

Aiden's Volunteering Story

GERMANY 2023

WCIA has been sending young people on international exchanges since the 1970's. We believe that there is no better way for a young person to develop key skills and competencies, as well as gaining invaluable citizenship skills, than to undertake an exchange, get out of their comfort zone and do something truly life changing.

We believe that everyone in Wales should have the opportunity to volunteer abroad, to develop as global citizen and contribute to a fairer and more peaceful World in a safe environment.



North Wales Region
Youth Exchange Body
Taith



This is Aiden, from Conwy, North Wales. This year he decided to do something truly outstanding and out of his comfort zone. With support from Conwy Youth Service and WCIA and funding from the Welsh government funded programme Taith, Aiden took the plunge and took on a 2-week workcamp in Baden-Württemberg in Germany. Organised by IBG, partner of WCIA who have a wealth of experience in organising international youth exchanges as well as voluntary projects across Germany, this workcamp was called 'Make Public Spaces Beautiful' and it was all about helping the community of Horb renovate, repair and bring to life their town, making it a better place for all to enjoy.

As part of the project Aiden lived and worked with 12 other volunteers from all over the world. Aside from sharing accommodation in Horb's Marmorwerk (the "marble factory" in German), the young people cooked for each other and shared each other's cultures. Aiden brought Welsh stories as well as showed his fellow volunteers some traditional Welsh dance!

“When I met Aiden we explored many options. Aiden attended a couple of on-line courses but not much was inspiring him. When I asked him if he would like to volunteer abroad with Taith, he didn't hesitate at the chance. Since that day I have seen him become much more proactive and independent. Aiden and I met regularly, to discuss his plans, and with my advice and guidance Aiden was able to approach and communicate with the staff at WCIA, who were very supportive. Aiden's experience in Germany has clearly helped him build on his confidence, make new friends and he is thinking of his future more positively”.

Ceri Hughes, Professional Youth Worker, Conwy Youth Service



What Aiden Enjoyed Most

Meeting new people and becoming friends with the other volunteers, learning about where they are from and understanding, as well as appreciating the differences between our cultures.

A Typical Day Volunteering

Everyone was assigned into different groups to complete daily tasks, such as preparing meals, shopping or cleaning. Depending on which team I was in I had different responsibilities. At work we would either be at the workhouse repairing and building new benches, sawing, drilling, sanding etc. As well as building new flower beds or cutting hedges, weeding and litter picking.

Taith and International Exchange

2022/23 was the first year that young people in Wales could take up international exchange opportunities through Taith.

Taith is a Welsh Government scheme aimed at bringing Wales to the World and the World to Wales. Every young person who lives in Wales, aged between 16-25, regardless of their background or where they live are able to take up an international exchange through Taith.

How the Placement Impacted Aiden

My confidence has really increased, I feel that I have become a lot more confident in myself and have become a more independent and well-rounded individual. I learnt how to communicate better, changing how I speak to make myself more easily understood. I have become more independent, more confident in taking my own initiative. I find it much easier to work as part of a team and solve problems which will help with my future employment chances.



Why Choose Volunteering?

Volunteering allowed me to make a positive impact on the local community, I was supported by fellow volunteers and leaders. Volunteering can really impact your life in a positive way, through meeting and spending time with like-minded people, and becoming more self-confident in your own abilities.

What's next for Aiden?

Volunteering has pushed me to try and get an apprenticeship role as an engineer. I talked with my fellow volunteers about what my interests are, and we talked through what options may be open to me.

I also want to re-sit my exams, as well as participate in more workcamps and volunteering to meet more great people and continue to develop new skills.

WCIA are really thankful to the team at IBG for organising such a transformative experience for the young people, including Aiden. For Aiden at least, it inspired a new perspective on life and a desire to experience more of the world through international voluntary work. It's testament to programmes like Taith, that in allowing young people from Wales to experience the world and contribute to a project that enables the creation of a new generation of ethically informed citizens of Wales and the World.

If you've been inspired by Aiden's story, or know a young person who could benefit from international volunteering experience, check out our other volunteering opportunities which can be found [here](#), or email us on volunteer@wcia.org.uk