

Newsletter



Summer 2011

A Word from Mair

Saying goodbye

Fifteen months ago I gave the Management Board notice that I would be retiring in November 2011. As the saying goes "Doesn't time fly", and only a little over two months to go. I have enjoyed my time with GISDA very much and have had the privilege and opportunity of getting to know and working with numerous people over the last 21 years.

It has been a pleasure to see young people succeeding despite all that life throws at them. It has been a privilege to be part of a valuable service for them. I am confident that the excellent work will continue under the reins of the new Chief Executive, Sian Tomos, and the Company's dedicated staff.

I would like to thank everyone, the Management Board, present staff and staff who are now working elsewhere and staff from other agencies for their support and encouragement over the years.

It is difficult to say whether I am looking forward to my retirement at present. Saying goodbye is never easy to do but I have cherished memories to take with me of my time with GISDA.

I wish GISDA the very best in the future and thank you all for the opportunity of working alongside you.

Mair Richards
Chief Executive

Staff News

Since our last issue we have said our goodbyes to Ceri, heading to University, Angela to Cardiff, Aled, to pursue a career in music, Chris to Anglesey and Sylvia. We wish them all the best.

We welcome our new Chief Executive, Sian Tomos, Kate and Bryn to the Finance Department, Glyn to 'Agor Drysau', Fflur to the North Gwynedd Project and Barry to Tŷ Rhydalun.

Congratulations to all of you and we hope you all enjoy working with us at GISDA.

Warm congratulations also go to Justine and Gareth on the birth of their second daughter, Mari. We wish them all the very best.

Key Events coming up soon...

Launch of the 'Agor Drysau' Project and the Annual General Meeting 26 September.



GISDA staff attending a staff information day and participating in an African drumming session



Gardening at Hafan

Over the past month Hafan tenants have been busy (bees) in giving a new lease of life to the garden at Hafan, and by all accounts they have been very successful in doing so(w). Harri Morris, GISDA's Peer Mentor, has set up the project to try and encourage participation in all activities by the young people.

Harri says "The reaction to the project has been so positive. In recent weeks the young people have been there waiting for me on a Friday morning ready to start, looking forward to working on the garden. They have been so successful, that by now, some of the residents have been working in the garden on their own initiative without me being there." He added "We had a young person, who was moving in shortly, shown around the hostel last week, and the residents that have been working on the garden wanted to show them the garden as part of the tour.

They obviously feel that they own the garden and are very proud to show off their hard work". The plan is that once the potatoes, onions and other vegetables are ready, the young people can learn how to prepare them for dedicated cooking sessions to promote healthy eating. This will also create an ethos of sustainable living within the hostel.

As well as getting free meals. The plan is for the young people to obtain a gardening accreditation from Agored Cymru.



"GISDA helped me off the streets by giving me a place to stay but also helped me to live on my own."

P

"In terms of Supporting People funding, GISDA plays a significant role in supporting young people within Gwynedd. They deliver housing related support through a range of different support models i.e. hostel accommodation, supported housing and floating support. Their services target one of the most vulnerable groups in our community and contribute to delivering the aims and objectives of the Supporting People programme in Gwynedd."

Sheila Phillips
Supporting People Unit - Gwynedd Council



Snowdon Trip

On Thursday June 30 seven of GISDA's young people climbed Snowdon for the very first time. They were accompanied by an experienced Mountain Leader as well as Key Workers and members of the 'Agor Drysau' Team.

After a slow start to the day the group started their climb at 10:30am from 'Pen y Pass' car park and even the fog couldn't stop the climbers making it up to the summit in a respectable 2 hours and 50 minutes. In the warmth of the new cafe everyone enjoyed a spot of lunch and the compulsory picture at the top of the mountain before starting the long descent back down.

