

Working with communities since 1927



GAVO UPDATES

QUARTER 2 July-September 2025



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1

WHAT HAS GAVO BEEN DOING?

2

- BLAENAU GWENT
- CAERPHILLY
- MONMOUTHSHIRE
- NEWPORT
- GWENT WIDE
- EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR PATIENTS (EPP)
- GAVO TRAINING

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

6

AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE NEXT QUARTER

7

- BLAENAU GWENT
- CAERPHILLY
- MONMOUTHSHIRE
- NEWPORT
- GWENT WIDE

CHALLENGES FACING THE THIRD SECTOR

8

- BLAENAU GWENT
- CAERPHILLY
- MONMOUTHSHIRE
- NEWPORT
- GWENT WIDE

CONTACTS & MEMBERSHIP

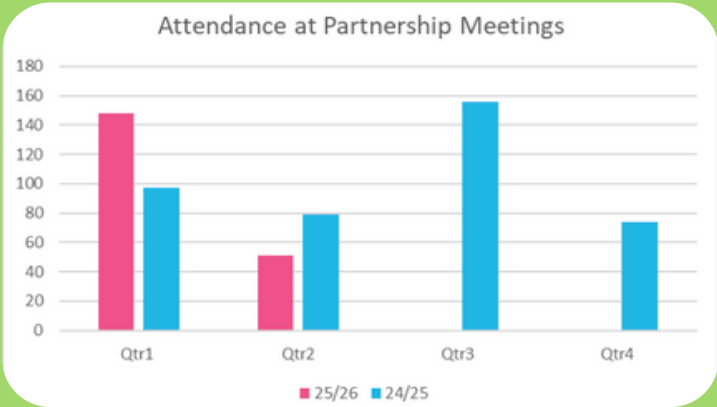
11

INTRODUCTION



At GAVO, our Senior Management Team, led by the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy CEO, drives meaningful engagement and influence across the Third Sector in Gwent. Focused on the influencing and engaging pillar of Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW), the team has strengthened collaboration with key partners, enhancing the sector’s voice at the Gwent Public Service Board and Regional Partnership Board, where our CEO now serves as Vice Chair.

With a focus on the influencing and engagement, a table highlighting the partnership meetings that GAVO, as a whole, has attended on behalf of the sector is highlighted below:



Over the past quarter, the team has continued to progress strategic leadership and operational excellence, advancing our Strategic Plan, improving finance and health & safety processes, and delivering positive funding outcomes for communities. Through active partnership engagement, governance and workforce development, and succession planning, we are ensuring organisational stability while expanding third sector representation across the region. These efforts reflect GAVO’s ongoing commitment to empowering communities and supporting a resilient, well-connected third sector in Gwent.



Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations
Cymdeithas Mudiadau Gwirfoddol Gwent

To learn more about our work and strategic priorities, please visit www.gavo.org.uk. As ever, we welcome your questions, insights and involvement.

WHAT HAS GAVO BEEN DOING?



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Our Community Development Officers provide governance and financial support to local organisations, ensuring the third sector's voice is heard across Blaenau Gwent. In the last quarter, they helped community groups secure over £228,000 in funding, supported sustainability and governance for organisations such as Aberbeeg Community Centre and Brynmawr Musical Theatre Group, and helped establish new initiatives including a mother and toddler group and a veterans wellbeing support group. Officers also participated in 25+ strategic and partnership meetings, supported older residents' social activities, and strengthened the Blaenau Gwent Forum to promote inclusive community collaboration.

VOLUNTEERING

Our Adult and Youth Volunteering Officers continue to expand volunteering opportunities. Strong links with schools, local organisations, and agencies are creating pathways for young people, families, and NEETs into volunteering. New partnerships, including the library network and Keep Wales Tidy, alongside active marketing and community outreach, are raising the profile of volunteering throughout Blaenau Gwent.



HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE, AND WELLBEING

As our staff member is currently unavailable, the work has been shared among several team members. We continue to send weekly updates to our membership and maintain a strong presence at the Integrated Services Partnership Board on behalf of the sector.

