



Nadroedd 'N' Ysgolion - Y Pandemig Arall

Snakes 'N' Ladders - The Other Pandemic

YOUTH ADVISORY PANEL

2022/2023 PROJECT DELIVERY REPORT



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

SMT

Supporting Safe and Confident Communities
Cefnogi Cymunedau Diogel a Hyderus

25 MLYNEDD - 1997-2022 - 25 YEARS



VOLUNTARY ACTION
MERTHYR TYDFIL
GWETHREDU GWIRFODDOL
MERTHYR TYDFIL

Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children
Barnardo's
Cymru

MTBWYF
Forwm Ieuenctid Ledled Bwrdeistref Merthyr Tydfil
Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Cwm Taf Morgannwg
University Health Board

**LLOYDS BANK
FOUNDATION**
England & Wales

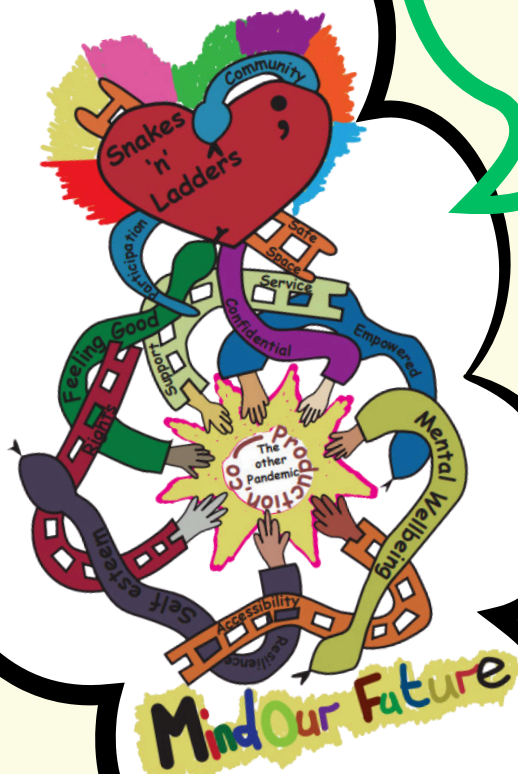



**CRONFA
GYMUNEDOL
COMMUNITY
FUND**

Why are you called 'Snakes 'N' Ladders - The Other Pandemic'?

Lacy Phillips, a member of our panel said, "The meaning behind the name for the Snakes 'N' Ladders project is both visual and metaphorical. It shows stages of mental health issues - ups and downs, barriers and openings, climbing and falling."

Rhian Davies added 'The Other Pandemic' to the title because she said that "The other side of the covid pandemic is a rapid worsening of mental health in our youth and increasing the challenge of providing services to deal with it."