After an hour of climbing down, the peak of Snowdon appeared from the clouds, even Gethin's pleas to go back up to have a look at the views couldn't stop the group from voting to carry on down the mountain. During the day the mountaineers had a brief history lesson from Gary, the mountain leader, about Sir Edmund Hillary's Everest training as well as the Copper mining industry that failed to materialise in areas surrounding Snowdon. A very educational and tiring trip all round. The expedition (we are professional now!) got back to the 'Pen y Pass' car park for 4:30pm before everyone went home to sleep!



Gary said "It gives me great pleasure to congratulate all who took part in this event, which resulted in everyone reaching the summit of Snowdon. This is unusual for a team of this size and experience in the mountains.

The team had a positive attitude throughout the day and a sensible approach to the task in hand. They showed an interest in mountain safety, craft, weather conditions and their surroundings.

I was particularly impressed when the team waited just below the summit until all team members were together so that they all reached the top as one team."

What our young people have to say:

"My name is Ben, I'm 24 years old.

Having no work in Manchester, in 2008 I followed my family and moved to Caernarfon. I had no success in finding work and I became homeless.

Thankfully GISDA gave me a place in a hostel in Caernarfon. Through GISDA I was introduced to Theatre Forum . At first I wasn't interested but I went along to the workshop as I was interested in finding out more.

After the first performance I had never felt so proud of myself and the group I worked with. Now I can't get enough and would love to expand the theatre and bring my skills to full potential on the stage."

Benjamin



Mongolia Trip

After an afternoon of activities and interviews in Aberystwyth, two of GISDA's young people were chosen to go to Mongolia in September with the 'Welsh Youth Forum on Sustainable Development'.

The Forum was established in 2003 for young people in Wales to have a voice on sustainable development issues through Empowerment, Education and Action. The Welsh Assembly Government provides the organizations' core funding.

They will travel for 8 days on the Trans Siberian train and volunteering in Mongolia for two weeks before travelling back. Both Anthony and Kyle have worked on projects to raise some money for their journey.

We will be interested to hear about their journey on their return. Well done to them both! Photos can now be seen on facebook via <http://www.dyfodol.org/>



Adventure Day Out!

Recently, six young people from GISDA went on an outdoor venture activity for the day at Capel Curig. In the morning they had the opportunity to do some mountain biking around Capel Curig with a professional trainer. In the afternoon there was a great opportunity for them to go climbing and to abseil down a rock.

The young people all seemed to have enjoyed the experience and had the opportunity to work together as a team to develop communication skills. Some comments from the group were "It was really good", "I would like to do it again" and "It was fun."

The main purpose of the day was for the young people to have a taster session in outdoor activities to see if they were interested in a career in the outdoor sector.

You can see the video on www.gisda.org

"As a Project Worker for the 'Agor Drysau' project I arrange lots of different activities for the young people. I also accredit some of their work through 'Agored Cymru' and work closely with their Key Workers to develop the life skills of the young people we support. I have been in this post for 6 months and enjoy very much being able to arrange different activities that the young people seem to enjoy such as graffiti and music workshops, games and creating mosaics."

Tracey



Five a side Football

The 'Agor Drysau' team have been busy recently organising football matches for GISDA's young people. After speaking with the young people it was obvious that there was a need for physical activity to be offered to them and football was chosen as the easiest way to get the sessions started. Since starting the football matches, the teams have been based on the Caernarfon team taking on Blaenau Ffestiniog, and up to now, Caernarfon have had the edge over their rivals. The sessions have been successful and the turnout increases with each game. The young people see the activity as a good

way to get to know each other and it has served as a great way for the new 'Agor Drysau' team to get to know the young people.

When the Community Justice Intervention Wales invited GISDA's football team to compete in their football tournament everyone was very excited. The tournament was held in Rhyl, where 15 teams were competing. The teams were separated into three groups of five.

GISDA's team played very well in the tournament and gave 100%. In the first and third game we drew 0-0. In the second game we won 1-0 and then unfortunately lost 1-0 in our last game. However, it was great day out for the young people who got to see the Barclay's Premier League Cup and take some photos of it.

'Agor Drysau' has also been looking at the possibility of staging a football tournament for agencies across the county to compete in, as a way of promoting GISDA as a service. Watch this space!

