

Be Community Plus



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Volunteering Wales

Strategic Grant - Project

report 2021/22

Monmouthshire County Council

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to report on the Be Community Plus project which was funded through the Volunteering Wales Strategic Grant 2021/22. The project has been co-hosted in partnership between Monmouthshire County Council and GAVO and ran between December 2021 and September 2022

Background

Need for the program

Evidence of need was generated primarily through the preceding Be Community Project which started in January 2017 and provided face to face training for community groups and leaders. This project recognised the need to support lead volunteers who were often coordinating projects and large cohorts of volunteers by themselves or as a small leadership teams with little, or no support. This put lead volunteers at risk of stress, overwhelm and burnout and risked the sustainability of projects. The evaluation by Chis Jones Regeneration illustrated a need for training courses to be provided in a range of formats. A high proportion of people requested online versions of training to fit in with home and work life and to complement existing face to face provision. The evaluation also found, that in addition to training community groups, leaders required tailored bespoke support focussed on the unique demands of their volunteering and projects.

The role that community groups and organisations play in creating opportunities for early intervention, prevention and wellbeing, were well recognised prior to and subsequent to, the pandemic. Regardless of whether or not they offer specific wellbeing provision, they offer opportunities for people to come together, expand their networks and develop resilience through social ties and mutual support. In times of austerity, in the wake of the pandemic, and with the cost of living crisis looming, it was clear that public bodies and services would need to collaborate more with community projects. With this recognition came a responsibility for Monmouthshire County Council and partners to support community groups and organisations, so that they are robust, sustainable and routed in best practice.

Program objectives

The aims of the project were:

- To enable fledgling groups to test innovative ideas
- To enable groups providing high trust activities, the opportunity to adopt safe working practices that safeguard volunteers and recipients, thereby forging stronger partnerships with Health and Social Care
- To support innovative projects to utilise skills and experience from private, voluntary, and public sectors to pilot and/or upscale projects
- To provide groups with access to the training needed to flourish and meet industry standards

The project had three main strands for delivery, this included:

- the development of an online suite of training based on evidence of need from the previous Be Community project
- The development of an intensive mentorship scheme to test and pilot new ideas, sustainably upscale projects and develop good governance/safe practice that lays the foundation for partnership working with linking in projects*
- To support the mentorship, organisations were able to apply for up to £2500 worth of purchases made by GAVO for equipment, services or other support to overcome barriers and provide quick wins for accelerated progress.

In addition to the main delivery strands, the project also provided two added value elements, which included:

- Ad hoc advice and support provided through MCC and GAVO staff to organisations that didn't meet the eligibility criteria for the project
- Independent Action Research Evaluation that involves the project beneficiaries in the evaluation of the project. This element was designed to build additional capacity in projects by equipping volunteers with the skills needed to inform future evaluation of their own projects. It also provided networking and learning opportunities through interaction with other projects involved in the scheme.

Management and Governance

A Community Panel was appointed to oversee the development and delivery of the scheme. Community Panel members were recruited from the community, in an open and transparent process, involving MCC, GAVO and partners advertising widely throughout their networks. Brief terms of reference were drafted and the delivery of the scheme was debated and agreed with Panel members, throughout the life of the project. Refer to Case Study.

Delivery – the Be Community Plus Offer

Online Training

The Purpose of the online suite of training was to create an alternative to face-to-face training in the form of flexible, bite-size modules that could fit around busy work and home lives.

The training opportunities are provided at no cost to people who give their own time to support their communities. The training would have the dual benefit of allowing individuals to develop their personal skills set whilst also bringing benefits for the wider community by enhancing the quality of community leadership and projects.

The development of permanent resources would also reduce ongoing cost for the Be Community program by reducing continuously commissioning of face-to-face training.

The types of courses developed was informed by evidence of need from original Be Community project and through engaging with community projects through the Community Action Network.

Content was created by a range of training providers, partners and in-house expertise using Microsoft Sway. The benefit of using Sway is that it is simple to use which means content can be created and changed without ongoing website development costs. The program also collects engagement statistics.

In total 17 courses were created. Subject areas are a mix of compliance/technical, leadership and development skill courses. The suite of courses were launched in August 2022.

