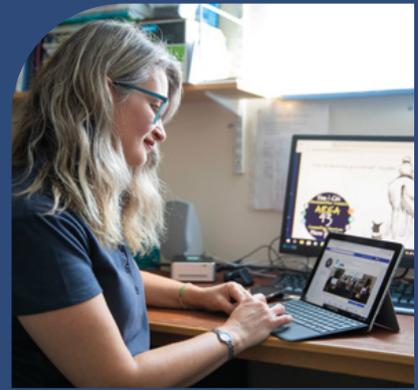


Investing in a brighter future for Mid Wales



Regional investment helping Mid Wales build a brighter future

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Tyfu
Canolbarth Cymru
Growing
Mid Wales



Introduction



Rosemarie Harris
Powys County Council



Ellen ap Gwynn
Ceredigion County Council

Councillors Rosemarie Harris and Ellen ap Gwynn look back at the achievements of the past 6 years of EU funding in strengthening the Mid Wales economy.

Both as Leaders of our respective Councils, and in Chairing the Growing Mid Wales Partnership and the Growing Mid Wales Board, we have long been working towards driving forward regional economic growth in partnership. This has seen us provide the leadership and voice to focus on the needs and opportunities of Mid Wales.

Over the years, it has seen us influence and deliver on a number of our key economic priorities through shaping and influencing national interventions, as well as providing strategic regional co-ordination and delivery of economic investments, including regeneration and European funds.

More recently, we have also laid the foundations to facilitate and accelerate economic growth via a single and ambitious vision for the region – of which a Growth Deal will play a key part as part of a broader funding mix. Work now continues apace to reach Heads of Terms agreement, and deliver a transformational portfolio of investments for the residents of the region – however this will require recognition and partnership working across all tiers of Government and the region to deliver the funding and capacity required to deliver our collective ambition as a region.

This past year has seen the Coronavirus pandemic affect our daily lives and our businesses, as we have never seen before in recent memory. Whilst we are continuing to see the social and economic effects of the pandemic, it is a pleasure therefore to be able to reflect somewhat on the positive successes that have taken place in Mid Wales through European funding, and to recognise the support of the Regional Engagement Team in supporting these investments.

Mid Wales is already home to significant key industries and businesses – and it is clear from the support provided over the past few years, that there is a wealth of opportunity in the region. It is heartening to see the efforts that have been taking place to invest in creating new employment opportunities, to develop and support our businesses, to support our workforce and the invest in digital infrastructure.

We are undoubtedly in uncertain times both in relation to Covid and in terms of future public funding to support our future economic wellbeing. We have made clear our intention as Leaders, of the need to view Mid Wales through a lens of opportunity and delivery, not only to recover – but also to capitalise on the opportunities we have here in the region to contribute to future growth and prosperity. But we are also clear this will require significant public policy co-ordination and co-operation at all levels, alongside adequate funding and support to meet our needs and opportunities in Mid Wales.

We hope that like us, you will take the time to celebrate and reflect on the successes across Mid Wales to date and enjoy reading the case studies as much as we have.

Mid Wales is home to a strong and vibrant agricultural sector generating produce to a nationally and internationally recognised standard. Home to over 900 food-related businesses and employing over 10,000 people, the region has a strong expertise and support offer through the existence of strategic sector support organisations and the showcase potential of internationally-recognised events such as the Royal Welsh Show. Coupled with industrial and innovation strengths, this offers the opportunity to grow the economic base significantly and lead on new high-value food development.

Food Centre Wales - Project HELIX

The taste of success

Mid Wales is home to Food Centre Wales, a dedicated food technology centre offering advice, technical services and training to business start-ups, SME's and existing food manufacturers, based in the village of Horeb, near Llandysul. The centre boasts a dedicated Research and Development building with unrivalled facilities staffed by expert Food Technologists, ready for food manufacturers to develop new and existing products.

Food Centre Wales is a key partner in the £21 million RDP-funded Project Helix - a pan-Wales strategic initiative, delivered by Food Innovation Wales.

Project HELIX looks to develop and deliver knowledge transfer activity focused on innovation, food strategy and efficiency that will increase production and see waste reduction in the food chain. Welsh food and drink companies are supported to develop and reformulate innovative products from concept, design, development and manufacture, through to the consumer's shopping basket.