Sports Leadership Course

A few of GISDA's young people have attended a 'Get into Sports Leadership' (Outdoor sports Programme) arranged by the Prince's Trust.

This was a full-time, six-week programme for young people aged between 16 - 25 from the local area, who are unemployed, not in education or any other training and interested in finding employment in the outdoor leisure industry.

The programme includes:

- BCU Level 1 coach (Kayak)
- RYA Powerboat Level 2
- RYA First Aid
- Employability skills
- One weeks work experience within Plas Menai Outdoor Centre
- A final presentation

The course was delivered by Plas Menai Outdoor Centre in Caernarfon and anyone referred had to be ready for work, and able to commit to the full 6 weeks of the course. Following the course there is the option of a 6 month progression support for each participant if they wish, to assist with helping to find employment or further training.



"I enjoy Sports Leadership very much; it keeps me motivated and active throughout the day. I enjoy being in my kayak on the water as I'm catching a wonderful suntan!

I am going to stick at it as it is fun and sometimes I have a right laugh."

Chelsey

**Grant from the Welsh Assembly
Government to improve the Youth
Service 2011-2012**

A grant of £10,000 was received in order to employ a Theatre Forum worker. The post will arrange workshops for GISDA's service users and performances in local Colleges.

Over the years, GISDA's Theatre Forum project has shown that it is an effective style for the

development of young people's confidence and self esteem, for them to work as part of a team and a way of sorting out problems. It also looks at positive ways of tackling oppression by making others in society more aware of the problems facing young people. It is hoped that the work will be accredited by Agored Cymru level 1 and 2 and will enable access to the Millennium Volunteers project.

One of the most striking experiences for me during last summer's Term was to see a performance based on homeless young people, from GISDA's young people of Caernarfon, in the style of Theatre Forum, which is a street theatre or community theatre.

As it happens, I saw the performance twice, one during a training day with the Children and Young People's Partnership in Bangor and then in a session along with chief officers of The Council and leading Electoral members. On both occasions the performances made an impression on me.

Homelessness amongst young people is a contemporary problem, and one our community cannot deny in its responsibility. The drama scenarios portrayed real life situations, thus causing an uncomfortable feeling within the audience; experienced through the medium of Theatre, which was right there in front of you. It gave direct audience interaction, demonstrating the pain and negative trails faced by a faction of our young people.

Without any misconceptions of the reality of the situation, through the interpretation of the performance, it sparked the Council to review their pledge to today's young people and ensure that their services deal directly with the daily problems, giving specific attention to those who are trapped in circles that need to be broken. Systemizing is not the answer, but to listen, understand their needs and respond to these.

Theatre Forum succeeded, through its presentation of homelessness, to openly and honestly portray the reality of their circumstances by bringing it to the consciousness of each and every one of us present.

Dewi Jones, Head of Education Gwynedd Council



'Agor Drysau' Project

This is a brand new project, funded by the Big Lottery that aims to open up education and development for our service users.

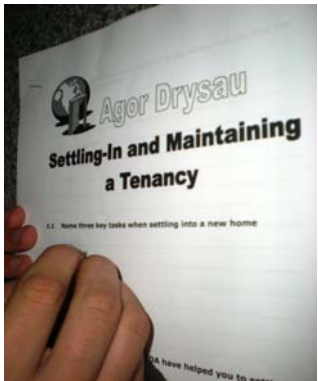
'Agor Drysau' will aim to provide stimulating learning experiences and opportunities which will enhance confidence and develop positive skills and talents.

These opportunities will assist people in moving towards a more confident and independent future. 'Agor Drysau' aims to offer accreditation for most of the skills acquired.

From learning to cook healthy food, managing finances, to sexual health, from theatre work to drumming and graffiti. 'Agor Drysau' will have a range of workshops, courses and opportunities designed to teach young people how to stand on their own two feet.

'Agor Drysau' will also focus on developing service users' employability, developing the skills necessary through volunteering opportunities and social enterprise work.