The Courses



Data Protection and GDPR

This course is aimed at raising awareness and to give a basic understanding of GDPR and the practice of data protection. It clarifies how to identify and manage personal information and highlights the risks involved in processing personal data and how to mitigate those risks. The course also gives information about what to do if you have a data breach and where to go for help and guidance.



Quote from course feedback

'This is a need to know course. It tells you everything you need to know to be compliant. A must for any charity dealing with personal information'

Improving and diversifying your income for charities and community groups

This course focuses on why charities and community groups may want to diversify their income streams and some of the factors organisations may want to think about when considering their readiness for diversification. The second section illustrates some practical methods for creating additional income and explores the opportunities and risks each approach.

Quote from course feedback

'Lots of new things to think about to generate more income. Surprisingly practical for an online course'

Introduction to moving and handling

Introduction to moving and handling is for anyone who wants to make sure they are lifting and moving things safely. It follows the All Wales Manual Handling Pass Port but doesn't replace face to face training.

Leading through change

This module is designed for volunteers in leadership positions who are thinking about implementing a change. The module demonstrates how people react to change differently and things leaders can do to support individuals and teams through change.

Quote from course feedback

'Just what I needed, will make the organization more sustainable'

Leading volunteers

Recruitment and retention of volunteers is a key theme that community member tell us they want support with. This was a popular course when delivered face to face by McConnachie Training through the traditional Be Community project.

This online module focuses on the safe recruitment of volunteers and how to continue to support them on their volunteering journey in order to retain them long term.



Microsoft Sway

This course was created for volunteers who have undertaken some of the online modules through Be Community Plus and would like to give Sway a go for themselves. It has also been an invaluable skill in training some of the training providers to use Microsoft Sway in order for them to provide online content. The module covers how to create a Sway from beginning to end and provides some useful videos and links to get people using the various features. Created in partnership with SRS.

Out on the TILES – helping people to transfer whilst out and about



In recognition of an aging population; community group organisers and leaders have identified that the mobility needs of their beneficiaries are changing and people accessing their groups are increasingly needing more support to mobilise when out and about. Community group leaders wanted to continue to support their aging members but felt unsure about the best way to help them negotiate their surroundings and do things like get in and out of vehicles. Out on the TILES uses practical videos

to demonstrate safe practice when enabling people to transfer using the moving and handling acronym T.I.L.E to understand task, load, individual and environment.

Quote from course feedback

'It was useful to be able to do this in my own time. As a refresher it would have been a bit of a waste of time to go to face to face course, sit there for a few hours and go over things I already know but this online version made the process quick and easy to fit in with me'

Phone Scams

This module has been provided by South Wales Police in recognition of the high incidences of scams that occur in Monmouthshire. In particular, this course was included to upskill the 400+ befriending volunteers supported through Community Connections so they are able to share this information with their befriended.

Power-Up Project

Is a series of modules designed to equip volunteer leaders with the knowledge to identify individual preferences, manage more authentically and identify triggers for key topics such as stress, overwhelm and burnout. The aim is to create a psychologically safe environment, where everyone feels open to discussing well-being with confidence.



1 Communicate like a boss

This module explores the science of language and its importance in creating a safe space for the team to talk.

2 Being a Human Leader

Being authentic is key to driving our team. This module explores the science of leadership styles from management theory, the characteristics of an authentic leader and introduces the NLP Rep System as a tool to become more authentic.

3. Boost Team Happiness – Optimise Results

This module teaches how to be aware of the team environment and understand how to nurture open, honest communication for all. It shows how to identify indicators of volunteer mental health decline and how to support them, how to develop mutually supportive volunteering/work environments and how to be confident in your individual style of support.

4 Fire Me Up!

This module is about the science of motivation and how volunteer leaders can keep themselves on track even when they don't feel like it. It teaches learners the technique to change state of mind and fire up both themselves and their team

5 Happy Team – Happy Life

This module explores the science of happiness and how happiness contributes to productivity. It enables learners to understand how to use Perceptual Positions for healthy conflict, how to deal with difference effectively and learn ways to optimise team effectiveness.

