

Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations

# Annual Impact Report

2023-24



Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations  
Cymdeithas Mudiadau Gwirfoddol Gwent

Working with Communities since 1927

# Contents

- Foreword by Chair 3
- Statement of Financial Activities 4/5
- Statement of Financial Position 6
- Blaenau Gwent 7-10
- Caerphilly 11-15
- Monmouthshire 16-22
- Newport 23-26
- Gwent-wide 27-28
- Engagement & Influencing 29
- The Year at a Glance 30
- Glossary of Terms 31

### GAVO's Bankers

NatWest Bank, High Street, Newport, NP20 1GG.

### GAVO's Solicitors

Morgan, Denton & Jones, Ground Floor, Park House, Greyfriars Road, Cardiff, CF10 3FA.

### GAVO's Auditors

Walter Hunter & Co., 24 Bridge Street, Newport, NP20 4SF.

### GAVO's Registered Office

Room G2 Beechwood House, Beechwood Park, Christchurch Road, Newport, NP19 8AJ.



**GAVO is the longest-standing and largest County Voluntary Council (CVC) in Wales. GAVO represents the Third Sector at local, regional & national levels and is the infrastructure support organisation for the Third Sector in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire and Newport.**

GAVO's role is set out in Welsh Government's Third Sector Scheme 2014 as:

- Enabling other Third Sector organisations to grow and develop;
- Supporting individual volunteers and collective voluntary action;
- Promoting good and safe governance across the Third Sector;
- Supporting Public Service design and delivery;

■ Providing voice and representation for the wider sector; and

■ Sharing good practice and innovation.

In addition to this Core Framework, GAVO has significant experience in developing and delivering projects and programmes which are a response to identified unmet community need, through collaborative approaches and partnership working.

Company Limited by Guarantee: 5590517  
Registered Charity No. 1113558



# Foreword by the GAVO Chair

Welcome to the GAVO Annual Impact Report for 2023/24



## GAVO continues to support communities within Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, and Newport.

GAVO has worked with voluntary groups to obtain funding totalling £1,855,434 across the GAVO footprint to help towards the sustainability of their organisations. This has also shown the sector growing to provide much-needed support to our communities. During the year there has been an increase in new organisations which GAVO have supported, with direct advice given to 482 groups in total.

GAVO Officers have reported that individuals are still reluctant to volunteer due to the cost-of-living crisis, GAVO continues to support third sector organisations to recruit and retain volunteers, successfully recruiting 161 new volunteers.

As GAVO's Chair, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking volunteers who keep our sector thriving. Moving into the next financial year, I know that the GAVO Board, the officers and partners will continue to support our communities to the best of their ability. You will see throughout this report the support our Officers have given to a wide variety of third sector organisations across the GAVO footprint. Looking to the future GAVO is committed to involving young people to be part of the mechanics of the organisation by sitting on the Executive Board and Local Committees.

The GAVO Strategic Plan 2025-2028 will be launched at this year's GAVO AGM, which Trustees and staff will work to put this strategy into action. The organisation is committed to ensuring that the third sector is supported, through its Mission Statement, Aims and Values. GAVO will strive to ensure that the Welsh Government policy for a Safer Wales is high on the Equality Diversity and Inclusion agenda.

GAVO continues to represent the voice of the sector on a variety of strategic partnerships, including the Gwent Public Service Board (PSB) and Regional Partnership Board for health. Information gathered at the Gwent PSB is passed through to each area via GAVO Forums, GAVO local committees and local partnership meetings, this ensures that the sector is regularly informed of emerging priorities across Gwent.

GAVO continues to be part of Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW), Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and ensures that the four pillars (volunteering, sustainable funding, governance and engagement and influencing) are at the forefront of GAVO's working practices. GAVO continues to work in partnership with both the statutory and private sector, whose response has again been exemplary, allowing the third sector to adapt to different and new ways of working.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the GAVO Board, GAVO Officers and special thanks goes to the third sector organisations, partners and community groups for your support over this period.

Continue to support your communities and GAVO will continue to support you.

**Edward Watts** MBE  
Chair

*As GAVO's Chair, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking volunteers who keep our sector thriving.*

# Statement of Financial Activities

(including income and expenditure account) For Year Ended 31st March 2024

	31.03.24					31.03.23				
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total from continuing operations £			Discontinued operations £	Total Funds £	Total from continuing operations £	Discontinued operations £	Total Funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS</b>										
Donations and legacies	3,075	0	3,075			0	3,075	0	0	0
Charitable activities	1,025,569	2,187,582	2,513,167			699,984	3,213,151	2,695,617	1,695,807	4,391,424
Investment income	35,693	0	35,693			0	35,693	7,327	0	7,327
Other income	3,120	0	3,120			0	3,120	88,789	0	88,789
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,067,457</b>	<b>2,187,582</b>	<b>2,555,055</b>			<b>699,984</b>	<b>3,255,039</b>	<b>2,791,733</b>	<b>1,695,807</b>	<b>4,487,540</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>										
Expenditure on Charitable activities	832,396	2,142,175	2,311,784			662,787	2,974,571	2,109,089	1,695,807	3,804,896
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>832,396</b>	<b>2,142,175</b>	<b>2,311,784</b>			<b>662,787</b>	<b>2,974,571</b>	<b>2,109,089</b>	<b>1,695,807</b>	<b>3,804,896</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>235,061</b>	<b>45,407</b>	<b>243,271</b>			<b>37,197</b>	<b>280,468</b>	<b>682,644</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>682,644</b>
Transfers between funds	106,904	(106,904)	37,197			(37,197)	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Movements in Funds</b>	<b>341,965</b>	<b>(61,497)</b>	<b>280,468</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>280,468</b>	<b>682,644</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>682,644</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>										
Total funds brought forward	1,453,360	231,191	1,684,551			0	1,684,551	1,001,907	0	1,001,907
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>1,795,325</b>	<b>169,694</b>	<b>1,965,019</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>1,965,019</b>	<b>1,684,551</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,684,551</b>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.  
The charity has ceased the employment support activity, and this is shown as a discontinued operation.

# Statement of Financial Position

For Year Ended 31st March 2024

	31.03.24		31.03.23
	£	£	£
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors	129,952		740,608
Cash at bank and in hand	2,571,498		1,491,060
	<b>2,701,450</b>		<b>2,231,668</b>
<b>CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year</b>			
	<b>731,429</b>		<b>536,410</b>
<b>Net current assets</b>		1,970,021	1,695,258
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		<b>1,970,021</b>	<b>1,695,258</b>
<b>PROVISIONS</b>			
Pensions & similar obligations		5,002	10,707
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>1,965,019</b>	<b>1,684,551</b>
<b>FUNDS OF THE CHARITY</b>			
Restricted funds		169,694	231,191
Unrestricted funds		1,795,325	1,453,360
<b>Total charity funds</b>		<b>1,965,019</b>	<b>1,684,551</b>

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 27 November 2024, and are signed on behalf of the board by:

Mr E. Watts MBE DL  
Trustee

The regional approach to delivering GAVO service is now well embedded, having changed from thematic teams in 2021-22. The locality offices are now providing a base for staff in each county although they spend much of their time out in communities working with groups and volunteers and increasingly with partners. GAVO retains the core team of Community Development, Volunteering and Health & Wellbeing in each county, led by a designated Regional Strategic Lead Officer with a specialism in one of those three areas of work. Additional projects vary county by county and the following narrative report highlights the work in each area, reflecting the development of the regional approach.



**Our Regional Strategic Lead is active within the relevant support structures across the region to ensure the Third Sector Voice is heard. Involvement at a strategic level has been maintained and the officer has been present at a range of strategic meetings. To ensure GAVO is an active member and participating appropriately, the Officer serves as GAVO Lead on the Local Delivery Group with Public Service partners. The team supported the BG Local Committee meetings and encouraged some new organisations to attend.**



### Community Development

Our Community Development Officers are in place to provide governance and financial support to organisations across the Gwent region. Community Development in Blaenau Gwent has a significant focus on supporting organisations with funding bids and in looking for opportunities for funding for the third sector.

The Regional Strategic Lead and Development Manager in Blaenau Gwent initiated the start of the SPF grant discussions, capturing valuable learning opportunities from this new process. As a result of these conversations with Blaenau Gwent CBC regarding the availability of Shared Prosperity Funds (SPF) for the sector,

the Regional Strategic Lead developed a number of bids for third sector small grant schemes. The bids were received positively and successfully, and two grant schemes were launched during the year to support organisations and volunteers, promoted and managed by the GAVO Blaenau Gwent team.