BLAENAU GWENT WELLBEING COACHES

As part of the Happy, Healthy Blaenau Gwent initiative, our Wellbeing Coaches provide early support to people before they need health or public services. Since the project launched on 17th July 2025, around 70 residents have been referred—mainly for issues related to loneliness and isolation. Coaches have established strong relationships with GP surgeries, delivered community outreach, and connected participants to local groups and wellbeing activities. Through tailored support, signposting, and collaborative engagement, the team is helping residents improve their wellbeing and embedding the project as a key link between the third sector and health services.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In Caerphilly, GAVO continues to support community groups, sports clubs, and voluntary organisations through dedicated Development Officers. Work this quarter has included providing advice on governance, incorporation, and business planning, supporting successful funding bids, and guiding new applications and CIO registrations. Officers have actively engaged in local networks and partnerships, organised the Volunteer Achievement Awards, and delivered the Caerphilly Forum, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing across 15–20 local groups.

VOLUNTEERING

Our Volunteering Officers have promoted volunteering opportunities for both adults and young people, supporting community events, schools, and local initiatives. Highlights include coordinating the Annual Volunteering Awards, securing sponsorship, and working with partners such as Wynne Construction, Jobcentre Plus, and Public Health to link volunteering with employability and wellbeing projects. The team also welcomed a new Youth Volunteering Officer, strengthening support for young volunteers.

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE, AND WELLBEING:

Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing (HSCW) Officer have continued to embed third sector support into local health initiatives. Key activities this quarter included planning World Mental Health Day, preparing a Pain Management Talk, engaging with the Regional Integration Fund, and strengthening partnerships with local organisations and networks.

EARLY LANGUAGE TEAM

The Early Language Programme has supported families with young children, delivering sessions to 56 families over nine groups in July and launching 10 new groups in September. Officers have strengthened sector partnerships, promoted activities such as “Play in the Parks,” and developed a marketing plan to enhance project visibility.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

GAVO’s Participatory Budgeting (PB) programme has enabled communities to directly shape local funding priorities. Across Caerphilly, projects in Upper Rhymney Valley, the Van, Risca, and Greater Bargoed have engaged hundreds of residents, with grants allocated transparently to initiatives addressing mental health, youth engagement, and cost-of-living support. The PB programme continues to empower communities, fostering civic confidence and local ownership of decisions.



Woodchill CIC Site Visit



Pain Management Talk in partnership with Versus Arthritis



Baby Massage at Let's Talk Sessions

MONMOUTHSHIRE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

GAVO's Development Officers continue to empower local organisations, with additional focus on rural communities. In 2025/26, support has helped groups secure key funding from RIF, Awards for All, and the William Gale Fund, enabling projects in movement, digital inclusion, and environmental improvement. Training in Community Development and BE Community has strengthened governance and wellbeing practices, while over a dozen organisations have received tailored advice on funding, governance, and operations. Collaborative work with local initiatives such as Abergavenny Cinema Community Benefit Society, TogetherWORKS, Pubtopia CIC, and environmental groups has advanced community ownership and sustainability. Stronger partnerships with Monmouthshire County Council, MHA, and Be Community have further supported sector development.

VOLUNTEERING

GAVO's Monmouthshire volunteering team remains dynamic and effective, supporting both youth and adult placements. The rebranded Youth Led Grant continues to thrive, distributing funds widely across the county. Active participation in community events, committee involvement, and partnership initiatives like the Digital Lending Library has strengthened engagement. Planning for the October Volunteering Awards is well underway, reflecting robust, inclusive processes and a commitment to celebrating volunteer contribution.

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING

GAVO's Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing Officers have strengthened partnerships across the county, supporting dementia-specific projects, coordinating small grant awards, and expanding the Abergavenny Wellbeing Information Centre. A network of 20+ organisations benefits from information-sharing, collaboration, and early intervention support. Work with NHS services, Bridges, TogetherWORKS, and Cyfannol Women's Aid has enhanced community support and sector awareness.

