



VISION 21 | CHANGING LIVES

v21.org.uk

V21 A year in review. 2023/24



V21 Catering @ Nantyglo



Alan Pursell

1947 - 2024

In Memory and Thanks.

We can't start this report without acknowledging the fact that V21 lost an important member of our family in April 2024. On the 14th of April, our Chair, Alan Pursell passed away. Alan had been involved with V21 for many years and was part of our fabric and history. He had a deep love of the work V21 does and was so proud of all of our trainees and staff and what they have achieved together throughout the years. Alan is greatly missed by all of us at V21 but we know that going forward we will continue to make him proud of what we do. We will honour all his hard work, dedication, and love of the organisation by continuing to make it the best place for those with learning disabilities to learn, thrive, and more importantly, be themselves.

Thank you Alan.

Due to Alan's passing, V21 had to look for a new Chair to take over the reins of this important role and found that person within our existing Trustees. Michael Winter became V21 Chair in May. We wish him all the best and fully support him in his new role.

Welcome

2023/24:

Welcome to V21's annual report for the year ended 31st March 2024, the report concentrates on our performance in 2023/24.

This year truly felt like the beginning of something new, with a burst of fresh energy revitalising our entire organisation. After navigating a few challenging years it was amazing to see everyone back in action, moving forward with confidence and optimism, leaving the worries of lockdown and COVID behind. There was a renewed sense of unity as both staff and trainees worked together toward a shared mission: to be happy, supported, and together.

We welcomed both familiar faces and new trainees through our doors, closing the year with nearly 19,000 trainee placements provided, an incredible average of 379 each week. On top of that, we launched two new projects in Cardiff: a pilot Life Skills project and a Reception Skills project based at Sbectrwm. We didn't stop there. We expanded our existing projects by adding more days, introduced new product lines, and found innovative ways to improve on the things we already do, all with a view to benefitting as many people with learning disabilities as we could.

Over the past few months I've reflected on how extraordinary Vision 21 actually is and how most people involved with the organisation don't realise this. They don't realise, not because they don't think what we do is important, but we can forget it is because what we do in the projects is "ordinary" to us, when sadly it is far from it. Every day we witness people with disabilities breaking barriers and smashing through stereotypes simply by being themselves. Out in the wider world this isn't always the case. Whilst some things are better than they were for people with learning disabilities, society is still far from

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Continued:

where it needs to be. This is at the heart of everything we do at V21 and it's something we should be incredibly proud of, supporting our people to thrive in whatever way that means for them. Looking back on this year, we're proud of every achievement and excited about what the future holds.

Our collaboration with dedicated local authorities is always key in helping us support those who need it most and this year was no exception.

To everyone who has played a part, whether through donations or volunteering your time, we offer our deepest thanks. Your support has made a genuine impact on the lives of our trainees and their families.

Special thanks goes out to our dedicated Trustees, whose unwavering commitment has helped shape Vision 21 into the fantastic organisation it is today. Together, we're looking forward to an even brighter future.

Thank you, diolch.

Wayne Lewis
V21 CEO

What we did...

GROWING

The focus for this year wasn't about leaving the last few years behind us, but using everything we learned and felt, to come back stronger and more connected than ever! We made it a priority to bring as many people as possible into the planning of VZT's future and the next few pages showcase some of the exciting things we achieved together.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic aims of any organisation are crucial to its progress, adaptability, and most importantly its ability to meet the needs of everyone it works with. The following three aims were set by the board:

1. Provide high-quality support and training opportunities for people with Additional Learning Needs, placing their needs and aspirations at the heart of everything we do.
2. Ensure current and future income streams reach their full potential and are used efficiently to maintain the financial resilience of Vision 21.
3. Ensure that the work we do remains relevant to the people and partners we work with, while exploring new opportunities as they arise.