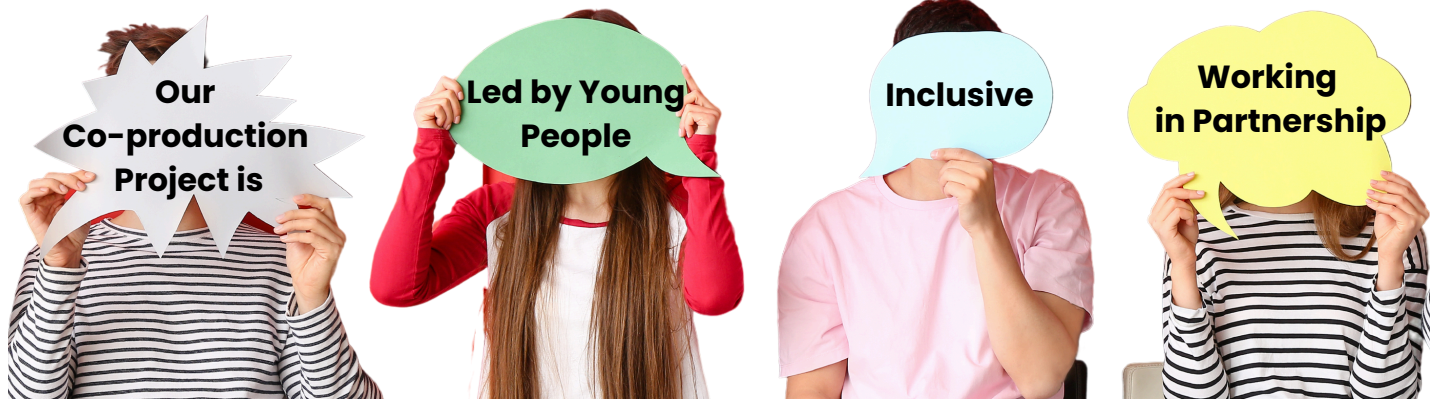
from the Youth
Advisory Panel

WELCOME...

We're very proud of the **'Snakes 'N' Ladders - The Other Pandemic'** project and the contribution that over 450 of our peers from Merthyr Tydfil have made to its findings.

- **Thank you** for sharing your lived experiences around mental health and wellbeing with us.
- **What you have said** has helped us shape the project and identify the top issues affecting young people's mental health and wellbeing in Merthyr Tydfil.
- **Our next steps** are to focus our time around these top issues and trial some solutions to see if they make a difference.

We hope you find this 'young person version' of the delivery report useful and informative, and that you will join us in our journey over the next 4 years.





Snakes 'N' Ladders - The Other Pandemic is a project that aims to reach all young people aged 11-25 in Merthyr Tydfil, whatever their background or life experiences.

We are led by a panel of young people and supported by partner organisations, to find out what impacts upon young people's mental health, wellbeing and resilience; and to pilot informed approaches to target the top issues.

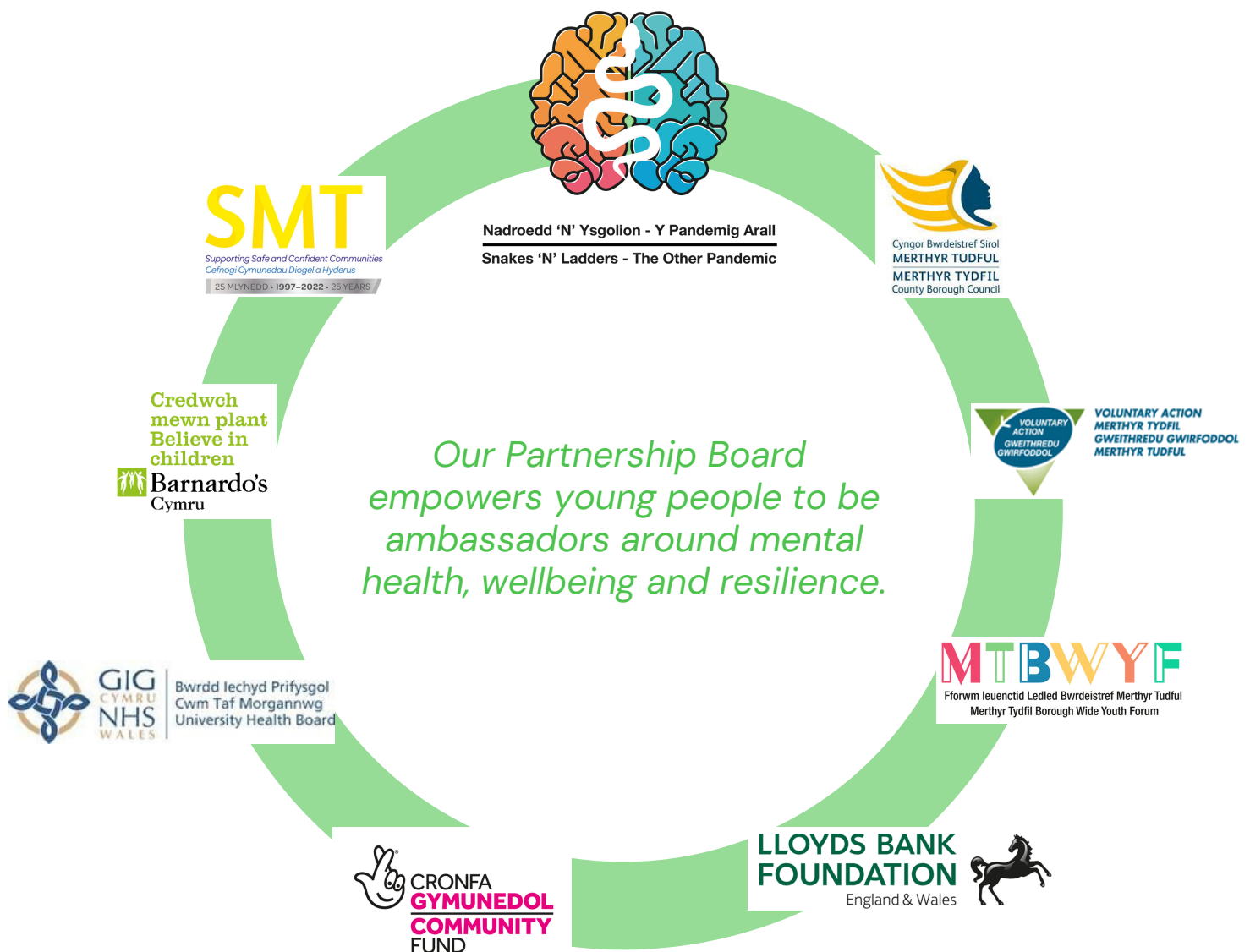
As young people ourselves we want our voices to be heard and our life experiences to be learned from. We want to improve resilience by improving relationships and building trust in our peers for a more hopeful future.