6 Back to What Future

This final model rounds up the series by looking at the science of managing teams in world of hybrid remote working.

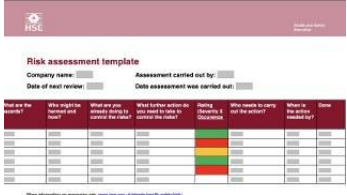
The course shows volunteer leaders how to give teams a voice and replace blame with curiosity. It focuses on how to recognise team types and how to work to strengths to impact productivity. It discusses reward vs motivation and its importance for hybrid working and keeping the team connected where there is less opportunity to get together in physical environments.

Quote from course feedback

'I have done all six modules in my lunch back over the last month. Brilliant that I can fit this kind of thing in between work and home. Thanks, I have learnt a lot'

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment was another traditionally popular course when taught face to face through the original Be Community Project. This online module is sent with resources so that community groups can start implementing the learning using the tools mentioned in the module.



The image shows a screenshot of a 'Risk assessment template' form. At the top, it has the HSE logo and the title 'Risk assessment template'. Below the title, there are fields for 'Company name', 'Assessment carried out by', 'Date of next review', and 'Date assessment was carried out'. The main part of the form is a table with the following columns: 'What are the hazards?', 'Who might be harmed?', 'What are you already doing to control the risk?', 'What further actions do you need to take?', 'Rating (likelihood)', 'Who needs to carry out the action?', 'When is the work to be done?', and 'Done'. The table contains several rows of data with various ratings and action items.

Quote from course feedback

'I can start by walking round tomorrow and evaluating risks to our volunteers and ensure I give myself quiet time to walk around and evaluate all areas. What might seem very simple to one person, is baffling to others. This was the case with me and risk assessments. I think I was over thinking them. Thank you!'

Trustee Development and Charity Governance

Throughout the year Monmouthshire County Council, the community and partners run Community Action Network events. This course kept emerging as a something groups wanted to access. The course looks at the role of trustees, legal responsibilities and how to recruit, support and develop trustees. The course also looks at the various not for profit organisations structures and helps learners to consider the right structure for their project.



Quote from course feedback

'I've been thinking about becoming a trustee, this was brilliant to helping me understand more about what's involved'

Tummler School



Online Tummler School provides easy-to-use tools and new ways of doing for either anyone wanting to start doing more for their community, or for experienced community activists, who welcome valuable new ways and tools to help them make a greater difference.

Designed to fit around busy lifestyles it is a free interactive online programme. 'Tumblers' are community activists inspired and better-equipped to make asks of those around them, who grow communities of

changemakers to make a greater, more sustainable and profound difference to their world.