Food Technologists from the three Food Centres in Wales work with Welsh companies to forensically analyse each step of the manufacturing process, identifying ways of introducing efficiencies across process controls, site design and systems development.

Project HELIX's strategic approach enables food producers in Wales to benefit from best practice and industry intelligence from across the world. An evaluation of the project in the summer of 2019 found that the project had already achieved an economic impact of £110 million since commencing in 2016. In addition it had helped create 366 new products, nearly 300 new jobs and had helped to safeguard a further 1,300 jobs.



Since opening in October 2019 Alana has expanded the range by

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and opened an on-site shop to sell bespoke products.

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Case study

Ridiculously Rich by Alana

One of the companies to benefit from HELIX's support is the well-known Ridiculously Rich by Alana. Alana is notable for winning the twelfth series of BBC One's The Apprentice in 2016 and received an investment from Lord Sugar for her luxury cake business.

It has always been important to Alana that the products are manufactured in Wales using the finest ingredients and in October 2019, Ridiculously Rich moved into its first purpose built bakery in Alana's home town of Aberystwyth. The technical team from Food Centre Wales supported Alana through the move to her new premises, by assisting her with the factory layout, equipment sourcing and HACCP Plans to ensure the new premises met the demands of the growing business.

Food Centre Wales helped Alana's business achieve SALSA (Safe And Local Supplier Approval) standards in just six weeks - the Food Technologists conducted a gap analysis of the processes and procedures to identify the areas that needed work to achieve the SALSA Accreditation and offered guidance to reach those standards.

Since the bakery officially opened in October 2019, Ridiculously Rich by Alana have expanded the range by 30% and opened an on-site shop to sell bespoke products. The bakery's popularity has led to large queues seen frequently outside the door, and Alana has recently opened Mid Wales' first ever dessert bar on the seafront in her beloved Aberystwyth.



APPLIED RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mid Wales is home to globally renowned and recognised industries and research & development assets and expertise that offer opportunities to catapult regional productivity growth.

Business across Mid Wales already benefit from access to the WG Smart Innovation service, which is backed by over £17m of ERDF funding. SMART Cymru offers Pan Wales support for businesses at different stages of the RD&I process including, and operates alongside other projects such as SMART Expertise which works with HEIs to develop research excellence and promote knowledge transfer.

£40.5m

investment will build on the established scientific community already present at Gogerddan.

AberInnovation

An environment for business and academic collaboration

Located at Aberystwyth University's Gogerddan site, AberInnovation will host world-leading facilities and expertise within the bioprocessing, agri-tech, and food and drink sectors to support business growth through de-risking R&D activities, facilitating new product and process development, and accelerating routes to market.

The £40.5m ERDF investment will build on the established scientific community already located in the region; and working in partnership with public and private entities, it aspires to address some of the 21st Century's most pressing grand challenges, including climate change mitigation, food and water security and renewable energy.

The campus is a strategic project for the region, and will directly benefit the local community through linked services and economies, and the creation of new high-value jobs and career options within a plethora of industries. The new research facility will offer first-class multi-disciplinary capabilities and facilities allowing companies and university stakeholders to increase their research grant capture significantly, leveraging in millions of pounds in additional income to the area.

Construction work at the campus was completed in August 2020 and a number of enterprises have already taken floor space with a growing tenants and membership network supported by AberInnovation.

This development will drive the growth potential of our strengths in research assets and expertise, to help support a shift-change in the regional economy to boost productivity and jobs growth across Mid Wales.





Providing unique high-level laboratory facilities, the

£4.2m

project will open in late 2020.



VETHUB1 Supporting advances in Veterinary Science

VetHub1 is an ERDF-backed project that will engage with SMEs, HEIs and multinational companies in developing research and commercial activities targeting diseases of zoonotic and animal health importance to both Mid Wales and the world.

Providing unique high-level laboratory facilities, the £4.2m project, which will open in late 2020, will work with government and other key stakeholders such as the Wales Veterinary Science Centre to complement veterinary support services throughout Wales and to enhance national capability

By offering veterinary services in Wales that normally are performed elsewhere in the UK and by assisting in pathogen detection where existing facilities cannot meet demand, VetHub1 will contribute to a national resiliency network assisting veterinary practices and farmers.

