

Regional Integration Fund - Two-page profile

Reducing Isolation (PR011)

This profile shows the high-level details relates to the annual proposal, monitoring and evaluation, including indicators, performance measures, expenditure and the impact for service users.

Overview/summary of the programme

The programme was designed to establish a 'whole system' approach across Cwm Taf Morgannwg's health and social care sectors, aiming to foster healthy interdependence among older people by sharing responsibilities for better outcomes and experiences. Before the programme, referrals from statutory partners to third sector organisations were rare and lacked awareness of the support the organisations offered. To address this, the programme created a single point of access to third sector services, integrating it into the Social Service & Wellbeing Wales Act's IAA process flow. A critical component of this programme is the RIF Befriending Grant, managed by Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil. This grant supports voluntary sector initiatives in Merthyr and RCT that provide befriending services through phone calls, home visits, and assistance in attending peer support and activity groups. The grants aim to reduce isolation and loneliness in people aged 50+, which can negatively impact their physical and mental wellbeing, confidence, self-esteem, resilience, and independence.

Isolated and lonely individuals, who may live alone or with family, often lack immediate support networks and can heavily rely on health services like GP and mental health services, sometimes resulting in an over-reliance on medication. The programme targets these individuals, especially those who have suffered bereavements and struggle to move forward. The grant scheme, supported by Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil, includes delivery agents such as Age Connects Morgannwg, British Red Cross, Safer Merthyr Tydfil, Volunteering Matters, and Valleys Kidz.

RIF deliverables:

Primary model of care:

Prevention and community coordination

Enablers:

Promoting the social value sector

Integrated community hubs

Workforce development and integration

Priority population group:

Older people

Regional approach:

The programme is delivered by multiple partners across part of the region including the statutory and third sector. RIF funding contributes towards the delivery of community based support to reduce isolation.

Priority (Linked to Area Plan)

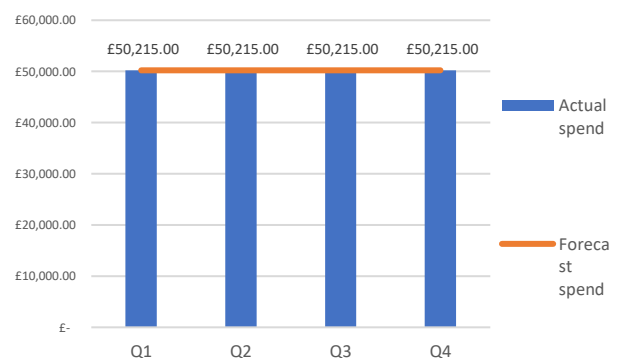
Older people and people with dementia will be supported to engage in their local community and have a quality of life where loneliness is minimised.

Older people and people with dementia will enjoy good health and wellbeing and supported to live independently for longer.

Older people and people with dementia will receive the support they need to remain in their home for as long as possible, or to move back home as quick as possible following a hospital admission.

Older people and people with dementia will be able to participate in, contribute towards and access services within their communities.

Project expenditure – £202,048 (2023/24 FY)



Projects/partners supporting delivery:

CTM UHB
Local authorities
PHW
Third sector
Community providers
SWP

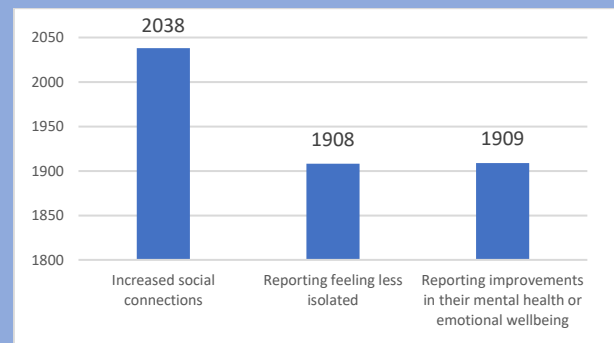
Summary of expenditure:

The funding received from RIF is a contribution towards the delivery of friendship and reducing isolation projects predominantly in the MT and RCT areas of the region. The funding provided during 2023/24 was fully utilised during the year.

