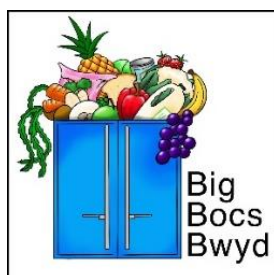




Review of Big Bocs Bwyd pilot phase 1 – ‘The Valleys 5’

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This report is a qualitative summary of the pilot phase (phase 1) of first 5 Welsh Government funded, valleys based Big Bocs Bwyd (BBB) installations.

It is important to note at the outset that Covid 19 has significantly affected both installation and operationalisation of most of these initial BBBs, in particular in terms of timeframes from delivery to opening of the BBBs. Therefore this report is not necessarily representative of timeframes, volunteer recruitment etc. that will be possible now Covid 19 restrictions have been reduced to tier 0 level.

It is also very important to note that since these 5 BBB were installed, there has been a great deal of development in terms of curriculum resources/workshops etc. Also, taking an 'action research' approach, changes have been made to the installation/development processes as more schools have come on board. This means that some of the issues raised in this review have already been resolved.

1. Background

Based in school grounds, BBBs are converted shipping containers that serve as a 'pay as you feel' shop, stocking food mostly provided by Fareshare Cymru. Along with their own small growing areas and social spaces, they provide experiential, curriculum-based learning opportunities whilst also supplying affordable food for families and the wider community.

Following on from the installation of 5 initial BBBs, funded by the Waterloo Foundation, (concept phase), the Welsh Government awarded £100k, managed by the Cadoxton and Oakfield Primary Executive Headteacher (Janet Hayward), to pilot the concept in a further 5 schools. With input from The Valleys Regional Park (VRP), BBBs were introduced into 5 schools situated in areas of high deprivation in the Valleys (pilot – phase 1).

These 5 valleys-based schools were to serve as a project managed pilot that aimed to gauge whether the BBB concept had potential for roll across Wales.

A baseline evaluation framework for the pilot phase was designed by VRP and a simple baseline evaluation was undertaken (appendix 1) in order to inform any future iterations of the project.

From that baseline work, initial indications were that the BBBs had potential to provide positive value for pupils, parents, and the wider community. In addition, it appeared that even using a 'pay as you feel' concept, there was opportunity for profit which could contribute to the sustainability of the BBB projects. At the time of the pilot, the plan was to carry out a qualitative assessment of the 5 pilot BBBs and provide recommendations to Welsh Government in relation to possible rollout. However, during the pilot phase, the Welsh Government awarded additional funding for a further 25 BBB projects. This meant some subsequent roll out of those BBBs (phase 2) occurred prior to findings from the pilot phase. This also meant that less project management/analysis time has been available for the pilot phase.

At the time of writing, (concept, pilot phase 1 and phase 2 now complete), the BBB concept shows significant promise from a number of different perspectives - as a curriculum resource, promoting healthy lifestyles and eco literacy /circular economy opportunities and food growing experiences, whilst also helping ease pressing issues of hunger and food poverty in the areas of highest need.

As a result of indications of success to date, the Welsh Government have recently awarded a further £900k to introduce the BBBs into a further 25 Valleys based schools (phase 3). In summary, approximately £1.5k has now been invested by Welsh Government and will result in the installation of 60 BBB projects by late 2022. A summary of the phases can be seen in Appendix 2

A discussion paper for phase 4 is currently being written and this will explore suggestions for a future operating model and potential funding structure.

1.1 Evaluation to date

The intention was to carry out a small-scale evaluation, including baseline data collection and 3-month report of the 5 Valleys based BBBs pilot.

The baseline report was completed (appendix 1) as planned, and specific data was requested from the 5 schools for the next phase. Unfortunately, a number of issues (Covid related staff shortages, operational delays etc.) made robust data collection very problematic.

Therefore, this report represents a qualitative summary relating to approximately 6 months of the BBBs being operational at each of the 5 pilot phase sites.

The information collected to date can serve as a baseline for future development for the project and to also inform the development of the next phase of evaluation.

2. Qualitative data analysis for Phase 1

All 5 schools in phase 1 (see appendix 2) were interviewed by the Valleys Regional Park Recreation and Wellbeing Convenor between February and March 2022.

The topic guide used to conduct the interviews can be seen in appendix 3.

2.1 Installation to operation time and opening days/hours

The 5 BBBs were delivered between January and April 2020 and took between 6 and 9 months to become fully operational. Covid 19 had a significant impact here in terms of timeframes.

