

## **Cwtch Together Trustees Report 2024/2025**

We have had another busy, successful year thanks to all of our wonderful families, volunteers, and supporters. Please find below a breakdown of our activities this year.

### **Personnel**

#### **Active Trustees**

Chelsea Harrington  
Claire Donoghue  
Celia Brooks  
Claire Doyle (as of December)

#### **Session Manager**

Sarah D'Arcy

#### **Staff Members**

Rebecca Hughes  
Sam Jones

#### **Ambassador**

Catherine Smith

#### **Volunteers**

Approximately 30 volunteers this year including Mike Sweeney, Chloe Brushett, Logan D'Arcy, Catherine Smith, Roy, members of the GoodGym, and members of Make A Smile.

### **Finance**

**Income:** £8,303.71

**Expenditure:** £18,229.60

### **Monthly Breakdown**

#### **April**

Our volunteer, Catherine Smith, held a Skittles fundraising evening at Whitchurch Rugby club. This is one part of her many fundraising events, we will find out the total raised from these at the end of 2025.

We hosted a private hire party on the 27th.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- Puzzle matching day
- Building day

- A rainy outdoor day for National Play Outside day

## **May**

We hosted a 'Free to Families' council session on the 31st, this was evaluated on last year and the decision was made to have one extended session, instead of the two sessions in one day. This works better for us as we often had a lot of people not showing up after booking the free sessions when they were more structured, and this way the families can come and go as they please.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- Sports Day where everyone received a participation medal
- Spring Garden Day including taking part in the RSPB bird watch, as well as planting plants, and turning bottles into bird feeders
- Messy Madness, aimed at helping with anxieties around mess/germs brought in during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Colour Red Day
- We made charity badges with BRAWD for an upcoming fundraising event with a Male Voice Choir.

## **June**

We had a meeting with the organisation Giving Is Human, who act as a fundraising site for people to make donations on, this wouldn't cost us anything but would take a significant amount of volunteer time ensuring our page is consistently updated, and advertising the site as often as they required from us. Due to this and the currently low amount of users, we have decided that this may be something we work with in the future.

Many of our brand new toys were damaged intentionally whilst being supervised by parents/guardians, this happened repeatedly for three weeks. We have asked parents to please stop the children from damaging our equipment as we are a small charity and cannot always afford to replace things, we also informed that we would ask the parents to replace items if they are clearly intentionally damaged, (of course we understand that breakages and accidents happen often, and sometimes can't be helped.)

A Cardiff Male Voice Choir held a fundraising evening and raffle at Whichurch Rugby Club, with proceeds coming to Cwtch Together and to BRAWD. This is part of the total from Catherine Smith that we will receive at the end of the year.

Session was cancelled on 22nd due to staff illness.

Session did not take place on 29th due to planned staff annual leave.

C3SC continued their contract with us so will continue to do our payroll moving forward.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- A Circus Workshop, with Andy Horobin Entertainment, who taught our children how to take photographs through a clear globe. This fascinated our children, so after this, Sarah donated a clear globe to Cwtch Together for the older kids to take photos with her phone.
- World Oceans Day, we used water trugs and imitation litter, and gave the kids litter pickers to 'clean up the ocean!' This was one of the most successful ideas this year, the kids loved it!
- Fathers Day messy play, we made cards, but also tried to downplay the theme of the day due to a recent loss.

## **July**

The GoodGym volunteers attended on 25th, focusing on gardening at the back of the hall. This area has a lot of wild stingy nettles which they cleared, as well as helping to clear the area so that the Scouts can get to the roof to get the guttering repaired to prevent leaking.

Due to issues last summer with children removing their clothes and being outside, we bought shower curtains and hung them to the railings, using them to block off the view from the adjacent park, as well as the end of the garden by the car park. We also put these curtains on the other side of the garden, as our new neighbours have started filling the area with rubbish, so we have done this to make the garden look tidier. This also helped us when leaving donated garden toys outside to use all summer, we were safe leaving the toys out and had no issues.

Catherine Smith hosted a folk and county night at Whitchurch Rugby Club, she also hosted a poker night, but this wasn't advertised in advance due to some of the proceeds raised being donated to BRAWD.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- National Thank You Day, we made cards for teachers, parents, and our volunteer Roy
- Starting to prep for summer! We played with Hama beads, chalks, and bubbles.
- Arts and Sensory session.
- Lots of outdoor play, including painting wooden toys outside.

