

# YMCA NEATH

## Annual Report

### 2025



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**Here for young people  
Here for communities  
Here for you**

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## **1.0 Board of Management**

Chairman Mr Kevin Lewis

Treasurer Mr Martin Evans FCA CTA

Vice Chairman Mrs Joanna Jenkins MBE JP DL

Reverend Lynn Maddocks

Mr Clive Ball

Mr Emrys Elias OBE

Mr Alun James

Dr Bryn John CStJ DL

Mrs Delyth Lewis

Cllr Alan Lockyer

Sarah Hemington

Marcia Hughes

## **1.1 Honorary Advisors**

Independent Examiner Mr Richard Chapple WBV Accountants

Mr Robert Williams DL, Hutchinson Thomas Solicitors

## **1.2 Staff**

Centre Manager Jessica Kennedy

Receptionist/Wellbeing Officer Sarah Hemington

Receptionist Sandra Cook

Receptionist Sara Jones

Receptionist Joanne Turner

Caretaker Craig Bourne

## **1.3 Bankers**

Barclays Bank Plc. (Neath) Swansea Building Society

Nationwide Building Society

## 2.0 Aims and Purposes

The YMCA is a Christian Movement. At its centre are Christians, who regarding Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, desire to share their faith with others and make him known, believed, trusted, loved, served and exemplified in all human relationships. It welcomes into fellowship persons of other religious faiths and of none.

Accordingly, the Young Men's Christian Association stands for:

- A worldwide fellowship based on equal value of all persons.
- Respect and freedom for all, tolerance and understanding between people of different opinions.
- Active concern for the needs of the community.
- United effort by Christians of different traditions.

The Young Men's Christian Association aims to:

Provide a welcome to members for themselves, in a meeting place which is theirs to share, where friendships can be made and counsel sought.

Develop activities which stimulate and challenge its members in an environment that enables them to take responsibility and find a sense of achievement.

Involve all members in care and work for others.

Create opportunities for exchanging views, so that its members can improve their understanding of the world, of themselves and of one another.

## 3.0 Full Membership

The Full Membership of the Young Men's Christian Association is a fellowship of men and women over 17 years of age who have accepted the Basics of Union, are committed to the Christian way of life, desire to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek to associate themselves with others in Christian service in and through the Association. Full Membership is open to any man or woman over 17 years of age who, by loyally accepting the challenges of Christ, is willing to take his or her part in the fellowship and service which the Association exists to promote.

## 4.0 Chairman's Report

2025 celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of YMCA Neath, it also marked 15 years since having the honour of being elected as Chairman. During my 15 years as custodian of our Christian organisation that welcome all faiths it has been a pleasure to oversee how we have been able to adapt to the everchanging circumstances that have challenged us.

It is down to the loyalty and dedication of all that believe in what YMCA Neath stands for that has endured through all those years, my sincere thanks go to our Trustees , volunteers, and staff in particular our Centre Manager Jessica Kennedy, without all these amazing people there would be no YMCA Neath.

**Kevin Lewis**  
Chairman

### 4.1 Chaplain

This year has been a challenging year as my family situation has changed quite a lot. I have found it increasingly difficult to find a regular time and day to meet people at the YMCA and there I could not fulfil what I had hoped to during the year. Every time I did manage to find time I was both pleased and impressed by the work going on and the service to the community being provided there.

Chatting to members of staff and those attending the classes, I was encouraged by the way the Christian principles were being applied every day to people in need i.e. sharing food, clothing etc and a safe and friendly place to meet friends and make new ones.

I will try my best to be more active in my role as Chaplain and hope that I too can have a positive input to all those who attend the YMCA.

**Pastor Lynn Maddocks**  
Chaplain

## 4.2 Centre Managers Report

2025 has seen YMCA Neath celebrate its 150th anniversary a huge milestone in our journey. We've asked ourselves whether the YMCA will still exist in another 150 years and I honestly believe it will.

How lucky am I to have played even a small part in our story? Looking back at our history reminds us that those who came before worked incredibly hard to keep YMCA Neath alive, ensuring its legacy could continue to grow.

I've also been fortunate to meet amazing people through the YMCA who share the same values as me. Together, we've created something truly special and the encouragement I've received along the way has meant so much to me. When the world can feel like a gloomy, heavy place, the power of community cannot be underestimated.

Our aim has always been to provide a space where people feel they belong, where they feel seen and valued. Every day, when I see people helping one another or simply finding comfort in being here, it reminds me why this place matters to so many.

As always, our focus is on growing sustainably and continuing to create a welcoming YMCA for everyone who walks through our doors.

2025 has been a year that truly captures what YMCA Neath is all about. I am so proud of the progress we've made and excited for what lies ahead!

**Jessica Kennedy**  
Centre Manager



# YMCA Neath 150th Anniversary

In 2025, YMCA Neath proudly celebrated its 150th anniversary, marking a significant milestone in its long-standing commitment to supporting the local community. With the support of funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), we delivered a programme of celebratory and heritage-focused activities that honoured our past and ensured our legacy is preserved for future generations.



As part of the celebrations, a new YMCA sign was installed on the building, refreshing the centre's external identity. A commemorative plaque and a newly installed rededication stone donated by Harold Davies Monumental Masons Ltd were unveiled by H.M. Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan, Mrs Louise Fleet, CStJ, JP to formally mark 150 years of service and renewed commitment to our values.



A time capsule has been purchased which will contain items, messages and memorabilia that reflect life at YMCA Neath today. Alongside this, a professionally produced photo book will be printed documenting key moments and the people who have shaped YMCA Neath across generations.