WELLBEING LINKS

Wellbeing Links connects patients to local services before they require GP intervention, improving social connection and reducing primary care demand. In the last quarter, 125 requests resulted in 360 connections, with services praised by both GPs and patients. Creative and therapeutic activities support neurodivergent and isolated individuals, reinforcing prevention and early intervention goals.



Volunteering Day at Dean Farm Trust

TOGETHERWORKS

TogetherWORKS continues to deliver diverse community activities while progressing its CIO status and future funding plans. The project strengthens partnerships across health and community services, and contributes to participatory budgeting and county-wide events, ensuring meaningful, hands-on support for volunteers and communities across Monmouthshire.





COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Our Development Officer ensures the third sector's voice is heard across Gwent. This quarter, they supported local groups with grant funding and promotional campaigns, including the Caerleon Sunshine Grant and Warm Hub funding. They received 45 Warm Hub applications totalling nearly £194,000, allocating £116,000 to 31 Newport groups. The officer provided tailored applicant support, both online and in person, and produced video case studies of GAVO Award nominees to showcase community impact.

VOLUNTEERING

Our Adult and Youth Volunteering Officers continue to connect volunteers with meaningful opportunities. They promoted the Youth Volunteers Fund, supported individuals with tailored guidance, and facilitated placements at events such as Disability Sport Wales, the Big Splash Festival, and Mud Pie Explorers CIC. Officers offered advice to over a dozen local organisations on recruitment, safeguarding, and collaboration, coordinated the Newport Volunteering Awards, and developed resources to support youth volunteering initiatives.

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING

Our Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing Partnership Officer strengthen local third sector partnerships. In Newport, this included managing Warm Hub applications (£110k fund), supporting decision-making on RIF and Carers funds, and meeting with local authorities and health partners on initiatives such as No One Left Behind, dementia support, and employment for disabled people. The officer provided guidance to local organisations, raised awareness for health campaigns, managed recruitment, and contributed to multiple boards and forums to improve grant investment, project delivery, and service development.

GWENT WIDE EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR PATIENTS (EPP)

The EPP project offers a wide range of self-management health and well-being courses and workshops for people living with a health condition, and their carers. All staff and volunteer tutors bring personal experience of managing or caring for health conditions, ensuring courses are delivered with understanding and empathy. Recent achievements include planning new courses running through to December 2025, completing Agored marking training to deliver recognised certification, and training new tutors to expand the team. The project continues to strengthen partnerships and referrals, including with Dewis, Llais, and the ABUHB Diabetes Team. The team has also engaged healthcare professionals through presentations at the county hospital and delivered training sessions for tutors, supporting ongoing work within the "3 P's" framework.

GAVO TRAINING

GAVO is supporting third sector organisations across Gwent to build capacity, resilience, and professionalism through learning and development. Over the past quarter, our team has delivered a range of initiatives to strengthen communities and organisations. Highlights include the successful completion of our Community Development Training pilot, now being developed into an accredited ILM course focusing on community leadership. We have also strengthened organisational governance through delivering workshops for many local groups. Partnerships are expanding, with collaborative opportunities explored with Bute Energy to enhance community engagement and learning. Demand for our workshops, consultations, and coaching sessions is growing, reflecting the positive impact of GAVO's support across Gwent.

KEY PERFORMOMANCE INDICATORS

BLAENAU GWENT

Number of Interactions with organisations providing direct advice	95
Avg amount of times each organisation has used GAVO	1.9
Potential funding to be awarded by GAVO	£222,113
Actual funding awarded by GAVO	£91,582
Target value of funding supported by GAVO	£111,056
Actual value of funding supported by GAVO	£139,653
% of organisations being supported for funding (based on organisations supported or funded against the number of organisations supported in total)	41.18%
Average number of volunteers against organisations supported (based on volunteers supported/placed against the number of total organisations)	0.75

CAERPHILLY

Number of Interactions with organisations providing direct advice	420
Avg amount of times each organisation has used GAVO	2.2
Potential funding to be awarded by GAVO	£576,745
Actual funding awarded by GAVO	£136,237
Target value of funding supported by GAVO	£288,373
Actual value of funding supported by GAVO	£383,870
% of organisations being supported for funding (based on organisations supported or funded against the number of organisations supported in total)	25.53%
Average number of volunteers against organisations supported (based on volunteers supported/placed against the number of total organisations)	0.90