## **August**

On the 2nd we hosted the Cardiff Council's first Free to Families session, the main issue with this session was people not showing up after booking, because it is free there is less commitment to attending or cancelling. Our first session we had 18 families booked in and only 6 attended. The council has said they will be stricter this year, and will say that families cannot book onto the next session if they fail to show up when booked (without giving us notice) Decided to rename the sessions from Free Fridays, to Sessions At No Cost To Families.

On the 17th we were closed for the afternoon for a private party booking.

We created printed receipts for children that attend with Social Services staff to take back with them.

GoodGym volunteers attended to help us with more gardening.

Unfortunately money has again gone missing from our honesty box in the kitchen. It has accumulated to over £70 throughout the year. We now have one person wearing a cash bum-bag, as we unfortunately can no longer have the honesty box moving forward.

At the end of August we relaunched our annual Membership Scheme, which costs £25 per person if paid into our bank, £26 if paid via PayPal, and includes the following...

- £1 off per child per week
- Priority booking for council sessions
- Party Pack only available for members
- Discount for Claire Doyle Photography.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- Sensory outdoor play, including water guns. Advance notice was given to parents to bring a change of clothes for children wanting to take part.
- Olympics day, we made medals and panned for gold in sand. We also hosted a one day raffle.
- Foam Machine - this was fun, but we needed additional support for the clean up afterwards, this is suitable for an outside activity.
- A Barbie morning.
- Summer fun and messy play.
- Food tasting (summer fruits) and crafts.

## **September**

Our Insurance renewed on 7th with Markle Insurance. We have had a lot of weather damage to our storage units this year, but haven't made any claims on our insurance. Thankfully, most of the damage has been to second hand donated items. Our neighbour/volunteer Roy checks on the units for us every time there is bad weather, and has fixed the roofing for us several times. We sadly can't make the units more stable, and will have to replace them in the future. There was a lot of damage to our photography back drops, we have tried to store as much as possible off the floor moving forward

Logan D'Arcy has started work experience with us, setting up and tidying away before and after our sessions. This was suggested to us by his school, as he is unable to take part in traditional work experience through the school due to his phobia of germs.

Chelsea ordered a logo ink stamp for our library of books. We will use this on books donated to us, which will then have our stamp on them when being donated back to the community.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- A visit from Ebbw Vale Owl Sanctuary, this was a very successful sell out session, so we will be doing this again.
- A Superhero session with food tasting.
- Autumn leaf painting.
- Holistic Sounds with Cheryl Gallea, this was very different and very much enjoyed by our children. Cheryl donated her time pro bono.

## **October**

The 4th saw the finale of Catherine Smith's fundraising evenings at Whitchurch Rugby Club. This included a raffle, hook-a-duck game, etc.

On the 5th we hosted a 3rd birthday party for one of our children.

Our contact for the Scout Hall, Gerwyn, has left the organisation, and our new contact moving forward will be Kylie.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- Spooky crafts, decorations made in advance of our Halloween party.
- Spooky playdoh, pumpkin tasting.
- Halloween party which was a sell out as usual. Next year we are hoping to have the party on a Sunday, and potentially open the Saturday up as an open day for the public, or for a fundraising event, if we have the staffing levels available.

## **November**

We hosted a Free to Families session with the council.

The GoodGym volunteers visited us again.

With the help of volunteer Kirsty McGowen, we used Hobbycraft glass jars, and sensory fillings such as coloured rice, chick peas, and pasta, and sold them at our sessions with suggested donations of £1.50 for bags and £2.50 for glass jars, complete with Cwtch Together logo stickers. The fillings have also been organised for easy use at Saturday sessions.

We had a few issues this month with staff not showing up to scheduled shifts, luckily our volunteer Michael Sweeney was available to help out on most occasions.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- Colour coordinated balls in tents from our ball pit.
- Seasonal Crafts
- Winter Crafts.
- Christmas decorations making.
- Tik Tok experiments, and potions.
- Stem activities as shared and suggested by parents and guardians.
- Science sessions.
- Sensory fun.

