

Partnership helps fight rural poverty as community in Corwen area claim almost half a million pounds in benefits

[Arron Evans](#) 15th May



A VITAL partnership helping fight poverty and isolation in rural Denbighshire has helped people claim almost half a million pounds in benefits in just over two years.

Citizens Advice Denbighshire teamed up with Corwen-

based South Denbighshire Community Partnership, a grant-funded community charity, to reach out to the people of Edeyrnion.

Already this year as the Covid-19 lockdown has hit the rural economy CAD has helped claimants access over £130,000 – they had set themselves a target of £295,000 in four years.

That followed a total of £193,000 claimed in the first year, 2018, and the running total is now approaching £500,000 with 70 per cent of that money likely to be spent locally, a massive boost to the economy of the area.

CAD Chief Executive Officer Lesley Powell said: “By going to Canolfan Ni in Corwen two days a week and going out to Edeyrnion we were able to help people whose poverty was hidden in this picturesque countryside.

“The partnership with SDCP has enabled us to reap big rewards because we knew there were unclaimed benefits there but forming this great partnership with SDCP has enabled us to have a presence there through Welfare Benefits Caseworker Kristen Sedgwick and meet people face to face.

“They have been brilliant and attending their events at Canolfan Ni and since the lockdown their work in combatting rural isolation has enabled them to signpost people to us.”

Among those helped has been Pauline Murfitt, 61, from Clawdd Poncen, Corwen, who said: "Kristen has helped me no end – this last 12 months I would have done myself in but for her.

"I had moved from Cerrigydrudion and had to wait a year for Universal Credit but now Kristen has helped me get my fortnightly money for the last 16 months.

"She's an angel and I don't know how many times I've cried in front of her. It's been a fantastic service."

SDCP Chief Officer Margaret Sutherland said: "This partnership has come about from the support we have received from the Big Lottery Fund because CAD were an integral part of the bid that we made for funds to fight rural isolation and rural poverty.

"We are working to reduce fuel poverty through the Corwen Energy Local scheme and we also work with CAD on their school uniform recycling and on helping people reduce their energy costs and on debt.

"This is helping people in very difficult circumstances, many of them very worried about debt but the key thing is many of them were eligible for these benefits but they just weren't claiming them."

"What we've been able to do is to bring the expertise of CAD to Corwen with their local officer Kristen Sedgwick where previously they had had to go to Ruthin and she

has been able to help them with making claims online.

“Some people have been owed over £10,000 and in one case it was £24,000 in back-dated claims and 70 per cent of that money will be spent locally.”