Behind any charity's aims lie its objectives and the plans for achieving them. To help us achieve these we created a Strategic Objectives Working Group consisting of staff from all levels of the organisation, including non-project staff. This is the first time we have involved staff in the setting of VZT's objectives, but we felt it was important as it provided a broader perspective of the organisation from different viewpoints. This approach has also strengthened the understanding and commitment to achieving these aims compared to previous efforts. These objectives will form the basis for budget meetings and supervisions moving forward.



Laughing and learning together at VZT Oaks Garden Nursery. Proud of our work at VZT Farms.



Happy painting. Smiling together in VZT Pottery.



Trainee Placements

Year after year, our top priority has been to provide high-quality learning opportunities for as many individuals with additional learning needs as possible. This year was no exception.

We delivered over 4,000 learning sessions, across 14 different projects and in partnership with four different local authorities. Every one of these sessions was filled with people laughing and learning together in an environment that not only supports diversity but actively encourages it.

To support the goal of providing as many learning opportunities as possible for people with ALN, we launched two exciting new projects this year.



New Projects

V21 Life Skills Pilot

While each of our projects focuses on different areas, they all share a common purpose: to boost confidence and support our trainees in becoming more independent, and teach practical skills they can use beyond our projects. To enhance these efforts, we teamed up with Cardiff Social Services to pilot a Life Skills project at the Annex in Sbectrwm. This project provides a safe and supportive environment where trainees can try out new tasks, make mistakes, and learn in a supportive and understanding environment.

V21 Reception Skills

Our vibrant community center, Sbectrwm, has always served as a home for many of our projects while also providing rental space for third-sector organisations and the local community. With thousands of visitors each year, it's a lively, diverse space. This year, we added a new layer to its vibrancy by transforming the front office into the Reception Skills project. Trainees in this project learn administrative skills, how to interact positively with customers and visitors, building management knowledge, and problem-solving techniques.

New Staff

With new projects come new team members, and this year we welcomed four fantastic new staff to the V21 family. Christian Wilton King joined us part-time to run the Life Skills Pilot, while Jeannette Harrison took over the management of Sbectrwm and the new Reception Skills project. Amy Long came on board to help coordinate the volunteering side of V21, and Ffion Bailey joined as a Catering Assistant at V21 Catering in Nantyglo. All of them have hit the ground running and have seamlessly embraced the unique challenges of working at Vision 21.



V21 Life skills



V21 Reception Skills

BUILDING

Becoming Greener

V21 has always aimed to become greener and more energy-efficient, not only to save money but also to show greater kindness to our planet. Over the past few years we have made significant upgrades to our infrastructure including replacing roofs and enhancing insulation. This year we took another big step forward by installing solar panels on Unit 12 at Fieldway. This will be followed next year by 47 solar panels at Sbectrwm. The installation on Unit 12 has already helped us reduce our carbon footprint by an impressive 5 tons!

V21 Woodwork

The V21 Woodwork @ Heath team has continued to strengthen their partnership with the Cardiff Parks Department. You may have even seen their impressive work, as benches beautifully refurbished by them now enhance parks across the city.

In addition to revitalising Cardiff's park benches they also crafted 120 sample frames for the local blinds company Swanmac. These sample frames are designed to showcase the range of products that Swanmac offers.

Events

We can't reflect on the past twelve months without mentioning the now legendary V21 discos. Each event involves a great deal of planning and the number of staff who volunteer their time to help is fantastic. The trainees participate by creating playlists, making decorations, and creating an atmosphere that Russ Abbot would be proud of.

V21 Oaks Garden Nursery



V21 Oaks Garden Nursery

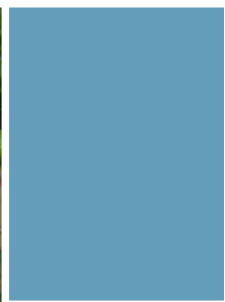
This growing season marked our first proper opening to the public since the pandemic, and what an incredible season it was! Last year, we upgraded the EPOS system at the garden nursery, making it easier for our customers to place orders online and over the phone. This upgrade also allowed us to track our sales effectively this year.