## **December**

We cancelled the Saturday session on 8th due to a Red Weather Warning put in place. Due to the weather, panels popped out of two of our storage units, and the front roof popped out of two. A nearby tree fell and was stuck in the unit at the back. Our neighbour/volunteer Roy went in alone to fix these issues for us.

We contacted our insurance for advice on weather to open, and the Charity Commission suggested we could open on Sunday instead of Saturday, and the Scouts were happy for us to have the hall on this occasion.

Catherine Smith arrived to a session with a Christmas gift for our children. She had brought two members of the charity BRAWD with her to play with the children, and they had also brought a Christmas gift for each individual child. Catherine informed us that she had raised £1,610 for Cwtch Together throughout the year. What a fantastic achievement.

On the 10th the GoodGym volunteers attended, due to the weather they helped loads with indoor activities such as cleaning and organising toys, cleaning the kitchen, and getting rid of cobwebs in hard to reach areas.

We hosted our Christmas Party on the 14th. Michael came to visit the kids dressed as Santa. Claire Doyle also volunteered for the day. Unfortunately one of our members of staff, Sam, didn't show up again, even though we talked with him the day before about how he would have to leave early due to other personal commitments. This let us down but luckily we had Michael and Claire there to support our other staff members. This would unfortunately be the last time we would hear from Sam Jones, who would eventually leave Cwtch Together as a member of staff.

Claire Doyle joined our Board of Trustees, she has been involved in the charity as a volunteer for a while, and is well liked and trusted by our current trustees, staff members, and attending families. Claire took Christmas pictures of the children, and edited them to put Santa in the scene. This had a lot of very good feedback from families, and a number of parents even changed their Facebook profile images to these edited images.

We were lucky enough to receive very generous donations totalling £250 from Gemma Need, and her mum Christine Need.

On the 24th we were informed that someone had nominated Sarah for an 'Inspiring Person in Grangetown' award with Luna Promotions, and that she had won the award and a £100 prize!

GoodGym asked if we would be able to make 90 hand made Christmas Cards for a care home that they volunteer at. Sarah and Chloe did this for them.

We had to reinforce the importance of parents and guardians supervising kids, we printed and posted new signage to support this.

We purchased an indoor privacy screen, to protect the children's dignity when changing nappies in the back room, and we have pull out mats for older kids.

We bought new soft place which is bulky to store but definitely worth it, the kids love it and it is used weekly.

Our volunteer Chloe has started helping with our Instagram account, with supervision from her mum due to her age.

Asda Community Champions from the Leckwith, Coryton, and Cardiff Bay stores got in touch as they have been given pots of money to donate to local charities, and have been told they need to donate to non-sporting organisations. All three locations are looking at us. Leckwith have applied for us to have a £1,000 grant for sessions aimed at Teenagers. In April we will be able to apply for something else. Cardiff Bay are starting their grant applications in April 2025, they would like us to apply for a disabled toilet, but the Scouts are already applying for this as it is their hall. We need decent storage so we may use this opportunity for this.

Roy has helped us look into replacement outdoor storage units, and suggested three 20 foot insulated shipping containers. These should have wood inside to drill shelving units, instead of needing the freestanding units. We would need to cut the containers to ensure our fire exit space still has the room for wheelchairs.

We received an anonymous £50 donation from Catherine Smith's open mic night at Whitchurch Social Club in July.

## **January**

We had issues this month with parents coming with carers from the organisation Pro-Care, we've had to contact the company to complain about the way that two carers were behaving with Amy, manhandling and mishandling her, this resulting in the two carers being fired.

We received a new sensory table donated to us by Cardiff Council as they are unfortunately no longer allowed to store anything in their units.

A charity called New Life contacted us to donate three bags of toys, they are hoping to continue to support us with donations of toys in the future, as they mostly work with furniture.

Social Service's Children Home have started coming along quite often, with approximately 6 children, using us as a safe place to meet with parents etc. They have said we are the only service that they are comfortable visiting for this reason as they are treated the same as everyone else. All the carers we have met this way have been lovely and we are happy to be here for them.

Cardiff Council have changed their policy, and now no longer allow volunteers without a police check. This was relayed to us very last minute so we were unable to let Chloe volunteer as she is not old enough to get a DBS check. Our new volunteer Charlie, who started in January, is waiting for her ID. Charlie has no experience with disability but does with home education, she loves cleaning but is unsure if she will become a permanent volunteer due to other personal commitments.