Community engagement has been central to this project. A children's and young people's art competition invited local children to create a piece of art that reflects their time at the YMCA.



Four permanent history boards were also installed, telling the story of Neath Union Workhouse and YMCA Neath from its early beginnings through to the present day. The boards combine text, photographs and QR codes linking to further online content, ensuring the history is accessible to all.



We hosted two history talks, The History of Neath Union Workhouse by Jonathan Davies and From Neath to Hollywood by Robert King. Both were well attended and received positive feedback.



**Jessica Kennedy**  
**Centre Manager**

## 5.0 Fundraising

The YMCA is truly fortunate to have the support of individuals within our community who dedicate their time and energy to fundraising for our vital services.

Thank you to Pamela Lewis and our dedicated volunteers our community shop has raised over £12,000 since opening. Every item, from clothing to household goods, is priced from as little as 50p, making quality essentials accessible to all.

We would also like to thank:

- Briton Ferry Community Shop
- Dan Y Rogof Caves
- Lidl
- Morrisons Neath
- Neath RFC
- Neath Little Theatre
- Neath Trefoil Guild
- Tai Tarian
- The Lodge of Instruction
- Thomas Carroll
- Toms Nursery
- Zoahs Ark



# Grant Success

This year, YMCA Neath has been fortunate to receive a wide range of grants that have enabled us to strengthen our services and expand our community impact. We are extremely grateful to all funders for their support.

## NPT Third Sector Grant – £25,000

This core funding contributed towards essential organisational costs, helping us maintain and deliver high-quality services across all our community programmes.

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Active Lives for All - £30,000

This funding supported the refurbishment of our disabled toilet facilities and enabled us to offer a selection of accessible fitness classes, including Chair Yoga, Tai Chi, Feel Good Fitness, and Stronger Steadier sessions. It also provided wellbeing workshops such as watercolour art, felting and other craft activities designed to improve mental wellbeing and social connection.

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Celebrating 150 Years of YMCA Neath – £4,500

This grant supported activities and materials for our 150th anniversary celebrations, helping us honour our heritage and share our story with the community.

## Hubbub – Essential Roof Repairs – £5,000

Funding was awarded to carry out urgent roof repairs, ensuring our building remains safe, watertight, and fit for purpose.

## NPT Warm Space Fund – £1,600

This grant helped us increase our warm space provision, offering a welcoming environment for residents during colder months.

## NPT Food Poverty Grant – £2,130

Funding supported our community pantry and initiatives aimed at reducing food poverty for local families and individuals.

## 4 The Region – £800

This contribution supported our environmental work, including the purchase of soil and a wormery for our community garden.

## Social Isolation Grant – Mugs and Mates – £3,600

This funding will help us deliver our “Mugs and Mates” project, providing activities that reduce loneliness and encourage social connections across the community.

## NPT Local Nature Partnership – £6,750.15

Funding supported biodiversity improvements, including the installation of swift boxes and the creation of a vibrant nature-themed mural at our site.

## NISA Heart of the Community Award – £2,000

This award supported ongoing community activities and strengthened our ability to respond to local need.

## National Grid – £500

This grant funded new sensor lighting to improve safety and energy efficiency within our building.

## 6.0 Annual Good Friday Breakfast

The 144th Good Friday Breakfast was held this year on 18th April and the MC was the YMCA Hon Solicitor, Robert Williams, who introduced the top table guests. Our Pastor, Lynn Maddocks, gave the bidding prayer and the address was given by Kevin Johns MBE and was very well received by the audience. The vote of thanks was given by the chairman, Kevin Lewis, who also gave a summary of the activities held in the YMCA over the last year. The entertainment was provided by soloist, Harri Morgan, accompanied by Allister Mahoney.

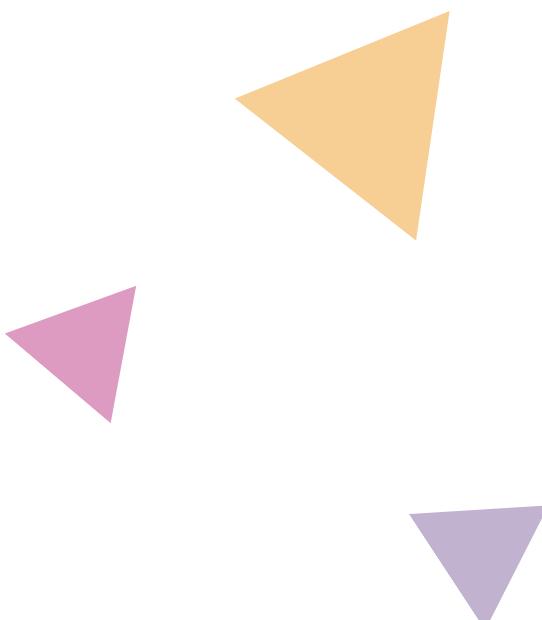
There is a considerable amount of work in planning the traditional Good Friday Breakfast and the YMCA Board is grateful and thanks our dedicated staff that make up the team who make the event so successful. The support of the people of Neath has spanned many years - this year YMCA Neath celebrates its 150th Anniversary - and has made a huge impact on all of us. It has enabled the YMCA to provide support to people of all ages and abilities via an extensive programme of community based activities, including sport, education and training in a safe environment.

Over the last 144 years raising enough funds has always been challenging for YMCA Neath and the support of the public has been fundamental. To bring this up to date we have set up a fundraising page to compliment the Good Friday Breakfast collection, to maintain the good work that keeps the YMCA at the heart of Neath.