They are currently open between 1 and 3 times a week for between 1.5 and 4 each week. Opening days tend to depend on Fareshare Cymru scheduled delivery days for each geographical area.

1 school advised they have had to reduce the number of times they open per week as they were running out of food and have been unable to secure another Fareshare delivery for any other day of the week. To offset this issue they will be doubling their food order in the one available delivery from April.

2.2 Numbers of users

All school reported either a steady increase, or maintenance of numbers in terms families visiting the BBB each week.

Across the 5 schools the anecdotal evidence at interview was that a large percentage of the people visiting the BBBs each week are not necessarily those who have been identified as 'in need' of support. However, this is not to say that those families are not experiencing difficulties due to increases in prices of food, fuel and utilities etc.

Where the schools are open to the wider community (n=3) there were some reports of families, (8 out of 25 at one school) without children at the school, being at the "*front of the queue*" every week even though local knowledge of the families indicates they do not appear to be in need of subsidised food. Again, this is impossible to corroborate.

All schools report support from parents and teachers who are using the BBB in order to help reduce stigma and to support the project.

The numbers of families using the BBBs ranged from 10 to 50 each week (figures quoted by each school were approximately 10, 20, 25 40 – [but only 10 regulars] & 50)

2.3 Curriculum

Overall the schools did not report that they are yet making demonstrable links to the curriculum for Wales. The reasons cited for this were such things as:

- Not had enough time yet (covid related staff shortages were cited for this)
- Due to plan this next term x 2
- Expecting more guidance/support on this aspect of the BBB

No schools had used anything from the BBB website or that had been provided by the BBB project team.

(NB there have been sessions held to assist with curriculum related resource development that a number of these BBBs had not attended)

A number of the schools have begun to develop resources relating to BBB and the curriculum and one in particular has recognised the learning potential of Big Bocs Bwyd within their bespoke curriculum design.

2.4 Volunteers

4 out of 5 schools now have regular volunteers

1 school has 10 volunteers in total, with a core regular team of 3

2 schools have as 3 volunteers and one has a 'friends of' the school group that also help periodically

1 school has 2 regular volunteers and ad hoc help from other staff members

1 school has no volunteers at present (they did have 5 parents but they have dropped out 1 by 1) so they are currently trying to recruit.

Only 1 school reported feeling completely confident they could rely on volunteers to take on most of the running of their BBBs.

Most of the 5 schools reported staff needing to routinely 'step in' to subsidise volunteer time.

2.5 Practicalities/barriers

The common barriers that were identified were:

- The initial set up being challenging and this referred mostly to:
 - Bank account set up (on average seemed to take 2 months+ and some have still not secured internet banking access)
 - Writing their constitutions (some had been told by their local council for voluntary action that the one provided to them by the BBB central project team was out of date but were not necessarily forthcoming with help)
 - Obtaining charity status (2 reported they havent started/finalised the process yet)
- Environmental health related aspects – temperature checks, approval for things from the local authority etc. – the schools advised this has just taken time to get used to and becomes easier with time
- Not having templates for things like BBB specific risk assessments, volunteer policies,
- The unanticipated cost/work involved in updating infrastructure (gates, fences etc.) to accommodate new activity related to the BBBs
- Having time to build relationships with local suppliers (1 school has not managed this yet)
- Finding consistently reliable volunteers

1 of the 5 schools reported having significant difficulty in relation to their interaction with their local council (NB. the BBB central project team are aware of the difficulties with this council in particular and have been working to address this).

In terms of barriers for parents, some schools reported anecdotal feedback from parents around the stigma of using the BBB (because it was seen by them as a “*foodbank*”). All schools seem to be working hard on promoting it as a ‘saving food from waste’ shop rather than a food bank.

All schools said the initial ‘getting the BBB off the ground’ was a lot of work but that it definitely had got easier as it bedded into the school life

2.6 Permenancy and future plans

All schools saw the BBB as a being a permanent fixture in the school and most reported plans to work towards the following:

- Developing their own resources (all schools said this - e.g. recipe cards, menu cards)
- Developing the programme of BBB activities that can deliver aspects of the curriculum (e.g. learning about money by being involved in the shop)
- Developing community links (especially via the food growing/community gardening element)
- More cooking (all 5 schools). Great creativity was being demonstrated here where there were no kitchens, with examples like using just slow cookers or staff room microwaves
- Exploring the use of the school kitchens (currently not permitted by the local authorities)
- Exploring possibilities for Community Interest Company/social enterprise status – particularly in relation to job opportunities for volunteers (1 school)
- Developing ‘junk food’ cafes in the school
- Furthering community links
- Developing links with allotments and other community groups
- Opening during holiday time to ensure continuity of the ‘service’ and for wider community involvement

2.7 Funding

1 school has already secured an Awards for All lottery grant (£9100) and this will enable them to have someone with gardening expertise to develop their garden for use both by the school and the community.