- Sports Small Grants scheme of £220,000
- Volunteering Training scheme £45,000

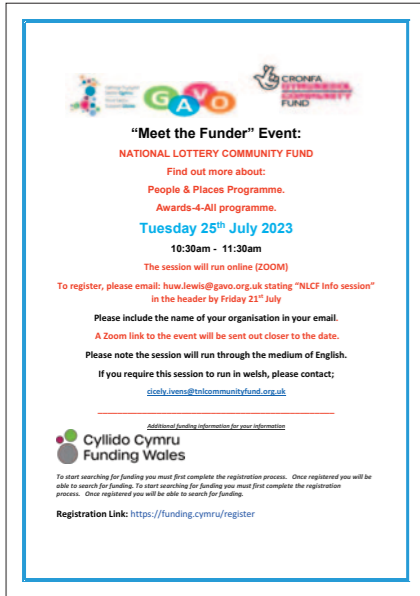
Alongside the new grants the Team also supported the annual Regional Integration Fund (RIF) small grant scheme, providing £100,000 from the Regional Partnership Board/ABUHB for third sector organisation projects providing health and wellbeing support to communities. The RIF Emergency Funding for groups with their own premises providing support to communities throughout the Winter period also received wide attention and a number of organisations have received vital funding towards their running costs.

As a result of the additional SPF work, a part-time Development Officer was appointed on a fixed term to support sustainable funding and good governance in Blaenau Gwent.

GAVO BG Development Officers have formed a working group for community action network events with the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Partnership Officer and Blaenau Gwent's Food Partnership Co-ordinator from Tai Calon; and partnered with the Officer to identify and compile third-sector contacts, laying the groundwork for a dedicated forum led by GAVO. They have also developed a customer satisfaction form, intending to gather feedback from community contacts. This data will inform the development of the third-sector forum.

### Some examples of impact include:

- Assisted Cwm 1st Scout group in expanding their café.
- Supported Waundeg Action Group to



submit three funding applications, resulting in a successful grant for the group and its community activity while facilitating the donation of carpet tiles from Abingdon Flooring Ltd to the Waundeg community house.

- Submitted several Awards for All applications, specifically targeting sewing/crafting groups in Blaenau Gwent. These initiatives aim to address social isolation and foster new relationships within a supportive environment.
- Successful allocation of small grants which included the upgrade of Ystrad Deri's community kitchen with £15,000 of funding and engaged with a newly registered men's mental health charity, providing support and guidance for its establishment.
- Established collaboration with Tai Calon Community Housing Association Well-being Team to link with existing GAVO groups.

### Volunteering

Our Volunteering Officers, both Adult and Youth, are there to support volunteering through quality opportunities and by responding to requests from individuals in the community as well as working with Third Sector organisations and partners to promote good quality volunteering placements.

The Volunteering Officers have been focussing on raising the profile of volunteering and in their work and have been in conversation with a number of RSLs to support their tenants with volunteering opportunities. They also met with BG Council and local councillors to expand volunteering initiatives and to explore how volunteers could support asylum



dispersal families and asylum seekers' community involvement, facing language barriers.

The annual Cash4U grants for youth volunteering were launched during the year, as was the Annual Volunteering Awards during Volunteers Week with officers promoting the GAVO Volunteering Awards and encouraging nominations. The Volunteering Officers have also appeared on local radio promoting volunteering! The Volunteering Officer represents GAVO on the working group overseeing the development of the new Volunteering Wales platform and has supported the launch of a refreshed Volunteering Wales website.

The Blaenau Gwent Awards, held at Llanhilleth, were well-received by organisations and individuals providing an opportunity to celebrate volunteering across the county borough.

Officers have actively participated in various employment and cost of living events, run by partner organisations, resulting in an increase in referrals. They have also maintained attendance at area-specific meetings to stay informed about challenges faced by young people whilst having the opportunity also to promote GAVO's services.

The team also explored collaborative working opportunities with organisations like Volunteering Matters, focusing on befriending services for individuals over 18 and actively engaged with organisations who support the volunteers with additional needs, ensuring their successful integration into placements and providing necessary support. Some examples of the activity during the year are:

- Attendance at the "Which Way Now" event, allowing for closer links to be made with organisations and potential volunteers.



- Placements at Beaufort Theatre and Llan Miners Chapel.
- Received referrals for potential volunteers from Careers Wales, Youth Disability Team, and Local Authorities, emphasising the importance of recruiting younger volunteers with some referrals having complex needs. Available placements offer training opportunities, catering to young volunteers who have disengaged from school.
- Conducted volunteer workshops for Llamau and ACT across Blaenau Gwent, enhancing youth engagement and planning future volunteering projects.
- Participated in community events like "Leaping into the Future" and "One Beat," showcasing volunteering opportunities and GAVO services, engaged with schools and community centres to explore volunteering opportunities for students and young people and successfully facilitated volunteering participation in projects such as tree planting and litter picks.
- Provided ongoing support and recognition for volunteers' achievements and contributions to their placements.

### Health Social Care and Wellbeing

Our Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing Partnership Officers are there to support the Wellbeing Agenda. A key element of the work is to build partnerships and relationships across the statutory and third sector to ensure that communities have information on how to access as wide a range of health and social care services as possible and support third sector organisations with a health and wellbeing focus to promote their activities to all.

The HSC&WB Officer has been responsible for promoting and managing applications for the RIF grant which was substantially oversubscribed. Having been guest speaker at an ABUHB

Compassionate Communities event the Officer saw a marked increase in enquiries from GP surgeries regarding third sector services.

A significant piece of work was involvement on a multi-agency basis with the large number of Nigerian families who moved into Blaenau Gwent during the year, not covered by a formal resettlement programme.

The Officer has continued to promote wellbeing through the production of the BG Weekly Burst, increasing the reach, with confirmed figures reaching 986 people weekly through emails and Facebook updates with a current reach of 7685 people, with posts on local pharmacy / GP opening times and a free toy giveaway reaching significant numbers.

As the GAVO representative on the Blaenau Gwent Neighbourhood Care Networks (NCNs) the Officer has provided opportunities for third sector organisations such as Volunteering Matters to make presentations; and has been key in producing a referral pathway poster for GP rooms alongside the NCN. Examples of other activity include:

- Meeting with large numbers of organisations in order to link them into the statutory sector and with each other including BGCBC Young Carers, Smart Money, PHW Screening Team, Inside Out, Thriving Communities and Muddled Minds dementia group
- Supported the Section 16 Forum event planning, MH & LD Third Sector re-commissioning, and Carers Operational Group.
- Worked with the Compassionate Communities coordinator to advise surgery staff of available groups/services for patients to meet their needs.
- Worked with the Regional Dementia Friendly/Integrated Wellbeing Network (IWN) to discuss GAVO running a BG Dementia Steering Group and planned a mapping exercise.
- Worked with Wise Kids to run their first 8-week course in BG (funded from our RIF grant), introducing them to Families First and Young Carers who gave a free venue for a taster session.
- Scheduled a BG Wellbeing Day with IWN for both men and women.
- Coordinated third sector organisations' involvement in the new Bevan Health and Wellbeing Centre, focusing on mental health themes.
- Presented GAVO services at a BGCBC Social Work Team meeting and conducted a customer satisfaction survey in BG.

### Communities for Work



GAVO completed its delivery of the Welsh Government and European Funded Community Employability Programmes contract across Blaenau Gwent in partnership with the DWP during the year, with a number of staff taking voluntary redundancy and others moving over through a TUPE agreement to work within the local authority to continue the Welsh Government funded element of the programme.

A small team remained with GAVO for six months to close the programme, completing the task and moving on to other opportunities at the beginning of October 2023.



There was also a change in geographical focus and eligibility and the reduced team moved from four offices to a base in Ebbw Vale Institute, to cover the whole of BG. The team have had to refocus and, whilst still with GAVO, undertook the following:

- As a result of a number of factory closures supported large numbers of newly unemployed people, including a successful CV writing workshop. The team are having to work with new eligibility criteria and guidance and changes to the way barrier funds can be accessed.
- Conducted an employment event with 287 attendees, resulting in 6 people securing employment on the day. 63 employers attended, with 150 CVs received and 1,377 inquiries about live opportunities.
- Introduced the youth bus for community outreach and improved signage for the Engagement team.