Crowdfunding to help YMCA Neath can be found on JustGiving  
[www.justgiving.com/charity/neath-ymca](http://www.justgiving.com/charity/neath-ymca)

Next year's Good Friday Breakfast is planned for 3rd April 2026..

**Dr Bryn John**  
**Chair Good Friday Breakfast Committee**



## 7.0 Community Use and Partnership

### Active Lives for All

To complement our gym and wellness activities, we created the Active Lives for All project, funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Active Lives for All is designed to make health and wellbeing accessible to everyone in our community. The project offers inclusive fitness opportunities such as low-impact exercise classes, gentle strength sessions, and tailored wellbeing activities.

We also introduced Wellbeing Wednesdays, providing creative, calming sessions including watercolour painting, felting and other therapeutic arts-based activities that have been especially valued by participants looking for a gentle, social way to improve their mental wellbeing.

As part of this project, we were also able to give our disabled toilet a much-needed refurbishment, improving accessibility and dignity for everyone using the facility.

Sadly, this funding will come to an end in December, but the impact of Active Lives for All has been huge. It has removed barriers to participation, created new social connections, supported physical and mental health and ensured that people of all ages and abilities feel welcome and included at YMCA Neath. It has truly captured what YMCA Neath is all about.

Through this project, we have taken important steps toward building a healthier and more connected community and its positive legacy will continue long after the funding period ends.

**Jessica Kennedy**  
Centre Manager



## After School Club

We have continued to build on the success of our after-school club for full-time school-age children - a happy, welcoming space where young people can attend with a parent or carer to enjoy fun games and social time. Every child receives a hot meal along with snacks and refreshments and adults can choose from a range of hot drinks. The club has become an important place for social engagement, enabling both children and adults to build friendships in a safe environment. It also directly supports families experiencing food poverty, ensuring each child has access to a nutritious hot meal.

Due to increasing demand we expanded our offer by adding a second session: Clwb Retro, a dedicated gaming club for older children. This new session provides age-appropriate activities, retro and modern gaming opportunities and a safe social space tailored to the needs and interests of older participants. The introduction of Clwb Retro ensures children across all age groups have a place to belong.

None of this would have been possible without the generous £9,000 funding we received from Hubbub, for which we remain exceptionally grateful. With exciting new ideas and opportunities ahead, we look forward to seeing both the after-school club and Clwb Retro continue to flourish in 2026!

**Jessica Kennedy**  
Centre Manager



## Baby Bank, Data Bank and Food Bank

Throughout 2025, our Food Bank, Data Bank and Baby Bank have continued to provide vital support to individuals and families across our community. These three services form a crucial safety net for those experiencing financial hardship. Together, they reflect our commitment to ensuring that all members of our community have access to the essentials needed to live with dignity and stability.

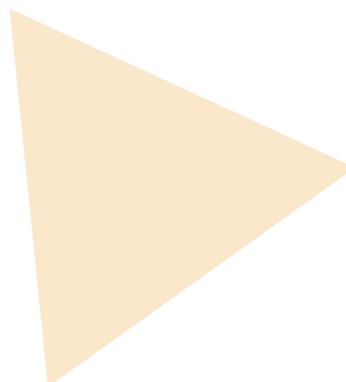
Our Food Bank has seen a steady increase in demand as the cost of living continues to impact everyday necessities. We have worked hard to maintain a consistent supply of food parcels thanks to generous donations and funding. Families can access emergency support quickly and without judgment, helping to reduce the stress associated with food poverty.

The Data Bank has become an increasingly important resource, providing mobile data and connectivity to individuals who would otherwise be digitally excluded. Access to data enables people to stay in touch with loved ones, apply for jobs, manage benefits and access online services that are now essential for daily life. By bridging the digital divide, the Data Bank helps create equal opportunities for those who may otherwise fall behind.

Our Baby Bank continues offer families with young children essential items such as nappies, wipes, toiletries and milk. Donations from the community and funding partners have helped us meet these increasing needs.

Together, these three services demonstrate the YMCA's commitment to supporting the whole community through compassion and responsive care. In 2026, we will remain focused on expanding our reach and ensuring that no one in our community feels alone during times of crisis.

**Jessica Kennedy**  
Centre Manager



## Computer Club

The YMCA recognises the increasing importance of digital literacy in today's world, with support from NPTCBC we offer a free Computer Club where attendees can access support with all things digital. Whether it's navigating online platforms, mastering essential computer skills, or seeking assistance with digital tools, our Computer Club aims to bridge the digital divide. This is made possible by the fantastic staff and volunteers from the NPT Digital Inclusion Team.

At YMCA Neath, we firmly believe that everyone should have the opportunity to thrive in the digital age.

**Jessica Kennedy**  
Centre Manager

## Community Gym

Our community gym continues to be a vital part of YMCA Neath, supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of people of all ages and abilities. This year has been an especially transformative one for the space.

We were awarded £40,000 from The Clothworkers' Foundation, enabling us to carry out a significant gym refurbishment. This funding allowed us to purchase a full range of modern, high-quality fitness equipment, ensuring our members have access to a safe, accessible and motivating environment to achieve their health goals.

Alongside the new equipment, the gym also benefited from a much-needed refresh. Thanks to the dedication of our staff and members - who rolled up their sleeves and volunteered their time - the gym received a fresh coat of paint!

The YMCA is also home to a number of fitness classes such as Zumba classes with Hayley and Barbie's ladies strength training. Barbie continues to grow her sessions and has now added personal training with small groups.