VetHub1 forms a vital part of the Veterinary Science and Animal Health cluster in Mid Wales, building on strategic activity such as the SER Cymru-funded Centre of Excellence in Bovine TB and Wales' only school of Veterinary Science, also at Aberystwyth University. Mid Wales is ideally placed as a leader in providing services to the agricultural sector and training the next generation of vets.



TOURISM

Mid Wales is a distinct region with a rich heritage, culture and outstanding natural assets that underpin a tourism sector of significant importance to the regional economy; with the industry employing 10,500 within the region, and was worth an estimated £6.3 billion nationally in 2018. Covid-19 is having an impact on this sector like no other, however, its importance and the potential of our assets to support future growth sustainably remains undiminished.

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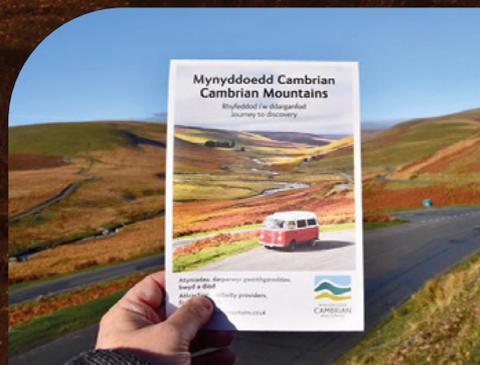
Cambrian Mountains Making the most of our natural assets

Through extensive partnership working and two years of valuable engagement with communities, local producers and tourism providers, Dyfodol Cambrian Futures has supported the development of sustainable rural communities through the provision of new tourism opportunities and the increased promotion of one of the most beautiful parts of Mid Wales.

Stargazers will love the first ever Dark Sky Discovery Guide to the Elan Valley and Cambrian Mountains, building on Elan Valley's status as an International Dark Sky Park. The project has also created an innovative 'astro-tourism trail', linking nine sites that show off the spectacular night sky in the Cambrian Mountains. Visitors will also benefit from the first ever pocket guide and map for the Cambrian Mountains.

The project has already led to an increase in tourism and longer stays and the economic benefit to local accommodation providers, cafes, pubs, restaurants, local shops, and activity providers.

The Dyfodol Cambrian Futures project is an RDP-funded project delivered by the Cambrian Mountains Initiative and part-funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Ceredigion County Council, Powys County Council and Carmarthenshire County Council.





CHERISH

Newid Hinsawdd a Threftadaeth yr Arfordir
Climate Change and Coastal Heritage
Athrú Aeráide agus Oidhreacht Chultúrtha

This cross border
European-funded
project will receive

£5.1m

through the Ireland-
Wales 2014-2020
Programme.



CHERISH

Cross-border cultural heritage

CHERISH (Climate, Heritage and Environments of Reefs, Islands, and Headlands) is an exciting, 6-year European-funded Ireland-Wales project between the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, the Discovery Programme: Centre for Archaeology and Innovation Ireland, Aberystwyth University: Department of Geography and Earth Sciences and Geological Survey, Ireland. The project will receive €5.1 million through the Ireland-Wales 2014-2020 Programme.

CHERISH is a truly cross-disciplinary project. It aims to raise awareness and understanding of the past, present and near-future impacts of climate change, storminess, and extreme weather events on the rich cultural heritage of the Irish and Welsh regional seas and coast. The project employs innovative techniques to study some of the most iconic coastal locations in Ireland and Wales.

SUPPORTING ENTERPRISE

Millions of pounds of support has been provided in Mid Wales to stimulate and support growth in the region's 13,000 businesses. Business Wales, the Welsh Government's flagship business support programme, has benefited from over £51 million of EU funding to date to deliver a comprehensive and tailored information and support package to SMES to enable job creation, wealth and business growth in Wales. Business Wales also delivers entrepreneurship promotion and support to Wales based entrepreneurs in the form of Big Ideas Wales in order to develop an entrepreneurial environment and sustainable stock of young businesses.

To date under the current ERDF 2014-2020 Programme, 1,310 businesses in Mid Wales have received non-financial support, with over 350 new enterprises supported. There has also been an employment increase of 1,704 jobs in supported enterprises.