Registration form to access the training

<https://forms.office.com/r/3W8PztXtMU>

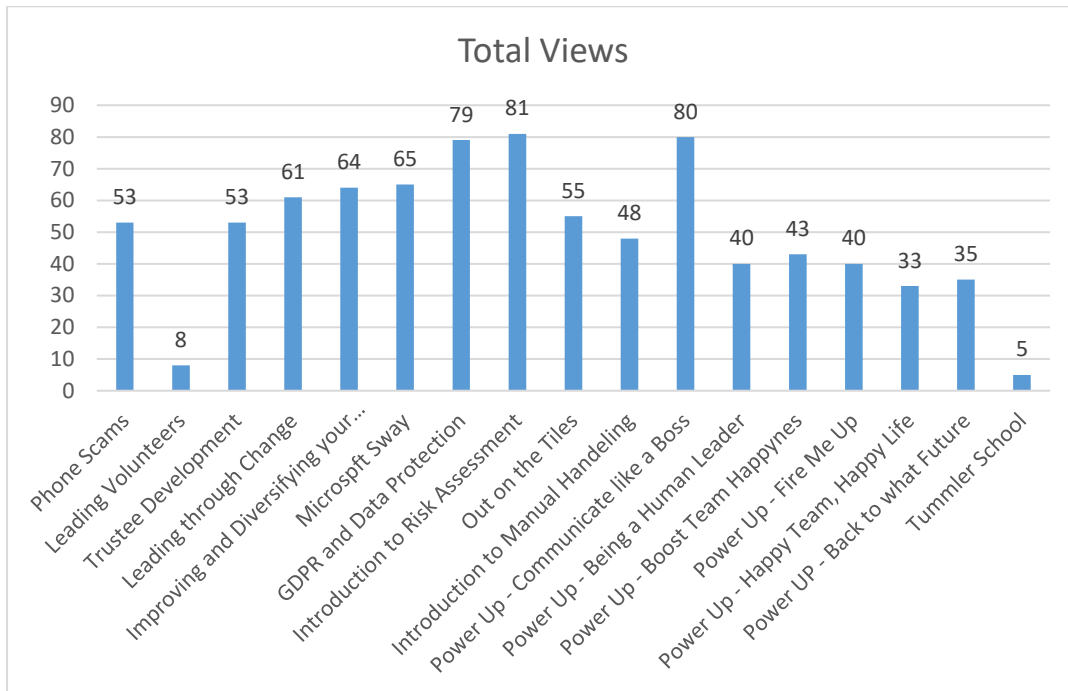


Training Statistics and feedback

The following information relates to data generated between August 2022 – October 2022.

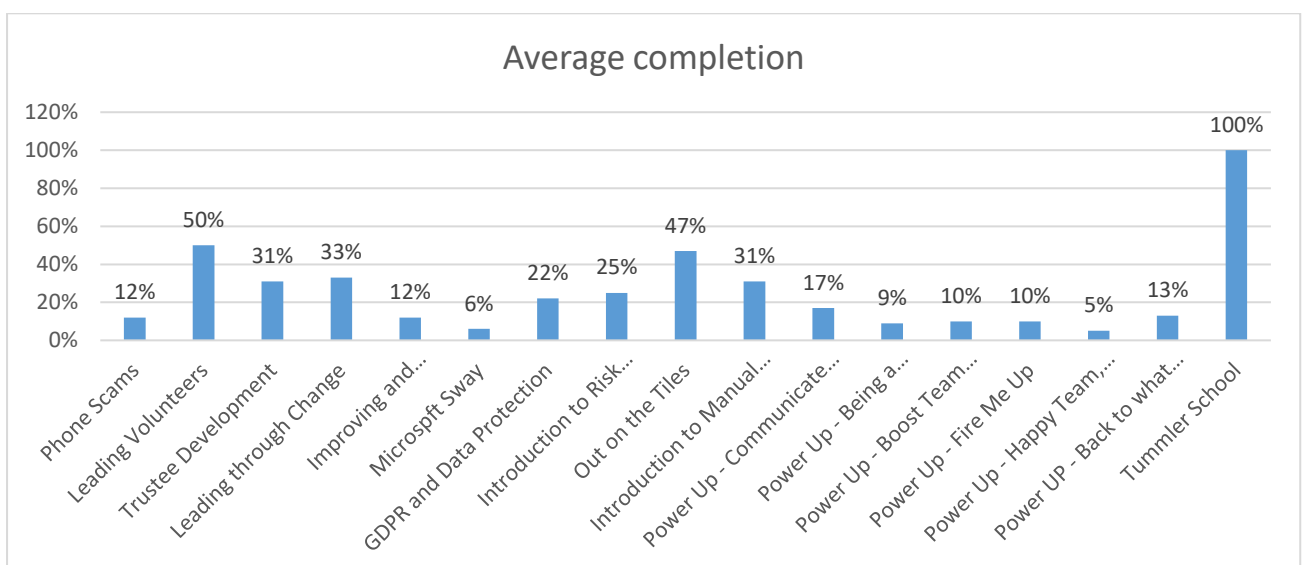
Total Views

In total courses have been accessed 843 times to date, the following chart illustrates the breakdown per course.