In just one season, the project sold an impressive 9,941 plants and 412 baskets and planters, generating over £30,000 in sales—an outstanding achievement!

Looking ahead, we have plans to surpass that total next year and expand some of our growing and selling efforts to Sbectrwm.

V21 friends at our Halloween Disco



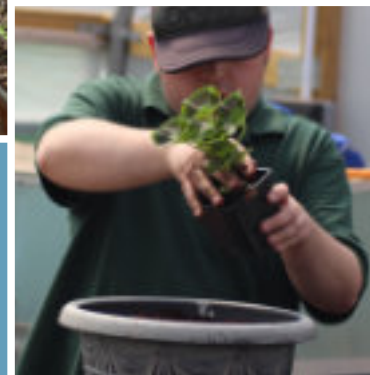
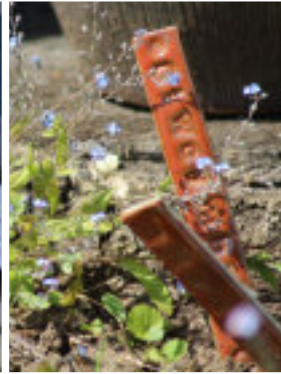


V21 Community Garden

Our V21 Gardening project marked a significant leap towards achieving full accessibility this year. Beth and her trainees worked hard to dig out and lay accessible paths throughout the garden, connecting one end to the other. With the support of ISG and their partners a brand-new patio was also constructed outside the V21 Pottery enabling full, safe wheelchair access for the first time in it's history.

We participated in the National Garden Scheme 'Open Garden' event this year, and the entire place looked stunning. Staff, trainees, and volunteers came together to make the day memorable and we received fantastic feedback from our visitors.

Plans are already in motion for the upcoming growing season, and we're excited to announce that a new "shop" is being set up in the glasshouse for selling hanging baskets and plants!



MAINTAINING

New Lease at Sbectrwm

To support V21's planning and ensure the organisation's long-term future, we focused on renewing the lease at Sbectrwm. Although it took some time, we're excited to have secured a brand-new 25-year lease! This allows us to continue developing and enhancing the site to better serve our trainees.

UWHA Contract renewal

For the past 14 years, we've enjoyed a fantastic partnership with United Welsh Housing. At both of the projects we've delivered an excellent lunch service to the tenants of Plas Hyfryd and Llys Nant Y Mynydd, never missing a day over the last 14 years. To ensure this successful collaboration continues, we renewed our contract this year and are excited to work alongside UWHA to provide the best service possible for both the tenants and our trainees!

Accreditation

Over the years, the work within our projects has been accredited by Agored Cymru, enabling our trainees to earn valuable qualifications. This was overseen by our colleague Teresa, who retired during the pandemic. Due to Teresa's retirement, we decided to look at doing something different. So this year, we began discussions with Adult Learning Wales to support the accreditation of our two Catering projects in Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly. With their backing, trainees in these projects will not only continue to reach their goals but also gain recognised qualifications along the way.

Our United Welsh Partnership at Llys Nant y Mynydd Extra Care Scheme

REMEMBERING

The hardest part of being such a close-knit organisation is that when we lose people it deeply affects everyone. This year we had to say goodbye to two wonderful individuals who had been a part of V21 for many years.

Claire Regan sadly passed away in August 2023 after a short illness. Claire was always smiling and thoroughly enjoyed her time at V21. She loved to tell us about her family, especially her parents. Early in 2024 Nigel Partridge passed away. Nigel was a passionate Cardiff City fan and always quick with a joke. He enjoyed sharing stories about his life and was happy to mentor other trainees.

Both Claire and Nigel are greatly missed around V21, but we are grateful to have known them as we did.



