

News and information for Wales from:
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff Bay,
CF10 5FH t 029 2043 1700 f 029 2043 1701
www.wcva.org.uk t 0800 2888 329



Head start for £40m schemes to help disadvantaged groups into work

WCVA will be at the centre of the employment agenda in Wales this year after the successful launch of two multi-million pound schemes that will support disadvantaged groups into work.

Over 400 people attended roadshow events to introduce the Engagement Gateway and Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) schemes, which will invest £40m over three years.

The two schemes are part of a joined-up strategy to give target groups the skills and opportunities to progress into employment.

The Gateway will invest in organisations that build the skills and confidence of individuals and link progress to a 'next step' such as volunteering, training and supported or full employment.

The ILM is an example of a 'next step' and the scheme will invest in organisations that provide target groups with a period of supported employment and structured work experience.

Both the Gateway and ILM are procurement rather than grant schemes. They will offer contracts up to a maximum of £150,000 and any organisation will be able to bid through a tendering process.

WCVA Director of Enterprise Phil Fiander explains: 'WCVA will offer a variety of contracts for organisations to work with particular target groups in particular areas and deliver certain positive outcomes.

'With the Gateway, organisations can themselves decide on the activities which best achieve these

outcomes. The ILM will be more prescriptive in how we want organisations to support individuals, although the kind of work experience that is provided will be up to the organisations with which we contract.

'In exchange for this, organisations whose tenders are approved will be paid an agreed fee. My advice to any interested organisation would be to read the information leaflets which are available from the WCVA Helpdesk to find out more about each scheme.

'The next step will be to complete a questionnaire to join the approved supplier list and then you'll receive information about relevant tender opportunities. We anticipate the first invitations to tender will be in June this year.'

Both the Gateway and ILM will operate in the former Objective 1 areas of Wales – now known as Convergence – with the ILM being a solely North Wales scheme.

The Convergence areas of Wales are Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea and Torfaen.

For information leaflets on the Gateway and ILM, contact the WCVA Helpdesk on 0800 2888 329 or help@wcva.org.uk Both schemes are funded by the Wales Assembly Government and European Structural Funds.

WCVA given new role in supporting Communities First across Wales

The Deputy Minister for Regeneration Leighton Andrews has announced changes in the national support arrangements for Communities First Partnerships across Wales, as from 1 January.

After a Welsh Assembly Government procurement exercise, WCVA has won the contracts to provide advice and support to partnerships and a training and development service.

Leighton Andrews said: 'The original concept for Communities First was about building the skills,

experience and confidence of local people so that they could identify priorities for their communities in the form of a plan of action.

'The consultation document was clear that Communities First now needs a clearer focus on practical regeneration initiatives and on tackling poverty - particularly child poverty - and income generation.

'In line with the changes to the Communities First programme itself, these national support arrangements will help support the re-focus of the programme.'



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National training programme for voluntary groups in every corner of Wales

The new Courses for Communities Cymru national programme has been published offering training that will help organisations deal with such crucial issues such as finding funding and managing assets.

WCVA, the county voluntary councils and volunteer centres launched the first training programme in April and this second programme consists of 54 courses.

Some courses are one-day and others half-day - which will be delivered by CVC and WCVA members of staff, with other organisations brought in to provide training in some of the identified specialist areas. Courses cost just £20 per day or less - putting them within the reach of voluntary groups, large and small.

WCVA Training Manager Kate Thomas said: 'It's apparent that while there's a wealth of training being delivered to the sector, there's little

consistency in provision of core training to support voluntary groups in setting up and developing their organisation, supporting staff, volunteers and trustees, fundraising, managing their assets and delivering better services.

'Courses for Communities Cymru will provide a quality-assured, affordable programme of courses in local and regional areas across Wales.'

The courses will be held all over Wales and cover such topics as formalising organisations, organising a committee, monitoring and evaluating the organisation's work, getting the best out of IT and working with others.

A copy of the Courses for Communities Cymru programme is available from the WCVA Helpdesk on 0800 2888 329 or email help@wcva.org.uk, your local county voluntary council, www.wcva.org.uk and www.coursesforcommunities.org.uk.

Credit unions can help Welsh savers weather recession

Despite the recession, people are increasingly opting to save for special occasions and that seems to be particularly the case in West Wales.

The community-run local bank for Ceredigion, North Pembrokeshire and West Carmarthenshire, Credcer, has seen its membership triple over the past three years.

In January 2006, the bank had 406 members; today, it has 1,284 who have saved more than £150,000 with the FSA-approved Credit Union.

'Local people save weekly and monthly to build up a lump sum for holidays, Christmas and so on,' said Credcer's voluntary treasurer, Cris Tomos. 'Members can also borrow from the credit union on the back of their savings record.'

'At our 2008 AGM, we agreed a multi-tiered dividend paying up to 5% on savings held by members, with all junior members getting an automatic 5% return on savings and free gifts. All savings are covered by the FSA compensation scheme.'

'A recent national survey confirmed that UK credit unions are growing at a healthy rate - on

average, they have tripled in size over the past decade,' Cris added. 'It's good to note that the Credcer Credit Union has outperformed the national trend.'

UK credit unions have also seen their loan portfolios increase five-fold in the past decade, according to a report from the Association of British Credit Unions and the Co-operative Bank.

The Breaking Through to the Future report also suggests that the majority of credit unions anticipate further growth in the future.

The report sets out the key strategic issues for the future and concludes that the potential for the sector to grow further is significant, providing credit unions collaborate to achieve economies of scale and greater innovation.