GAVO is sad to see such a successful programme finish and hope it will be equally as successful for the people of Blaenau Gwent in its new guise. We wish all the staff good luck for the future.



**The Regional Strategic Lead and Development Manager maintains the strategic links with the statutory sector in the county borough through involvement with the Local Delivery Group, the local element of the Wider Gwent PSB, as well as other statutory sector meetings such as Safeguarding, Families First Board. Also providing support for the Voluntary Sector Representatives and Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee with Caerphilly CBC, scheduled meetings have taken place throughout the year with Lowri Jones from Menter Iaith elected to Chair the full Committee for the year. The Officer has continued partnership working with the CCBC Volunteering team to arrange further volunteer training and the RDP team on potential use of SPF funding and support for sustainable food growth, allotments and food producers. Also working throughout the year with the CCBC Caerphilly Cares Team and CCBC Senior Officers to maximise the promotion of funding they have available, ensure there is a joined up approach to supporting the third sector and identify service gaps the sector could potentially fill.**

The early focus for the whole Caerphilly Team was the Mega One Beat Third Sector Showcase event in April in Blackwood Rugby Club. Hugely successful with over 30 organisations attending plus yoga and Taekwondo demonstrations, free blood pressure checks, folk music and children's activities supported by the Early Language team and Petra Publishing. Feedback was very positive and public engagement increased. A second event, again proving successful and with increased public attendance took place in March 2024. Further events are planned for 24/25 with a new title "V Fest".

### Community Development

The CCBC SLA provides for additional development support allowing GAVO to undertake more intensive development work with groups looking to become more sustainable. Enquiries around Community Asset Transfer grew but the process remains complex and time consuming for groups and Officers supporting them. The CCBC Community Empowerment Fund relaunched with several groups asking for help to apply as well as ongoing support for groups applying for Welsh Church Acts funding and Grants to the Voluntary Sector administered by CCBC.

A major focus has been the development of the Participatory Budget Programme, as commissioned by ABUHB and CCBC and the Development Officer undertook substantial preparatory work.

The Development Officers have provided increased support to organisations seeking help with business planning, project planning and organisational development. They have conducted workshop sessions for groups including supporting officers in Monmouthshire by running Trustee's Roles and Responsibilities Workshops for two groups in that county.

Working with the Volunteering Team in Caerphilly Cares the Regional Lead was able to negotiate some SPF funding to provide a series of free training courses for volunteers throughout the year. The courses provided by Dr Alan Dowler and CCBC Adult Education included:

- Effective Communication Skills
- Effective Management of Staff and Volunteers
- Effective Leadership Skills
- Stress Management
- Project Management and Advanced Communication Skills with certificates of accomplishment

CCBC's Adult Education Unit will provide the

- Accredited Food Safety,
- First Aid
- Basic Safeguarding.

An evaluation meeting for the first year of training has also taken place.



Development Officers have continued to host the Caerphilly Voluntary Sector Forum with good attendances and positive contributions from the sector.

The mainstay of the community development work is supporting organisations to find funding and as this is becoming increasingly difficult it can take longer to see results. Officers dealt with many new funding enquiries and meetings with new groups, Some successful examples are:

- National Lottery People and Places grant of £260,000 for Rhymney Valley Foodbank and £90,000 for Cefn Fforest Miners Institute.

Development Officers have also progressed with Community Wealth Building and a circular foundation economy in partnership with the Caerphilly Team, and started the process of a research project with the focus being on the sector and understanding perceptions of Social/Nature Prescribing with the HSC&WB Officer.

### Volunteering

Our Volunteering Officers, both Adult and Youth, provide support for all aspects of volunteering and the year has seen substantial outreach work with third sector organisations and partners. Ensuring volunteering remains a high priority the Officers have participated in a



number of partnership meetings, including green spaces and tree planting, and meeting with Gwent Police regarding volunteer recruitment. There were also successful engagements with schools, disability teams, theatres, and community groups to promote volunteering. They also participated in joint events including One Beat, Caerphilly quarterly forum and the GAVO Gwent Volunteers Officer Strategic meeting. The Officers have organised a number visit by the Lord Lieutenant of Gwent, GAVO's President, to volunteering activities and groups across the county borough including:

- Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr to meet Ffrind I Mi, Dementia and End of Life volunteers.
- Newbridge Tabernacle to showcase their services and see the Vision Centre before presenting certificates and awards as part of Volunteers Week.
- Ystrad Mynach's Climer Legacy Fund Food Bank.
- Food Pantry at Gilfach Community Centre and presenting certificates to food pantry volunteers.
- Taraggan Educational Gardens, acknowledging significant volunteer contributions.

Officers have promoted volunteering opportunities at several partnership events including the Bryn Meadows Neighbourhood Care Network Meeting (Winter Pressures Event), Fare Share Food Pantry (71 in



attendance), Thriving Communities 2nd anniversary at Fleur de Lys Community Centre, Van Community Centre Activities, and Morgan Jones Park Police event, "getting to know your community". There has been a significant increase in the number of requests for corporate volunteering activities from the statutory and private sector.

They have also recruited volunteers for Careers Wales, Youth Disability Team, and Caerphilly Council, providing placements and training opportunities for younger volunteers with complex needs. As part of the recruitment drive, also registered 125 individuals for annual tree planting weeks and facilitated workshops for Llammau and ACT across Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly centres, focusing on youth engagement and skill development.

A significant element of the work has been to ensure volunteering is recognised and celebrated. The Officers have supported organisations to recognise volunteering efforts by presenting volunteering certificates including 10 generic certificates, 6 certificates for 50 hours, 1 for 500 hours, 2 for 2000 hours, 1 for 4000 hours and 1 for 5000 hours.

As part of that recognition the Officers, supported by the whole Caerphilly Team, organised the Caerphilly Volunteer Awards at Blackwood Miners Institute, in partnership with Caerphilly CBC. The event was an excellent showcase of volunteering achievement.

### Health Social Care and Wellbeing

Our Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing Partnership Officers provide support to Third Sector organisations with a health and wellbeing remit.

At the beginning of the year the HSC&WB Officer had, like others, been responsible promoting and administering the RIF grant

scheme which again was over-subscribed for the county. The Officer met with the new Green Prescribing Coordinator for ABUHB and worked with them on a small grant scheme to support third sector organisations. The Officer has also represented GAVO at the Gwent Citizens Panel and Caerphilly ABUHB Comms and Engagement group and the Regional Dementia group. The Integrated Service Partnership Board was re-established during the year with the HSC&WB Officer representing GAVO and the third sector.

The Officer continued to work closely with the IWN lead and the Cwtch programme, attending IWN meetings/workshops across the borough. A number of significant pieces of work with the IWN included

- Reviving the Wellbeing Friends project. January plans include collaboration with the Parent Network to develop and roll out the project, linking it with Cwtsh guides and the website.
- A Men's Health Event at Bargoed Library in collaboration with IWN Engagement Officer and Caerphilly Libraries. Responding to the success of Women's Health events, partners like Dewis Cymru, Smart Money Cymru Community Bank, Men Walk Talk, Gwent De-Fibbers, SHADE, Salvaged Creations, and Community Connectors participated. Despite a lower turnout than the Women's Day, partners provided significant information and support, conducting blood pressure checks and referring some attendees to GPs.
- Organising Men's Health Day at Risca Library and the WellYou wellbeing day at Caerphilly Library with a view of providing wellbeing services directly to communities and facilitate networking among services.

Participated in consultation events and working to broker new partnerships and collaborations between the third sector and statutory providers is an important role of the HSC&WB Officer and during the year the following were supported:

- The Rebalancing Care strategy, highlighting the importance of fair compensation to the third sector and the value of volunteers not replacing paid services.
- Met with Dr. Lucy Boulter from the University of South Wales to discuss her work supporting older people with a new





supplement for immune response to flu and potentially Covid. Discussed potential collaboration with the voluntary sector and future funding applications.

- A feedback session on third sector commissioning with ABUHB, emphasising the need for collaboration and co-production in practice.
- Engaged with healthcare institutions through working with ABUHB and the Volunteering team to develop initiatives for health and social care students.
- The NCN Winter Pressures Event, a collaborative effort between Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent.