All schools said they would very much like to apply for additional funds but feel they need support to find out exactly where they can apply to and some guidance with bid writing.

A number of schools have tried to become part of the Tesco blue token scheme but all report they it felt was too onerous a process.

Some schools have approached their local councils for voluntary service for help.

2.8 Support required

There were a number of common areas where all 5 schools highlighted they felt they needed additional support:

- More guidance on charity registration at the outset
- Fundraising (particularly to write bids)
- General support and mentoring (just to be able to ask questions more often for example)
- Risk assessments, volunteer policies, general procedures

Some of the comments were:

“we really weren’t sure how to do lots of this”

“additional support would have been really useful, and still would be to be honest”

A number of the schools said it would be useful to let others that follow them in having BBBs know of the challenges, just so they are prepared. Most also mentioned having some sort of mentoring or buddy system.

It is important to mention here that a number of the schools were very complimentary about the support received by Hannah Cogbill in particular.

NB. Centrally organised project meetings were held half termly and all 5 schools were invited to attend.

2.9 Observations and general comments

The common things mentioned when asked for observations/general comments were:

- How valuable they found the half termly project meetings where they could learn from others and share their experiences
- The process has been more work than they had anticipated
- The workload is greatly eased by having a core of committed volunteers
- Most schools said they would be interested in basic nutrition training
- Where the VRP Guardians had supported as school, (8 weeks x once a week practical support and advice relating to the produce growing aspect of the BBBs) feedback was exceptionally positive

“we couldn’t have moved the garden space forward without them, they were fabulous”

“the Guardians were invaluable and gave us such good advice”

- How wonderfully engaging the BBBs are for all the children (examples of activities such as junk food café’s, cooking sessions, recipe development, sugar reduction sessions etc. were given)
- 2 reports of local organisations being unhappy with having to ‘share’ local surplus food (e.g. one community development organisation that had “lost their Tesco slot because of the school now getting it instead”)
- Most schools reported buying additional food to ‘top up’ Fareshare deliveries and their local supermarket surplus food offers. This enabled them to make up recipe kits for example (e.g. Rainbow rice that was cooked in school to tie in with learning about chinese new year and the children were then able to buy the recipe kit to take home and cook, and post their pictures of it on school social media).
- All 5 schools report they make a profit and that can be reinvested into further BBB development
- Most schools had approached their local councils for voluntary service (e.g. BAVO, VAMT) for advice on things such as developing the constitution, charitable status processes, funding and volunteer (recruitment and/or management)
- Some great examples of ‘circular economy’ activities were reported – e.g. giving surplus fruit/veg to a local person who makes jams and chutneys out of them. Using plastic waste for art projects, obtaining composting bins from the council so they could make their own compost for their school garden

3. Data development needs

This phase of the BBB project has usefully highlighted a number of data development gaps which will need to be addressed if the project is to evidence how it is performing against its objectives.

Record keeping has been quite sketchy and as records are kept in different ways at different schools (e.g. some record numbers of transactions, others a ‘mental note’ of how many families use their BBB each week), it is difficult to correlate any meaningful information.

In addition, previous information that was thought may be useful, such as KGs of food ‘saved from landfill’ have, over time, proven to be less useful and too onerous to collate. The case study approach also doesn’t appear to have yielded the type and regularity of information that was hoped for at the outset.