We will arrange a DBS check for Charlie and Chloe soon, Sarah's (Enhanced) runs out in the summer so will also get this sorted, they are now approximately £108 each.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- Jewellery Making and Bead Work
- Recycling week with boxes and loose parts play

- Star Painting and Star wool shapes, we wrapped wool around a parent tied to a chair... maybe avoid this activity in the future!
- Sweet Treat Week, using up left over Halloween sweets, with a Feb best before date.
- RSPB Bird Watch week. We received stickers and certificates and made bird feeders, we also logged everything online.

## **February**

Sarah completed her Food Hygiene Level 2 and Buckle Training.

GoodGym volunteers attended on 7th, cleaning our path way with torches.

We have talked with Chloe and due to the great job she is doing with our Instagram she will be setting us up with a Tik Tok account when she turns 16 in May. Our kids have enjoyed making Tik Tok trends and experiments videos

Chelsea arranged for us to have a free premium account on Canva, this will make our advertising and creative work easier. Claire Doyle and Sarah D'Arcy also have access to this.

We purchased a new stepping stone, and rocking rainbow shape things.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- Animal antics
- Valentines, icing biscuits and creating bracelets.
- National recreational sports and fitness day, we teamed up with Thrive for this session at our hall, as they are currently struggling to get attendees.
- Make-A-Smile attended with princesses and Spider Man, they played with make up and our children loved it.
- We played with our new wooden castle, a big hit!
- 'Free From Friday' we created gluten free pancakes which went down well.

## **March**

A DBS checked volunteer from BRAWD attended.

GoodGym volunteers attended on 4th and cleaned the inside of the Scout Hall, they have offered to paint our walls as ours currently aren't waterproof so can't be cleaned properly.

MV Lec did our PAT Testing, free of charge! We're very grateful for their support.

The District Commissioner now does our Scout Hall invoices.

We have had 8 locals for the door to the back room this year, one cost us £25. Roy is going to help us come up with a solution to this.

We purchased a medical role play doll set from Eto, the second hand shop in Barry, for £25. We have a mutual partnership with them where we advertise them and they will let us know



when they get something donated that they think we will like.

We ordered and set up a Sum Up card machine, this is connected to Sarah's phone but can be used away from the phone. This has minimal fees and is so much easier to use for sessions.

Sarah completed Radicalisation and Online Safety training.

Our themed sessions this month included...

- St David's Day / Amy's 10th Birthday, dolls, dancing, painting
- World Book Day, we gave away loads of books to parents, one said that their school was looking for book donations so we helped with that.
- Charlie created and laminated pictures of Zog, we had a treasure hunt and a wordsearch.
- Dolly baths.
- Bike races
- Odd Sock Day (Down Syndrome Awareness Day) Chloe organised this day where we also made puppets from socks.
- Mothers Day, choc biscuits, Chloe suggested ideas for today's session, she is getting more confident with getting involved and given more freedom to run sessions.

<b>Opening Balance</b>	£20,050.14			
<b>Month</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>+/-</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>April 2024</b>	£466.13	£2,003.33	-£1,537.20	£18,512.94
<b>May 2024</b>	£510.65	£1,028.02	-£517.37	£17,995.57
<b>June 2024</b>	£206.09	£1,963.04	-£1,756.95	£16,238.62
<b>July 2024</b>	£1,204.77	£946.11	£258.66	£16,497.28
<b>August 2024</b>	£169.73	£1,134.94	-£965.21	£15,532.07
<b>September 2024</b>	£1,278.05	£2,759.81	-£1,481.76	£14,050.31
<b>October 2024</b>	£372.17	£1,846.27	-£1,474.10	£12,576.21
<b>November 2024</b>	£748.30	£1,187.07	-£438.77	£12,137.44
<b>December 2024</b>	£2,285.13	£1,948.84	£336.29	£12,473.73
<b>January 2025</b>	£563.27	£1,147.09	-£583.82	£11,889.91
<b>February 2025</b>	£129.70	£1,317.27	-£1,187.57	£10,702.34
<b>March 2025</b>	£369.72	£946.81	-£577.09	£10,125.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>£8,303.71</b>	<b>£18,228.60</b>	<b>-£9,924.89</b>	
<b>Closing Balance</b>	£10,125.25			