'Agor Drysau' is about finding alternative ways of learning that is stimulating, challenging and fun.



The Open Doors Project includes a mediation service.



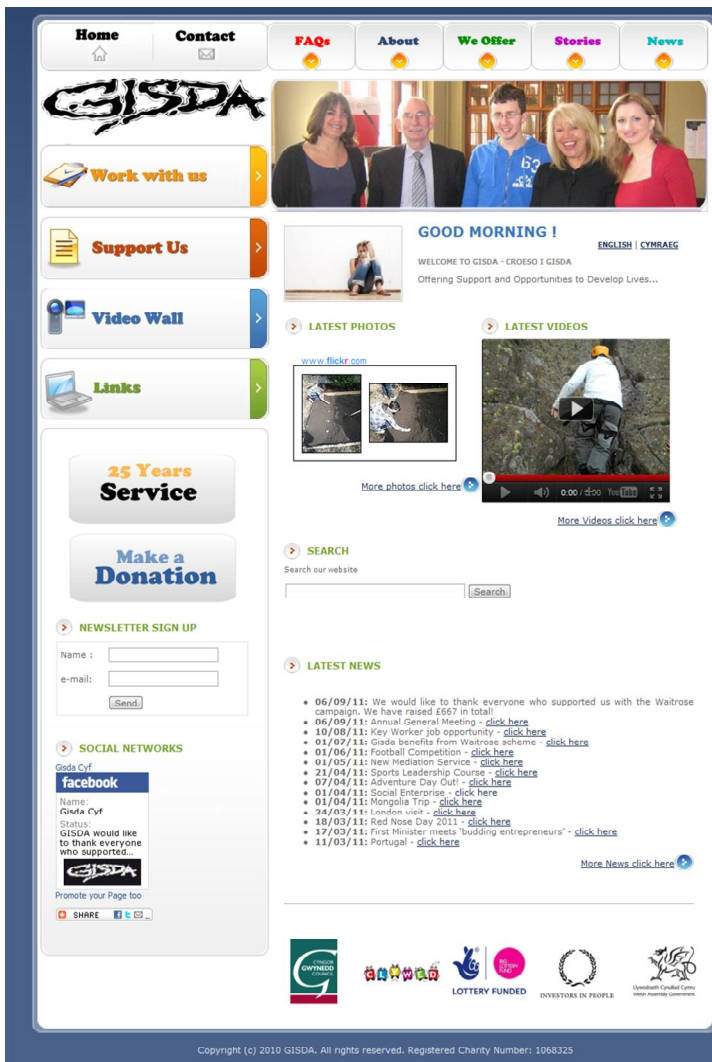
"I am the Agor Drysau Project Manager – I'm responsible for creating and organising a varied work program of activities for our young people, from sport to art, music to drama as well as working on core educational units.

The core units allow the young people to receive accreditation from 'Agored Cymru' for their work. The project's core units are based on independent living skills that include cooking, budgeting and maintaining a tenancy. I also look for opportunities for the young people such as volunteering, training and also different experiences."

Gethin



GISDA have a new Website!



Some of the young people were involved in designing the new website, which we like and we hope that you do too.

Here are some questions that were put to them about the experience:

Q - Why did you decide to become involved in designing the new website?

A - "I was interested in finding out about how you set up a website. I wanted to make the website more user-friendly to other young people."

Q - What did you do?

A - "We met with the web designer, from Delwedd, to decide on the structure and colours and we had the final say on how the website should look."

Q - What do you think of the final result?

A - "Brilliant! It is definitely more user-friendly and geared towards young people, with links to social media also. GISDA should now be able to reach more people who may need support. It also raises awareness of what GISDA can do to help."

Q - How do you think this will make a difference?

A - "More people can now come to GISDA if they need support. There are photos and stories from other young people that have been supported by GISDA and these should help any new young person feel less afraid of contacting GISDA if they need to. There are also new opportunities for a young person with GISDA and you can also give something of yourself back, like I have, which pays off."