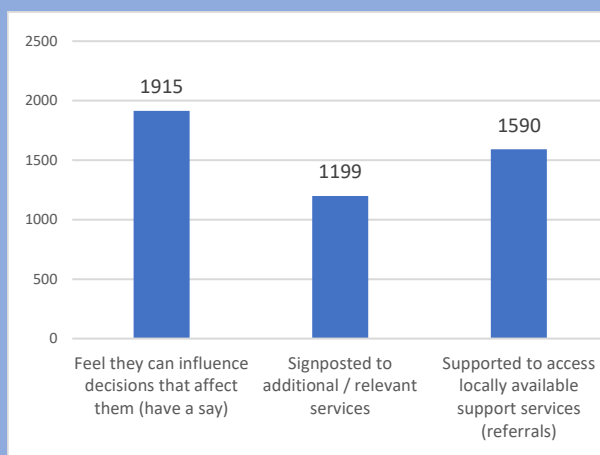
Programme outputs (annual figures):
(includes additional outcome measures)

No of organisations receiving grants	18
No of referrals	333
No of new groups facilitated	60
No of individuals attending sessions	2224
No of volunteers recruited	134
No of new opportunities to engage with the local community (developed)	54
No of new local services developed using a coproduction approach	26

Programme outcomes: (primary measures)
(Numbers)



Programme outcomes: (primary measures)



Performance overview: (summary)

The Befriending Grant programme, managed by VAMT, has been instrumental in providing support to older adults and their carers in Merthyr Tydfil and RCT. Through telephone and in-person befriending services, the programme facilitated 333 referrals and supported 2,224 individuals, with volunteers contributing 2,463 hours valued at approximately £33,952. This effort resulted in 1,908 individuals reporting increased social connections, 1,909 noting improved mental health, and 1,949 making new friends.

Although the programme continues to provide a valued service it is not available regionally and faces ongoing challenges such as inadequate local transport, limited mental health support tailored to men, and a lack of services for those on the ASD spectrum. Moreover, the current funding levels do not meet the rising demands and does not cover inflation or necessary operational costs. Despite these, the programme's strengths lie in its sustainable projects, personalised 'What Matters' approach, and impactful community engagement.

The programme has significantly improved the well-being of older adults and their carers by providing vital support services, reducing isolation, and fostering community connections. Addressing the identified constraints and building on the lessons learned will ensure the continued success and expansion of the programme, further increasing its positive impact on our community's.

Impact of the programme (qualitative):

- Improved Well-being:** People frequently report feeling less lonely and more socially connected, contributing to their overall happiness and mental well-being.
- Enhanced Social Connections:** By supporting new friendships and fostering supportive relationships, the programme improves the social foundation of our communities.
- Community Integration:** The programme facilitates community integration by encouraging participation in local activities and events. People feel more connected to their neighbourhoods and find opportunities to contribute positively to their communities.
- Quality of Life:** The programme contributes to an improved quality of life by addressing emotional needs and providing practical support. People feel more capable of managing their daily lives, reducing stress and enhancing their ability to cope with challenges.
- Preventative Health Benefits:** Through regular interactions and support, the programme helps reduce physical and mental health decline. People often feel healthier and more resilient with regular positive engagement, attributing improvement to the social and emotional support they receive.

Overall, the impact of the programme emphasises its role in fostering meaningful relationships, promoting well-being, and enhancing the overall quality of life for older adults and their caregivers. These qualitative outcomes illustrate the impact of the programme beyond statistics, demonstrating its importance in supporting our community.

Recommendations:

To sustain, enhance and extend the programme effectiveness, it would require additional funding, expand support services, strengthen local partnerships, and improve transport accessibility.

- Sustainable preventative funding:** Develop a robust and diversified funding strategy exploring social investment models. This will provide financial stability and flexibility to expand services and meet growing demand.
- Enhanced partnerships:** Strengthen partnerships with LHB, LAs and community organisations to create integrated support networks.
- Community engagement:** Increase community awareness of the programmes benefits and actively engage stakeholders through networking events.
- Innovative delivery models:** Explore innovative service delivery models such as virtual befriending platforms, peer support networks, and technology-enabled solutions to reach more isolated individuals and provide flexible support options.