



# EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF PONTHAFREN ASSOCIATION

April 2012 – April 2013

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
About Ponthafren	2
Aims Of The Evaluation	2
Evaluation Methods	3
Key Findings	4
What Were Ponthafren’s Objectives For 2012/13? And Did They Achieve Them?	5
How Much Did Ponthafren Do?	14
How Well Did Ponthafren Do It?	18
Is Anyone Better Off?	23
Conclusions & Recommendations	26

*“Ponthafren is clearly growing in effectiveness and reputation. It is very highly regarded by its partners as a healthy, efficient and pro-active organisation that gets things done.”*

Mental Health Information and Participation Team, PAVO

## ABOUT PONTAFREN

Ponthafren Centre, opened in 1992, is a registered Mental Health Charity, catering for people in North Powys who experience mental health issues, those who may be socially isolated or excluded. It offers drop-in facilities, a wide range of workshops, activities and courses, in-house support plus signposting to other organisations and specialist support services. Ponthafren has a volunteer board of Trustees and a small core staff team who work with a larger team of volunteers. The organisation has expanded over the past years due to identified health needs of the rural population and in addition to the centre in Newtown, has an Outreach Centre in Welshpool and an Outreach group in Llanidloes.

Members have a range of psychiatric conditions and personality disorders, including those who self harm or are involved in substance misuse. There are others who have been, or are involved in the criminal justice system, or are classed as homeless. There are also a number of members who have a dual diagnosis of either, learning disabilities/mental health issues or alcohol dependence/mental health issues. Due to the rural nature of the area, some members not only experience mental health issues, but are also socially isolated or excluded.

Ponthafren aims to provide a compassionate, respectful, empathic, person-centred, recovery based approach to support members to identify solutions to their difficulties. Art, craft, volunteer training, anger management, confidence building, music therapy, yoga, health and wellbeing group, gardening, healthy eating/cooking on a budget and one-to-one money management advice in partnership with the CAB are just some of the activities and courses on offer. Ponthafren often works with people who have been excluded from other services and those that other services have been unable to engage.

## AIMS OF THE EVALUATION

### 1. AIM OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

The aim of the report is:

- a) To evaluate whether Ponthafren's Objectives for 2012/13 have been met
- b) In line with the "Results Based Accountability" framework, used by Powys' public agencies, to ask:
  - How Much Did Ponthafren Do?
  - How Well Did Ponthafren Do It?
  - Is Anyone Better Off?
- c) To evaluate Ponthafren's strengths and areas for improvement

### 2. PONTAFREN'S STAKEHOLDERS

Ponthafren's current stakeholders are identified as:

<b>Members</b>	
<b>Staff</b>	paid & voluntary
<b>Trustees</b>	
<b>Commissioners of Services</b>	including Powys Teaching Health Board & Powys County Council
<b>Partner Organisations</b>	including Statutory sector - Police Other Voluntary organisations Community Groups Private sector – e.g. Phoenix House Hospital
<b>Funders &amp; Donors</b>	including charitable trusts and private individual donors
<b>General Public</b>	

# EVALUATION METHODS

## EVALUATOR

Sorelle White is a consultant with a good track record in the community and voluntary sector in Powys. Sorelle has experience in a range of roles from running community groups to working as a business mentor to arts organisations as well as at strategic level as PAVO's Health & Social Care Facilitator. Sorelle is also a qualified Counsellor who has worked at Mid Powys Mind and Wrexham Mind.

## FIELD RESEARCH

<b><u>METHOD</u></b>	<b><u>STAKEHOLDER</u></b>	<b><u>OUTCOME</u></b>
Face to face interviews (August 2013)	Staff: Centre Co-ordinator, Centre Development Officer	
Online questionnaire* (Dec 2012)	Staff, trustees, members	27 respondents
Paper version of questionnaire* (Dec 2012)	Staff, trustees, members	29 respondents (Welshpool) 46 respondents (Newtown & Llanidloes)  <u>Out of a total of 102 responses:</u> 84 identified as members. There were a total of 212 registered members in Dec 2012 when the survey was carried out so this represents a 40% response rate.  The remaining 18 respondents identified as non-member paid staff / trustees & volunteers
Telephone interviews (Sep 2013)	Trustees  Partner organisation	2 interviewees - Tim Halford & Sharon Jenkins  1 interviewee - PAVO - Mental Health Information and Participation Team
Telephone interviews* (Jan / Feb 2013)	Partner organisations – which refer and signpost their clients to Ponthafren. 12 organisations were suggested.	Interviews were secured with 10: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult Mental Health Service,</li> <li>• Kaleidoscope,</li> <li>• Coleg Harlech WEA,</li> <li>• Montgomeryshire Independent Advocacy Service,</li> <li>• Phoenix House Hospital,</li> <li>• Youth Justice Service,</li> <li>• Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre,</li> <li>• Barnados,</li> <li>• Dyfed-Powys Probation Service,</li> <li>• Job Centre Plus.</li> </ul>

\* This information was originally included in the Evaluation Report for the previous 2011/12 year but is also included in this 2012/13 report as the research was carried out in the relevant year (between Dec 2012 – Feb 2013). A copy of the full research findings can be found in the appendices of the 2011/12 Evaluation Report.

## **DESK RESEARCH**

Information was extracted from the following documents:

- Joint Monitoring Reports for Newtown and Welshpool Centres (for commissioners Powys Teaching Health Board and Powys County Council)
- Service Level Agreement with Powys Teaching Health Board
- Ponthafren 2012/13 Annual Report
- Ponthafren Newsletters
- A selection of minutes from Members meetings
- A selection of evaluation forms from the various activities attended by members
- The Welsh Government Healthcare Standards

## **KEY FINDINGS**

This period has seen radical and positive change at Ponthafren. There has been a significant increase in the volume of services delivered such as counselling and extended opening hours, as a result of Big Lottery funding. In addition, the organisation is receiving more referrals due to changes brought about by the Mental Health Measure and the closure of a number of local mental health resources.

Targets have been met for these new services and feedback from funders and partner organisations suggests that they are being delivered to a high standard.