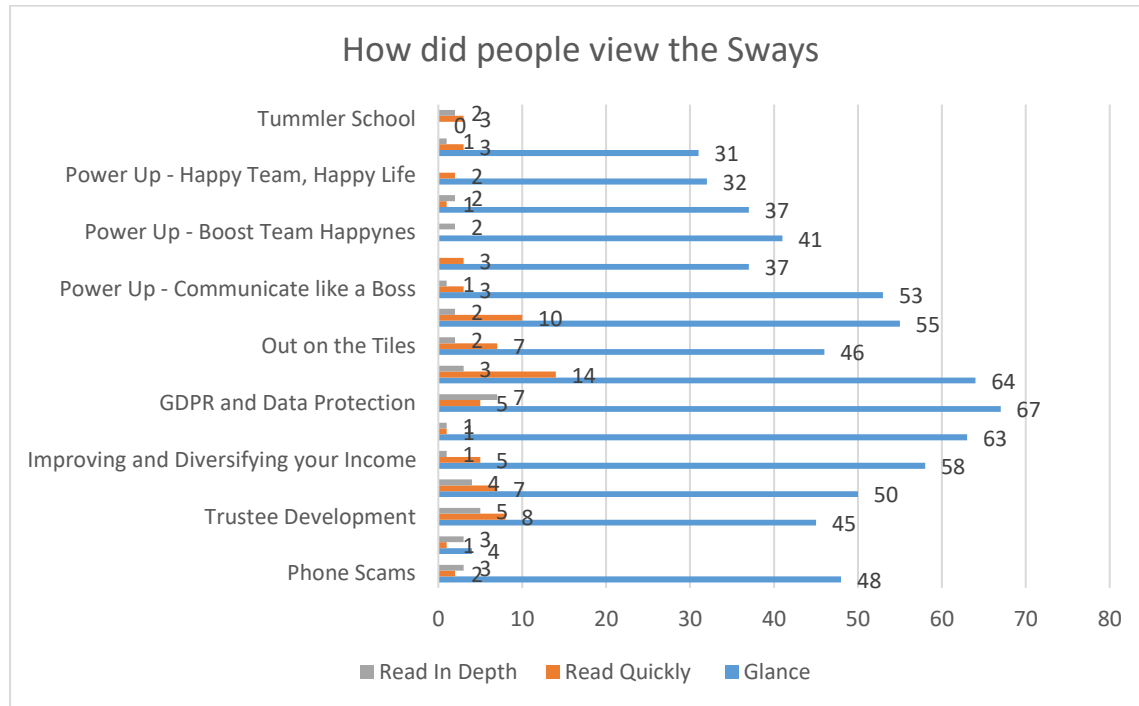
Average completion rate

The average completion rate for courses is 25% demonstrating that 210 courses have been completed since the launch of the modules. Due to delays in development; Leading Volunteers and Tummler School we added to the offer later which may account for the reduce number of views.



How people viewed the modules

The table below illustrates the breakdown of viewing habits into glances, quick view and long reads. We suspect the large number of quick views is down to people having a look at the module before deciding to invest more time and people completing the course in small chunks. More investigation is required to delve deeper into this trend.



Feedback

Participants are encouraged to give feedback at the end of each module through a link to an online form. The following data is from 91 feedback responses Relevance to volunteering role

- 94% of the respondent thought that the training was relevant to their role.
- 88% of respondents thought the training was easy to access.
- 96% of respondents thought the training would help they perform their role or improve their practice.
- 91% of respondents said that they learnt something new in the training.
- 84% of respondent said they enjoyed the training

The following is a word cloud of responses to the question – What will you do differently as a result of the training?



