – who abuse your trust in them.

Often people who exploit you are nice to you; they might buy you things, listen to your problems, take you to great places or give you a place to stay when you're having problems.

Anyone who persuades you to have sex with them or other people, or encourages you to post sexual images of yourself via text or on the internet, in return for the things that they have given you is sexually exploiting you, even if you don't always feel like they are.

If what you are being asked or forced to do makes you feel uncomfortable or worried in some way or somehow feels wrong then remember it probably is.

## **i** Where can you find help?

If you are a young person who is worried about any situation that you or a friend is in, talk to an adult that you trust as soon as you can.

**Further help and advice on how to keep yourself safe from child sexual exploitation is available on [www.itsnotokay.co.uk](http://www.itsnotokay.co.uk)**



# Be vocal and help make a difference...

Are you interested in improving local public services? If so, why not apply to become a Co-opted Member on one of the Councils scrutiny committees?

Local residents or those people that work in the County Borough who want to get involved in some of the key decisions affecting the area, should apply for one of the vacant positions.

As a scrutiny committee co-opted member you will work on one of the Council's five Scrutiny Committees with elected Councillors from all parties, and also other co-opted members. You will use your skills and knowledge of the issues and of the services within the County Borough to add to the discussion and debate.

The role of the scrutiny committees includes reviewing decisions made and actions taken in connection with the Council's policies, plans and budgets, and making recommendations for changes and improvements where necessary.

Further details are available on the Council's website in the "Scrutiny Committees" section. You can find out more about which of the committees have vacancies, download an application form and find out more about Scrutiny in general by visiting [www.merthyr.gov.uk](http://www.merthyr.gov.uk) and searching for "scrutiny committees". Alternatively telephone the Scrutiny section on **01685 725464** for more information.

There is no salary or allowance for the role, but reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed.

*The closing date for applications is 19th November 2015*



## **i** Where can you find help?

If you are an adult who has been or still is the victim of abuse, or you know someone who you think is being abused, contact your local Safeguarding Team on **01685 724539** (Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm, Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm).

If you have concerns about the immediate safety of a child or young person contact your local Safeguarding Team on **01685 725000** (Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm, Friday - 8.30am - 4.30pm)

To contact Children or Adults Services outside office hours, at weekends and bank holidays call the Cwm Taf Emergency Duty Team on **01443 743665**.

If you suspect an adult, child or young person is at immediate risk of harm call 999 and speak to the Police.

If you would like to report a non-urgent incident or have a problem or general query call 101, the 24 hour non-emergency number for the police.



# The Keep Safe Cymru Card

## – helping to protect our communities

The Keep Safe Cymru Card was jointly launched with South Wales Police, Learning Disability Services and Mencap Cymru.

The card may assist anyone in the South Wales force area with a learning disability, dementia, mental ill-health or communication need.

The scheme is designed to make people more aware of their personal safety, to encourage reporting of crime – especially hate crime – and to seek help if they need it.

When an individual registers for a keep safe card, they will also be given access to the Police Disability Line. This is a dedicated non-emergency telephone number for people with a disability to use to contact the police. When calling this number, the Call handler will be aware before they speak to the caller that they have a disability.

The potentially life-saving cards enable vulnerable people to get help when they become ill or feel unsafe.

The 'Keep Safe' cards were originally designed for people with learning disabilities but can now be more widely used.

The cards, which are free, allow people to list their name, emergency contact details as well as health and other important information about themselves to make sure they get the appropriate help if they are taken ill or feel unsafe. In addition, people using the card can register their details with our Public Service Centre and will be given a card with

a reference number on it. If they then need to ring through to 101 at any point to report a crime, or ask for police assistance, they simply quote the reference number and all the callers registered details will be available to the Public Service Operator.