**Jessica Kennedy**  
Centre Manager



# Dance Wales UK

We started off the year with Born2 perform finals. The talent there was amazing our two groups did extremely well and our soloists Ellie Evans & Martha Hill had Judges choice and Martha won third place overall.

Swansea Dance festival in February half term. Lots of medals were won. Our highest scoring soloist Emilie Phillips and highest duet Charlotte Morris pictured and Ellie Evans.

First competition for warriors was showdown in Cardiff. Amazing results for the first comp of the season. BCA cheer comp was next for our warriors again loads of trophies came home with us.

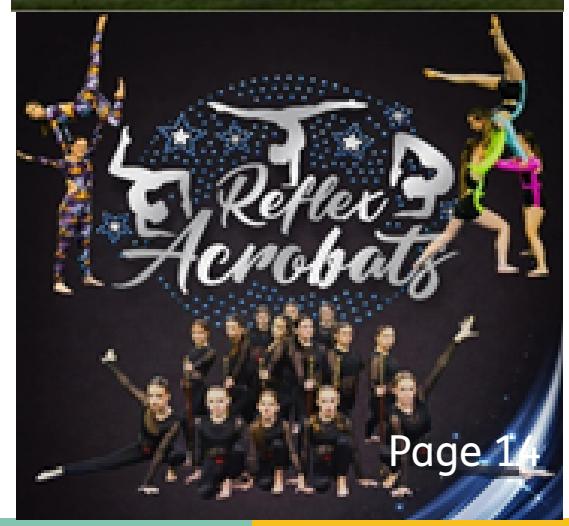
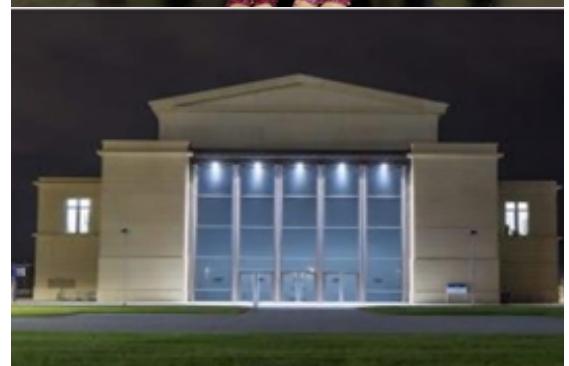
Our Reflex acrobats tried a new comp called Follow your dreams. Our inter reflex came away with the highest marks award in their age group.

Third comp for warriors in April. Spring thaw out with ICE. Our soloists and 5 man compete at this event and did well. Magnetar comp in May last comp for reflex and inter Reflex of the season and final comp for warriors in southern chill. Try outs for both were had in April and July and new teams were formed.

July 5<sup>th</sup>, we had our annual summer show at the amazing venue of The Great Hall in Swansea university. Everyone performed amazingly and the show was a success thanks to the pure size of the stage.

We had summer workshops in August which were very enjoyable. After a lovely summer break our acrobats competed with their new routines for St David's festival, Magnetar championship and Born2 perform and both teams got through to the finals. To end the year, we had a Christmas party hosted by the Mad Jay DJ at Tonna Rugby Club and our Christmas show at the Gwynn Hall.

I would like to thank all my staff, helpers and chaperones for an amazing 2025. 2026 is our 20<sup>th</sup> year so its going to be bigger, better and a lot busier!



## Friendship Circle

2025 saw three full years of our Friendship Circle, which continues to offer vulnerable and isolated individuals a safe, welcoming space to come together, take part in activities and build meaningful friendships. Watching these friendships grow remains the core reason we provide this service to the community.

We continue to receive regular engagement from our NPT Local Area Coordinator, Adam, who refers individuals who would benefit from the group. New members also join us after seeing our social media posts or hearing about us through word of mouth.

This year, we are pleased to share that we have secured funding from The National Lottery. This incredible support has allowed us to expand what we offer, we have introduced more creative activities such as watercolour workshops, felting, wreath making and ceramics.

We've just ended the year with our Christmas party and we will continue improving the overall experience for our members.

**Sarah Hemington**  
**Wellbeing Officer**



## LGBTQIA+ Adult Group

Running YMCA Neath's LGBTQIA+ group has been a pleasure and this inclusive, friendly group has grown both in stature and purpose over the past year. Thanks to generous funding from The Postcode Community Trust Fund, we have been able to create a warm community where people feel safe, welcome and free to express themselves.

It has been a difficult year for many in the LGBTQIA+ community due to the current social climate, therefore safe community spaces are vital to the wellbeing of our members. We have been able to offer a wide variety of free activities for our monthly meet ups including such varied sessions as axe-throwing, bowling, quizzes, an animal encounters visit, crafting activities, a Christmas singalong and buffet. For next Christmas we are planning a sumptuous meal in a restaurant which will also be funded as another consideration in our current climate is the cost of living crisis.

We have a busy, thriving WhatsApp group which offers information on LGBTQIA+ local events and also support/ outreach that is available to members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The group also fosters peer support in a safe space, encourages socialising and creates a vibrant/supportive community.

I have attended many events providing information about the group and networking as part of my work, such as the Safer Neath Port Talbot events and NPTCBC's LGBTQ+ Forum. Last February myself and my volunteers organised an LGBTQIA+ History night which comprised of varied speakers, entertainment, stalls and a buffet. The event was kindly funded by the Community Cohesion Small Grants Fund. We were joined by varied speakers such as Brandon Gregory (Cardiff Dragons FC) who spoke about inclusivity in sport, through to Rachel Ann Lewis (Gay of Moonshine Blog) who spoke about LGBTQIA+ activism with passion and a sprinkle of humour.

