***Sian Cousins’ journey through volunteering:***

“Whilst I was studying at the University of South Wales, I made sure to take every opportunity to expand my networks and use free time to volunteer and gain valuable work experience.

“I initially met my current employer, Scott Jeynes, whilst he was in his previous job at Pobl, when he ran a 5 a-side tournament for all local hostels to enter. During university time, myself and my course mates supported the delivery of this tournament where I carried out various roles including time keeping, refereeing, and being the main point of contact for Scott to manage the logistics of the day.

“It was then from our initial introduction that Scott approached me in his new role as Project Manager at Street Football Wales, when he was looking for a volunteer to support the launch of their first women-only session in Cardiff. I worked alongside Caitlin the Development Officer to deliver the session along with meeting weekly to discuss session content and marketing opportunities to grow the women-only project. I then volunteered with Street Football Wales for a year at all women only sessions, events and occasionally the mixed sessions when they needed extra staff, in addition to being a part of the staff team for their first national team competition, since covid, in Edinburgh in 2021.

“Street Football Wales then looked to grow, and I got offered a part-time contract, during my final year of university, as the Women-only Development Officer. This meant I delivered the existing Cardiff women-only session and expanded to deliver a second session in Swansea, along with covering all admin. Then in June, after I graduated, I got offered a full-time contract to become the third full-time staff member where we now run 3 women-only sessions and have a women’s team in our national team programme each year.

“The time I gave voluntarily to support Street Football Wales meant I got offered a full-time contract straight out of university, in a job that has presented invaluable career opportunities including managing and developing a project independently, developing positive relationships with staff, volunteers and key stakeholders as well as being involved in planning and running several international trips.”