Working across Merthyr Tydfil County Borough, we have spent time during the listening phase of the project reaching out to 11-25 year olds in our communities and schools. We have formed a Youth Advisory Panel, to lead the project and work with a range of partners and organisations who support us. We have held focus groups, fun events, questionnaires and 1:1 consultations. We have gathered a large amount of data that we want to tell you about in the following pages.

Most importantly, we want to show you the top issues we identified from our research and how we are planning to address those issues over the next 4 years.

Our Working Partners

Snakes 'N' Ladders - The Other Pandemic is fully supported by the following organisations. They are all involved in different ways - some employ staff specifically to work on the project, others provide us with training and premises to meet in. They all offer their time and expertise to support the project.



You can find out more about our partner organisations at the end of this report.

How The Project Started



The former Local Authority Children's Champion of Merthyr Tydfil, the young people of MTBWYF (Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum) and other partner organisations originally made a funding application to **The National Lottery Community Fund**.

MTBWYF wrote and delivered a presentation to the Lottery's 'Mind Our Future' board as part of the application. They spoke about what they wanted to do and why. They were supported by a partnership board of organisations who agreed to support the work over the duration of the project.

When the National Lottery Community Fund awarded us the £1.2 million for the Project, we found out we were one of just nine similar projects in Wales!

The young people of MTBWYF launched the project by creating a new Youth Advisory Panel, dedicated to the goals of Snakes 'N' Ladders - The Other Pandemic.

The young people said, "We want lots of young people to get involved and to share their experiences. We want ALL our voices to be heard."

Step 1: The Panel

The young people on the Youth Advisory Panel knew that the first year of the project was **the 'Listening Phase'**.

- We knew we would need to talk to as many of our peers as possible throughout Merthyr Tydfil.
- We knew issues affect young people differently and individually.
- We knew we needed to identify the **top issues** if we wanted to help as many young people as possible.

We recruited more panel members, set up monthly panel meetings and decided how to begin reaching out. We decided what we wanted to do and our project partners provided training to start us off. Our training involved: how to conduct a consultation or a workshop; how to create an online questionnaire; how to give a presentation; and learning about safeguarding issues.