We booked varied stalls from South Wales Police through to Swansea Bay NHS trust. Two members of our LGBTQIA+ group entertained the audience by playing piano and singing 'Queer anthems' such as Bronski Beat's 'Smalltown Boy'. There was not a dry eye in the house as they were a fantastic addition to the line up. The event was an educational, inspiring and emotional evening. It fostered a strong sense of community and was a huge success, drawing in over 50 attendees. The feedback gathered from the event was extremely positive as everyone had fun but also left feeling that they had learned something and been part of a local LGBTQIA+ community.

**Sarah Elias**  
**LGBTQIA+ Group Co-Ordinator**

# Gardening Club

Our community garden, Gardd Y Pobl, continues to flourish thanks to the hard work and dedication of our incredible volunteers and the support of our funders.

This year has been a year of celebration and recognition for Gardd Y Pobl. We proudly achieved our Green Flag Community Award, a significant milestone recognising the value of our garden. We were also thrilled to reach the finals of the Keep Wales Tidy Awards, a testament to the passion and effort of everyone involved.

We welcomed the wonderful Roger from Keep Wales Tidy, who delivered support through the Keep Wales Tidy development package. His guidance has helped us elevate the garden even further with new growing beds, a polytunnel, wildflower turf and lots more added to our outdoor space!

Looking ahead, we are excited to have secured funding through this year's NPT Local Nature Partnership programme. This support will allow us to install new swift nesting boxes, bird watching area and create a beautiful nature-themed mural, enriching the space for both wildlife and visitors.

**Jessica Kennedy**  
Centre Manager



## The Lending Shed

This year we launched The Lending Shed, an exciting new project made possible through £9,000 of funding we received late last year from Hubbub. This support has enabled us to create a community-led space where people can borrow useful household items, tools, DIY equipment and craft materials at low cost, reducing financial pressure while encouraging reuse and sustainability. The funding has been used to purchase a wide range of high-quality items - from carpet cleaners to camping equipment - that members of our community can borrow as and when they need it. The Lending Shed is already proving to be a valuable asset, helping local residents save money and reduce waste through sharing instead of buying.

**Jessica Kennedy**  
Centre Manager

# Gymnastics

The Gymnastics section is running very successfully and has been able to expand all classes from our extensive waiting list in 2025, due mainly to the appointment of a new assistant coach and Welfare Officer Hayley James and the help of assistants Jewel and Maisie.

All new gymnasts have settled in really well. Our Gymnasts are thoroughly enjoying the sessions and will be working hard in November and December to progress on the Rise Award Scheme and will be awarded with an achievement certificate and medal before we break up for Christmas.

We are also applying for grants which will enable us to get coach training and much needed new equipment for the new year.

We are pleased to share that our gymnastics club will be part of the Tesco Stronger Starts vote in January 2026 - we would be so grateful if you can take the time to vote for us when you are in store!

**Karen Phillips**  
Head Coach



## **Men's ADHD Support**

A small group of men of all ages and backgrounds, bouncing off the walls, doing their best to take turns.

ADHD represented in all forms, by those who experience the extremes of joy and sorrow that it has to offer.

A monthly sanctuary where unmasking is not only expected, but welcome, and where oversharing, overtalking, and silence if preferred, is never frowned upon or disparaged.

Come as you are. Progressive increases in volume as the evening progresses.

It's free. That's important.

It is an oasis of acceptance in a difficult world. A place for men who often feel adrift in life. We have people coming who otherwise struggle to leave the house. We've received £200 from the town council this year which will cover us for room hire for most of 2026. We are looking for other funding options and we are looking to promote ourselves through GP Clusters this year and continue to expand the group.

**Keith Finn**

**Martial Arts**

**Ninjutsu**

2025 has been a quiet year for the Ninjutsu section. We have travelled across the UK teaching the art we practice at YMCA Neath. We have an extensive student base with some students traveling from Torquay to train with us at YMCA Neath. We are hoping to host several seminars at our home dojo and look forward to the support we always get from the admin team here. We have taught a seminar in Reading this December, which I hope will bring more interest to our Dojo and encourage people to travel to the excellent facilities here.

**Merlyn**



# Neath Judo Kwai

In the last report of 2023, I stated that Neath Judo Kwai had experienced an incredibly successful year. I was delighted, but of the mind that we would never match the success again. However, I have been proven wrong. Neath Judo Kwai has managed to surpass the success of last year. This is a credit to the coaching team and the support of Jessica at the YMCA.

## Competitions.

The club has travelled to many venues, national and indeed international to compete in aspects of judo. Below is a record of our achievements.

Brandon Jones. Silver medal U100kg Kidderminster (Samurai club) 15.10.23

Meriel East. Bronze medal Welsh closed 25.11.23

Macsen Jenkins. Bronze medal Welsh closed 25.11.23

Elis East. Double gold medal Welsh closed 25.11.23.

Fraiser Thorne silver. Cerys Boxer silver. Calum Harris bronze 25.11.23. All gained at the National Sports Centre Cardiff.

Harley Collins. Silver medal Gendros Judo competition 20.01.24

Elis Evans. Bronze medal Welsh school championships Cardiff 27.01.24

Macsen Jenkins. Silver medal Welsh school championships Cardiff 27.01.24

Macsen Jenkins competed in British school championships 10th march, missing out on bronze medal.

Macsen Jenkins and Finley Whitefoot competed in the Llanishen dragon competition Cardiff May 24.