- 10 out of 12 objectives for 2012/13 were fully achieved. The remaining 2 objectives were partly achieved or being worked towards.
- Ponthafren continues to meet the needs of its members well.
- Suggestions raised by partner organisations in the previous evaluation, have been addressed and many positive developments taken place as a result.
- Good mechanisms are in place for ensuring members views are heard and responded to.
- There is a dedicated & energetic approach to promoting messages about positive mental health. This contributes significantly to the fight against the stigma around mental health.
- Values of compassion and respect underpin the activities of the organisation and play an important part in its success.
- 5 out of 8 recommendations from the previous evaluation report have been fully or partly addressed. 3 recommendations have yet to be addressed.
- Due to the additional volume of activity, staff and trustees are working at full capacity and at times can be over-stretched, which presents a potential risk to the organisation.

# WHAT WERE PONTHAFREN'S OBJECTIVES FOR 2012/13 AND DID THEY ACHIEVE THEM?

The level of achievement is rated as follows:

- Yes 
- Partly 
- No 

## **OBJECTIVE 1**

Ponthafren will continue to align its service provision to respond to national and local priorities and also to members' and the people of North Powys' needs.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes 

## **EVIDENCE**

Ponthafren works to the national priorities under the Welsh Government's Healthcare standards & "Together For Mental Health" strategy. Also, the Mental Health Measure came into practice in October 2012, enhancing service users' rights to Local Primary Mental Health Support Services. As a result, all local GP mental health referrals are now processed via a "mental health hub" and must be dealt with within a specified timeframe. This new system has speeded up the referral process, increased the number of referrals to Ponthafren's services coming from the GPs and the Community Mental Health Team.

More locally, Ponthafren aligns its services with other public service agencies under the Powys "One Plan" and also the Powys-wide mental health strategy "Hearts & Minds" under the terms of their service level agreement with Powys County Council and Powys teaching Health Board. The "Third Sector Service Review" was carried out by Ponthafren's statutory funders in March 2013 and the organisation was assessed as being fully compliant, having not been given any action points.

Through the "Light The Way" action group, Ponthafren members are given the opportunity to influence the way mental health services are delivered in Powys via dialogue with the Community Mental Health Team.

## **OBJECTIVE 2**

To continue to develop services aimed at promoting good physical and mental health and individual recovery for our members and the communities of North Powys.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes 

## **EVIDENCE**

During 2012/13 there were a total of 2508 attendances at activities, courses and support services provided by Ponthafren compared to 1196 in the previous year. This represents an increase of 110%.

Ponthafren's Big Lottery funded 'Reaching Out' project began to take shape in this reporting period. Opening hours and counselling provision were extended in Newtown & Welshpool, plus a new one-to-one worker took up her post. Also the existing wide range of activities continued to support the physical and mental health of members and the wider community. Further details of this provision are as follows:

An enhanced counselling service started in September. There were 3 qualified counsellors and one student in Newtown plus two qualified counsellors and one student in Welshpool. In the first 5 months of the project, twenty clients had completed their 11-week course of sessions. All of them were then contacted and asked for anonymous feedback on the service. Twenty questionnaires were sent out and ten were completed and returned. All ten reported back that they had benefitted from their counselling sessions, with seven stating that it had definitely helped them to move forward. Referrals come from GPs, Community Mental Health Teams, Social Workers and other partner organisations.

The hours of the Resource Facilitator in Newtown were extended in this period, allowing her to further develop The Health and Wellbeing Group. The group meets weekly to discuss healthier lifestyles using British Heart Foundation guidelines. Activities include cooking demonstrations, quizzes and walks. Not all members join to lose weight but over a period of 7 months, group members had lost a total of 81lb.

The new one-to-one worker supports clients from North Powys both at the centre and in their own homes. The support is intended for people who are either recovering from mental distress or those who feel they need support to overcome barriers and move forward in life.

Peer-led initiatives in Welshpool include a new Beating Depression group which started during this period in Welshpool. The group meets weekly to share experiences and strategies for living with depression. Ponthafren in Newtown also ran a successful 9-week course in Mindfulness

## **OBJECTIVE 3**

To continue to attract new trustees and volunteers in order to bring new ideas, skills, perspectives and experience to the organisation.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes 

## **EVIDENCE**

A trustees' skills audit was carried out and 4 new trustees were recruited during the year, Dan Thomas, Rod Evans, Peter Bayliss and Trish Varley.

Unfortunately some trustees also resigned during the year. As a result, the organisation is currently lacking the support of a full quota of trustees. Recruitment is therefore an urgent priority. Requests for new trustees are regularly promoted as "footers" on outgoing emails from the organisation.

Between Feb 2012 – Feb 2013 Ponthafren had 89 individuals who volunteered for them. These included: Trustees, Volunteer Support Workers, Administrative Volunteers, Garden Volunteers, PR group, Volunteer Drivers, Volunteer Facilitators of workshops/courses, Peer Mentors and General Volunteers. This is a similar number that volunteered last year – 87.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4**

To work with local voluntary and statutory organisations to ensure the service that Ponthafren offers continues to meet the needs of the communities it serves.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes 

#### **EVIDENCE - PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

As previously mentioned, the new Mental Health Measure has resulted in more referrals from the GPs and the Community Mental Health Team for Ponthafren's counselling and other services. As a result, the level and quality of partnership working between Ponthafren and these organisations has improved. Also the profile of the Ponthafren has been raised among the GPs, resulting in more direct referrals including among previously "hard to reach" groups.

Telephone interviews were carried out in Jan / Feb 2013, with partner organisations which refer and signpost their clients to Ponthafren. 10 out of 10 rated their relationship with Ponthafren in the highest category – "very good".

Other comments include:

*"They have moved with the times & expanded and remained client focussed."*

(Montgomeryshire Independent Advocacy Service)

*The people we have referred have done really well. Excellent.*

(Dyfed-Powys Probation Service)

*"Whenever I contact them they are more than helpful and supportive. Excellent. I don't know what I'd do without them.."*

(Job Centre Plus)

*"They allow people to be independent & are supportive - a hard balance"*

(Coleg Harlech)

*"I'm always pleased to see how fresh & new the activities are. They send regular emails and posters which we put up so we're well informed."*

(J. Land, Phoenix House Hospital)

(Further information about partnership working in the "How Well Did Ponthafren Do It?" section)

### **OBJECTIVE 5**

To be innovative in our approach to mental health, recognising the need for compliance with the clinical governance framework and the Healthcare Standards for Wales 'Doing Well, Doing Better'.