MONMOUTHSHIRE

Number of Interactions with organisations providing direct advice	452
Avg amount of times each organisation has used GAVO	4.8
Potential funding to be awarded by GAVO	£299,946
Actual funding awarded by GAVO	£84,390
Target value of funding supported by GAVO	£149,973
Actual value of funding supported by GAVO	£89,750
% of organisations being supported for funding (based on organisations supported or funded against the number of organisations supported in total)	22.11%
Average number of volunteers against organisations supported (based on volunteers supported/placed against the number of total organisations)	0.76

NEWPORT

Number of Interactions with organisations providing direct advice	266
Avg amount of times each organisation has used GAVO	2.5
Potential funding to be awarded by GAVO	£488,436
Actual funding awarded by GAVO	£192,602
Target value of funding supported by GAVO	£244,218
Actual value of funding supported by GAVO	£20,488
% of organisations being supported for funding (based on organisations supported or funded against the number of organisations supported in total)	42.99%
Average number of volunteers against organisations supported (based on volunteers supported/placed against the number of total organisations)	1.23

AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE NEXT QUARTER



BLAENAU GWENT

In Blaenau Gwent, GAVO is supporting community groups to thrive and make a real difference. We help groups deliver projects, secure funding, and build long-term sustainability, while strengthening governance and encouraging local partnerships. We champion volunteering, offering support for recruitment, retention, and youth engagement, and provide capacity-building to help groups move from planning to action. Through networking, engagement, and resource sharing, we keep communities connected and informed.

Our focus on referral management, efficient service delivery, and local appointments ensures support is accessible, coordinated, and effective. By combining practical help with strategic guidance, GAVO empowers groups to maximise their impact and create lasting benefits for Blaenau Gwent communities.

CAERPHILLY

Over the next quarter in Caerphilly, GAVO is focused on empowering communities and supporting local groups. We're helping young people lead the way through Youth-Led Grants and promoting volunteering via V Fest and other community events. Local organisations can access expert guidance on governance, funding, and sustainability, while our capacity-building support strengthens their impact and resilience.

We're also coordinating sector events and recognition, including Volunteer Awards, and working closely with Caerphilly County Borough Council and local networks to share learning and boost community wellbeing. Summer activities like Play in the Parks encourage family engagement, while we support groups in planning autumn programmes and preparing sector-wide funding bids to secure vital resources.

MONMOUTHSHIRE

In the coming quarter, GAVO Monmouthshire will focus on expanding volunteering and community impact across the county. We will coordinate volunteer placements, support young people through the Youth Volunteer Fund, and explore intergenerational volunteering opportunities. Our Thriving Communities events and the Monmouthshire Volunteering Awards will celebrate and strengthen local networks.

We'll continue partnering with Monmouthshire County Council and local projects in Abergavenny, while supporting funded initiatives like RIF, WIC, and Carers Groups in Caldicot. Health and wellbeing partnerships, including GP surgery engagement, will ensure better connections and referrals. Looking ahead, we aim to develop new community initiatives, grow volunteering opportunities—especially for youth—and build strong networks to share knowledge, strengthen partnerships, and ensure all projects thrive.

NEWPORT

Over the next quarter in Newport, GAVO will focus on supporting communities and strengthening local partnerships. We're launching the Warm Hub Scheme, helping groups set up and promote safe, welcoming spaces, while collecting impact stories to showcase their benefits. Our Third Sector Network continues to grow, fostering collaboration and volunteer engagement, including promoting the Youth Volunteer Fund and recognising outstanding contributions.

We're exploring partnership opportunities through the £500k Community Integration Fund and aligning small grants with local care priorities. Ongoing place-based care and winter planning workshops, sector mapping, and engagement with ABUHB, NCC, and One Newport ensure our resources meet community needs. Additional initiatives include supporting carers, launching the Greener Futures Project, and preparing for diabetes local support, with developments pending Welsh Government funding.