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Development Bank of Wales Camlas Vets

Financial support allows veterinary practice to grow

Camlas Farm Vets are an independent, dedicated farm animal veterinary practice. Working with commercial farms and smallholders, they provide high quality services and support to clients in the Powys and Shropshire area. They are passionate about treating animals and work alongside farmers to get the best from their livestock and farming enterprises. As a farm animal practice within a tight-knit mid-Wales community, the practice aims to ensure that their customers are always completely satisfied with the services they provide.

The practice had been operating from their original premises for six years. It was functional but small, with no real way to increase capacity. Thanks to an £80,000 Wales Business Fund Loan through the Development Bank of Wales Camlas Farm Vets was able to relocate to larger premises which will allow them to grow their business and offer a wider range of services. Their new base allows local farmers to bring livestock into the surgery if needed and some of the funding has also been used to create a new operating theatre, suitable for larger livestock like ewes, cattle and horses.

The loan has secured nine jobs at the practice and could see further jobs created as a result of the increased capacity.

Investment into SMEs is substantially improved where finance and business support are aligned. To make this happen, the Development Bank of Wales works with Business Wales, making it simpler and easier for businesses to access support alongside finance. A referral scheme between the Development Bank and Business Wales helps business in Wales benefit from a more rounded approach to business support.





Social Business Wales Aber Food Surplus Reducing waste and creating jobs

Aber Food Surplus was created in 2017 when three people from Aberystwyth University’s Sustainability Society met and started collecting food waste from Morrison’s supermarket. By 2019 they had secured £99,000 of Lottery funding, provided 3,000 “pay as you feel” meals and redistributed 17,000 tonnes of food.

Expanding their collections to include M&S, Lidl and Tesco, they presently save 300kg of food being wasted every week and provide facilities and services to encourage the reduction and redistribution of edible fit-for-consumption food surplus from the main supermarkets in Aberystwyth.

Their aim is to bring people together, using food to break down barriers, provide opportunities, and support the community socially, culturally and environmentally to work towards a more resilient, proactive and healthy community.

The ERDF-funded Social Business Wales operation, led by the Wales Co-op Centre, has been working with the team from 2017 and has provided support with legal structures and company registration, business planning and financial forecasting, and raising finance and grant applications.

Social Business Wales Open Newtown Community assets in Newtown

Going Green for a Living Community Land Trust Ltd was formed in 2018 when the opportunity arose for the community to take on the stewardship of the town’s parks, open spaces and river frontage. The Social Business Wales project supported Open Newtown to review the different business models available for creating the social enterprises and develop bespoke Articles of Association used to create the new company, establishing Open Newtown as a not for profit company limited by guarantee. The support also included business planning, raising investment and best practice for asset transfers

The project signed a 99-year lease for 130 ha of green space within in the town centre as part of a land asset transfer between Powys County Council and Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Town Council. They also took on 10 ha of land from the Welsh Government.

Trading as Open Newtown in 2018 they secured a £1.1 million grant from The National Lottery Community Fund Wales as part of their Community Asset Transfer fund to develop the lands assets and to establish the projects and partnerships that would allow Newtown’s green spaces to be managed in perpetuity for the community, building natural assets and developing benefits for town’s people and the town’s economy.

In Newtown they are in the process of creating The Riverside Venue with the support of WG Regeneration funding which will act as a gateway to Newtown’s green spaces and as a regional focal point for developing sustainable tourism as well as providing a warm welcome to locals and visitors arriving by bus, foot, cycle and car. And with the financial support of Natural Resources Wales and the support of the local canoe club they have been unlocking the potential of the River Severn in Newtown by installing four access points providing safe access to encourage paddle sports in Newtown.



DIGITAL

Digital infrastructure and exploitation are vital in creating a connected and digitally-capable Mid Wales. Businesses across the region are able to work smarter, faster and better, following major public investment in providing superfast broadband.

Key to getting Mid Wales connected are the Welsh Government's Superfast Broadband and Ultrafast Broadband Programmes, which have received a combined total of £29.6 million funding under the current ESIF programme. These projects build on activity funded in the previous programme, aiming to connect 40,000 'harder to reach' premises to fit-for-the-future broadband infrastructure.

The Superfast and Ultrafast Broadband Programmes have received a total of

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funding under the current ESIF programme.