Was this objective achieved?

Partly



### **EVIDENCE**

One of the trustees, Daniel Thomas, with staff and volunteers is working through each Healthcare Standard and checking compliance. 8 out of 26 standards (which were updated in June 2013) have been completed to date.

### **OBJECTIVE 6**

To work and collaborate with other similar mental health organisations in Powys to share best practice, ideas and cooperate where appropriate.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes



### **EVIDENCE**

Although recent changes in the funding landscape and communication issues have brought challenges to some working relationships, Ponthafren staff continue to attend and contribute positively and openly to the regular "Mental Health Co-ordinators Group" meetings. These meetings are facilitated by the Development Officer from Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO), Mental Health Information and Participation Team and are an opportunity for managers from all of Powys's mental health resource centres, to co-operate and co-ordinate. They are: Mid Powys Mind, Brecon & District Contact Centre, Ystradgynlais Mind and Machynlleth Mind.

The Development Officer has attended a meeting with the new Manager at Phoenix House Hospital in Welshpool which has improved joint working.

### **OBJECTIVE 7**

To continue raising our profile in the wider community with the help of our Public Relations Group

Was this objective achieved?

Yes



### **EVIDENCE**

90 out of a total of 189 formal referrals in this year (48%), were people who either referred themselves to Ponthafren or were referred by friends or family. This suggests there is a significant level of awareness about Ponthafren in the community as these people were not referred from professional sources.

The PR group which promotes Ponthafren including at community events, attended 30 events this year compared to 19 events last year, an increase of 58%. Examples of promotional events included: The Titanic evening at Powys Theatre, Newtown in November attended by 60 people from Ponthafren and the local community. Plus the Ponthafren OPEN DAY in June.

Particularly important in addressing stigma are the PR group's attendances at "non-mental health" events. For example, the PR group gave a presentation about energy saving at the "Renew" conference hosted by the Centre For Alternative Technology (CAT).

The group have also worked with the Ponthafren Administrator / graphic designer, to produce a leaflet about mental health referral on behalf of the "Light the Way" action group.

Jan from the PR group now sits on Dyfed-Powys Police's "Powys Confidence & Equality Group". The skills Jan acquired from her work with the PR group, have enabled her to take up this position.

Ponthafren has also won awards during the year, which help to raise profile. These included: PAVO's Group Volunteer of the Year Awards (won by the PR group) and Environment Wales' 20th Anniversary Award (for Ponthafren's Eco Friendly Garden).

### **OBJECTIVE 8**

To consider ways in which the Ponthafren buildings can be used more effectively as a 'whole community' resource.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes



### **EVIDENCE**

Ponthafren has been able to streamline its Newtown training room with new furniture and equipment using a "Can Do Communities" grant from PAVO. Also consideration has been given to refurbishing the stable block and the possible uses for it including a safe-house or community cafe.

### **OBJECTIVE 9**

To support and further develop the social enterprises linked to Ponthafren.

Was this objective achieved?

Partly



### **EVIDENCE**

Although the activities do not carry the legal status of social enterprise, Ponthafren have supported members to gain experience in trading activities relating to the Ponthafren garden. For example, income has been secured on plant sales, fruit and vegetables and sandwiches using garden produce.

## OBJECTIVE 10

To extend current services for people with mental health issues in North Powys through the successful delivery of the Big Lottery funded 'Reaching Out' project.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes



## EVIDENCE

In addition to the evidence under Objective 2 above, in the period, February 2012 to 31 January 2013 the "Reaching Out" project benefitted **26 partner organisations** and a total of **245 individuals** who became less isolated in Newtown & Welshpool due to the extension of hours & the Crisis Out of Hours service.

*comments made by individuals using the service have been the strongest indicator of the impact that this service has had on their lives and some of these statements made by individuals have been a very powerful indicator of the difference the service has made to them.*

All the outcomes and targets for this project period have been either met, exceeded or are underway as reported to the funders, who have given positive feedback about the progress to date. The response to the new services has indicated that there is a significant need for them in the community:

*The biggest unexpected outcomes of the project so far have been the numbers who have been accessing the Out of Hours services in both centres and also the uptake and demand for the counselling service, in particular in the Newtown area. We are way above target on the number of people who have accessed both centres on the evenings which we are now open and this is only 7 months since these opening hours were implemented*

The counselling service has been significant in delivering Ponthafren's services to new members of the community, particularly those previously hard to reach:

*...we are reaching more people than ever before and we are now being contacted by GP practices across north Powys, which is something we have tried to initiate in the past, but have had difficulty with. .. many are now initially accessing counselling, as referred by their doctor, but are then discovering the many other services and opportunities we are able to offer them, enabling them to become less isolated and gain support in other areas of their lives.*

## OBJECTIVE 11

To work with other partners/individuals to source funding and set up a project that will provide peer mentoring for young people with mental health issues.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes



## **EVIDENCE**

YAPS (Young Adult Peer Support Project) was one of six projects in a successful bid to the Big Lottery made by Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO) under the 'One Powys – Connecting Voices' banner. The project was started in this year and will be delivered in Newtown over a total of three years. YAPS will offer peer support mentoring to young people between the ages of 16-25, who have mental health issues and will encourage them to take a lead within the community and influence the way public services are delivered. The project involves:

- Researching best practice in the development, delivery and evaluation of peer mentor projects.
- Developing project policies in consultation with the Project Steering Group and young people
- Recruiting, training and supervising volunteer Youth Peer Mentors
- Co-ordinating activities and advocacy opportunities

To deliver the new service, Ponthafren will be working in partnership with other organisations such as Small Steps, Youth Justice Service and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHs) team.

