



BWYD
ABERTAWE



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Wedi ei ariannu gan
Llywodraeth y DU

**GROWING VOLUNTEERS AND
ACCESS TO LOCAL PRODUCE**

6 MONTH CASE STUDY

July 2024



www.bwydabertawe.org.uk

Background and Overview

Bwyd Abertawe's project Growing Volunteers and Access to Local Produce (GVALP) started in January 2024, funded by UK Shared Prosperity Funding and developed by Bwyd Abertawe coordinator and Steering Group in response to local need. The project focuses on enhancing community engagement with sustainable food activities and topics, promoting sustainable agriculture, and improving access to locally grown food in the Swansea area. Facilitating urban community participation in rural agriculture, and ensuring efficient transport solutions for urban community members for accessing rural growing sites.



The GVALP development worker liaises with food growing sites, recruit's volunteers to participate in food growing projects, as well sourcing and coordinating community vehicles, driver volunteers, and the cooking and vegetable growing training associated with the project for the volunteers. Collaborating with various local organisations, higher education institutions, Community Supported Agriculture's (CSAs) and community groups to build a robust network of support, volunteering, training, and sustainable food celebration.



Progress to Date

The GVALP project has made notable progress in promoting volunteering, sustainable agriculture, and community engagement in Swansea. Through comprehensive training programmes, collaborative partnerships, and effective transportation solutions, the project has positively impacted volunteers' lives, as illustrated by the volunteers' experiences below. The ongoing efforts and continuous improvements promise to further enhance the project's reach and effectiveness, contributing to a more connected and sustainable community. January to July 2024, the project successfully engaged over 130 participants. Activities are promoted through social media, Bwyd Abertawe membership newsletters, and partnerships with local organisations and educational institutions. Key activities include:


1. Volunteer Recruitment and Engagement:

- Volunteers have been recruited through Bwyd Abertawe's social media and e-news, Volunteering Wales website, promotional events, and referrals from support agencies.
- The Project Development Worker has established connections with local organisations, such as Swansea Council Voluntary Services (SCVS), Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales (EYST), Swansea Carers Centre, and several higher education institutions such as Swansea University, University of Wales Trinity Saint David and The Gower College.

2. Training and Workshops:

- Numerous food growing and cooking workshops and training sessions have been conducted, including practical growing sessions at CSA fields and theory training at The Gower College.
- Cooking workshops using local produce have been delivered, promoting healthy eating, and cooking with fresh seasonal produce and sustainable food practices.
- Collaborations with The Swansea Community Fridge and Primary schools in the Swansea area to promote fresh locally grown vegetables and foods.
- Information sharing on preserving methods, how to reduce food waste, and impact on surplus foods saved from landfill has been provided through social media, promotional events, food waste information packs, and cooking workshops.

3. Transportation Solutions:

- The project has facilitated shared transportation options, enabling volunteers to access growing sites and training sessions.
 - Several community owned vehicles have been utilised to transport volunteer groups to Community Supported Agriculture sites.
 - The Project Development Worker has undergone training to support community vehicle use and volunteer driving.
 - Volunteer drivers have been recruited to support non-driving individuals from the city to access volunteering sites in the Gower and Morriston countryside.
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Examples of impact

1. MP (male, age 20–30 yrs):

MP discovered the GVALP project through SCVS and decided to volunteer to combat isolation and engage with the wider community. He has participated in various activities at Cae Felin CSA and has attended cooking sessions this spring, enjoying tasks such as wheelbarrowing, planting, and fermenting. Matthew has found the experience beneficial for his mental health and has gained new knowledge about gardening and sustainable food practices. He plans to continue volunteering and is inspired to grow his own plants at home.




2. AD (Female age 45–55 yrs):

AD, who moved to Wales one year ago, joined the GVALP project to utilise her extensive gardening experience and connect with the local community. She has enjoyed contributing to the creation of no-dig beds at Cae Felin CSA and appreciates the opportunity to meet new people and learn new techniques. AD has also provided valuable feedback on improving the project's veg box scheme. She remains committed to volunteering and is eager to support future developments in food growing and cooking.



3. EE (Female 45–55 yrs):

EE, seeking to overcome loneliness and isolation, found the GVALP project through Volunteering-Wales.net. She has been actively involved in the Bramble & Nettle CIC and Blackhills CSA, where she has learnt about sustainable growing practices and medicinal properties of plants. The project has significantly improved EE's self-confidence and provided a sense of purpose. She plans to continue volunteering and is optimistic about future opportunities in the field of sustainable food.



In addition, some benefits of community food growing, and increasing access to sustainable food via learning about growing food, includes:

- The mental and physical health benefits of gardening (growing food) are well recognised, and reiterated by the volunteer stories above.
- Consumption of locally grown, seasonal fresh vegetables is also recognised as a key way to improve the nutritional content of our daily diet, with potential to reduce risk of diet related diseases.
- Increasing consumer preference for fresh local produce also benefits the local economy, by shortening supply chains which subsequently improves the resilience of local communities.
- Community food growing is less intensive and has a positive impact on the environment. Soil health, clean water and biodiversity are central to tackling climate change. Also, healthy soil is the foremost technology for sequestering carbon.



Contact info

More information on Bwyd Abertawe and our projects please visit our website bwydabertawe.org.uk

GVALP project enquiries and collaboration requests, please contact Project Development Worker Saara Rasanen; prosiect1.bwydabertawe@gmail.com, 07512 025 874.

Information on Bwyd Abertawe and sustainable food system partnership inquiries please get in touch with Bwyd Abertawe Coordinator Mary Duckett bwydabertawe@gmail.com

With thanks to our partners in this project