Macsen Jenkins travelled to the Netherlands 14-17th May to represent Wales in an international competition. Although not winning a medal, Macsen must be recognized for the incredible achievement of representing Wales in judo.

Macsen Jenkins competed in the Kent open 29.06.24.

Macsen Jenkins represented Wales in Belgium 14.09.24.

This was an international training camp and the Welsh contingent who did our national squad proud. A massive honour for the club and Macsen.



Harley Collins double gold medal. Macsen Jenkins gold medal. Finley Whitefoot bronze medal. Gendros competition 02.06.24. Huge success for our youngest members.

Elis East. Gold medal at the inaugural no gi judo competition, National sports center Cardiff.

Elis won the gold making him Welsh heavyweight, defeating a far more experienced and higher grade player (5th Dan).

Macsen Jenkins. Bronze medal under 60kg Western area international open competition 20.07.24.

Macsen Jenkins. Bronze medal Dragons academy competition 05.10.24

Elis Evans. Gold medal Dragons academy competition 05.10.24

In the inaugural Welsh closed kata championship held in Llanelli, the club had 5 competitors. Macsen Jenkins and Harley Collins gold medal, Nage no kata. Kai Kelly and Adam Cardy bronze medal, Nage no kata. Ian Cardy and Adam Cardy silver medals, gatame no kata. Kai Kelly and Ian Cardy bronze ju no kata 18.08.24. Neath Judo Kwai kata team had an age range of 61 years (juniors 12, Ian 73). We were the only club to enter judoka in every category at this event. It was an historic occasion, our team had the oldest and the youngest competitors, were the only club entering all katas and came back with medals in each one. Mr John Jenkins completed a safeguarding course and has been officially installed as the welfare officer to Neath judo. This has been in response to the mandatory regulation brought in by the BJA, that all clubs must have someone in this capacity by October 24. We are delighted that John has taken on the role and look forward to his contribution.

Grading. Judoka who have gained promotion.

Ian Cardy – 5th Dan 18.08.24. History in the making as Neath Judo has its first ever coach at this grade. A huge personal achievement for Ian as well as a massive input to the status of the club. Ian hopes that this encourages others to follow and enrich the club even further.

Elis East – 1st Dan 22.09.24. Elis gained his 1st Dan at the National sports centre Cardiff. At only 17 years old, it is an amazing achievement.

Dominic Hewitt took his points total to 90 at the same event.

Huw Widlake gained 60 points from the grading and the masters grading that followed.

Kai Kelly – Earlier in the year Kai collected 20 points, a huge achievement for a 17 year old.

Meriel East and Andrew Thomas also competed but were unlucky not to gain points. This means that we can expect to have a few more Dan grades in the near future. To put this into perspective, we average a person gaining their black belt, once every 9 years. In the past 20 months we have had 2 not including Ian's 5th Dan. We really have upped the ante this year. It shows how successful the club is becoming.

The club has been part of history again. The above mentioned people, along with Ian Cardy, who was officiating, were involved in the first British masters national dan grading held in Wales. It was also considered to be the largest Welsh competitive dan grading ever held.

Other judoka gaining promotion:

Brandon Jones 4th kyu 08.11.23

Elis East 2nd kyu 00.12.23

Huw Widlake 1st kyu 03.01.24

Kai Morgan Kelly 1st kyu 03.01.24

David Andrew Thomas 1st kyu 03.01.24

Meriel Symonds East 1st kyu 03.01.24

Rhys Hickmott 6th kyu

Elis Evans 6th mon 10.01.24

Zachary Kelshaw 6th mon 10.01.24

Daniel Wyles 6th mon 10.01.24

Macsen Jenkins 6th mon 10.01.24

Jude Cardy Kelshaw 4th mon

Oliver Wyles 7th mon 10.01.24

Mila Soyka 2nd mon 10.01.24

Evie Taylor 1st mon 10.01.24

Summer Collins dragon purple belt 10.01.24

Sophia Fair 2nd mon 19.01.24

Riley Jones 10th mon green belt 00.02.24

Elis Symonds East 1st kyu brown belt 27.03.24

Rhys Hickmott 5th kyu yellow belt 24.01.24

Jack Williams 5th kyu yellow belt 24.04.24

Thomas Toms 5th kyu yellow belt 04.04.24

Lois Sherwood 5th kyu yellow belt 04.04.24

Harley Collins 4th mon yellow belt 12.04.24

Josh Mainwaring 1st mon red belt 19.06.24

Macsen Jenkins 7th mon orange belt 10.07.24

Macsen Rhys Williams 5th kyu yellow belt 11.09.24

Matt Fury 5th kyu yellow belt 11.09.24

Samuel Esmonde 5th kyu yellow belt 11.09.24

Harley Collins 7th mon orange belt 02.10.24

Mila Soyka 3rd mon 02.10.24

Evie Taylor 2nd mon 02.10.24

Evan Davies 3rd kyu green belt 02.10.24

Lois Sherwood 4th kyu orange belt 02.10.24

Ian has been extremely busy grading all of the above. Of course, the judoka themselves have been working tirelessly to achieve the grades awarded and must be congratulated for their efforts.

Elis East and Kai Morgan Kelly completed their dan grade theory at club on 25.09.24. This was the first time such an exam was carried out by the coach of this club. Ian Cardy was delighted to be able to do this in his capacity as senior examiner. Another historical point for the club.

Imperial judo club 21.02.24. Club visit where members coped well and made a strong presence on receiving a warm welcome. This has enriched the club and broadened our contacts within the family of judo. We extend our thanks to Imperial for their welcome and friendship.