During the Listening Phase 40 young people expressed an interest in joining the panel. We now have 33 committed panel members.



When we met

We met monthly for panel meetings and extra days for training.



What we did

We broadened our own understanding of mental health and wellbeing and created working groups to complete project tasks.



Who Listened?

Our partner organisations listened to us at Board meetings which we chaired. They took us seriously and helped us create ways of reaching as many peers as possible.

Step 2: Asking and Listening

Why wouldn't you ask
for help?

Where do you go for help
in the community?

Where do you go for help
in school?

What affects your
wellbeing the most?

What do you think needs
to be done?

LET'S
TALK ABOUT IT

Redhouse Roadshow

92 young people | 13 organisations | 26 staff (internal & external)

In December 2022 we invited peers and organisations to our **first major event**. We used fun and interactive workshops to gather information about what our peers think about their mental health and wellbeing. The information we gathered here, and the questions we found to be the most useful, were integrated into the whole of the Listening Phase.

Consultations

Using what we learned at the Roadshow we consulted in schools and community youth organisations. We asked very similar open questions and were surprised to notice the same recurring top issues.

An Online Questionnaire and One to One Conversations

150 completed questionnaires | 17 One to Ones

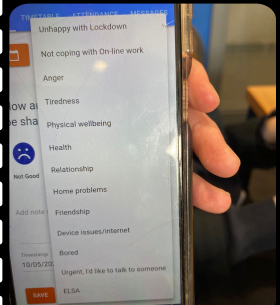
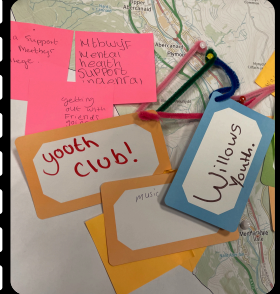
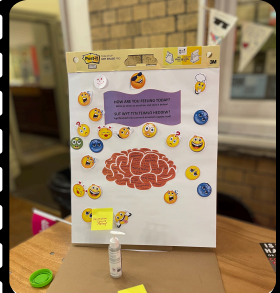
Finally, we created an online questionnaire and held some 1:1 consultations using the same questions. Once again the responses, and some life experiences, were the same or similar.

450 Young People

11 to 25 years of age

Living in Merthyr
Tydfil

Here are some of the schools and organisations that we consulted with. You may have seen us or chatted with us and been involved in the project!



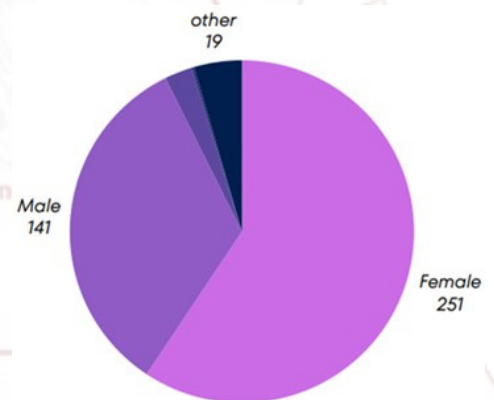
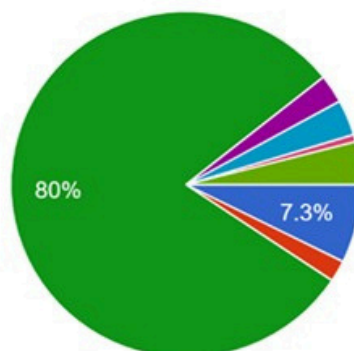
Schools

**Blessed Carlo Acutis
Catholic School
Cyfarthfa Park Primary
School
Gwaunfarren Primary
School
Afon Taf High School
Penydre High School
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg
Rhydywaun**

Community

**Adlib Drama Group
Glan Yr Afon Explorers
Scouts
Merthyr Valley Homes
Youth Provision
Redhouse Cymru
Treharris Boys and Girls
Club
Online questionnaire
shared across Merthyr**

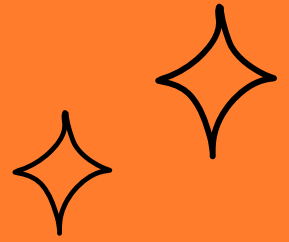
We tried to reach as many young people as we could, from as many backgrounds and lived experiences as possible.