The interim report is available on the Research Unit for Financial Inclusion website:

<http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/HEA/financialinclusion/>

Anyone interested in becoming a member or helping to volunteer with Credcer Credit Union should contact the Cardigan office on 01239 621408 or visit the website www.credcercreditunion.co.uk

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Sector leads the way with climate change charter

Voluntary groups in Wales will soon be leading the way in the battle against climate change, thanks to a declaration and comprehensive guidance being drawn up by WCVA.

The Welsh Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change aims to 'get the un-engaged to take a first step', asking people to sign up to some guiding principles on behalf of their group or organisation.

It will be followed by guidance from WCVA on where to go for help, which will map all the assistance on offer from the Welsh Assembly Government and other agencies and organisations for those who want to take action to tackle climate change.

'The declaration and guidance will be available on WCVA's website, hopefully with the ability for people to sign up to the declaration electronically, and linking it to the Assembly Government's climate change web pages,' said WCVA Senior Policy Officer Bethan Lewis.

The aim is to get 200 signatories by April 2010, with a possible awareness raising/launch event at the National Eisteddfod in summer 2009.

Awards get more popular each year

Wales's leading volunteer awards scheme is about to celebrate its sixth year of rewarding an ever-increasing number of nominees.

The Wales Volunteer of the Year Awards has grown considerably since its inauguration in 2004 with the number of categories having jumped from three to five, and the number of winners from nine to 15.

As well as recognition of individuals, young people (under 25 years), and groups, the WCVA scheme now also rewards 'green' volunteers and trustees.

WCVA is currently inviting nominations for the awards, supported by Peninsula Business Services. There will be up to three winners in each category, with 15 national winners presented with their awards at a ceremony in Cardiff next June, and all nominees awarded commendation certificates at a local ceremony or by post.

Details of the scheme and nomination forms, are available from the WCVA Helpdesk on 0800 2888 329, or e-mail help@wcva.org.uk. They can also be downloaded from the website www.wcva.org.uk/voty. The deadline for receipt of nominations is 3 April 2009.

CRU marks five years in business

A unique service set up to check the suitability of people working with children and vulnerable adults has helped more than 1000 Welsh voluntary organisations over the past five years.

The Criminal Records Unit (CRU) managed by WCVA has been hailed by the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, Dr Brian Gibbons, as a good example of innovative partnership working between the Welsh Assembly Government and the third sector.

Funded by the Welsh Assembly Government to give free access to criminal record checks for those working with vulnerable groups, since it began in December 2003, the CRU has handled over 81,000 requests for checks, issued 45,000 disclosure certificates and has over 4,000 service users.

Before the CRU was established, organisations were only able to access CRB checks for volunteers and staff by becoming a registered body with CRB or

through the services of a CRB registered umbrella body, many of which charge administration fees ranging from £7 to £70 per check.

Although WCVA CRU does not charge for processing applications for the voluntary sector, the CRB costs for checks for paid staff still have to be met by the employing organisation.

Next year will see the introduction of the new Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) which is set to have a huge impact on the third sector. From October 2009, anybody - volunteers or paid staff - who want to work with children or vulnerable adults will have to register with the new Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) through the Vetting Barring Scheme (VBS).

The CRU is based at WCVA's North Wales office in Rhyl. The unit can be contacted on 0800 0197 391, or by e-mail to cru@wcva.org.uk. Information on the service can be downloaded from www.wcva-cru.org.uk.



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Making everyone count - a guide to working with volunteers, trustees and staff with basic skills needs

Third sector organisations are renowned for their skills and knowledge in supporting and including service users with basic skills needs. Nurturing, encouraging and helping people to take those small steps, no matter how small ± in a quest to realise their potential and improve their lives.

WCVA undertook research in 2007 to look at third sector provision of basic skills and findings highlighted the extent of the support the sector provides to service users and beneficiaries across Wales.

What though of those staff, volunteers and trustees who may have basic skills issues? It is estimated that one in four people in the UK have some kind of basic skills need. Do we understand their needs? Do we recognise how to help and

support them in the roles they undertake to ensure the smooth running and success of the third sector?

WCVA has produced this user-friendly guide to addressing basic skills issues in the workplace. It gives an insight into the sorts of situations that staff, volunteers and trustees with basic skills needs may find themselves in.

It also gives some practical ideas and guidance on how third sector organisations can address any issues and support these individuals - directly or indirectly - to become more involved and less excluded in the workplace. You'll also find reference to further information and resources.

Publication available from: www.wcva.org.uk in pdf format, free of charge or printed copies available from WCVA Helpdesk 0800 2888 329 or email help@wcva.org.uk - price £6 plus p and p.

Homelessness award open for applications

The 2009 Val Feld Women and Homelessness Award is now open for applications. This Award, which is managed by Shelter Cymru is intended to recognise innovation and new ways of responding to women in housing need throughout Wales.

This Award is intended to recognise innovation and new ways of responding to women in housing need throughout Wales.

Applications for the 2009 award are welcomed from organisations and individuals wishing to undertake research into the issues around women, housing and homelessness; to set up or fund a feasibility study for a new project; or to help develop an existing project.

Last year's award recipient was Janet Keaufling, a homelessness nurse working at the Cyrenians Cymru Community Centre in Swansea.

To make an application, please visit www.sheltercymru.org.uk/shelter/home/valfeld.asp. The deadline for receipt of applications is 31 May 2009.

The next editions of this WCVA national supplement will be available at the end of March, May, July, September and November 2009.



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