We have massively increased our coaching squad, with new level 1 coaches. The club has not had so many qualified judoka available to coach.

Elis East, Ian East, Meriel East and Adam Cardy gained level 1 coaching award.

Completed 2 day course 3-4.02.24

Adam Cardy first aid 03.03.24

Ian Cardy first aid 03.03.24

Adam Cardy safeguarding 23.03.24

Ian Cardy level 2 safeguarding 07.04.24

Elis East level 2 safeguarding

Kai Kelly level 2 safeguarding

Ian East level 2 safeguarding.

The first aid and safeguarding courses are undertaken by coaches every 3 years as validation of their coaching qualification.

The club has also gained nationally recognized qualification in kata. The following members gaining their certificates over the past year:

Adam Cardy, Ian Cardy, Ian east, Meriel East, Elis East, Kai Kelly level 1 go nosen no kata 07.04.24. Such was the standard of our judoka that Elis and Kai was told to enter national championships and Adam should work to become an examiner.

Meriel East level 1 nage no kata 12.05.24

Ian east level 1 nage no kata 12.05.24

Adam Cardy level 1 nage no kata 12.05.24

Kai Kelly level 1 nage no kata 12.05.24

Dominic Hewitt level 1 nage no kata 12.05.24

Ian East level 1 gatame no kata 23.06.24

Meriel East level 1 gatame no kata 23.06.24

Elis East level 1 gatame no kata 23.06.24

Kai Kelly level 1 gatame no kata 23.06.24

All these awarded at the Samurai club Swansea.

Ian Cardy gained level 2 nage no kata in Welshpool 28.07.24

This totals 19 kata certificates in Neath juldo kwai. Ian Cardy, Adam Cardy and Alun Morgan gaining the others in previous years. Neath Judo has never had this level of kata certification. Ian Cardy passed national C referees exam at Yate 28.04.24. This was the final piece of criteria needed to fully qualify as a senior examiner.

'Put on a gi and help children see' charity event. 15.06.24 for Children's eye cancer trust. The club raised £838.70, which was presented to Mr John Bird, the grandfather of Eva. A local child who recently had her eye removed due to retinoblastoma. The family, in true form then forwarded the money to CHECT, which will go toward benefitting other families in the same situation across the country. At least 7 other clubs attended, with 37 judoka participating from Llanelli and Swansea to Hereford. Several coaches gave instruction to the 40 odd people who attended. The juniors who came along were able to take on the black belts in a competition. Needless to say that they won hands down, defeating all the black belts who were brave enough to stand up to them.

Ian Cardy was officially given his senior examiner badge at Welshpool 28.07.24. The presentation was made by Alan Jones, the current Welsh national coach, who is also the highest ranking judoka in Wales. It was a great honour for Ian to receive it in this way. Neath judo kwai has never before had a coach who is also a senior examiner. This is an historic first for the club, of which Ian is extremely proud.

To finish, the club has over the past year made several historic steps and gained a great deal of achievement in many aspects of judo. We are going to enter 2025 with the prospect of more success on the horizon. The club is not standing still but rather moving forward successfully each year. We are intent, that with the support of Jessica and the YMCA, that we will continue to carry on developing. Neath judo kwai is an active, successful club.

Visitors will regularly comment on the warm friendly atmosphere that they experience when they visit or join the club. We are proud to be able to input the ethos of judo into the local community.

**Ian Cardy**  
**5th Dan.**



## JuJutsu

Neath Valley Martial Arts continues to go from strength to strength, training primarily in Combat Ju Jutsu, but also broadening our horizons with involvement and cross training in many other disciplines.

In the senior section Kai Morgan-Kelly and Meriel East achieved their 1st Kyujudo brown belts under the expert tuition of Ian Cardy (Neath Judo Kwai) in January 2024, with Elis Symons-East hot on their heels receiving his in March 2024.

Elis then went on to achieve his 1st Dan black belt in Judo on 22nd September 2024. He achieved this in a competitive Dan grading by line up, which at 17 is no mean feat. We are all very proud of him! Elis also won the gold medal in the inaugural Welsh Judo Association No Gi competition in June 2024, putting to good effect the skills learned within the club each Friday.

Elis and Meriel also competed in the Welsh Judo Association National Championships in November 2023. Elis received a gold medal and Meriel a bronze. Both did extremely well competing at a national level.

Ian East, Kai Morgan-Kelly, Meriel and Elis have also completed various judo Kata courses and have achieved their level 1 certification. Ian, Meriel and Elis also completed the British Judo Association level 1 judo coaching qualification this year to add to their various levels of knowledge.

It is always pleasing to see club members embracing other arts, and Kai Miles has achieved his 6th kyu red belt in judo.

Alongside this there have been regular trips to the Dojo of Andy McCormack (10th Dan, Taiho Justu) in Birmingham, with Kai Morgan-Kelly and Elis achieving their 6th Kyu green belts April 2024. A special mention must be made of the commitment of these young men, who regularly get up at 5 a.m. to drive to these sessions in Birmingham. Well done Kai Morgan-Kelly, Kai Miles and Elis!

Both Elis and Kai Morgan-Kelly are also continuing with their Tae Kwon Do journey and have both achieved senior Kup grades this year. They both also competed in the TAGB Welsh Closed Tae Kwon Do competition in March, both fighting to an extremely high standard, with Kai achieving a gold medal in sparring.