- Asian or Asian British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic group
- Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Black Scottish, Black Irish
- White, White British, White Welsh, White Scottish, White Irish
- Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Other (Please state)



There needs to be an interest
in and an understanding of
young people and what they go
through.



We need to deal with bullying,
especially in school and on social
media.

Bullying is everywhere in school.

We need more support in school.

I'm tired of school and caring
activities.

Most days I feel happy but a bit
sad because of school and family
loss.

WHAT SOME YOUNG PEOPLE SAID:

We need **ONE** place to find out
about all the help already
available to us.

We need to be able to access
help quickly and not wait weeks
for a referral.

We need more people to talk to.
We need to be listened to and
believed.

We need to know who we can
talk to and where to find them.

We need help dealing with stress.

Give us time to talk about our
feelings.

We need help to find help.



Step 3: Top Issues



At the end of the Listening Phase the Youth Advisory Panel, staff and partner organisations evaluated all the opinions, stories and contributions that had been collected. We saw that there were many, many issues that had an impact upon the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Merthyr Tydfil.

However, we also saw that there were some clear stand out issues:



Lack of relationships and trust between young people and professionals in all settings. This caused young people not to seek help when they needed it, particularly around the issues of unhealthy relationships and bullying. They wonder “What’s the point?” “They won’t believe me anyway”, “Will they share my story around so everyone knows about it?”, “I don’t know that person, it’s hard to talk to them about my problems.”



Social media. Social media is a part of all our lives but it negatively affects some of our relationships through cyber bullying and projections of an unrealistic self image and life.



Lack of information and knowledge of how to access help that is already available. Most young people do not know where to go for help and what will happen when they do. They want to know the process and people beforehand and also what will happen to their personal information when they give it.



Young people don’t feel listened too. They worry people won’t believe them and as a result they sometimes fail to speak up for themselves. They also worry that they *can’t* speak to someone when they really need too.



If you would like to see more information about the data, please contact our Project Coordinator (contact details at end of report).

Step 4: Project Priorities

To address the 4 top issues **4 project priorities** were created. These priorities will be the focus of the new 'Delivery Phase' of the project and we will pilot solutions to try to help improve the issues across Merthyr Tydfil.

Priority



Relationships and Trust

Improve relationships and trust between young people and professionals in education and community settings.
Work with schools, other organisations and young people to develop resources addressing unhealthy relationships.
Include these resources as part of the school curriculum.



Social Media

Promote positive social media use to maintain healthy relationships.
Show how to recognise cyber bullying and what to do about it.



Information

Develop and provide better access to information for young people about the help that is available to them. Increase understanding of those pathways and the people involved so that young people feel more confident to access the services they need.



Listening

Pilot a non-referral, easy access approach to an existing wellbeing service so that Young People can seek help and be heard when they need it.
Continue the Youth Advisory Panel throughout the lifetime of the Project to ensure we are led by the voice of Young People.

Step 5: Our Pilot Solutions

Year 2

Oct '23 to Dec '24

- YAP **Delivery Phase** launch event to local schools and organisations.
- Develop electronic resources to address relationships and trust.

Year 3

Oct '24 to Sept '25

- Work with partners, schools and organisations, to develop materials around improving relationships affected by bullying and social media.
- Work with key partners to trial an 'open access' approach to current wellbeing and resilience programs (outside lessons; no referral needed).

Year 4

Oct '25 to Sept '26

- Establish a sustainable and permanent method of making all developed resources available to young people.
- Potentially place young people in control of this resource.