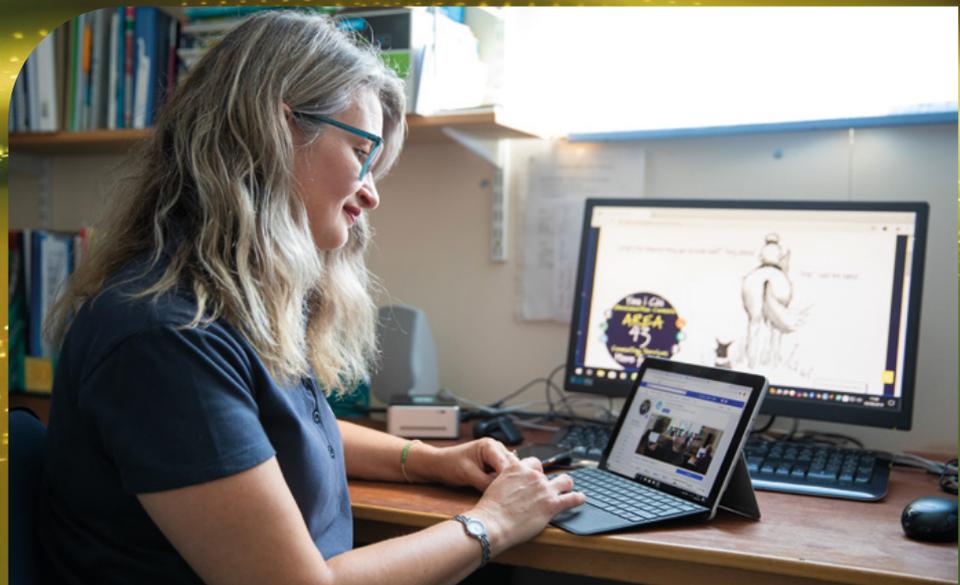
Superfast Business Wales

Charity reduces the challenges of rural isolation

Facing multiple challenges, a West Wales charity working with children from the ages of 10 to young adults of 30, realised they needed to think differently about tackling the issue of rural isolation head on. Area 43, based in Cardigan, runs a drop-in centre and counselling services and has contact with 1,800 vulnerable youngsters a year, many of whom are referred from other services such as education, child and adolescent mental health services, GPs, food banks and youth justice. But given the wide-spread geographical and rural nature of Ceredigion, it was sometimes hard to reach out.

Initially the charity looked at how it could connect with people using social media and Services Manager Lisa Head attended a workshop with Superfast Business Wales. But it was the one-to-one time spent with Paul Gadd, her business adviser at Superfast Business Wales, that really hit home. "It completely changed my thinking and I was surprised at what we could do with technology and how simple some of the solutions were," said Lisa.

The charity first tackled its 20-year-old website, making it more accessible and professional-looking. "As a charity we rely on funding and tendering opportunities and giving the right impression is integral to us being able to continue to support our community." The new look helped them win funding to pilot a digital service in Ceredigion. "The Here for You Online counselling service provides immediate access to a service when someone really needs it and it can make such a huge change to their mental health and wellbeing," said Lisa. The 'Here for You' Online Counselling Service is supported by Cynnal y Cardi under the LEADER scheme in Ceredigion and has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.



TRANSPORT

Reliable, resilient, sustainable and connected transport networks are fundamentally important to economic growth and communities – especially in a rural region like Mid Wales. Good quality infrastructure is vital in linking people up with opportunities, and companies with markets and labour supply.

A regional bid was successful in developing a

£160,000

project to install five CGI screens along the TrawsCymru T2 corridor.

TAIS

Enhancing transport for tourists

Under the current ESIF programme, Mid Wales has benefited from the RDP-funded Tourism Amenity Investment Support Scheme (TAIS), run by Visit Wales.

TAIS is an investment fund targeting amenity projects in the tourism sector that will develop quality sustainable tourism facilities and add value to the visitor experience. A regional bid was successful in developing a £160,000 project to install 5 CGI screens along the TrawsCymru T2 corridor, including popular tourist towns Machynlleth and Aberystwyth.

As well as providing the public with up-to-date info on bus timetables, the screens will also allow the public access to Local Authority tourism web pages and promote the Welsh Government's Welsh Way Coastal Route.



SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

Ensuring a highly skilled workforce for the future is a priority for the economy of Mid Wales.

To date, the current 2014-2020 ESF Programme has assisted over 11,000 participants in Mid Wales. Nearly 5000 of these have gained a qualification and 780 have entered employment.

In addition to pan-Wales schemes such as the Welsh Government's flagship Apprenticeship scheme – which has benefitted from over £200 million EU funding under the current programme – the workforce of Mid Wales are able to access a variety of regional and local employability and skills projects that are tailored to the workforce needs of Mid Wales.

Bioinnovation
Wales is a

£6.4m

pan-Wales operation that aims to tackle high level and technical skills shortages.

Bioinnovation Wales Upskilling for the future

Bioinnovation Wales is a £6.4m pan-Wales operation that aims to tackle high level and technical skills shortages in bio-based businesses in Wales by providing online postgraduate training for Welsh Agri-Food and Biotech industries, developing skilled individuals capable of carrying out research and instigating innovation within the businesses of Wales.

The nature of the training means that it is accessible from anywhere, overcoming the barriers of disparate population centres and patchy transport links. As well as upskilling Welsh-based employees and companies, the activity supports the productivity and profitability of Welsh agriculture – a key industry for the Mid Wales economy.

BioInnovation Wales is a partnership between the Institute for Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) at Aberystwyth University and the College of Engineering at Swansea University.



Powys County Council
and PRIME Cymru
secured

£320,000

ESF funding to offer support to economically inactive individuals aged over 54 to help them back to employment.

This translated into

86

people entering employment upon leaving the project and

57

people still in employment six months after leaving the project.

Powys Workways Encouraging employability

Powys County Council's Regeneration Team in partnership with PRIME Cymru secured £320,000 ESF funding to offer support to economically inactive individuals in the county aged 54 and over to help them on their route back into employment.

Funded by the European Social Fund and delivered through the Welsh Government, the project offered one-to-one mentoring, support with job seeking and interview skills, help with writing CV's, the chance to gain new qualifications, and find volunteering and work experience placements.

In the latter part of the project a re-profiling exercise was undertaken and approved to enable the project to work with a wider group of people, including those who were long term unemployed. This resulted in a good uptake of the services offered through the project and enabled more people to access and benefit from the service on offer.

In total 320 economically inactive participants were engaged with. This translated in 86 people entering employment upon leaving the project, 84 gaining a qualification or work relevant certification, and 57 people still in employment six months after leading the project. There was also a larger than expected number of participants that entered into self-employment upon leaving the project.

The tailored support also meant that participants reported an increase in confidence and self-esteem, and felt better about their prospects going forward



Siawns Teg a social inclusion charity in Newtown received

£116,000

of funding from Active inclusion for their Brighter Futures project.

Active Inclusion - Welsh Council for Voluntary Action Targeted support

The Active Inclusion Fund is managed by WCVA, supported by £21 million of EU funding. It aims to reduce economic inactivity in Wales and improve the employability of disadvantaged people, and has a dedicated Youth strand to work with people aged under 25 not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Under the Active Inclusion project, third sector organisations can apply for funding to provide specific, tailored employability activity in their local areas. Siawns Teg is a social inclusion charity based in Newton that works to break down the problems and issues surrounding unemployment, personal learning opportunities and health. They received £116,000 of funding from Active Inclusion for their Brighter Futures project - a tailor made programme for long term unemployed young people to help them break down barriers to work and gain employment or further education.

Joe was referred to the Brighter Futures Project in early 2020. He was on the Autistic Spectrum and also has other learning, behavioural and physical issues to contend with as he was born with Hydrocephalus. Generally, he was lacking in confidence.

Joe had had some work experience in a kitchen and was keen to pursue this further. Joe attended online training and workshops and was successful in achieving a work related certificate in Life Skills. Joe continued to apply for relevant positions and was supported with the application process and his CV. The project also supported Joe by holding a mock interview before his trial shift as a kitchen assistant at a local hotel.

Securing the job has had a massive impact on Joe's life. His self-esteem and confidence are greatly improved, and now he earns a weekly wage he no longer has to apply for Universal Credit.



For any further information please visit:

www.growingmid.wales

www.tyfucanolbarth.cymru

twitter.com/GrowingMidWales