Lisa

Paul



**GISDA's Mediation Service****Can't Agree?**

Do you want to try to improve the relationship with your parents/
family/landlord/friends?

A GISDA Mediation Worker could help support you in an un-biased & fair way, to re-connect with someone you've had a disagreement with, especially if you are at risk of becoming homeless.

Who can we help?

Young people between 16 – 25 years old

How can it help me?

- Talking about things can help you both find a solution
- Supports better communication
- Reducing the bad feeling between you
- We don't take sides

How does it work?

- Sessions run by an Accredited Mediator
- Meet people separately first
- Discuss how everyone sees the issues
- Meet altogether when you're ready, if everyone agrees
- Work out how you'd both like things to be

What our young people have to say:

In January 2011, I decided to find a really important person in my families' existence, my eldest brother. He was adopted at a young age due to complications within the family. I spoke to my Key Worker, Andy, and he found me an agency that I could work with to find him.

Andy called them first and then they called back to arrange a meeting between me and my mum and a woman from the agency. When we met up we spoke about some things that were going to happen and gave some birth details. Within a couple of weeks we were meeting again and found out that he was also looking for his birth family. We were over the moon!

After this we found out more about him, and my mum wrote the first letter. Within a week of receiving the letter he was really eager to meet us so he decided to visit.

It was July 2011 - we met him and now we are a full family at last. We speak regularly and he visits loads. It's funny because he works down the road from where we live and we didn't even know. Huge thanks are owed to Andy and to GISDA because this is the best thing they could have ever done. My family and I are massively grateful.

Stephanie



What's your job role? I am a Key Worker in the North Gwynedd Project supporting young people and families on floating support as well as the residents at Hafan I have been in the job since summer 2009 after graduating from University.

Take us through your typical week – As the job involves shift work this means there is no average week. I try to see all the young people I support at least once a week to follow their support plan. This could involve assisting them with form filling, liaising with other agencies, employment/training issues or just helping them improve their self-esteem.

What do you think are the best aspects of your job and why? Every young person that comes to GISDA has their own goals, whether they are short term or long term, small or big. Seeing a young person achieve these goals or just head in the right direction brings satisfaction to me. If we can have a bit of a laugh along the way then that's even better!

Do you have a role model or someone who has inspired you and if so, why? I don't really have a role model who has inspired me although I do follow the example of Aled, my fellow key worker in the office. He wears nice chequered shirts and has a lovely singing voice!

Tell us about your hobbies and interests – I like to keep myself active by playing sports. I am a big football fan and support Liverpool. I also like to spend time with my mates and visit new places. At the end of 2009 I did a six month round the world trip with 3 friends which was a lifetime experience; it has given me a hunger to travel more in the future!

"I congratulate GISDA and its young people for what they achieve through Theatre Forum. When I saw the production it was obvious that the activity is an excellent way for the young people to publicly express their experiences. I thought that was very valuable in itself and of course valuable for other people that may gain a better understanding of the young people's situation. The whole production is well worth while and congratulations to everyone, and all the best to the young people in the future."
Alun Ffred Jones
AM

What our young people have to say:

"As part of the social enterprise project I had the chance to work in a group for the first time, socialise with other young people and also gain new skills.

The rock climbing project was a great experience and I learnt about how to start your own business.

I also earned time banking credits which I used towards a trip to Alton towers. I had such a great time and I hadn't been there since school."

If there any other young people who want to join the social enterprise group in seeing how to create your own business I would advise them to do it as you learn so much. It involves a lot of team work so you need to make sure you get your voice heard and be prepared for some hard, interesting work in getting the business started.

Darren

"Tai Clwyd Housing Association is landlord to properties which GISDA manages and provides accredited support to its tenants. We work closely with GISDA and appreciate the excellent work and service they provide for young homeless people throughout Gwynedd. We receive housing applications and with GISDA's help re-house individuals that are ready to move on from their projects or want to receive support from our general estate."

Rhian Lloyd Williams
Support and Housing Senior Officer

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