Year 5

Oct '26 to July '27

- Second year of addressing relationships and trust with Year 9 pupils. Evaluate this solution.
- Full project evaluation and report in partnership with the Wales Institute of Health & Social Care, USW.

We're grateful to the **National Lottery Mind Our Future Fund** for granting us five years for the whole project. Such a long period of investment shows the Community Fund's commitment not just to the project and the changes we are trying to make but to all the young people of Merthyr Tydfil.

The Youth Advisory Panel have taken a lead in designing the four pilot solutions and will be fully involved for the duration of the project. Our project partners support the pilot solutions and will support us in testing them.

Our pilot solutions have been added to a flexible timeline which covers up to July 2027. The project will continue to listen to young people and evaluate as we go along, changes will be made as and when needed.



Step 6: Monitoring Our Success



How will we
know our pilot
solutions are
working?



How will we
know that we're
tackling the
top issues and
having a
positive
impact?

We have a chance to make real and lasting change for the young people in Merthyr Tydfil and, therefore, have put systems in place to continuously evaluate all that we do.

The **Youth Advisory Panel** and **Partnership Board** will continue to meet together regularly and we will continue listening to all young people across the Borough.

Our partner evaluation organisation is the '**Wales Institute for Health and Social Care**' out of the University of South Wales. They have a great deal of expertise evaluating projects like ours and we are excited to receive their help.



from the Youth
Advisory Panel

FINAL WORDS...

Thank you for reading our report about the first year of the 'Snakes 'N' Ladders - The Other Pandemic' project, our findings and what we will be doing to try to improve the mental health and wellbeing of our peers in Merthyr Tydfil.

- **If you are between 11 and 25 years of age** and want to get involved, please contact any of the people listed below.
- **If you belong to an organisation** working in Merthyr Tydfil, and you would like to explore avenues of co-production, please contact the Project Co-ordinator via those listed below.

Engagement Officer: Jess Powell, jp@smt.org.uk

Engagement Officer: Deb Davies, dd@smt.org.uk

Project Co-ordinator: Jan Watkins, jw3@smt.org.uk

Social media



YOUTH ADVISORY PANEL

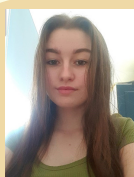


What It Means To Us To Be Part Of 'Snakes 'N' Ladders -The Other Pandemic' and Why We Joined.



Abby

I believe that mental health is very important, and being part of Snakes 'N' Ladders means I can be involved with their mission to promote and assist with the wellbeing of our youth.



Lacy

Services have continuously failed to meet my needs, but this has motivated me to improve the ones that are already in place. Under the Snakes 'N' Ladders project, we will reshape what already exists to better serve those in need by working together with like-minded young people who are enthusiastic about change and our mental health and wellbeing.

Megan

I joined Snakes 'N' Ladders because I am a young person that suffers with anxiety symptoms. I wanted to try something new to push my boundaries, with the support of my sister by my side at meetings.

Luke

Being a member of Snakes 'N' Ladders feels like being part of a second family. I am extremely proud to be part of this incredible group as we collaborate to make a positive difference in the lives of young people.



Katy

I'm Katy, I'm youth mayor of Merthyr Tydfil. I have been part of the project from the beginning. I think mental health and wellbeing is incredibly important.

Katrina

I joined this project with a mission to improve mental health and I am very happy to be involved.



Abdullah

Why did I join Snakes 'N' Ladders? Well, why not? Why wouldn't I like to be part of a project that is trying to help young people, people like me?



Samee

I've been involved in this project since 'day 1'. I've loved seeing how it's grown and evolved over the year; how it's given hope and support to all the young people involved; and how it has been received by everyone who has come into contact with it. This project means the world to me and I hope it means just as much to everyone else.



Jay

I recently joined Snakes 'N' A Ladders because of my boyfriend. At first I was sceptical but I grew to love and enjoy the meetings. Snakes 'N' Ladders motivated me to grow out of my shell and aspired me to meet new people.