GWENT WIDE

Next quarter, we will be promoting Gwent-wide learning and development opportunities for the third sector, strengthening skills, knowledge, and collaboration across local organisations. By investing in people and partnerships, we aim to build a more connected, capable, and resilient voluntary sector in Gwent.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FACING THE THIRD SECTOR IN GWENT?

BLAENAU GWENT

In Blaenau Gwent, the voluntary sector faces a range of challenges this quarter. Team capacity is impacted by staff absence, while community groups are navigating limited funding and complex grant processes, particularly in arts and education.

Sustaining member engagement and recruiting committed volunteers remains difficult, compounded by placement and host suitability issues. Increasing demand from individuals with mental health or neurodiverse needs requires specialist support and careful risk management. Strategic partnerships with schools need strengthening to promote early volunteering, while service gaps—especially in in-person befriending—persist.

Balancing referrals with available capacity, managing expectations, and navigating digital systems like Elemental adds further complexity.

CAERPHILLY

The voluntary sector in Caerphilly faces a challenging quarter. Slow uptake of opportunities and last-minute event cancellations can affect engagement and delivery. Many groups struggle with capacity pressures from Community Asset Transfers, tight charity registration deadlines, and Local Authority expectations, including governance requirements and volunteer limits.

Funding is increasingly competitive, with fewer grants and rising incorporation requirements, while future streams beyond 2026 remain uncertain, complicating planning. Small, volunteer-led organisations also face complex guidance, bureaucratic processes, and time pressures from tendering, pulling staff away from frontline work.

Budget constraints and late strategic changes to project criteria add further strain, requiring groups to adapt quickly. Despite these challenges, GAVO remains committed to supporting Caerphilly's voluntary sector, helping organisations navigate uncertainty, streamline processes, and sustain valuable community impact.



MONMOUTHSHIRE

In Monmouthshire, local voluntary groups face a challenging quarter ahead. Limited funding and administrative capacity make it hard for smaller organisations to secure grants, while sustainability remains a key concern for initiatives needing ongoing support. Staffing pressures and lone-working challenges add to delivery difficulties, with some groups awaiting CIO status or follow-on funding.

Rising demand on community services, alongside reductions in statutory support, means groups are increasingly absorbing complex cases, while early intervention opportunities are shrinking, raising the risk of crisis. Youth engagement is particularly limited, affecting wellbeing and social inclusion. Service partners also experience delays and long waiting lists, requiring careful expectation management.

GAVO continues to support Monmouthshire groups with funding, governance, and sustainability, helping ensure the sector can adapt, respond, and thrive despite these pressures, including TogetherWorks as they transition to an independent CIO.

NEWPORT

Newport's voluntary sector faces a dynamic and challenging quarter. Staff absences, internal role changes, and small team sizes mean workloads must be carefully planned to prevent burnout and ensure critical processes continue smoothly. Limited capacity often pushes teams from proactive work into firefighting mode, while 1-1 community support remains resource-intensive.

Recruitment and induction of new Health, Social Care & Wellbeing and Youth Volunteering Officers will strengthen ongoing projects, including the Warm Hubs scheme, volunteer awards, and potential support for POBL's Greener Futures initiatives. Teams remain actively engaged in local partnerships and networks, contributing to COL, Right Skills, and One Newport meetings.

GWENT WIDE

The voluntary sector in Gwent faces several key challenges this quarter. Tight delivery timescales often restrict meaningful community engagement and resident-led participation. Limited community capacity, heavily reliant on goodwill, creates inconsistencies in programme delivery. Venue shortages and geographic fragmentation—particularly in areas like Risca and Greater Bargoed—slow progress, while volunteer and tutor gaps further reduce capacity and delay initiatives. Centralised administrative systems, from IT to materials, add additional backlogs, affecting timely access and engagement.

Despite these hurdles, GAVO remains committed to supporting local organisations, strengthening community networks, and ensuring that residents continue to have a strong voice in shaping services across Gwent.



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MEMBERSHIP

If you wish to become a member of GAVO, our membership form is located on the website at www.gavo.org.uk/membership. As a third sector we are stronger together so would encourage you to join.

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