## **OBJECTIVE 12**

To be aware of continuing and future consolidation and changes in the sector and to always act in the best interests of our members.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes 

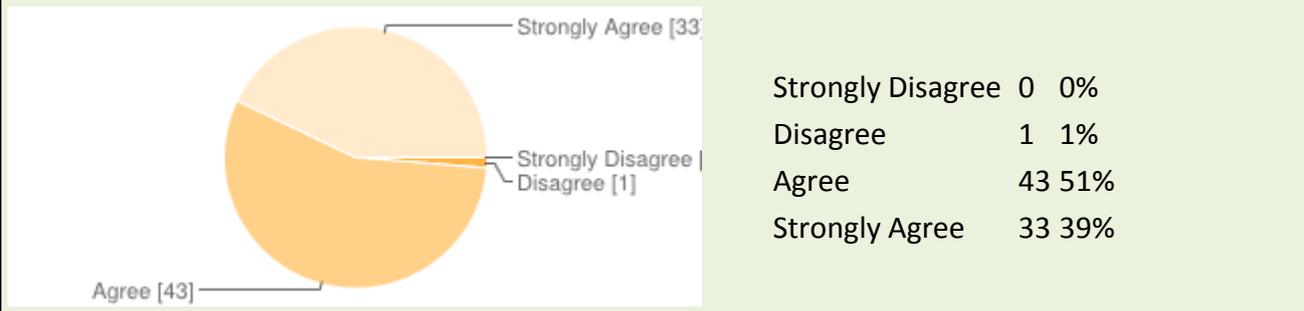
## **EVIDENCE**

Ponthafren's services are jointly commissioned and monitored by Powys County Council and Powys Teaching Health Board. The Lead Commissioner is Powys Teaching Health Board, with whom they have their Service Level Agreement. Regular meetings with the Health Board keep them informed about current and future priorities in the sector.

Ponthafren also keep up to date through their membership of PAVO and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Providers Forum which includes other organisations with statutory service SLAs.

Communication with members is good. Members are encouraged to raise items at the regular members meetings. Suggestions are taken on board and actioned wherever possible for example the regular walking activity was reinstated due to requests from members. Also there is a suggestion box for matters that members feel they cannot bring to the members meeting or raise with a member of staff or volunteer. It is also an opportunity for members to influence the governance of Ponthafren by the trustees. The suggestion box is then opened once a month at the trustees meeting. Also members can give their suggestions to their member representatives who are clearly identified on a poster along with photographs of the trustees.

**If I have a comment or suggestion to make about how Ponthafren is run, there are opportunities for me to do this**



**I am satisfied that my views are encouraged and respected by Ponthafren**



**OBJECTIVE 13**

To further develop our volunteer training programme to benefit members and build our capacity. Was this objective achieved?

Yes 😊

**EVIDENCE**

A new one-to-one volunteer training programme has been written, which will be OCN accredited and delivered in the future. Many have benefitted from the volunteer training in this period, including the following examples taken from the Big Lottery “Reaching Out” monitoring form:

*One of the participants of the volunteer training has gone on to take part in fundraising events in the community and is now actively involved in organising an alternative volunteering fayre for younger people and states that it was the skills gained from the volunteering course which enabled him to have the confidence to take on these community events.*

*Other participants of this training have gone on to seek further training out in the community and are also volunteering for other community projects such as the Alzheimer’s Society. Every participant of the volunteer training identifies that there has been an improvement in their self-worth skills and knowledge.*

*Two individuals who came to the project for work experience have gained paid employment with ourselves and another has gone on from their work experience with us to undertake further training and is now volunteering for 2 organisations whilst looking for paid employment and states that it was the volunteer training which enabled her to overcome some of her mental health issues to gain the confidence to do this.*

In total 70 volunteers attended training courses. 20 of those were trained on the in-house 6 week training programme which is now accredited by the Open College Network and funded by the WCVA Volunteering in Wales Fund. The remainder attended external training courses, such as POVA, Child Protection, First Aid, Mental Health Awareness and Mental Health First Aid.

#### **OBJECTIVE 14**

To continue to work in partnership with Powys Teaching Health Board, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Powys County Council, to provide a service that is responsive to the needs of the people of North Powys.

Was this objective achieved?

Yes 

#### **EVIDENCE**

In addition to evidence in Objective 12, Ponthafren have substantially developed their working partnerships with partner organisations in this period due largely to the new “Big Lottery” funded services.

The Development Officer is on the panel of the Health Boards’ Home Treatment Team, which aims to support people in their homes and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and delayed transfers of care. The team has visited Ponthafren and spoken to members to both inform them of the service and also to receive their feedback about the service.

The Development Officer has also worked with the Learning Disabilities team at Powys County Council, delivering Mental Health Awareness training to staff.

## HOW MUCH DID PONTAFREN DO?

During this year April 2012 – Mar 2013

**384** the number of members Ponthafren provided services for (in the membership year running from June 2012 to June 2013)

**2508** the total number of attendances at activities including courses, groups, trips etc. This is a **110% increase** on last year.

Newtown Centre - 1795

Welshpool Centre - 713

**61** The average number of members attending the centres each day

Newtown Centre - 34

Welshpool Centre - 27

**89** the total number of volunteers including: Trustees, Volunteer Support Workers, Administrative Volunteers, Garden Volunteers, PR group, Volunteer Drivers, Volunteer Facilitators of workshops/courses, Peer Mentors and General Volunteers.

**4209** the number of hours the centres were open during the year

Newtown Centre – 2464 (average 51 per week)

Welshpool Centre – 1745 (average 37 per week)

**70** the number of volunteers attending training courses at Ponthafren

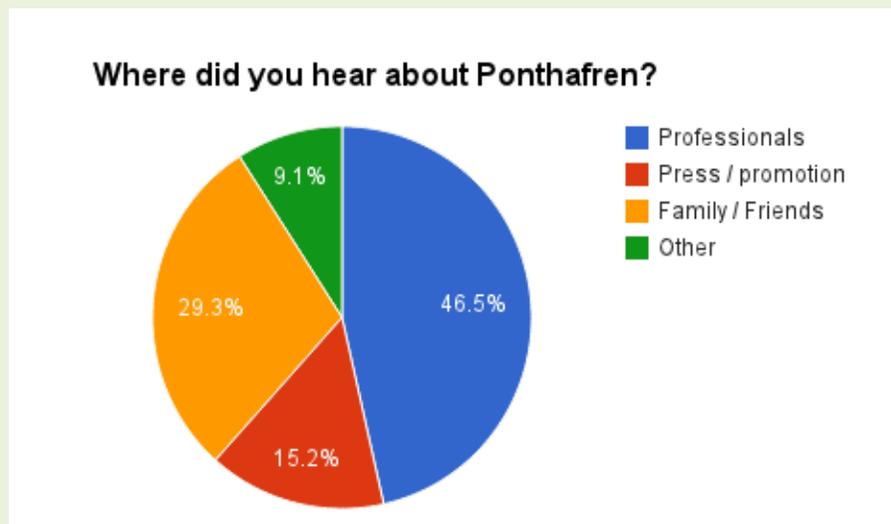
45 from Newtown Centre

25 from Welshpool Centre

20 attended the accredited in-house training programme and the remainder were external training courses, such as POVA, Child Protection, First Aid, Mental Health Awareness and Mental Health First Aid.

