



# GROW

Growing Real Opportunities for Women

**GROWING REAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN (GROW) CYMRU**

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**MARCH 2024**

**TRUSTEES:** Ms. Jayne Davies  
Mrs. Ann Casey  
Ms. Kathleen  
Mrs. Naaema Al Raisi

**CHARITY NUMBER:** 1190097

**REGISTERED OFFICE:** Unit 12, St. David's Shopping Centre  
St. David's Place  
Swansea  
SA1 3LG

**BANKERS:** Santander Bank  
1 Union Street  
Swansea  
SA1 3EE

We are pleased to present our annual report together with financial statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

We would like to say thank you to our funders, supporters, partners, and to our volunteers, who give so many hours of their expertise and time. Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru, would not be able to deliver, operate and provide the services that we do without them.

A big thank you to the City and County of Swansea who have supported us throughout our journey so far.

## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT:**

Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru has now successfully completed its fourth year of delivery. Having officially opened our doors to the public on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019, our first six months was a bit chaotic to say the least, with a break in and several other hiccups we ended the first year on a high.

Following the challenges experienced through the pandemic we can proudly say that 2022-23 has been a year of growth and expansion with lots of support from partners and the community. We continue to improve and expand our provisions, and all of this has been achieved with the help and dedication of our volunteers, and their commitment to GROW Cymru. I would like to thank each and every one of them for believing in GROW Cymru and all we are trying to achieve.

## **TRAINING:**

GROW Cymru continues to provide our in-house training, accredited and non-accredited in the following areas:

- Personal Development and Confidence Building
- JET – Job Employment Training
- Nurture – Introduction to Enterprise
- Mature – Developing your Enterprise
- £it 4 LiFe – A Financial Workout

Alongside these workshops we have partnered with outside organisations and delivered several other accredited courses in Food Hygiene, Health & Safety, IT, Drug & Alcohol Awareness and several non-accredited courses in Volunteering, Budgeting your Finances, Time Management and Teamwork.

Twenty-eight women completed Personal Development workshops, and forty-six women completed the various other course, with many of them completing more than one qualification.

## **PROJECTS:**

**ABC-123:** Our school uniform recycling project.

The number of parents using our “ABC123” pre-loved school uniform project continues to grow and has gone from strength to strength, alongside the children’s coats, which are an expense parents are struggling with. Following the economic crisis in late 2022 with the increase in fuel and the cost of living we decided to provide school uniforms and coats FOC during the months of January and February 2023. This was extremely successful, and we provided over 1,500 pieces of uniform and children’s coats. Once again it is thanks to our volunteers who collect, sort, wash and iron our pre-loved school uniform.

Once again it is a reminder that the use of pre-love uniforms has a serious impact on family's finances and on strengthening our community, it also plays an essential role in reducing landfill, sustaining our precious environment and protecting our natural resources. A win win situation for everyone. We remain a permanent fixture on the City & County of Swansea website, with them referring families to us for uniforms, more specifically those who have applied for a uniform grant and have been unsuccessful.

### **WOMEN INTO WORK:**

The project continue to provide clothing for women returning to work and requiring suitable clothes for interviews and work. We accept donated formal clothing which is then dry cleaned/laundered and re-distributed to women in need for a small donation.

### **WINTER COATS - HELP YOURSELF:**

Once again, our appeal for winter coats and jackets were extremely successful. From November to the end of February we received donations of 151 (one-hundred and fifty one coats) and redistributed to members of the public who were in need. This will now become a regular annual project.

### **BREAKFAST CLUB:**

Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru continue to provide a Warm Space during the winter months, provide a breakfast on a Tuesday and Thursday mornings. The project enables women not only to have a breakfast in a warm space but also to socialise and meet new people. For some this is the only time they will have breakfast as many are still suffering from the Cost of Living Crisis.