Claire Regan
Nigel Partridge

Volunteers

Over the years, Vision 21 has been incredibly fortunate to have the support of a dedicated group of regular volunteers, as well as those who volunteer as part of their education and training, and corporate teams who lend a hand on projects or during special events.

This year, we facilitated 29 work placements: 22 adult nursing undergraduates, 6 social work undergraduates from Cardiff Met, and 1 Art Psychotherapy postgraduate from USW. During their time with us, these students gained valuable insights from our trainees and staff, leaving with a deeper understanding of people with learning disabilities and their incredible capabilities. This experience is crucial for all future social workers and professionals in health and social care, and Vision 21 is committed to supporting these learning opportunities in every way possible.

We now have 32 regular volunteers who contribute their time each week



Volunteering at V21 Crafts 2

across our projects. Their help has been invaluable to both trainees and staff, and they've brought fresh perspectives, a willingness to learn, and the desire to share their own skills.

We would like to extend a special thanks to ISG Ltd, a construction and engineering company that continues to support us both hands-on and strategically in the development of the V21 Sbectrwm Community Garden. Their team regularly steps away from the office to help with all sorts of garden maintenance tasks. They've also volunteered at our Christmas Fayre and generously provided skips free-of-charge to assist with waste removal.

We feel incredibly fortunate as an organisation to have attracted such amazing people who selflessly give their time, skills, and knowledge to benefit our trainees and projects. The Board, staff, and trainees are immensely grateful to all our volunteers and look forward to continuing to build on the fantastic work we've done together.

Christmas Card competition

This has DEFINITELY become a tradition. Louis, from the V21 Craft project, is the third winner of the Christmas Card competition. As always, the trainees who participated poured their heart and soul into creating some wonderful Christmas designs, making it a challenge to select just one winner. However, Louis' design of Santa stuck in a chimney was outstanding. We're excited to see what next year's competition will bring!



Louis with his winning design

Christmas stall

This year's Christmas stall was a fantastic collaborative effort, showcasing items from six different projects. We introduced an exciting range of new products, including seed bombs made in V21 Barry Crafts, gorgeous Shibori scarves from Crafts 2, and bug houses crafted from recycled timber at V21 Garden. With the addition of the always-popular fairy houses from V21 Woodwork, V21 Craft Cards and the classic V21 Pottery, it was a truly winning combination!

Over the 18 days we were there, we sold 1,460 items and took just short of £13,000. We lost count of how many conversations we had about what we do as an organisation and what a great place it is to work!



New shibori tie-dye scarves made by V21 Crafts2

What's next?

In the next 12 months we are looking to develop:

SUMMER, WINTER & EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Summer ball

Next year, we plan to increase the number of amazing get-togethers we have by hosting a summer ball! This is one of the events our trainees have requested, and who are we to say no? The ball will feature live music and food, all set amidst flowing ballgowns and black ties and suits.

Elvis

Maxine and her team at V21 Catering have a range of events planned for the tenants at Llys Nant Y Mynydd, including an Elvis impersonator and an American themed lunch.

Grotto

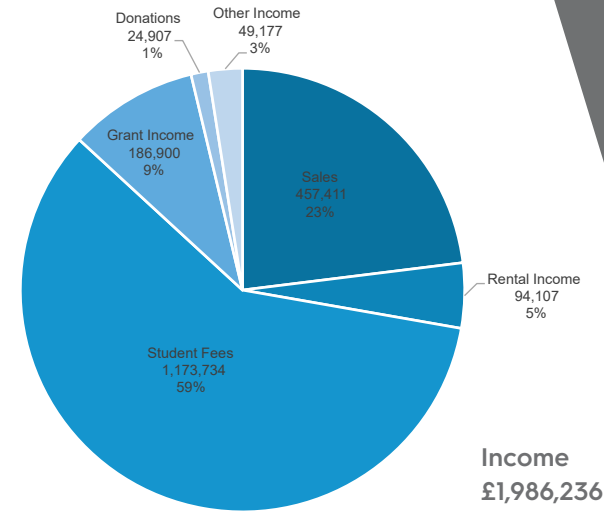
Another event we'll be launching is a Santa's Grotto at Sbectrwm. This is an exciting and festive way to attract more people to the centre and provide our trainees with the opportunity to showcase their capabilities to a wider audience.