Hours in kind spent on creating courses

GDPR and Data Protection: 4 hours updating adapting existing MCC internal course

Microsoft Sway: 5 hours development SRS

Phone Scams: 2 hours adapting existing resource MCC officer time

Specialist IT support: 18 hours MCC officer time

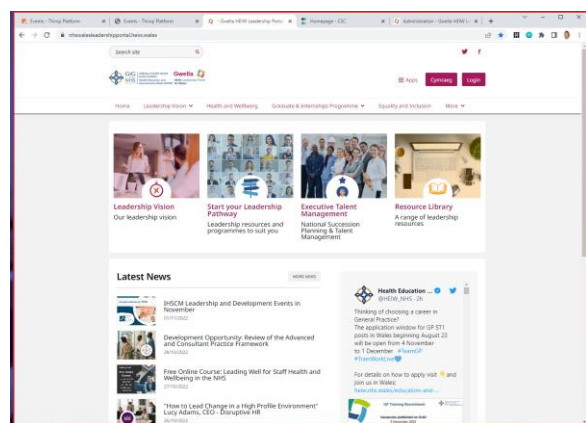
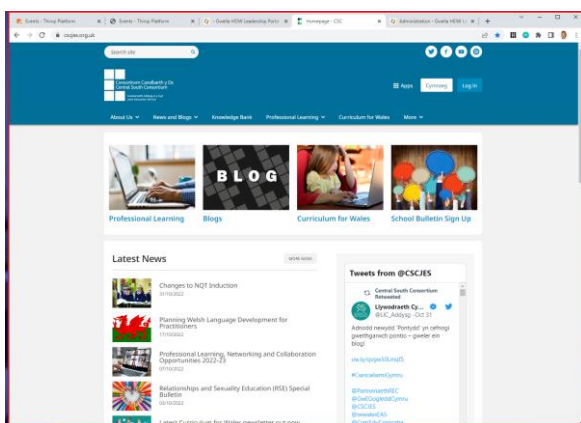
Sway training for course creators: 6 hours MCC officer time

Challenges and mitigating action

There were very few training providers with the expertise to create online content, which would have meant using a technology company to convert the training, which would have been prohibitively expensive. This would have resulted in fewer training courses for the funding. Instead, Microsoft Sway was used as the platform to develop the training. A Sway module to teach providers how to use it was created which was later added to the suit of training on offer.

The workforce development department at Monmouthshire County Council was also making significant investments into a training platform. Rather than duplicate, it was decided not to go ahead with the Be Community Plus platform that would have had ongoing maintenance costs associated. Instead, content will be added to the larger platform when completed in 2023. This meant the project would need an alternative delivery model to enable participants to sign up to courses in the interim. To do this a Microsoft form has been created with automated flows enabling automatic emails with relevant Sways to be sent to participants.

Below are a few images of what the platform will look like once it is complete in 2023



Mentorship and purchases

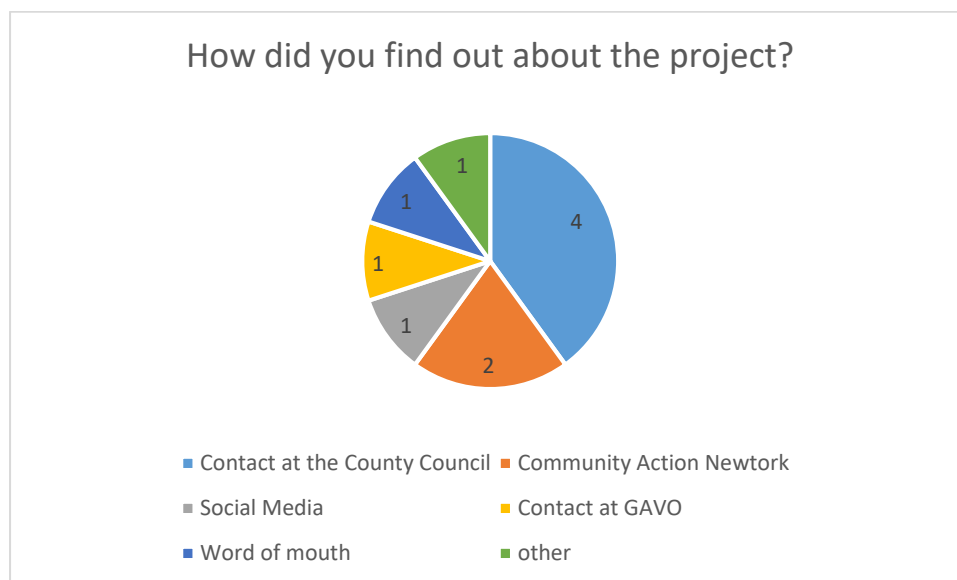
The purpose of this element of the project was to provide intensive mentoring to community groups in order to upscale projects, improve their sustainability and develop good working practices routed in good governance.

Projects received bespoke mentorship from a range of providers from third, private and public sectors with relevant expertise for the project and their goals. This was accompanied with access to purchases to reduce barriers and facilitate speedy progress. Based on the requirements of projects a minority of projects received only mentorship or only purchases.