Further information on the scheme, which includes an application form, can be found by visiting the South Wales Police website at

[www.south-wales.police.uk](http://www.south-wales.police.uk)

*The scheme is designed to make people more aware of their personal safety...*

### Meet your local officers

Your local police officers will be in the reception area of the Civic Centre from 12pm until 2pm, Monday to Friday.

Come and talk to them to raise issues about your local area and obtain crime prevention advice.



# Changes to children's free swimming

From October Half Term the free swimming provision in Merthyr Tydfil is changing.

New guidelines issued to Sport Wales by the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism means that junior 'Splash' free swimming is to be reduced and the focus moved to increasing 'Learn to Swim' rates and tackling inequalities in swimming.

Merthyr Tydfil is currently the only authority in Wales to offer free swimming all day, every day during school holidays (a total of 116.5 hours per week) at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre and Aberfan & Merthyr Vale Community

Centre, with most other authorities offering the minimum 7 hours per pool, per week.

Merthyr Tydfil must now fall in-line with all other authorities in Wales, meaning that the hours will be reduced incrementally from October Half Term 2015 to Easter Half Term 2016.

## October Half Term 2015 Free Swimming will be as follows:

Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre				Aberfan & Merthyr Vale Community Centre			
Day	Start	End	Total Hours	Day	Start	End	Total Hours
Monday	09:00	20:00	11	Monday	11.45	17:30	5.75
Tuesday	09:00	20:00	11	Tuesday	11.45	17:30	5.75
Wednesday	09:00	20:00	11	Wednesday	11.45	17:30	5.75
Thursday	09:00	20:00	11	Thursday	11.45	17:30	5.75
Friday	09:00	20:00	11	Friday	12:00	17:30	5.5
Saturday	09:00	12:30	3.5	Saturday	09:00	11:30	2.5
Sunday	09:00	12:30	3.5	Sunday	09:00	11:30	2.5
Total:			62.00	Total:			33.50
				Overall Total:		95.50	

A further reduction to 86 hours per week for the Christmas holidays, 76 hours per week for February Half Term and 50 hours per week for the Easter Holidays will follow.

**The full reduction to 14 hours per week will be implemented from Whitsun 2016 across both centres.**

**In the meantime, MTCBC will, along with partners, develop a plan for 2016/17 to engage with children age 16 and under, focusing on:**

- Those failing to achieve the prescribed 'Learn to Swim' test by the end of Key Stage 2
- Those living in areas of high deprivation
- Those from migrant communities
- Young people with disabilities

**For further information contact the Leisure, Culture and Sports Development Manager on (01685) 727356.**

# Have you ever wondered how your Council Tax is spent?

We often get asked exactly that!

So we've created the below graph to demonstrate the spend, per pound, for your council tax in Merthyr Tydfil.

- Education 35.68p
- Social Services - Adult Services 15.37p
- Grounds Maintenance 1.06p
- Highways and Engineering 1.94p
- Leisure and Culture Services 2.23p
- Licensing 0.04p
- Registrars 0.07p
- Capital Financing Costs 7.12p
- Legal and Democratic Services 1.17p
- Support Services 5.29p
- Police 3.03p

- Social Services - Prevention and Early Intervention 1.72p
- Bereavement Services 0.08p
- Refuse Collection 2.92p
- Community Regeneration 0.62p
- Trading Standards 0.24p
- Housing Services 0.35p
- Peace of mind (life Line) 0.01p
- Levies 2.57p
- Corporate Property 1.51p
- Fire Service 2.33p

Council Tax Band	Annual Council Tax
A	901.81
B	1052.12
C	1202.42
D	1352.72
E	1653.32
F	1953.93
G	2254.53
H	2705.44
I	3156.35

- School Transport 2.07p
- Social Services - Children Services 9.19p
- Street Cleansing 0.74p
- Fleet Management 0.68p
- Planning and Building control 0.54p
- Public Health 0.47p
- CCTV 0.09p
- Council Tax Benefit Payments 5.53p
- Emergency planning 0.08p
- Corporate costs 0.62p