## Ponthafren working in the community & with other professionals

In our recent survey, Staff, volunteers, trustees and members were asked where they first heard about Ponthafren. The results are below, with “professionals” and “family & friends” being the most popular source.

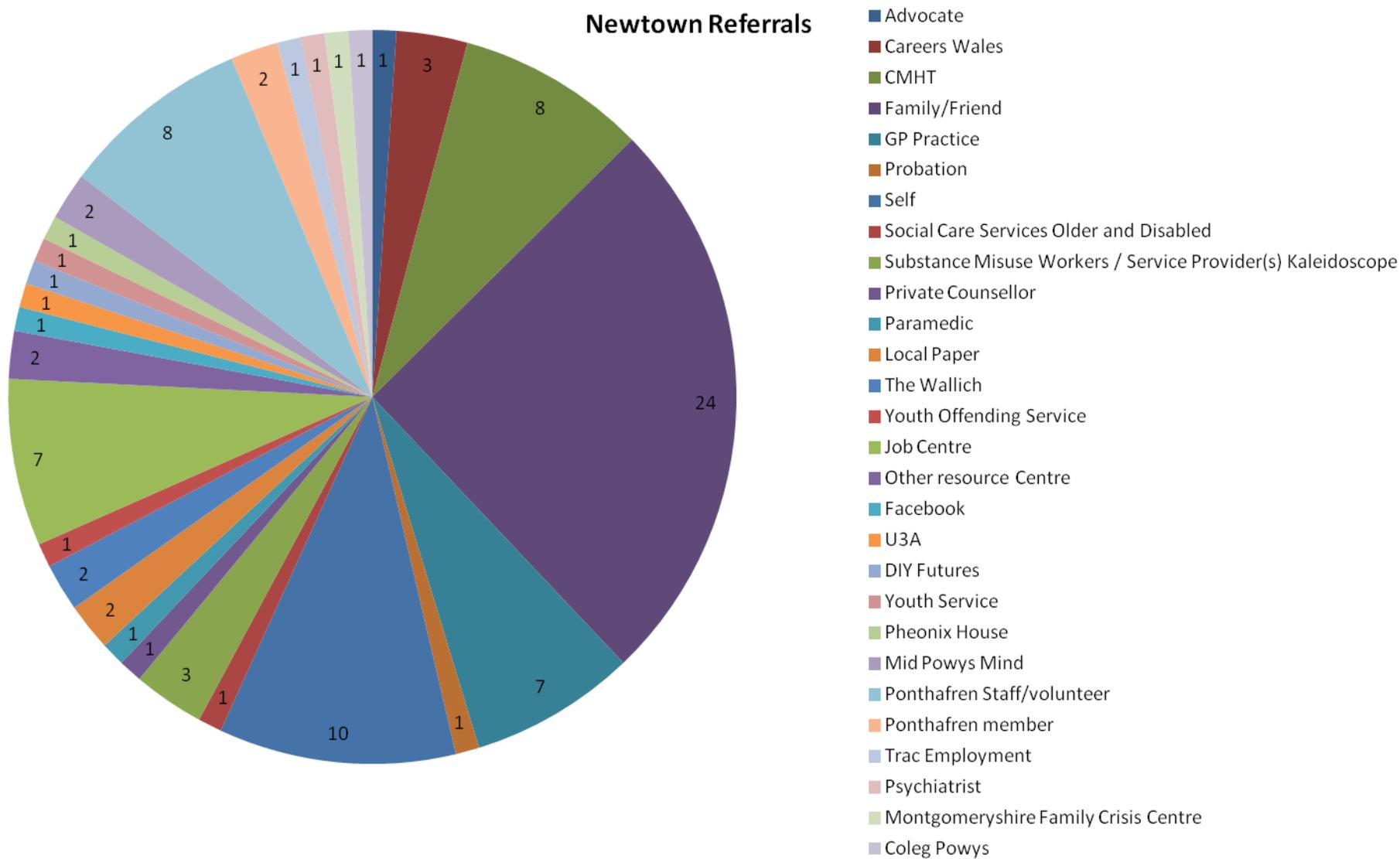


**30** total number of events attended by PR group – contributing to the reducing of stigma surrounding mental health.

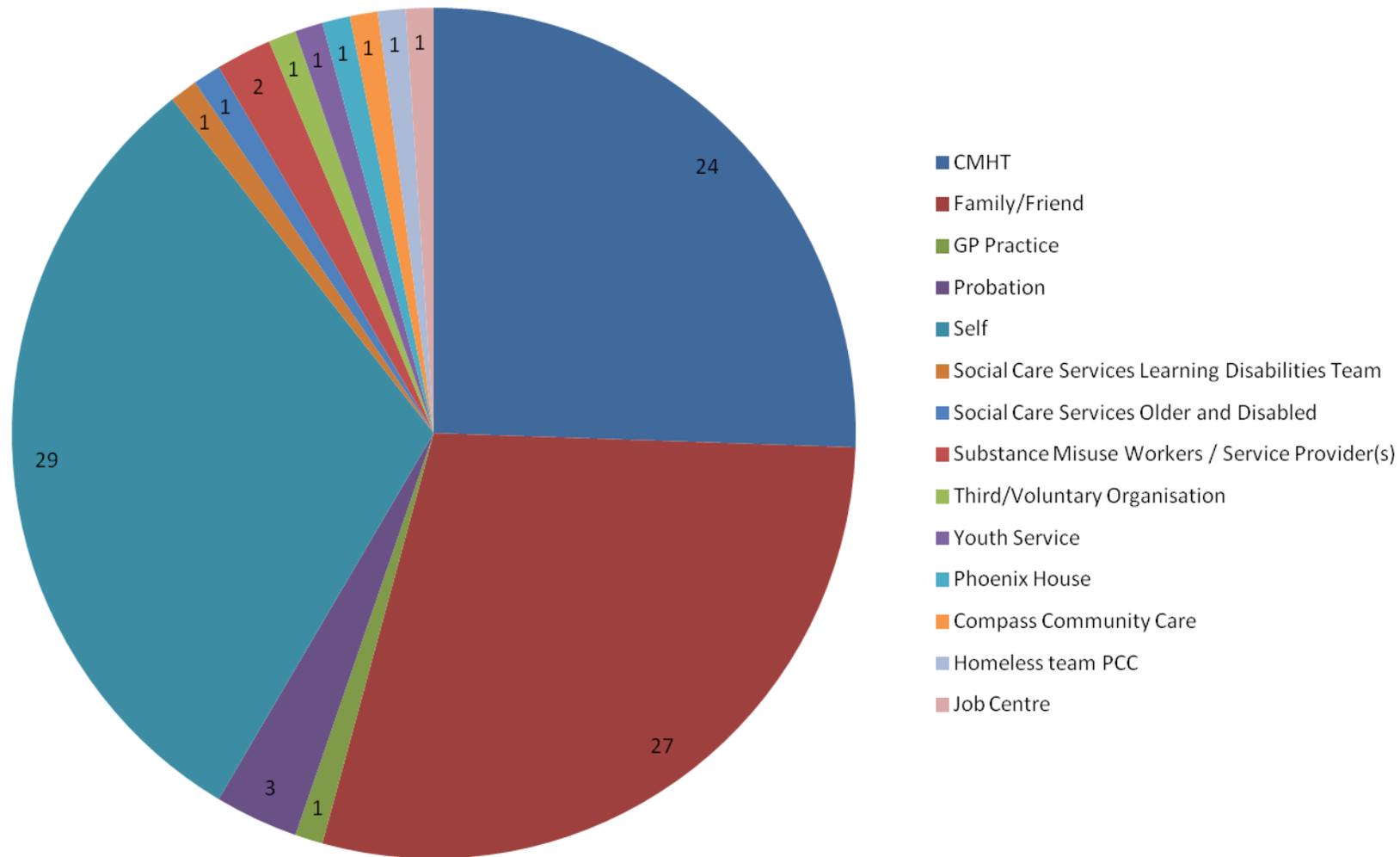
**100%** satisfaction rating among our partner organisations  
10 of our partner organisations were asked:  
**How do you rate your working relationship with Ponthafren on a scale of: poor / fair / good / very good**  
10 out of 10 said “very good”

**189** the total number of new referrals into our service  
95 - Newtown Centre  
94 – Welshpool Centre  
source of referrals by % / pie chart - overleaf

### Newtown Referrals



## Welshpool Referrals



## HOW WELL DID PONTHAFREN DO IT?

The quality of the service was evaluated by asking if Ponthafren is meeting the needs of members, commissioners and partner organisations and whether recommendations from the previous Evaluation Report have been addressed.

Please note, full results of this field research were originally published in the Evaluation Report for 2011/12. Extracts also appear here because the research was carried out during this evaluation period between Dec 2012 – Feb 2013. A copy of the full research findings is in the appendices of the 2011/12 Evaluation Report.

## IS PONTAFREN MEETING THE NEEDS OF ITS MEMBERS?

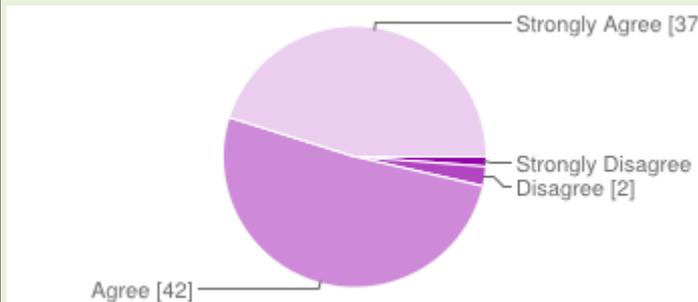
Yes 

### EVIDENCE

Results from the evaluation survey of Ponthafren members:

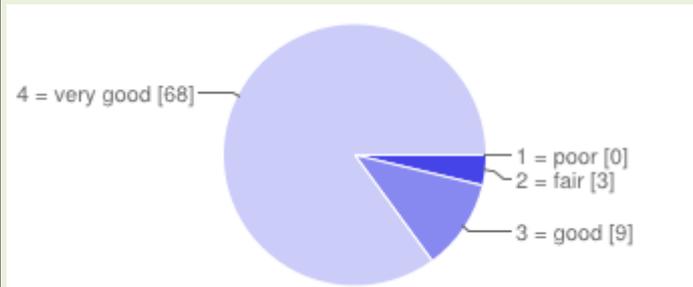
(the percentages don't always add up to 100% because some respondents did not answer all the questions )

#### **Ponthafren meets the needs of its members**



Strongly Disagree	1	1%
Disagree	2	2%
Agree	42	50%
Strongly Agree	37	44%

#### **Overall, how would you rate the services that Ponthafren offers ?**



1 = poor	0	0%
2 = fair	3	4%
3 = good	9	11%
4 = very good	68	81%

(See Objective 12 for additional evidence)

## IS PONTHAFREN MEETING THE NEEDS OF ITS COMMISSIONERS?

Yes 

### EVIDENCE:

The “Third Sector Service Review” was carried out by Ponthafren’s statutory funders in March 2013 and the organisation was assessed as being fully compliant, having not been given any action points.

Also Ponthafren continues its work on compliance with the Welsh Government’s Health Care Standards ‘Doing Well Doing Better’.

## IS PONTHAFREN MEETING THE NEEDS OF ITS PARTNER ORGANISATIONS?

Yes 

### EVIDENCE

10 partner organisations were asked:

**How do you rate your working relationship with Ponthafren on a scale of:**

**poor / fair / good / very good**

10 out of 10 said “very good”

**How would you rate the professionalism of Ponthafren on a scale of:**

**poor / fair / good / very good**

8 out of 10 it as “very good”

2 out of 10, as “good”

## WERE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS EVALUATION ADDRESSED?

5 out of 8 recommendations have been fully or partly addressed. 3 recommendations have yet to be addressed. However, it should be noted that because the previous year’s evaluation report was published relatively late (March 2013), there has been a period of only 6 months for the organisation to respond to the recommendations, rather than a full year.