Other partnership activities included attendance at Section 16 Planning Meetings, IWN meetings in Caerphilly, support for Participatory Budgeting project and presentation on HSCWB at the Citizens Panel. The Officer has been actively participating in diverse initiatives and groups, including dementia steering groups, age-friendly community steering group, NHS Screening Network, Fusion Network, ISPB, HAPUS project link-up, Gwent Assistive Tech Network, meetings with Versus Arthritis and Multiply Project, attendance at the Parent Network Trunk or Treat event.

Initiating links with new groups, our Officer has supported Dicky Tickers for heart failure support and met with parents interested in setting up a support group for children with neuro-sensory issues.

### Early Language

GAVO's Early Language Programme is funded through Families First and is focused on supporting Early Language within Caerphilly. By holding sessions for parents and children to attend, our trained Officers support parents with advice, guidance and transfer to other services if needed.

- The Early Language project joined the fun at Mega One Beat in April. The Team received very positive feedback from the Let's Talk with your Baby courses, with the new term beginning in April seeing eight new groups, expanding to twelve in May. New areas are included throughout the year as the eight week courses come to an end and staff have visited Penyrheol, New Tredegar, Blackwood, Abertyswg, Lansbury, and Bargoed before moving on

to new courses for parents and babies in Penyrheol, Penllwyn, Abercarn, New Tredegar, Bargoed, and Gelligaer.

They also ran Let's Splash sessions in local leisure centres and the sessions have been offered to several families attending the programme. They showcased their services at a Health Board Network meeting alongside other third sector and statutory projects and an antenatal event was attended to promote the Let's Talk with Your Baby course and engage with expectant parents. Officers have also been involved in discussions with partners on Summer Play in the Parks activities.

Following their attendance at a Book Trust webinar the team became a key partner in distributing books to families in Caerphilly. The team participated in Book Trust's Rhymetime week, promoting nursery rhymes and singing on social media and within groups, with participating families receiving certificates. The project fostered a closer working relationship with libraries, with several libraries in Caerphilly were set to host groups following the Easter period, including Risca, Bedwas, Abertridwr, Bargoed, and Aberbargoed.

The Officers organised a partnership with St John Ambulance, which aims to provide free First Aid courses to families and arranged three mini first aid sessions in January specifically aimed at families with babies, aiming to enhance their first aid knowledge and skills. The project, in partnership with the Early Years team, received additional funding to offer further first aid courses for families, extending to those attending Let's Talk and Bright Beginnings.

Staff have completed collaborative communication training, emphasizing effective communication with families through reflection and informed listening.

Collaboration with refuge staff resulted in the provision of a customised course for families in supported living. Despite low numbers this engagement was seen as a positive step toward working in partnership and offering opportunities to families who may not have engaged previously.

Early Language Officers participated in an Early Years middle managers meeting and



zone meetings, ensuring the project's integration into Early Years discussions and facilitating partnerships with other stakeholders. The Early Language Families Officers also met to discuss improving the use of Welsh within the project and for families participating in the Let's Talk course.

The Team established a partnership with Bright Beginnings staff to highlight Let's Talk courses during sessions and encourage parent sign-ups. A new group in January, comprised a complete cohort from Bright Beginnings.

### Participatory Budgeting

Having been approached in early 2023 to discuss the delivery of Participatory Budgeting in Caerphilly GAVO agreed to the project and early in the year the SLA, terms of reference for the Steering Group and Operational Group were drawn up and agreed along with a job description for a PB Officer to support the programme.

The Development Officer appointed to oversee the project developed a draft working paper on delivering Participatory Budgeting in Caerphilly County Borough in readiness for GAVO distributing the Participatory budgeting finance which was distributed to Steering Group members with background information on the process planned.

Following extended advertising a part-time Officer was appointed during the second quarter of the year who was supported by the GAVO team to understand the third sector and support structures in the borough before embarking on the task, beginning in the Upper Rhymney Valley area. The team have subsequently supported the production of

marketing materials, and attended the first operational group, locality meetings, all public meetings and introduced the PB officer at groups and networks in order to promote the project and GAVO's work in general.

Initial work involved the PB Officer focussing on meeting with local groups and working with the IWN principles, public engagement being key to the programme GAVO received more than 140 responses to initial public involvement at open meetings, highlighting a total of 420 issues and identified key areas for improving Health and well-being in Rhymney.

The Rhymney Participatory Budgeting Residents Panel was established following the public meetings and has convened regularly since. The panel comprised 34 individuals, with an average attendance of 15 members. The group, supported by the PB Officer, has undertaken a prioritisation exercise to develop its priorities for the PB funding, gone out to residents for expressions of interest for potential projects, sifted applications and planned a showcase and voting event to choose the first round of funding recipients.

Other practical initiatives are underway. Sub-groups have been established to address specific tasks, including Reinstatement of the Rhymney Eisteddfod. Also the development of a Youth Panel aimed at engaging with younger demographics. The Officer is also working on developing project outputs/impacts as project delivery increases.

The first Steering Group meeting was held in line with the Terms of Reference with direction given to the Operational Group to help with partner integration.







# Monmouthshire

The Team in Monmouthshire has been somewhat depleted as a result of long-term sick, resignations and vacancies. However, they have worked well together to minimise the disruption, with some staff taking on extra hours to cover gaps and, in the interim, the DCEO and Team members covered strategic meetings to ensure there was a third sector voice and information could be fed back to the wider sector. Following the agreed investment in temporary staffing, internal job share appointments and successful recruitment, the Team was brought almost up to capacity.

The post of Regional Lead remained vacant during the early part of the year with the Adult and Youth Volunteering Officers eventually being appointed to jointly cover the role. Since then, they have shared the line management of the rest of the team and GAVO representation at strategic meetings.



## Development

A new core part-time Development Officer was appointed to the North of the borough to take up the post vacated by the Regional Strategic Lead Officer/ Development Manager and a part-time temporary post was also appointed to cover sickness absence in the South to provide full time development support across Monmouthshire.

Working together with support from the team both Officers quickly established connections with key community organisations and partners, engaged with many groups that have requested GAVO's support, such as projects in Chepstow with GAVO's Wellbeing Links Officers to establish relationships, including Palmer Centre, Cromwell Road Senior Citizens Group, BaseCamp, and Thornwell Pavilion, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Members of the Women's Institute, and Monmouthshire Housing Association; and completing a Caldicot Pride Awards for All application, indicating the group's positive momentum.

To support their professional development and knowledge sharing, both Officers participated in training workshops on writing bids and funding applications; and attended their first online meeting of the TSSW Sustainable Funding Practitioners Network. They have subsequently promoted a number of funding opportunities such as the Summer Together Small Grant Scheme with Mon CC and has been supporting an increasing number of voluntary organisations with governance and sustainable funding.

There have been a number of longer-term projects supported in Monmouthshire including:

- Supporting the development of an LGBTQ+ Network in Monmouthshire, and supporting Caldicot Pride in event organisation and funding applications, including Awards for All.
- As part of GAVO's links with the 'Friends of TogetherWorks', Officers



carried out organisational support and development, working with the trustees and committee members to revise their constitution.

- Assisted 'The Gathering', a disability-based group with advice on governance, their wish to become a CIO, business planning and vision development. The group being keen to take on a building, they also required advice on potential funders and community asset transfer processes requiring additional research to better support them in conjunction with Monmouthshire CC Development Officers. They were provided with advice on their CIO application and provided with a business plan template and further support has been offered. Volunteering Officers also supported The Gathering group.
- In collaboration with MCC provided support to a group at The Tithe Barn, Abergavenny, focusing initially on governance structure and funding; followed by arranging an open day and assisting with charity registration.



The Development Officers have developed a close working relationship with the Wellbeing Links team to enhance collaboration and information sharing and supporting their engagement with new groups and their ability to link groups together for mutual support such as MonLife's Memory Cafe with Bulwark Senior Citizens.

GAVO Development staff have also been proactive in supporting the Monmouthshire Community Action Networks (CAN), attending the event at Bulwark Community Centre and at MUCH in Magor, alongside Volunteering Officers and other staff.

## Volunteering

Apart from their joint role as Regional Strategic Leads, Volunteering Officers in Monmouthshire has been busy with a number of opportunities to promote volunteering with the general public in collaboration with partners. With the new team being forged in Monmouthshire, there has been work around the synergies between Volunteering and Community Development. There has been positive progress in this work, linking with our Development Officers actively supporting various organisations with funding and governance matters, including whole team support for TogetherWorks and QueerSpace to be part of Abergavenny Pride with a presence at the event which saw over 1000 people take part.