REFURBISHMENT

Sbectrwm Facelift

Sbectrwm will soon undergo a partial facelift. Planned refurbishments include updates to the meeting rooms and hall, with new furniture replacing the older items to create a more open and modern atmosphere in the rental space. To support our transition to greater energy efficiency, we will be replacing the radiators in the hall—originally installed before the main part of the building was constructed 25 years ago—with more efficient models that will actually help keep the hall warm. We will also look at refurbishing the toilets within the main building, to make them cleaner and nicer to use.

Income and expenditure 2023 /24



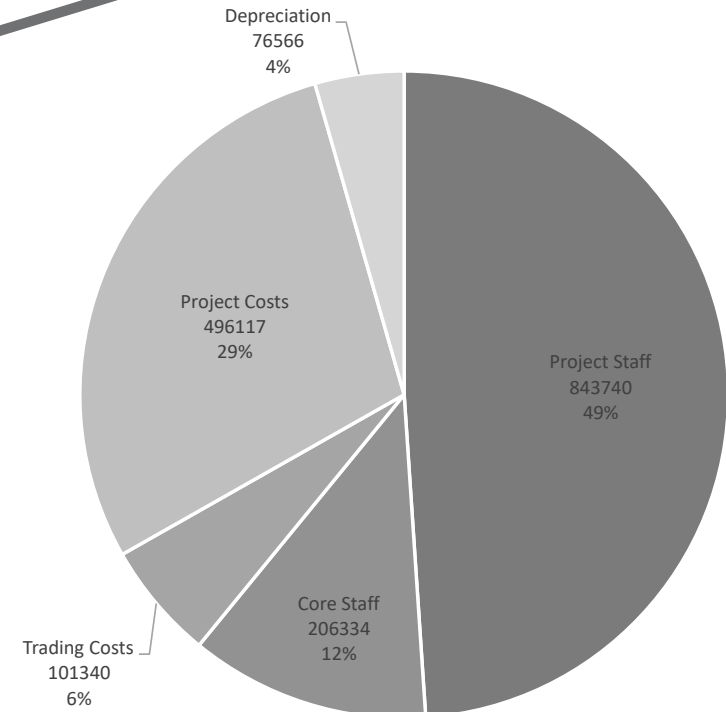
Into the Cloud

As we move into the future, we need to ensure that our technology and ways of working keep pace. Next year, we will fully transition to "cloud" working, meaning that all our software and "drives" will be stored virtually. This approach helps keep our data safe while eliminating significant costs such as server replacements and the need for VPNs, allowing all projects to easily and quickly access the information they need.

V21 Woodwork @ Barry

Plans are moving forward with a complete refit of project. We hope this will make use of the space give it chance to develop new ranges, enhancing the opportunities

Expenditure £1,724,097



Thank

you

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has supported us this year and in previous years. We are consistently amazed by the kindness and generosity of our supporters and the individuals who contribute to making us the organisation we are.

Thank you to the volunteers who tirelessly dedicate themselves to supporting our projects and trainees. We also extend our thanks to our donors, funders, friends, and families. Lastly, we appreciate our wonderful staff and trainees for making the past 12 months as successful as possible.

While we don't have enough space to name everyone who has made an impact on V21 this year, we sincerely thank you all.

We would like to specifically thank the following for their support:

Donors

Nigel Partridge - Legacy
Madeline Shiers - Legacy
Wayne Lewis
James Phillips
Scale Family

Easyfundraising & Facebook Donors
OneLottery supporters

Continued Support

Cardiff City Council
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Newport City Council
Blaenua Gwent CBC
Caerphilly CBC

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