As if that isn't enough Elis, Kai Morgan-Kelly and Ian also regularly train at the Neath YMCA Shotokan Karate Club under the watchful eye of Andrew Richards, 3rd Dan. Andrew also cross trains with us in jujutsu on a Friday, and the interesting insights and knowledge that he shares with us are always much appreciated.

Within the club there have also been senior gradings with Regan Ace and Lewis Forkin achieving their 6th Kyu yellow belts in November 2023, with Kai Miles receiving his in October 2024.

## Kung Fu

Lau Gar Wales has had another good training year; our Lau Gar Tigers class has seen a number of our newer students progressing and progressing up the belts and for some progressing into the adults class. In the coming year it is hoped that these students will continue to grow and acquire good skills in our style and are now poised for a grading in the new year to continue their progression.

The adults' class has seen a number of beginners progress up the belts and we hope they continue to do so in the new year, a few of the adults are illustrating their dedication to our style and progressing towards their higher belts and we hope this continues.

Earlier in spring, four members attended a Lau Gar Family training weekend at the Lilleshall National Sports Centre, focusing on the 8 powers and keyword training. The event offered excellent training but also a good social gathering as the course and accommodation was held on the campus. At the end of July, Alun and Conrad attended the main week-long summer course in Llandudno, this was the 50th anniversary of this event in the UK and a celebration meal was held on the last day of training.

This week proved to be an excellent training opportunity with a number of senior national instructors providing training in small groups. Alun also attended the Guardian training weekend at the end of the year also held at Lilleshall National sports centre, training the five animals and Bac Ging Gong sets.

This year we continued our collaboration with the Chinese Community in Swansea, including a number of training sessions and demonstrations of Kung Fu and the lion dance. It was a busy Chinese New Year with a number of Lion and Dragon Dances performed by the club in Swansea and Cardiff, and similarly later in the year these dances were performed as part of a celebration of Chinese culture at Cardiff museum.

As well as the YMCA at Neath on a Monday evening, classes have also continued this year in Pontardawe on a Tuesday evening.

### Alun Morgan



## Morning Mingle

We have had a busy year at the Mingle sessions. Our numbers and diversity has changed since the groups conception 18 months ago. We have developed from an all female group to a male/female group. Our ages range from 20's to over 70's which gives us a wide range of values and ideas.

Our group has increased to over 20 members. Our aim is still to combat social isolation by offering a warm and welcoming space for anyone who wishes to join us. Our sessions are based on improving health and wellbeing by providing various craft sessions, a chat over tea/coffee and cake. Prize bingo and hoy goes down really well with our members plus they really enjoy a quiz.

The YMCA has provided us with variety of workshops such as paper making, wreath making and felting which has been a great support for our members wellbeing.

Our members have had the option to go on activities via the Temp Credits Scheme. We've visited a number of places such as Barry, Tenby, Copperjack Boat trip, Dyffryn Gardens, Margam Park and St. Fagans.

Looking forward to 2026 we as a group will decide what we would like to do, 1 member has suggested a fish and chip lunch another has suggested charades. Our aim is to continue to grow and evolve.

### Pamela Lewis



## Mugs and Mates

This year saw the launch of our Mugs and Mates coffee morning, which began as a monthly gathering and has already grown into a fortnightly event due to its popularity. Thanks to support from the Social Isolation Grant, we hope to continue developing this vital space.

We've seen a steady increase in attendance, with men coming along to enjoy a cuppa, a game of pool and most importantly have a chat.

The atmosphere has been relaxed and supportive, and it's clear that the group is playing a meaningful role in improving wellbeing and connection among those who attend.

**Jessica Kennedy**  
Centre Manager



## No Limits Ladies

We are a peer led ladies friendship and craft group based at YMCA Neath. Our aim is to improve wellbeing, bring people together and reduce isolation. Our group is volunteer run by our ladies and supported with courses and various crafts. No Limits Ladies Group is a safe space for women to attend, have a coffee and a chat and meet new people.

The group has taken a short break and we look forward to welcoming everyone again in January!

## Platform

Platform for Families NPT service can offer a range of supportive and therapeutic interventions that meet the emotional and wellbeing needs of children, young people and their parents. The service offers support for families and their children up to 25 years of age living within the Neath Port Talbot area. All support offered will be discussed and agreed with the family during an initial assessment.

Our aim is to support children, young people and parents to improve;

§ Emotional and mental wellbeing

§ Own and family resilience

§ Lifestyles and behaviours

§ Family relationships Types of presenting issues can include;

§ Anxiety/fear/stress/anger

§ Low confidence/assertiveness

§ Attachment § Bullying

§ Low self-esteem/self-worth

§ Depression/low mood

§ Dealing with emotional distress

§ Difficulty with family communications

§ Strained Relationships Maintaining Family Relationships Service offers;

§ Help and support for parents and their children and young people with relationship difficulties.

§ Support to improve communication and discussion § Building problem solving and conflict resolution skills

§ Guidance and information for children who may be at risk of danger from online activities

§ Increased awareness and knowledge of how to keep their family safe whilst engaging in online communications.

Referral Criteria: Referrals can only be made via the Neath Port Talbot Single Point of Contact (SPOC) which can be contacted on; 01639 686802 or at [s poc@npt.gov.uk](mailto:s poc@npt.gov.uk) . \*Where there is current involvement with, or if waiting for a service from CAMHS or children's services we would not duplicate these services.

This is also applicable in our Family Relationship service where there are CAFCASS/court proceedings or contact disputes involved, as this is an Early Intervention and Prevention service.

Kath Ahern

PLAT<sup>F</sup> FORM

# Where to find us

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