The year has seen an increase in volunteering enquiries from individuals and agencies, and increased partnership by supporting the establishment for a new 50+ Wellbeing Hub with Job Centre Plus. A number of corporate volunteering days have been supported with Morgan Tindall.

The Volunteering Awards were run in conjunction with Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA) as partners for the first time, providing the team with additional support, marketing and publicity through their staff. The Awards night, held in the Gateway Church, Abergavenny, was a very successful example of partnership working. The team have proud to support the journey of young volunteer Dylan Allman, a Volunteering Award Winner, who has now received recognition from the Prime Minister's office for wildlife conservation and education contribution.





GAVO Volunteering Officers were approached by Family Volunteering Club UK and the Monmouthshire team agreed to work with them to establish a pilot with local third sector groups and Mon CC, progressing to the starting of a Family Volunteering Club in Abergavenny.

The Cash4U grant was launched, as in all four areas, and the team have used social media successfully for promotion. Officers also supported the participatory budget scheme by engaging with local residents in Chepstow.

The Volunteering Officers particularly, have supported the Community Action Networks (CANs) in Abergavenny, Monmouth, and Chepstow, working in conjunction with Mon CC to create promotional material and manage event administration.

The CAN at the Magor and Undy Community Hub (MUCH) engaged with over 130 people and stallholders from a wide range of

community organisations. Feedback from the event which included activities, taster sessions and a funding advice panel was very positive. The event provided community connections and networking opportunities. Usk will be the next target area for a CAN event.

Staff have engaged with a Community Growing Event with well-received workshops led by our Youth Volunteering Officer and continued GAVO and MCC discussions on potential partnership use of the Wellbeing Information Centre in Abergavenny.

Our Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing Partnership Officers are in place to support Third Sector organisations with a health remit. The Monmouthshire HSC&WB role is now benefiting from a Job Share between the previous post holder and an internal candidate. They have close links with Mon CC and ABUHB, with one Officer also managing the Wellbeing Links project which has been recognised as an example of good practice.

As in other areas the Officers supported the dissemination of the RIF grant and has been linking with further organisations to allocate RIF slippage to the Sector to support RPB strategies and help empower the sector.

In their partnership role, the Officers attend a range of strategic meetings to represent GAVO and advocate on behalf of the third sector, linking them with opportunities to enhance services to residents and promote community wellbeing and mental health support. They utilise social media and a Weekly Burst to communicate with and inform over 250 organisations and contacts.



The officers attend ISPB and NCN meetings as well as numerous meetings with ABUHB colleagues, with examples being winter pressures, highlighting the work of the Voluntary Sector and Wellbeing Links service and the Assistive Technology project and continued discussions with health and social care leads about voluntary sector involvement in supporting people at home.

HSC&WB Officers also participated in the Winter Planning event for Monmouthshire, emphasising GAVO's role and need for additional funding for the third sector. Further activities included:

- Supported the development of the MonCC/MHA Digital Lending Library. Expanded connections with Forest of Dean groups, enabling potential joint work with Monmouthshire. Attended dementia-friendly network, learned about assistive technology for individuals with dementia.
- Facilitated a meeting to discuss the potential for establishing a "Community Conversation" in the Monmouth area.
- Public Health Wales meeting on testing and screening entitlements for the public
- Participated in discussions with MCC, Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA), and third-sector organisations on well-being support required post Gilwern Surgery closure, including a well-being information event in Gilwern.
- Discussed support for veterans with Mon

- Met with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to discuss holistic well-being support for young people; engaged in discussions with MCC Young People and Communities team and linked in with the Wellbeing Director at The Bridges Centre, to collaborate on services.

Officers have also attended holistic well-being initiatives, discussed sustainability issues with Growing Space and made links with many organisations across Monmouthshire.

### Wellbeing Links

The Wellbeing Links project is funded by (NCNs and IWN) Monmouthshire with an aim of linking the patients of GP surgeries to Third Sector services, frequently before the need to speak to GP's, reducing the demand on practices and helping people in the community to find more targeted support. The Team of three Advisers (2 full time equivalent posts) managed by our HSC&WB Officer, have undertaken the following activities:

- Launched a monthly Community Conversations Group in Monmouth to network with other professionals in the Wellbeing arena, including hospital staff, Integrated Social Services team, Monmouthshire County Council, and Housing Association.



shadow the Advisers. This indicates increasing recognition of Wellbeing Links Officers as part of the extended surgery team and an opportunity to introduce students to collaborative ways of working, the third sector and extending traditional surgery roles.

The team are receiving more positive impacts of service, in particular feedback from those individuals referred by GP Surgeries across Monmouthshire. They are also experiencing increased referrals, which, again, highlights the positive impact of the project, and have had an additional GP practice in Caldicot join the referral process.



- Collaboration with other organisations to support individuals with cognitive challenges in achieving their goals.
- Collaborated with MCC on Integrated Wellbeing Network, Wellbeing Network training session on gambling awareness.
- Involved in Gwent Public Health plans to integrate IWNs with Foundation Tier.
- Attended the Themed Wellbeing Network around Children, Young People, and Families, welcomed over 20 attendees, explored communal living model at Severn View care home and discussed support group for carers of people with dementia, met with MHA and MCC regarding Digital Lending Library, addressing concerns over reporting and partnership and attended NEST framework conference, gaining insights for supporting children and families.
- Participated in networking opportunities with wellbeing professionals involving hospital staff, the Integrated Social Services team, MCC, the Housing Association, charities, and community groups. Aimed at forging links with key individuals in other organisations to enhance services for G.P. surgery individuals.

Impact numbers for the year are as follows:

- Requests received: 421.
- Face-to-face Wellbeing Appointments: 304.
- Links/Information provided: 877.
- Ongoing referrals made: 297.
- Supportive introductions carried out: 76.
- Total number of links provided to individuals: 1250.

Positive feedback received from an individual after their Wellbeing Appointment:

*"Before coming to this appointment today I felt as though I was continually banging my head against a wall. After being able to talk it all through with you today, I now feel that I have the tools to climb over that wall."*



Throughout the year Officers have been engaged in strengthening relationships with G.P. Practices, finding it helpful to put faces to names for collaboration and to address queries about the Wellbeing Links role. Staff have initiated personal engagement sessions with Practice Manager and GPs. Positive responses have lead to two surgeries requesting final-year medical students to



### TogetherWorks

TogetherWORKS is a collaborative project between Monmouthshire CC and GAVO with a range of additional partners including Monmouthshire Housing Association. Originally funded as a pilot through Community Regeneration Funding, the project has been funded through UK SPF until the end of March 2025. This guaranteed funding has enabled some longer term projects running out of the building to gain momentum.

It has also enabled the employment of a Support Officer to assist the Coordinator in the day to day running and development of community led and influenced services. The employment of a technician to run the woodworking workshop in the Maker's Space whilst having had the funding approved, was delayed due to the need to revise the electrical services to the unit. The post eventually went out to advert to be filled in the new financial year.

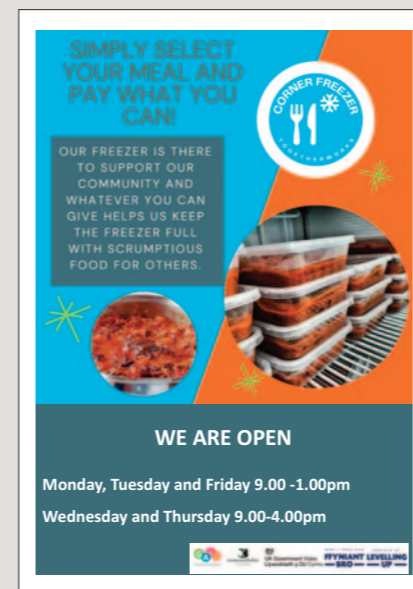
There has been a significant growth in the number of people utilising the centre for a wide range of activities as well as support and signposting to advice services. The Co-ordinator has developed extensive contacts across both the statutory and third sector

leading to a range of collaborative events and activities. Partners have used the centre to meet clients and offer support sessions. These have included Mon CC employment advisers, MHA housing support staff, IConnect, Women's Aid, Citizen's Advice, Mon CC End Period Poverty Campaign, GAVO Wellbeing Links Advisers and external agencies.

