

Social enterprises prove to be a model of success

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SOME 200 social enterprises have been created in Wales over the last two years, with the backing of a business support programme delivered by the Wales Co-operative Centre.

Community interest company Baobab Bach in Bridgend became 200th social enterprise to be officially incorporated since the launch of the [Social Business Wales](#) New Start programme back in November 2019.

During the first lockdown, parent company Eclipse Wales Services, generated the idea to set up community pantries in local communities, using food surpluses to help support people and venues through the pandemic by providing access to affordable food. After a successful pilot project, the numbers have grown to over 12 community pantries across the Bridgend County, soon to be 13.

Alison Westwood, director of Baobab Bach said: "Clients use the pantry for a variety of reasons, usually they live on a tight budget but using the pantry means they can make their money 'go further'. We deliver to clients such as those with disability, reduced mobility, the frail and elderly or those with no means of transport.

"To date, over 6,000 bags of food have been distributed, amounting to more than 60 tonnes of food. The pantries are developing links with local support services and signposting and referring clients accordingly. A number of pantries also offer teas and coffees and the opportunity to stay and chat to help ease loneliness and isolation and improve wellbeing."

The success of the pilot project led to dialogue with [Social Business](#)

[Wales](#) and its advisor Tom Addiscott to explore ways of developing the pantry network and sustaining it. They also formed a partnership with Linc Cymru, who worked with Baobab to secure food poverty grant funding from the Welsh Government.

Ms Westwood added: "The pandemic has challenged us all, but it has been very reassuring to work with Tom and [Social Business Wales](#) and to recognise that we are developing a sustainable, locally based service that will support the people of Bridgend County, and beyond, well into the future.

"We anticipate that Baobab Bach, with the continued support of [Social Business Wales](#), will develop the community pantry network and wellbeing cafes into the future, whilst also benefitting the environment by reducing the amount of food going to landfill and encouraging local growing projects."

Carly McCreesh, project manager for [Social Business Wales](#) New Start at the Wales Co-operative Centre said: "We are extremely proud to have incorporated 200 social businesses during this incredibly unstable and difficult economic period. We have helped some inspiring individuals and community groups get their business ideas off the ground and it has been an absolute pleasure to help them establish, create jobs, and do incredible things within their communities.

"In the wake of Covid-19 there has never been a more important time for communities to continue being innovative through business. From helping our most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Wales, to tackling our climate emergency, we hope individuals and community groups continue to see social business as

the business model of choice for years to come."

The [Social Business Wales](#) New Start support service is backed with European Union funding.





► Baobab Bach CIC, from left: Tom Addiscott, business adviser at **Social Business Wales** with John and Alison Westwood of Baobab Bach CIC