There is a need, at this stage, to revisit the objectives (Appendix 6), confirm if they remain the same and then develop an easy data collection protocol that can be a generic reporting requirement for each school. For example, it would be useful to establish common (and regular) recording procedures for:

- Numbers of families using BBB

- Volunteer hours
- % of families from outside the school (to ascertain community reach)

4. Project Team comments

The BBB central project team highlighted the following points in terms of 'lessons learnt' to date:

- There have been a great deal of procurement and construction lessons learnt since the installation of these pilot phase 5 BBBs. This has enabled subsequent phases of the project to be delivered both more cost effectively and at a faster pace
- Developing a network of local contractors and suppliers has also greatly enhanced the project in terms of value for money, local material sourcing etc.
- There are now well-developed relationships with many of the Local Authorities. This has provided a clearer picture of the different approaches taken by each local authority. It is important to note that despite national building regs, Local Authorities often interpret those regulations differently
- Experience has now demonstrated that a named (and consistent) lead from within the schools is needed from the outset in order to ensure continuity of messages, attendance at project meetings and ongoing awareness of resources etc.
- Developing a robust Expression of Interest process (used from Phase 2 onwards) has helped ensure a level of commitment from individual schools
- Robust relationship building has been central to the process at all levels
- Based on lessons learnt since the pilot, future Expressions of Interest will now include a requirement for both an operational lead (e.g. family liaison officer) and a strategic curriculum lead (i.e. a member of the Senior Leadership Team) for each BBB. This will help ensure that BBB becomes firmly embedded in terms of curriculum design, family engagement and sustainability of the project

5. Conclusion

It is important to reiterate again here that this pilot was during the pandemic. Some of the BBBs were delivered during periods of wide-reaching restrictions (lockdown or shortly following), which will undoubtedly have slowed the transition from delivery to opening. Then due to severe staff shortages and demands on teachers in general (in terms of pandemic recovery), things like time to set up bank accounts, learn 'the ropes' of running a shop, encourage and train volunteers etc., have also been impacted.

It is also important to note here that this is a very small sample size, although there is potential for significant generalisability as many of the variables remain the same across schools.

Due to around £1.6k of funding being received in a short space of time, the rollout of BBBs has been very quick. Being unable to gain insight from the initial ones before moving to each new phase means there has been a steep learning curve for all! Many of the observations in relation to barriers/what support is required, have now been addressed prior to phase 2.

At the time of writing there are 10 operational BBBs, 25 installed (phase 2) and awaiting opening and an Expression of Interest day scheduled for a further 25 (phase 3).

However, in the relatively short time of the BBBs being operational, the indications remain that they do have the potential to be an effective intervention to contribute to the following:

- BBB provides a vehicle for Curriculum for Wales to be developed in an authentic and inclusive way
- Providing a settings-based approach to the provision of food and nutrition learning without the stigma of a food bank
- The reduction of food poverty/food insecurity
- Helping to start to improve awareness of nutritional intake/quality
- Helping improve the overall wellbeing of the families who use the BBB
- Increasing parental engagement and involvement at the school/in their gardens
- Measurably reducing food waste
- Encouraging wider community cohesion (and links with other food/growing related suppliers and projects)
- Increasing food literacy
- Increasing the knowledge necessary to help address the nature and climate emergency at a community level
- Increasing the food growing skills necessary to encourage community growing
- Increasing food preparation and cooking skills (at schools where they have the facilities)
- Generating a small income for the school – making them relatively cost neutral (after initial set up) and helping contribute to their viability and sustainability

6. Recommendations

It is pertinent to reiterate here that since these 5 pilot schools set up, there have been refinements made to BBB that means a number of early 'teething' issues have now been addressed (e.g. issues re bank accounts – there is now a better idea of which banks to approach, more information is now available about how simplify filling in the charity status forms etc.)

Picking up on findings from the interviews, it would be useful to explore the following:

1. A review of the objectives just to ensure they remain fit for purpose

2. Developing data collection protocols/framework

This would ensure consistent and comparable data collection across the schools and the various phases and will provide essential information both to ascertain progress against objectives and to inform future phases

3. Remind schools of the free OCN Community Food and Nutrition training available and ensure that it is on the website

A number of schools mentioned they would like basic nutrition training and this course is available (at a £25 per person charge) to schools at present. As SHEP registered schools are already required to do this particular training, this would be useful for those hoping to become SHEP schools

4. Exploring ways to assist schools to get extra support for the produce growing areas of their schools until they have the infrastructure in place and a bank of volunteers to lead on this work

This could be in the form of things such as:

- a. one large bid for funds that could be allocated on a school-by-school basis to help establish and develop the growing spaces (e.g. the Lottery could be approached to see if this were something they would consider funding across Wales)
- b. exploring organisations that are Wales wide that may be willing to help locally (e.g. Men's sheds, Council Allotment Officers etc.)
- c. providing a bid blueprint bid that can be completed and submitted at local level to relevant funders (e.g. the various windfarm funds that cover specific geographical areas)