### **FOOD BANK:**

During the pandemic and followed by the Cost-of-Living Crisis we realised that there was a need for a Foodbank for women living in the local vicinity of Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru. The Food Bank support approximately 50 women per week with basic items. We now partner with Cwtch Mawr a multi-bank providing essential goods to those in need. Cwtch Mawr, which means 'Big Hug' in English is Wales first Multibank – a community donations hub offering support for families experiencing poverty across Swansea. It provides surplus essentials such as warm clothes, hygiene products, school uniforms and bedding donated by businesses, like amazon, directly to those in need.

### **KNIT 'N NATTER:**

Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru is a Knit'N'Natter group in Swansea City Centre; we meet every Tuesday 12.30pm to 3pm. The group continues to grow and welcome new members, where they can socialise, learn new skills and share their skills in knitting, crocheting and needle work. We continue to produce lap-blankets which are donated to local care homes; memory blankets for Social Services to give to newborn babies and baby products and toys to sell to raise funds to purchase items for the group.

The group get together with like-minded people to crochet and knit, have a chat with new friends, learn new stitches and share our love of all things woolly

### **PERIOD POVERTY:**

The free sanitary products are extremely successful with us providing products to over sixty women every month. We also supply a few local cafes with free products for their toilets which is a way of advertising our project and spreads the word. Once again, we were successful in securing funding from the City & County of Swansea to continue the project for another year.

### **ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:**

We offer free (subject to eligibility) English classes for people who do not speak English as their first language. Many of our students progress onto college/university courses or into employment. The ESOL classes are every Thursday and Friday morning 10.30am to 12.30pm and continue to be extremely popular with an average of 24 women attending each week.

### **ONLY GIRLS ALLOWED:**

This project launched in September 2020 has been very successful. However, during the latter part of 2022, the numbers started dropping off and the women started to disagree over the different activities, it was therefore decided that the group would be put on hold for the foreseeable future. The group ended in November 2022.

### **MARKETING & PROMOTION:**

Website: [www.growcymru.org.uk](http://www.growcymru.org.uk)

Facebook: GROW Cymru ID: 2256726307987118

Facebook: GROW Cymru Shop ID: 100846257947161

### **STAFF:**

The charity is currently run solely by volunteers including the management as we have been unable to secure money for salaries.

## **VOLUNTEERS:**

Volunteers are the backbone of Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru; without volunteers we would be unable to provide and deliver the activities and services we do. We have sixteen volunteers, who give a minimum of ten hours per week, and volunteers who give their time when we have activities/events i.e. International Women's Day celebration, Cultural Diversity.

Some of our projects such as the - Foodbank, ABC-123, Period Poverty, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Health and Wellbeing, ICT and Arts & Craft are all run and managed by volunteers.

Our volunteers add great value to Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru. They also bring a wide range of skills, experience and knowledge to GROW. Above all they help GROW to achieve its mission and goals.

## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT:**

Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru is a voluntary organisation that provides training, support, mentoring and guidance and volunteering opportunities to women of all backgrounds and all ages across South Wales. Based in Swansea city centre, Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru aims to enable, empower and encourage women to overcome the barriers they face to social and financial inclusion and independence. To increase self-confidence and improve their self-esteem through economic activity, education and volunteering.

GROW Cymru offers a unique programme of training, workshops, discussion groups and learning, where women can explore their fears and barriers as well as their aspirations and opportunities and take the first steps towards a more inclusive future.

## **TRUSTEE INDUCTION & TRAINING:**

In February 2023 four new individuals were nominated and accepted as a new Board of Trustees for Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru. All were given the organisation handbook which outlines their legal and constitutional responsibilities as members of the Management Committee, to familiarise themselves with our operational objectives. Formal training will be organised

## **SUPPORT & SIGNPOSTING:**

Growing Real Opportunities for Women (GROW) Cymru refer too and receive referrals from other organisations such as Race Equality First, Working Swansea, Swansea City of Sanctuary, Communities at Work, Careers Wales, BAWSO, Women's Aid and Congolese Development Project, and self-referrals.

Sharon V Rouse,  
Chief Executive Officer