On Thursday the 29th of June Officers and volunteers were honoured to welcome Jane Hutt MS Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip. Monmouthshire County Council Leader, Cllr. Mary Ann Brocklesby, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement, Cllr Angela Sandles, TogetherWORKS' Centre Manager Isla Arendell, Edward Watts, Chair of Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) and Rachael King of Cyfannol were amongst those who welcomed the visiting Minister to the community centre. The Minister spent time with members of the Art Group, The Coffee and Craft Memory Loss and Disabilities Art Exhibition and viewed the ongoing work in our community garden.

A very small number of the activities and events that happen at the Centre have been highlighted for the report as follows:

TogetherWorks Community Garden has become well established and a regular band





of volunteers are active throughout the year growing flowers and produce, including some of the Ukrainian community and the local comprehensive school.

During the Summer School Holidays the staff and volunteers developed a Breakfast Club in collaboration with MCC, Chepstow &

Having started with a Community Fridge the emergency food "Corner Cupboard" idea has grown and the centre launched a Community Freezer in the Autumn. Funded through MHA "Pitch for your Project" and working in collaboration with a qualified chef, the kitchen has had a makeover and has been inspected for use to prepare meals. The freezer is filled regularly with a range of cooked meals which can be purchased at low cost by families and individuals in need, and users of the centre.



TogetherWorks has also provided a base for Queerspace, a group for transgender and gender non-conforming people. Meeting twice a month by the end of the year it had sixteen members.

It has been supported by Cllr Ian Chandler MCC LGBTQ+ Champion. They have held events, had presentations from support organisations and have taken part in a number of Pride events. They plan to organise a Pride event for Caldicot in 2024.



Friends of TogetherWorks has established as a constituted organisation and supports the activities in the centre through its fundraising. They also act as a voice of the users. TogetherWorks band of volunteers have grown over time with over 20 regular helpers.

Caldicot Lions. The grant funding enabled them to provide a weekly free breakfast and provide families with children attending the art and Lego club activities to take home a breakfast bag each. The Art Club ran for two hours each time with many children staying engaged for the whole sessions. Some parents admitted that they shy away from messy art activities at home and were very grateful to give their children the opportunity to be engaged in a creative activity during the holidays, again away from screen time. The Art club was very popular, often spilling over to a second table with many children making repeat visits. Over the Summer the numbers for these activities were:

- 52 children at the Lego Club
- 49 at the breakfast club
- 63 children and 17 adults at the Art Club

*"It's amazing. They take care of you. Entertain the kids. We are so lucky to have this on our doorstep. And all free."*

*"It's amazing for meeting new people and trying new things. Children socializing is the best bit."*



### Carers Project

The Carers Project has been funded by Monmouthshire County Council over a long period to provide support and opportunities to carers across the county. A new Coordinator came into post in 2022 to work alongside the Mon CC team to produce the Carers Newsletter, organise events and activities for Carers and support national events such as Carers Week with local activities.

The Coordinator started planning monthly carers event with a tour of Caldicot Castle to begin with, although cancelled due to lack of takeup, whilst the trip to Westonbirt

Arboretum went well. The Officer unfortunately, went onto long term sick so outputs and impacts were very limited with much of the missing work being picked up by the Local Authority team. The staff member eventually left and, following discussions it was agreed that the local authority would in future provide the service in-house and close the contract. GAVO officers in Monmouthshire, in particular the Wellbeing Links Advisers, continue to signpost residents to the Carers Team and promote opportunities and support for carers.



**The Regional Strategic Lead for Newport is also the Health Social Care and Wellbeing Partnership Officer for the area. The Officer is the line manager for the team and has represented GAVO at Strategic meetings including the Integrated Service Partnership Board, Third Sector Partnership linked to the Newport Local Delivery Partnership and the PSB. The Officer has also been involved in negotiating ongoing funding for project workers within the team, and potential additional staff. The Newport Team were represented at the Armed Forces Day.**



### Community Development

The Development Officer started the year with the Newport Forum at Eton Road Community House with a good turnout, featuring guest speakers from the National Lottery, Newport Council, and Cranfield Trust. Issues raised were sustainability and trustee recruitment, which will be supported by targeted work from the volunteering team. The second Newport Forum in the period held at Beechwood was again well attended and featured a presentation from The Big Lottery and Craig Lane, Chair of the Third Sector Partnership.



A successful third, featured presentations by grants officers from the National Lottery and the WCVA, fostering connections and follow-up sessions with various groups.

There has been some more intensive work with a number of groups including Shopmobility and the Community House with grant funding and introductions to organisations to support them in the former and community consultation support and business planning with the latter.

The Officer attended the Participatory Budgeting Network, connecting with arts, music, and theatre community organisations focusing on the circular economy.

A positive outcome from the work the Officer undertook with Newport County Council (NCC) regarding the Warm Hubs grants programme, resulted in £60k funding being awarded for distribution, which has increased from £20K the previous year.

The Officer relaunched the Caerleon Sunshine Grants and with the Caerleon grant panel accepted recommendations to support Caerleon in Bloom's bid for the Caerleon Sunshine Fund, marked the successful re-establishment of the panel after a lengthy break.

Collaborated with Newport Council and CWMPAS to set up Newid Digital support workshops, which took place in November to support the promotion of digital inclusion.

During the latter part of the year, our Development Officer for Newport relocated to Scotland. GAVO recruited to the vacant post, with a new member of staff commencing in April and the Regional Lead was also successful in negotiating additional funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to appoint an additional Development post for the region until 31st March 2025. In the interim support was given to groups by other Newport team members and other GAVO Development Officers.

### Volunteering

The GAVO Volunteering Officers, both Adult and Youth, support all aspects of volunteering. The Newport Volunteering Officers utilised Volunteers Week in June to highlight opportunities and supported organisations to recruit trustees, also using the week to launch the Newport Volunteering Awards. The Volunteering Awards took place in the Autumn in the Coldra Court Hotel with sponsorship obtained by the Officers from a number of companies allowing for over 100 guests to attend a very successful and glamorous event celebrating volunteers from across Newport.

The Officers have developed good relationships with the University of South Wales Newport and Coleg Gwent providing



numerous opportunities to have stands at Coleg Gwent Fresher's Fairs and University of South Wales Welcome Fest to promote volunteering and meet with various individuals, charities, and referring agencies. They have engaged with students, promoted sign up to the Volunteering Wales platform and engaged with ESOL students, connected with the MBA Global Studies programme, and promoted volunteering opportunities to them.

They have participated in community events and meetings to promote volunteering, engaging with stakeholders to discuss volunteer recruitment and retention strategies, sharing resources and best practices with colleagues to enhance volunteering support. The team have attended a number of public events including Employer in the Foyer with USW Newport and the NCC Volunteers Fair. They have also been involved in the All-Wales Working on Wellbeing event with a view to acknowledging Volunteering.

The Adult Volunteering Officer presented to the Recovery Through Activity group on



volunteering benefits and using past experience and training, delivered autism awareness sessions to GAVO staff.

The main focus of the role is assisting volunteers in finding suitable roles matching their interests and skills and have been proactive in facilitating connections between volunteers and organisations. They also support corporate teams to find quality volunteering placements including Acquis Insurance Management, Principality Building Society and CAF Rolling Stock.

The Newport Officers have supported a wide range of groups with volunteering, including advertising opportunities on Volunteering Wales and Careers Connect, and support third sector organisations and groups to develop good volunteering policies and practices, including:

- Newport Yemeni Community Association,
- RSPCA
- Veterans Hub,
- Circus of Positivity
- Newport City Saints FC
- Maindee Unlimited
- Mission to Seafarers
- Shaftesbury Youf Gang
- FoodCycle
- No Comply Skatepark
- Diabetes UK
- Maindee Unlimited

They have engaged with a wide range of organisations on focused activity such as:

- Connected Newport Girl Guides with organisations for Christmas volunteering.
- Facilitated partnership between Gwent Police mini cadets and local organisations for community volunteering. Supported Gwent Volunteer Police Cadets' involvement in volunteering.
- Connected with Wise Kids to look at youth opportunities.

The Youth Volunteering Officer has supported many young people with finding a volunteering opportunity to assist the completion of their Welsh Bacc qualification, linking young people with food banks and organisations supporting people suffering from substance misuse, giving them the link to the Volunteering Wales website to encourage independent research.