Dylan

I'm the Deputy Youth Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil. I've been a member of Snakes 'N' Ladders for 2A years and it's important to me to help young people with their mental health and wellbeing.



Morgan

Being a part of the Youth advisory panel means we can strive to MAKE change in our community and also BEA the change. We can start now for the future of all young people.

Elliot

Snakes 'N' ladders Helps those who are in need Or those who want to help.

"Why?" you ask? This project is important to many. It motivates young people.

Amazing and fun to thoseA It helps to grow out of our shellsA It promotes mental health.

It helps those who need moreA Confidence, friends, support, And other essential skills.



Sparrow

I'm an aspiring tattoo artist. I have lived through my struggles now I want to help better others live with my knowledge on topics and through my work with Snakes 'N' Ladders.



Nerys

I joined Snakes 'N' A Ladders because I understood the stages that young people were facing in the community and wanted to make a change.



Lo

I joined the panel as I'm very interested in supporting young people with mental health and being able to help others understand mental health as a whole.



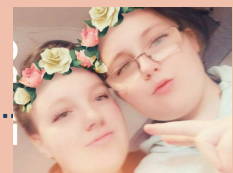
Jasper

Being in Snakes 'N' A Ladders is very helpful for me and the community. I joined because I wanted to help people.



Jacob

The mental health of young people in Merthyr Tydfil is so important. In a world of uncertainty it's a comfort to know that I'm part of a project that aims to help and contribute positively to my community.



Carly and Shannon

We have been a part of Snakes 'N' Ladders for just over a year and have really enjoyed being a part of this amazing group and meeting new people.



Ysa

I joined Snakes 'N' A Ladders because I want to help young people feel like they are not alone with their feelings, to support them on their mental health journey.

Cai

I recently joined Snakes 'N' A Ladders because my best friend was joining. I have since started to enjoy coming to each meeting.

PARTNERSHIP BOARD



The National Lottery Community Fund...

...award funds from the National Lottery to projects that strengthen society and improve lives. They have awarded us £1.2mil over 5 years to invest in improving the mental health, wellbeing and resilience of 11-25 year olds in Merthyr Tydfil.



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council...

... as lead for the project, the Council is committed to working in partnership with community groups and organisations to ensure future generations have access to services that meet their needs.



Safer Merthyr Tydfil...

... provide needs led services that increase confidence and enable communities to feel safer. As a partner organisation they contribute to hosting the Snakes 'N' Ladders team who advise and support the Youth Advisory Panel. Through the project SMT hopes it can assist in the steer of system change that improves positively the mental health and wellbeing for young people now and in the future.



Barnardo's Cymru...

...has been supporting children, young people and families for over 150 years. Across the Borough, Barnardo's delivers Early Years Family Support, Team Around the Family Key-working, Young Carers and Child Sexual Abuse Services. As a Snakes 'N' Ladders partner organisation, Barnardo's employs an Engagement Worker placed within the Project Team.



Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum...

... ensures young people in Merthyr Tydfil are provided with the opportunity to have voice and influence and shape the services that affect them in line with the UNCRC rights of the child.



Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil...

... is a part of Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) which is a network of support organisations for the third sector. Their shared goal is to enable the third sector and volunteers across Wales to contribute fully to individual and community wellbeing, now and for the future.



Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board...

... provides primary, community, hospital and mental health services to the 450,000 people living in three County Boroughs: Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf.



The Wales Institute for Health and Social Care...

... inform evidence-based health and care services. They will be helping us record and evaluate our project.



The Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales...

... partner with small and local charities, people and communities working towards a more just and compassionate society. We are working partners with similar goals. We will collaborate at times over the lifetime of the project.



The Stephens and George Centenary Charitable Trust...

... support young people with their own ideas to leave a legacy in their communities. They were a part of our partnership board during the first year of the project and we'd like to thank them for supporting the development of the funding application and initial design of the project.