**Recommendation 1: A need has been identified for a business/strategic plan to clarify where the organisation is headed. One of the trustees is addressing this.**

Was this recommendation addressed?

Yes 

## EVIDENCE

Work had started on this with one trustee who unfortunately has since resigned but the work is now being taken forward again by others. Staff now feel more supported by trustees in this area.

An obstacle to strategic planning is the reliance on statutory funders. There are sometimes delays in funding decisions which makes it difficult to incorporate funders' strategic goals into Ponthafren's own plans. Staff have met with funders to discuss this but it remains an unavoidable consideration.

## Recommendation 2: Relating To Management Structure

- **There is also a concern within the organisation that too much focus on strategy, business and policy may erode the passion & commitment of staff, volunteers & members. Also that more and more time is being spent on paperwork and being accountable to other organisations and the law. The thinking is that if there is less freedom to be passionate and spontaneous about their work, that staff may feel they are moving away from the organisation's core values and become de-motivated. It is advised that the trustees set aside some time specifically to address this tension within the organisation.**
- **Another concern is that as the organisation grows, the management structure needs to be clearly defined as does the role of the trustees so that they can differentiate between the everyday concerns of Ponthafren and the 'business side of it'.**

Was this recommendation addressed?

Partly 

## EVIDENCE

Trustees (led by the HR subgroup) are currently undertaking a review of the management structure and are committed to finding the best way of supporting the Managers. Discussions have been ongoing for a lengthy period between the Trustees and Managers regarding the best way to do this, including the suggestion of recruiting a Business Manager. Staff job descriptions are currently being reconsidered to further clarify responsibilities and also to identify where the Managers require additional support.

## Recommendation 3: Follow up on the suggestions made by Partner Organisations on how to improve joint working. The suggestions were:

Was this recommendation addressed?

Yes 

## EVIDENCE

1. Partners in the Probation Service requested bi-lingual promotional posters, which has been accommodated.

2. Some partners requested that Ponthafren staff visit their team meetings. The Development Officer has limited time to make external visits at the moment but attends team meetings where possible including at the Probation Service.
3. Several partner organisations flagged up a need for some kind of “link worker” – someone who would accompany people to Ponthafren on a first visit to make the centre more accessible. This has been addressed by appointing the one-to-one worker who can work with people in this way.
4. A peer support service was requested and there are now peer support groups in both Newtown & Welshpool
5. One partner asked if Ponthafren could negotiate a discounted rate for use of the local leisure centre for their users. This was actioned but unfortunately the request was not granted.
6. More confidence building courses were requested. The “Keeping Safe” & assertiveness training is on-going
7. It was noted by one partner organisation that the Welshpool premises is more restricted and could be nicer. Negotiations are underway regarding a possible garden for the Welshpool centre

**Recommendation 4: Communication between Staff / Trustees, Staff / Staff & Trustee / Trustee has been identified as an area needing improvement.**

Was this recommendation addressed?

Partly 

**EVIDENCE**

Communications have improved in some areas during the year:

**Staff / Trustees**

Trustee subgroups in the areas of Finance, HR & fundraising have been supporting the work of the Managers. Some are more active than others but staff acknowledge that there has been a gradual improvement in the level of support they provide.

Staff from Newtown and Welshpool centres regularly attend trustee meetings.

Some staff would like further support from the trustees and have highlighted a need for the trustees to increase their knowledge about the organisation.

A potential barrier to communication between staff and trustees is that supervision of Managers is not undertaken by trustees but by independent supervisors who are advisors to the board of trustees. As a result, there may be missed opportunities to collectively address issues of importance. In order to address this, it has been suggested that Supervisors report regularly to the HR subgroup.

#### Staff / Staff

Communications have vastly improved in this area. All Newtown staff meet once a fortnight and the meetings are more productive and efficient with contributions welcomed from all. Action points are recorded and followed up to ensure progress. Clearer methods for recording tasks and handover notes are now in place for the teams. Welshpool staff have regular meetings, with minutes sent to senior staff in Newtown. Also senior staff from Newtown & Welshpool now meet before trustee meetings to ensure any relevant information is passed on.

#### Trustee / Trustee

An improvement has been made but trustees' availability is sometimes limited due to other commitments and a decrease in the overall number of trustees. Trustees have attended members meetings as requested but overall the response to suggestions for the trustees to be more present in the centre to witness its day-to-day running has been limited.

#### **Recommendation 5: Some current staff work over and above their hours so it is hard to calculate the true cost of running the organisation.**

Was this recommendation addressed?

Yes 

#### EVIDENCE

There are systems for recording overtime hours and a new agreement that a maximum of 14 hours TOIL be carried forward per month.

#### **Recommendation 6: Consider identifying more solid performance indicators to answer the question "is anyone better off" for future monitoring & evaluation. (For example build on existing research into whether members go on to jobs, education, or reduce their need of other statutory support so a figure for financial savings could be estimated). Researching best practice among similar organisations would be recommended ie. how do other organisations measure the value of their preventative support? This more concrete evidence will place the organisation in a stronger position when applying for future funding.**

Was this recommendation addressed?

No 

The importance of this is acknowledged but as yet, the organisation hasn't had the capacity to address it.

**Recommendation 7: It would be helpful to carry out some market research among the local community to establish a baseline figure for how aware the general public are of Ponthafren's services. Future performance can then be measured against this figure.**

Was this recommendation addressed?

No 

The importance of this is acknowledged but as yet, the organisation hasn't had the capacity to address it.

**Recommendation 8: Yearly objectives for the organisation should be discussed and agreed jointly by staff and trustees in the SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-orientated & Time specific)**

Was this recommendation addressed?

No 

The importance of this is acknowledged and this will form part of the current work on business strategic planning.

## IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?

### MEMBERS

Yes 

### EVIDENCE

Members were asked:

#### **How would things be different for you if Ponthafren wasn't here?**

70 out of 79 answers (89%) suggested that they would be worse off in some way. So that would suggest that the same numbers of people are better off as a result of Ponthafren's services. The reasons they cite can be categorised under the following headings. (Specific comments from the members can be seen in the 2011/12 Evaluation Report.)

- Reducing Isolation / Loneliness
- General Support
- Alleviating Negative / Low Feelings
- Support To Stay Well
- Providing A lifeline
- Confidence & Skills Building

## ARE PARTNER ORGANISATIONS BETTER OFF?

Yes



### **EVIDENCE**

10 partner organisations were asked “How would things be different for you if Ponthafren wasn’t here?”

- *It would be frustrating. There would be no-one to refer to. There are limited resources for those with mental health needs, particularly as other organisations are losing their funding. It would be a total disaster for North Powys. Even some of those in the south prefer to come up here than access their local organisation.*
- *We would literally have no-one else. We are bereft of support in Montgomeryshire. It would just be medically orientated and that is not ideal.*
- *In this area there are little resources. Powys Challenge went. Only Ponthafren and Kaleidoscope, & PCC housing now*
- *There would be less community-based opportunities for people to access. We would have to put more on here.*
- *We would be unable to get the support our clients sometimes need to get them back into the community and build confidence.*
- *Nightmare! Because a lot of clients need to get out of house where there’s no alcohol. Very few other places don’t sell alcohol. There’s cheap coffee & it’s safe. There would be a big problem filling that gap. A big part of people’s care plan would be missing.*
- *I don’t know where else I’d go for support. I refer more often to them than any others. Whenever I contact them they are more than helpful and supportive. Excellent, I don’t know what I’d do without them.*
- *There would be a lot of very alone people with no support. They do such massive amount. Wouldn’t have anywhere to go & get support. Plus do volunteering.*
- *It would be taking away a very valuable resource. There’s nothing else like it.*
- *When people use them, it's an absolute lifeline. Can't imagine it without them – a valuable organisation.*

## ARE STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, TRUSTEES BETTER OFF?

Yes



### **EVIDENCE**

Staff, volunteers & trustees were asked “How would things be different for you if Ponthafren wasn’t here?” (18 responses)

12 out of 18 (67%) are better off due to employment and other opportunities

- *I would not be working in a job that I believe in and feel passionate about*
- *I would not only lose my job but the support network my colleagues provide me.*
- *Sense of community in welshpool wouldn't be as good as it is*
- *I wouldn't be as confident as I am now*
- *It would be a great loss. There is no equivalent facility in Newtown or Welshpool*
- *Wouldn't be able to practice locally as a counsellor*
- *I would have to volunteer somewhere else but the impact loss of a service like this on the members and the community would be disastrous*
- *I'd miss out on a great voluntary position*
- *Would not have anywhere to go*
- *I wouldn't know what to do with my Thursdays when I volunteer and it would be strange not seeing the members*
- *Living rural, I would not be going out and mixing with people and socialising*
- *Would still be looking for work / volunteering or might have applied to do a masters course*

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

*“Ponthafren is firing on all cylinders. It delivers a solid programme of work, is financially secure, has hard working staff and volunteers and is a well-liked, well-run organisation.”*

Chair of Trustees

It is testament to the hard work, professionalism and dedication of all staff and volunteers at Ponthafren, that the organisation is still thriving and delivering high quality services in such times of financial uncertainty and under the increased workload of the Big Lottery project. The organisation continues to put its members at the centre of its operation and it is highly regarded by members and partners as a result.

### Points for celebration include:

- Ponthafren is a solid organisation, which has responded well to the challenges of the increased volume of work in this period.
- The organisation is financially secure – a major achievement when many organisations are folding through lack of funds.
- Staff, volunteers, trustees and advisors all work extremely hard with commitment, integrity and attention to detail.
- Members are consistently well supported.
- Ponthafren has a good reputation for high quality and inclusive services among members, funders and partner organisations.
- There is an impressive level of positive and dedicated promotional activity.
- A wide range of services is provided efficiently, on relatively small budgets.

### Areas of concern:

- With the pressures of increased workload, the organisation is at times over-stretched and there is heavy reliance on a small number of key staff who are working to full capacity and sometimes additional hours. As a result the organisation is potentially at risk, should a key member of staff be absent for example.
- There are times when staff require additional support from trustees, particularly when there may be issues relating to staff and members that need addressing and hands-on support is required. Trustees have limited capacity to provide this, sometimes because of lack of experience and sometimes because of lack of availability due to the reduced number of trustees.

- Trustees would welcome a better defined management structure.
- There is an acknowledgement of these issues within the organisation but mutually acceptable solutions have yet to be found.

## **Recommendations:**

1. Recruitment of new trustees should be urgently prioritised.
2. Consider employing an independent consultant with HR expertise, to work jointly with staff and trustees to address the following:
  - how the managers can be best supported to work at increased capacity while avoiding risk to the organisation.
  - clarification of the responsibilities and working relationships between staff & trustees
  - a more effective system for staff supervision
  - a contingency plan for absence of key staff

Details of consultants can be found on the WCVA website. Also The Cranfield Trust offer free management consultancy for charities.

## **Recommendations carried over from previous evaluation**

3. Consider identifying more solid performance indicators to answer the question “is anyone better off” for future monitoring & evaluation. (For example build on existing research into whether members go on to jobs, education, or reduce their need of other statutory support so a figure for financial savings could be estimated). This more concrete evidence will place the organisation in a stronger position when applying for future funding.

There are some excellent resources on the Charities Evaluation services website ([www.ces-vol.org.uk](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk)) under “Tools & Resources / Outcome indicators.

4. It would be helpful to carry out some market research among the local community to establish a baseline figure for how aware the general public are of Ponthafren’s services. Future performance can then be measured against this figure.
5. Yearly objectives for the organisation should be discussed and agreed jointly by staff and trustees in the SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-orientated & Time specific)

## **Thanks:**

Thank you to all staff, trustees, volunteers and partner organisations who have given their time to this evaluation. Also to Becky for her time & patience providing me with all the relevant documents.

Sorelle White, Voluntary Sector Consultant

[me@sorelle.co.uk](mailto:me@sorelle.co.uk) / 07944 139027