The Youth Officer is responsible for the launch promotion and administration of the Cash4U Youth Volunteering fund. The Panel of young people met and awarded fund to five organisations, agreeing to visit the groups to see the projects in action later in the year.

### Health and Social Care

The Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing Partnership Officers are in place to support Third Sector organisations with a health remit. Our HSC&WB Officer and Regional Lead for Newport has attended a range of strategic meetings including a learning event for the RPB.

The Officer has involvement with NCC, ABUHB and partners across Newport on a number of fronts to support the inclusion of the third sector in service design and delivery, including:

- The Rough Sleepers Taskforce looking at potential delivery by the third sector.
- Meetings have also been held with the engagement lead for Social Care as USW to discuss third sector as a potential employer and for volunteering placements.
- Attended the first Children and Families partnership with NCC.
- Met with the NCC mental health team to explore third-sector support, synergies between the two, and how staff can support communications.
- Working with Voch Tech Challenge-Skills for the economy to arrange workshops and include key community stakeholders, including raising awareness with the NCC Right Skills lead. Newport was identified as one of the places in the four nations to develop the scheme.
- Our officer attended a meeting with the new NHS Executive to understand its establishment, purpose, and work plan. Ensured there was a third-sector voice and stakeholders understood the importance of engagement.
- Has worked closely with NHS Wales around questionnaire testing and a suitable evaluation tool to capture feedback.
- Attended workshops on the s16 requirements arranged by the Transformation team around commissioning and governance.

A significant element of the role is to publicise and promote statutory sector consultations

and public engagement exercises and encourage the third sector to respond. A number of these have taken place during the year including:

- Community Dental out-of-hours service and helpline.
- Contacted the Screening team at Public Health Wales (PHW) to promote screening and supported their campaign for bowel screening, signing up for membership of the Communities of Practice screening network.
- Promoted and supported engagement for ABUHB's consultation on proposed changes to the minor injuries service, initially with a Newport focus but eventually a Gwent-wide vision of change.
- Promoted a consultation exercise on cataract service changes by ABUHB and next-level support to people within the communities.

Direct support for third sector organisations in the health and social care field is an important element of the work and the officer has:

- Supported third-sector organisations in planning to support vulnerable people over the Christmas period, including the Christchurch Christmas lunch and the voucher scheme for veterans and their families.
- Provided direct support to third-sector groups with governance, safeguarding, and mental health awareness training.
- Arranged one-to-one meetings with organisations to discuss service developments: Epilepsy Wales, Breathing Space, Home Start, Bowel Cancer Awareness.
- Met with the new Newport Live Project managers for Momentwn to explore collaboration and support from GAVO.





### Food Sustainability Project

The Local Authority funds the Food Sustainability Project in Newport based with GAVO, with the main aim of supporting food projects in the area with grants, advice, guidance, and an opportunity to network. These organisations are focused on food and maximising its use through food banks and various growing projects to benefit people in Newport. The Newport Food Partnership Steering Group has been progressing with the coordinator reaching out to key individuals. Key stakeholders are committed to the Steering Group, with the initial meeting happening in late Autumn with support from Food Sense Wales/Sustainable Food Places.

The Officer with support from the Steering Group and partners, set up the food partnership event, Creating a More Effective Food System for Newport. There was a good representation of various elements of the current food system in Newport. They worked enthusiastically on various exercises and facilitated discussion and our officer has created a report that collates all the work done that day. Feedback is for everyone to work more collaboratively, and other points will help as a good starting point to build a food strategy for Newport.

The Sustainable Food Coordinator has been building on the community food network to work collaboratively to develop a network of community food growers which was enthusiastically welcomed and has become established as the Community Food Growers' Network, with its initial online meeting in the late Autumn. The Officer has also been in discussion with Gwent Wildlife Trust regarding their purchase of farms in Newport and intention to grow food and offer community opportunities. Collaborating with NCC it is noted that international students are making more use of food banks and more



work is being undertaken with Newport Migration Team and USW on this to initiate an established referral process for international students.

The Coordinator hosted a Community Food Network event at Beechwood with a number of new groups attending to hear from Business in the Community and the Period Dignity Programme.

The Officer runs the Sustainable Food grant scheme on behalf of NCC and has also negotiated grant funding of £50,000 to support food provision during the school holidays. This resulted in 10 Community Food projects supported and 492 families/households supported. Ongoing discussions with NCC continue about a larger grant pot for sessions starting earlier and running for a longer period.

The Officer has also been running the Warm Hubs Grant Scheme alongside the Sustainable Food scheme. GAVO has received an additional £60k in the Warm Hubs Grant Fund, launched in November and with applications submitted in December.

- The total value of grants awarded is £59,367.36, with Warm Hub sessions supported being 725, with attendances totalling 15,844.

Towards the end of the year the Officer has:

- Has collaborated and helped arrange the Hackathon Event, held on 20th March at Newport Market in collaboration with Cwmpas. There has been positive attendee feedback, which will contribute to strategy development.
- Worked closely with the Celtic Manor to deliver over 1000 prepared frozen meals, starting March 25th. Our Officer has purchased the freezers with the Celtic Manor assisting with registration and paperwork. Local councillors are supporting delivery and allocation to community organisations. The first distributions will start before the end of April. Organisations across Newport donated 1200 meals to those in need. Local businesses donated meals in catering trays, and our officer worked closely with Business in the Community and Newport City Council.

Through dialogue with NCC The Regional Lead and Secured funding for a Food Sustainability Coordinator role until 2025 and funding for a new Food Sustainability Support Officer.



### Education Programme for Patients



EPP Cymru continues to offer self-management health and well-being courses and workshops for individuals living with health conditions or caring for someone with

a health condition. The GAVO EPP team comprises two coordinators, support officer and volunteer tutors, individuals with personal experience in health conditions, ensuring empathy and understanding. The team are funded through ABUHB and the NCNs to provide courses across Gwent.

Whilst our long-standing Blaenau Gwent specific coordinator continues in post, our Gwent wide coordinator left during the year to take up a post with the EPP team in Public Health Wales. Her position was replaced with a tutor and the support officer/tutor stepping up to share the role. The courses offered are wide and varied, responding to need and the continue to receive direct referrals from General Practitioners, delivering a range of courses



accessible via our online portals or face to face. To highlight the success figures include:

- 974 people registering for courses with 779 completions
- 76 courses delivered with 709 evaluation forms returned
- 6 people supported to become accredited tutors and all tutors supported with updates and additional training

The team have continued to build stronger relationships with GPs across Gwent to increase patient referrals. Partnerships have also been forged with United Welsh Housing, Caerphilly Children's Centre, Dietetic and Diabetes Services from ABUHB, Velindre and All Wales Cancer Services.

Examples of course include Living with Chronic Pain, Living with Long Term Health Conditions, Stance Diabetic Footcare and Living Well with Diabetes, Long Covid Management and Cancer Thriving and Surviving. Details of other courses and more information about EPP visit our website at <https://www.gavo.org.uk/>.

### Corporate Services

The Corporate team provide a range of services to support GAVO to deliver services linked to the core TSSW role as well as supporting the range of additional project based staff across GAVO. The Personal Assistant to The CEO and Chair has continued providing Secretariat for CEO and Chair and in addition to this, during the quarter has organised the GAVO Governance meetings with Trustees. These include the Local Committee meetings, Newport Third Sector Partnership meeting, GAVO Operational Plan and Corporate team catch ups.

### IT and Marketing

The IT Officer has an ongoing role to support staff with their IT issues and progress GAVO's implementation of its IT Strategy. The Officer has also introduced a new Website and has supported staff across GAVO to have more interaction with the site and learn to post their own articles and news items. Our new Communications and Marketing Officer was proactive in getting to grips with the branding and current communication channels, actively meeting staff, Teams and



ending of the CFW project in its current form, e.g. sending letters confirming ending of programme and collating data, dealing with redundancy and, at the end of the reporting period, the confirmed transfer of staff to Blaenau Gwent CBC. The HR team have been integral to supporting staff training and development.

Attendance at/completion of mandatory staff training is improving, as detailed below:

- GDPR - 89% completed
- EDI - 92% completed
- Safeguarding - 92% completed



projects to look at improving printed materials to make them more accessible. The Officer drafted a new Communications Plan as an appendix to the Operational Plan. He supported the Volunteering Team with Volunteers Week in June and with the build up to the Volunteering Awards in the Autumn. Staff were saddened to lose the Officer in the Autumn to a long standing illness. The role remained vacant and the IT Officer has undertaken some additional work to fill the gap.