5. Exploring what policies/procedures/documents etc. could potentially be made available as templates for BBB schools.

There may be some things such as template bids, volunteer policies etc. that could easily be accessed central and disseminated via the Teams Hub. This could ensure

some level of 'quality standard' whilst still allowing for schools to make those content bespoke to each school

6. Promoting mentoring/buddying system

In the first instance, schools can identify other schools via the half termly meetings that they could contact to buddy up with

7. The use of currently 'off limits' authority owned school kitchens

Previous discussions with local authorities indicate that use of school kitchens will not be possible. Therefore, schools need to consider how they can develop their own cooking spaces within their individual environments. There are, for example, funding schemes available for schools to access monies to create their own kitchen facilities (e.g. outdoor kitchens)

8. Wider sharing resources such as recipe cards, menu sheets etc.

There are already links and tips on the resources page of the website that link to extensive recipe resources. A re-reminder to schools that these resources are on the website may be timely

9. Consideration be given to alternative supplies of surplus food

This will help ensure a continued supply of additional food – perhaps linking up with local allotments, pantries, local food banks etc.

10. Local Councils for Voluntary Action are approached centrally to discuss what support they can offer schools in their area

As the CVC's (VAMT for Merthyr, GAVO for Gwent, BAVO for Bridgend, NPTCVS for Neath Port Talbot, Interlink for RCT, CAVS for Carmarthen etc) are already under significant pressure, it is likely they will find it difficult if individual schools approach them so an initial discussion centrally with those local organisations is likely to be more popular in the first instance.

11. Discussions at Local Authority level with food poverty teams, community development teams, allotment officers etc. to bring BBB to their attention and to foster links with wider community engagement work

This could help 'join the dots' in terms of other projects such as food banks, pantries, allotments etc

NB. In relation to recommendations 10 and 11 above, the post of Community Managers (under the Community Schools initiative) could be ideal roles to address these recommendations. Community managers should have a good understanding of

the aims and objectives of the BBB projects and be able to engage with all the relevant organisations.

Section 7 Appendices


- 1 baseline evaluation report
- 2 BBB phases summary
- 3 Interview topic guide
- 4 Current objectives of the BBB project

Appendix 1 - Baseline evaluation report



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Appendix 2 - BBB Phases summary

| Phase | Timeline | Schools | Funding |
|--|---|--|--|
| Concept phase | 2018 - 2019 | Cadoxton/Gwaun y nant Oakfield St Martin's, Caerphilly Llandeilo primary school, Herbert Thompson Primary, Cardiff Grangetown Nursery, Cardiff Clase Primary, Swansea | School funded (Cadoxton, Oakfield) Waterloo Foundation funded x 5 |
| Pilot – phase 1 | 2019 – 2020 | Cwmfelin Primary, Bridgend Cyfarthfa Primary, Merthyr Garth Primary, Bridgend St Margarets RC Primary, Aberdare Ysgol Bro Banw Ammanford | Welsh Government (WG) £100k |
| 25 Valleys schools – phase 2 | 2021 - 2022 |  Phase 2 schools 2022.docx | WG £658k |
| 25 additional schools (20 Valleys based, 5 outside the Valleys) – phase 3 | 2022 – 2023 (at time of writing, Expressions of Interest are being sought) | | WG £900k |
| Phase 4 – To be confirmed following data gathering, application of planning tools) and evaluation of phase 2 (approximately June 2022, which will inform phase 3 evaluation) | | | |

Appendix 3 - Interview topic guide



BBB Valleys 5
interviews topic sheet

Appendix 4 - Current objectives of the BBB project

- Contribute to the reduction of food poverty/food insecurity via the 'pay as you feel' shop
- Help improve nutritional intake
- Help improve the wellbeing of the families who use the BBB
- Increase parental involvement in ways that suit them (e.g. buying from the pay as you feel shop, volunteering with food growing aspects of the projects etc.)
- To share lessons learnt with the next phase of BBB installation
- To develop learning resources that will ensure BBBs become a focal point for experiential learning about food
- Measurably reduce food waste
- Children will become more confident and literate about the connections between food, wellbeing and nature
- Children will have a wider appreciation of the connections between food, nature and the economy
- Children will develop a solid level of food literacy and confidence around how to process, cook and use food as a foundation for health Through experiential learning
- Children will have an improved awareness of the benefits and potential of relocalising food production and distribution
- Children will build enterprise skills through real-world learning and links to Curriculum for Wales, Rights Respecting Schools aims, Future Generation and Wellbeing Goals, United Nations SDGs and Eco Schools