

Merthyr Tydfil Libraries Contribution to COVID response

November- April 2021

Case Study

Summary

The pandemic hit the Library Service hard. Not only was the service hit hard by the lockdowns and subsequent easings then further lockdowns but early on in the pandemic the husband of a staff member died from COVID. The staff drew together like never before and despite the restrictions in place set up WhatsApp groups, online groups, video calls and chats so that they could support one another through an unprecedented time.

Aims of this case study

- To highlight the resilience, adaptability and compassion shown by the staff of Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries
- To highlight the contributions made by staff to support responses by other public bodies and groups to find those most vulnerable people and help

Early Days

The first lockdown came quickly for staff. Everyone knew that something was going to happen but the Friday evening announcement still came as a shock to many, who had little experience of COVID at that time.

Staff quickly set up networks on various digital platforms to keep an eye on one another, to keep in touch and share news and to ensure no one was alone at such a difficult time.

The team actively searched out volunteering opportunities and many started by delivering free school meals to children in the Borough.

Others worked together to deliver food parcels to the most isolated.

Others took on the role of befrienders to the Homelinks clients and kept in touch with them although they couldn't visit.

Some staff members became NHS supporters through the collection of food and toiletries to donate to the local hospitals where staff were under immense pressure.



When the news came that a staff member had lost their husband, the team again banded together, sending messages of support, flowers and cards and wishes to the whole family. On the day of the funeral, despite lockdown restrictions and no physical contact, they made their way to the funeral home to stand outside in support of their colleague, something that will never be forgotten.

This work continued throughout the early lockdowns, until some restrictions began to be lifted. The library worked tirelessly together to ensure safe return and many still continued their volunteering opportunities as well.

As we moved into November, cases were incredibly high within the Borough and testing centres were set up. Many library staff supported these centres after the local authority asked for volunteers and they worked 12 hour days, in various roles from cleaning, to stewards, to testers and processors.

After a single day of training, the staff stepped up to the plate and were the backbone of Merthyr Tydfil's response to walk in test centres. They worked with the military, other staff members and staff from agencies and council departments to ensure the centres ran smoothly.

For many, this was a direct response to the loss they had suffered early on, with one staff member saying:

*'It's the least we can do – when **** died we couldn't do anything to help, if this stops someone becoming really ill or stops it spreading we should do it'.*

Results



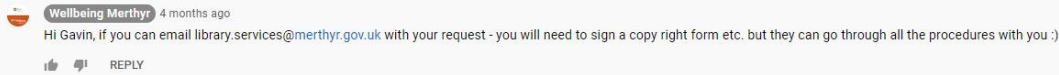

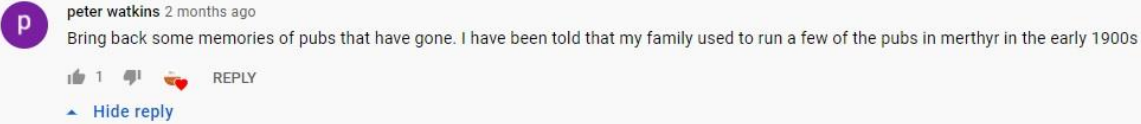
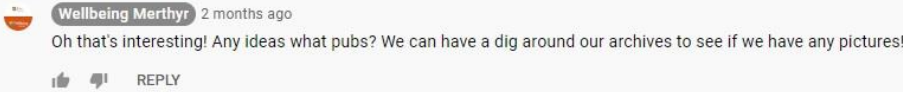
The pandemic has made many people re-evaluate the important things in life, their contributions to those around them and how we view the world.

For the staff at Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries, it has cemented their relationships, brought them together on a personal as well as professional basis and demonstrated something that everyone in the library profession knows:

Library staff are resilient, kind, caring, adaptable and almost in the realms of superhero.

Though viewing figures have increased over time, the rate of views was higher when the videos were first released on Facebook – again reflecting how Facebook posts direct viewers attention to other digital platforms.

Feedback

Title	Comments
Merthyr Sporting Heritage	 <p>Jonny'sWalk 6 months ago Great little video - Thanks so much - Jonathan 🙏👍</p> <p>👍 🗨️ REPLY</p>
Merthyr Soldiers Part 1	 <p>GPB 4 months ago Hi - I am currently pulling together a record of all the men who served within Merthyr during ww1/ww2 (I also collect medals to them). Is there anyway I would be able to get a copy of this photos please? Thanks Gavin</p> <p>👍 🗨️ REPLY</p> <p>🔼 Hide reply</p>  <p>Wellbeing Merthyr 4 months ago Hi Gavin, if you can email library.services@merthyr.gov.uk with your request - you will need to sign a copy right form etc. but they can go through all the procedures with you :)</p> <p>👍 🗨️ REPLY</p>
St Tydfils' Church	 <p>Dan Williams 3 months ago Amazing content</p> <p>👍 🗨️ 🍷 REPLY</p>
Public Houses of Merthyr Tydfil	 <p>peter watkins 2 months ago Bring back some memories of pubs that have gone. I have been told that my family used to run a few of the pubs in merthyr in the early 1900s</p> <p>👍 1 🗨️ 🍷 REPLY</p> <p>🔼 Hide reply</p>  <p>Wellbeing Merthyr 2 months ago Oh that's interesting! Any ideas what pubs? We can have a dig around our archives to see if we have any pictures!</p> <p>👍 🗨️ REPLY</p>