



Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

Cambrian Village Trust: Be Active Clydach Vale Healthy & Active Fund

Walking is a great way to promote a healthy lifestyle, increase physical and mental wellbeing and explore the local outdoor spaces within a community, local authority area or region.

At the height of lockdown measures as a result of COVID-19, walking and outdoor exercise became a lifeline for many individuals as a mechanism for maintaining positive mental wellbeing during a time of global crisis. Recognising the need to promote the importance of local outdoor activity during lockdown, partner organisations from InterLink, RHA, Active Nutrition, Ynysybwll Regeneration Partnership, Spectacle Theatre and Volunteers Matter, worked alongside Cambrian Village Trust to develop creative ways to engage individuals and promote opportunities for them to Be Active.

Social media became a crucial tool in actively engaging individuals and through this platform, Cambrian Village Trust was able to set up a virtual walking group called Making Tracks. The project allowed individuals to post videos, photos and stories from their exploration of different routes around Rhondda Cynon Taf to a Facebook group which encouraged others to discover the beauty of nature within their local community. To increase engagement, Cambrian Village Trust would also post videos, create challenges and run competitions based on previous participant feedback and to inspire individuals to push themselves further. A moment to step away from the negativity surrounding COVID-19 and lockdown and instead switch focus to achieve something positive.

As lockdown measures began to ease over the summer months, Cambrian Village Trust developed their Mini Explorers project to support families to undertake positive outdoor activity and learn new skills together. With full social distancing and COVID prevention methods in place, the project was able to offer family bushcraft sessions in a local Countryside Park. This gave families the opportunity to come together and learn how to construct a shelter, collect and chop wood, build a fire and toast marshmallows. Families were also then able to learn about the different birds and animals that live in the park to help generate an eagerness to want to connect with and discover nature more.

Through their outdoor based activities, Cambrian Village Trust has also been able to develop a new partnership with Friends of Cwm Clydach Countryside Park, a volunteer-based group set up to look after and maintain Cwm Clydach Countryside Park. This new partnership has allowed volunteers through the Friends of Cwm Clydach Countryside Park group to access free outdoor activities such as canoeing, archery and bushcraft skills. The volunteers have responded really well to the development of this partnership and have said that it gives them a reason to get up in the morning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the manual labour and the outdoor activities they are able to engage in has been beneficial for both their physical and mental health.



As World Mental Health Day approaches, Cambrian Village Trust, alongside their partner organisations are launching their March a Mile for Mental Health challenge to help further raise awareness of mental health issues, and how being active in your local outdoor environment can help you improve and maintain your personal mental wellbeing.

Through the Be Active project partner organisations have developed a range of virtual activities than can be undertaken both indoors and outdoors and these have included (but is not limited to) sing-a-long sessions, healthy cooking masterclasses, dance workouts, online drama sessions, walk and talk sessions, creative writing and storytelling, as mechanisms for citizen engagement, wellbeing promotion and welfare monitoring through lockdown periods.

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Interest Based Activities
- Social Media Interaction
- Personal Storytelling
- Skills Development Opportunities
- Organisation Partnership Development

Why is this co-production:

- Development of individual responsibility and ownership generating a sense of self-worth and purpose
- Developing partnerships to broaden the reach and scope of opportunities for citizens to engage
- Project creation based on identified need and citizen feedback and response