The Staff survey was re-circulated again to all employees in March. SMT with HR will look to gather feedback for updating Trustees in the future. The HR Team also support the Staff Forum. The HR Officer undertook the work around the IIP Review reporting a 67% response to the IIP staff survey, with largely positive results and improvements suggested being built into the Operational Plan.

**HR**

The HR team fully embedded the use of the PeopleHR system during the year, with it being the main landing point for GAVO staff in respect of time management, leave, employee absence details which allows us to produce monthly absence reports for Trustees.

The PeopleHR system also enables the storage and access to all GAVO policies through the system. The Corporate review of policies has been ongoing throughout the year to ensure compliance with legislation. HR staff have supported the transactional process of the

**Finance**

The new Finance Manager started in quarter three to take on the role of finalising annual accounts with the auditor. Since settling into the role the Officer has implemented a new purchase order system, and has met with CMT and managers and project teams to discuss finance and budgets and develop more streamlined systems. The Finance team supported the work towards closure of the C4W programme and at the end of the year focussed on the end of year finance processes and financial forecasting for Trustees for the new financial year.



# Engagement and Influencing

Stephen Tiley, CEO



**One of the four TSSW pillars of activity, alongside Good Governance, Sustainable Funding and Volunteering, all staff have a role to encourage the engagement of third sector organisations in local regional and national decision making and in influencing those decisions. However, at a more strategic level it is largely the Senior Management Team and Trustees that take on this role.**

**Third Sector Support Wales**

GAVO continues with its strong connections with TSSW Networks, which have proven to be very helpful in gaining information from a national perspective, helping to resolve problems whilst also promoting our work and the work of the sector in Gwent. These connections provide us and the whole sector with the crucial wider opportunity to connect with the national picture. It also allows us to have a voice when needed and learn from others across Wales.

We remain committed to a collaborative approach to national efforts, working closely with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and the other partner County Voluntary Councils (CVC). This collaboration involves being part of various committees and networks, such as the Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) Executive, CVC Cymru, TSSW Safeguarding Board, and committees like the Volunteer Practitioner Network, Funding Network, and the Learning Steering Group, just to name a few. This national networks also allow us the opportunity to influence and engage between TSSW (of which GAVO is a member) and the Welsh Government. We maintain open communication with MPs, AMs, and Local Councillors, which has played a crucial role in shaping policies, laws and securing funding. These ongoing communications with these influencers will continue to be vital as we move forward.

**Gwent Public Service Board**

The Gwent Public Service Board (PSB) has been in play since 2021 and replaced the previous structure of all County Public Service Boards' (PSBs) meetings. Currently, regional support is provided through area Local Delivery Groups, and GAVO will continue to play a pivotal part and represent the third sector at both the regional and Gwent PSB levels. The focus of the Public Service Board and its key objectives are as follows:

- Create a fairer, more equal Gwent that includes everyone
- Protect our environment
- Work towards Gwent becoming a Marmot region

GAVO's involvement ensures that the third sector is firmly established in the upcoming Wellbeing Plans and actions. GAVO has also initiated the process of developing the Gwent Third Sector Partnership Agreement, which is set for approval in 2024/25. This new agreement will serve as the Governing Document for the Gwent PSB's working relationship and collaboration with the Third Sector in Gwent. For more information about the Gwent PSB and its plan, you can visit the Gwent PSB website at <http://www.gwentpsb.org/en/>

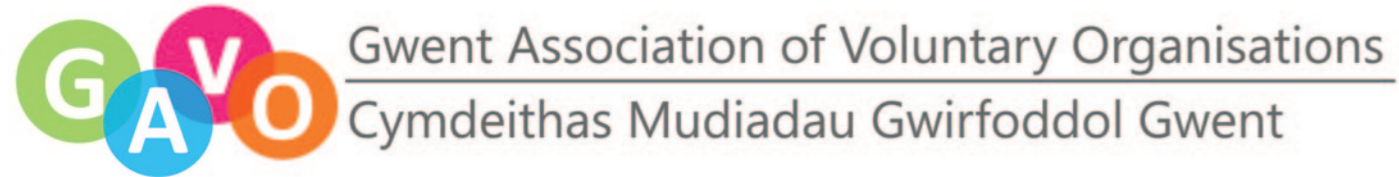
**Regional Partnership Board**

GAVO continues to play a pivotal role in the Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) both at the board level, through representation by our Deputy CEO at the Leadership Group and many of the supporting structures that feed the overall Board. GAVO's involvement at all levels of these discussions has been of paramount importance to ensure that the third sector's role continues to be acknowledged and respected. Over the course of the year, we have also been a key player in monitoring the new funding scheme, the Regional Integration Fund (RIF), and have championed a review of Governance to ensure ease of access for the Third Sector. Moving forward, I see the Third Sector being a vital part of the Health and Social Care strategies around prevention and supporting discharge, so we will continue to support these and link the Sector where possible.

More information around the Regional Partnership Board and its plans can be found on its website which can be found at <https://www.gwentrpw.wales/home>

## The Year at a Glance

Some of the headline figures from our activity recording system:



Some of the headline figures from our activity recording system.

There were 1056 opportunities for third sector organisations to be part of partnership meetings, forums and networks, and events.



## Glossary

Throughout the document, organisations and projects have been referred to with initials, a glossary of these appears below:

<b>TSSW</b>	Third Sector Support Wales - The collective of Wales Council for Voluntary Action and 19 County Voluntary Councils across Wales
<b>C4W and C4W+, CEP</b>	Communities for Work, and Communities for Work Plus - Community Employability Programmes
<b>WCVA</b>	Wales Council for Voluntary Action, the umbrella body for the third sector across Wales
<b>County Voluntary Council</b>	intermediary bodies supporting grass roots third sector organisations and volunteers at a county level
<b>CASH4U</b>	Annual small grant scheme for youth led volunteering projects
<b>DBS</b>	Disclosure and Barring Service checks for volunteers
<b>BGCBC</b>	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
<b>CCBC</b>	Caerphilly County Borough Council
<b>MCC or MonCC</b>	Monmouthshire County Council
<b>NCC</b>	Newport City Council
<b>MHA</b>	Monmouthshire Housing Association
<b>ABuHB</b>	Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
<b>MH &amp; LD</b>	Mental Health and Learning Disability
<b>RPB</b>	Regional Partnership Board
<b>PSB</b>	Public Services Board
<b>Marmot Principles</b>	From Prof. Michael Marmot's Report "Fair Society Healthy Lives" <a href="https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/">https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/</a>
<b>RIF</b>	Regional Integration Fund
<b>HSC&amp;WB</b>	Health Social Care and Well-being
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
<b>IWN</b>	Integrated Wellbeing Network
<b>ISPB</b>	Integrated Public Services Board
<b>NCN</b>	Neighbourhood Care Network
<b>DWP</b>	Department of Work and Pensions
<b>RSL</b>	Registered Social Landlord, Housing Association
<b>USW</b>	University of South Wales
<b>WEFO</b>	Wales European Funding Office
<b>WLGA</b>	Welsh Local Government Association
<b>WG</b>	Welsh Government

@ for Third Sector news, events, funding, volunteering opportunities & more!

[www.gavo.org.uk](http://www.gavo.org.uk)



**Head Office & Newport | Y Brif Swyddfa:**

Room G2  
Beechwood House  
Beechwood Park  
Christchurch Road  
Newport  
NP19 8AJ

**Blaenau Gwent**

GAVO Office 129  
The Innovation Centre  
Festival Drive  
Victoria Business Park  
Ebbw Vale  
NP23 8XA

**Caerphilly**

Cherry Tree House  
Carlton Drive  
Pen-y-Fan Industrial Estate  
Oakdale  
Crumlin  
NP11 4EA

**Monmouthshire**

Room 4a  
The Sessions House  
Maryport Street  
Usk  
NP15 1AD

E: [info@gavo.org.uk](mailto:info@gavo.org.uk)  
T: **0800 470 1378**

[www.gavo.org.uk](http://www.gavo.org.uk)

Company Limited by Guarantee: 5590517  
Registered Charity Number: 1113558



Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations  
Cymdeithas Mudiadau Gwirfoddol Gwent

David Ganderton Graphic Design  
E: [davidganderton@btinternet.com](mailto:davidganderton@btinternet.com)