The process

In order to ensure the community was in the driving seat, a community panel was set up at the beginning of the project. The panel was made up of four community members who applied to be mentors following a press release; they had a range of experience in academia, private and voluntary sectors. The role of the community panel was to approve applications for mentorship/purchasing (hothousing), including the allocation of mentor hours and value of purchases. The community panel was also responsible for allocating mentors to projects by matching mentors experience/expertise to the expressed needs of projects.

Opportunity to take part in the project as a mentor and to apply for hothousing was promoted through press release, email marketing, social media, posters/flyers, local Community Action Networks and through promotion by other partner organisations. The chart below illustrates how community groups became aware of the project.



Once a project application had been submitted, the project received a follow up visit or phone call from a MCC/GAVO officer to find out more about the project and what they were trying to achieve. The rationale behind this approach, was to provide support and reduce barriers to projects with limited experience of making applications. It offered an opportunity to share all necessary information, so the Community Panel could make a fully informed

decision about applicants. In a few cases, support was offered by GAVO/MCC to make the application and/or to amend the application.

Where possible, experts from the voluntary sector e.g. experienced community groups, volunteers or third sector mentors were suggested as appropriate mentors, so that WCVA funding could be reinvested into the local voluntary sector. This approach aimed to realise local expertise in Monmouthshire's voluntary sector and provide opportunity for organisations to test 'pay to teach' models of diversifying income. Where a voluntary sector mentor could not be identified local consultancy and expertise within MCC, GAVO or partners was sought.

The panel met seven times over the course of the project to approve projects, allocate indicative costs for purchases and allocate mentors

Once matched, the project and mentor were required to meet to discuss expectations and ensure 'fit' in terms of expectations and skills, before commencing the mentorship. Part of the mentors role was to help the project make considered decisions about purchases available to them through GAVO and report back to the panel to approve fully costed proposals.

Projects were monitored for progress through mentor reports and regular project updates with the MCC and GAVO team.

Ready Steady Go

A project for children with ASD and their families. The project received 25 hours funded mentorship from their local Mencap who have recently renovated a state of the art building with Big Lottery funding for in order to support people with disabilities in the community.

The aims of the project were to develop the governance associated with running services out of RSGs newly acquired building and submitting a big lottery bid to expand services across Monmouthshire. A laptop and iPad was purchased to enable the project to comply with GDPR legislation.

Key Success – improved upscaling and sustainability for the next three years through Award of Big Lottery funding of £99,50 and expansion of services to 150 new recipients. Development of policies and procedures to enable partnership working with social services. Tested ‘pay to teach’ model of mentorship.

Friends of Bailey Park

A gardening project based in Abergavenny. The project received 25 hours funded mentorship from Growing Spaces (local horticultural charity specialising in supporting disabled people) to design and create an accessible sensory garden.

Phase one of the project has been implemented with the addition of a new accessible path and renovated planters so that more disabled people can become involved in the project.



The second phase of the project will involve implementing a planting plan informed by Growing Spaces.

To support the second phase, the project has been linked with a private business that wants to donate 30 days of corporate volunteering. The private business/corporate organisation also has links with a local building firm who will be able to provide free or ‘at cost’ materials.

Once phase two is complete – Growing Spaces will support the project with volunteering to maintain the space. Thus providing opportunities for people with disabilities.

Key Success: Upscaling of project by increasing opportunities for disabled people. Potential to increase volunteering, new partnerships developed increasing future sustainability. Tested ‘pay to teach’ model of mentorship

Gilwern Roots

Is a community cohesion project aimed which has a number of functions around creating strong communities. They run a community café, community growing garden and small arts festival. As a small leadership team, the project wanted support around a range of issues to combat burnout and overwhelm.

The project received 50 hours funded mentorship through local community development consultant around trustee recruitment and development, governance, community engagement, volunteer retention, delegation, support with a charity commission application and wellbeing. Purchases included gazebos to bring the community together outside.

Key Successes: Engagement with local community around need to inform organisational direction, the future sustainability and resilience of the project was markedly improved reducing pressure on leadership team. Tested 'pay to teach' model of mentorship.

Happy go Lucky

A completely new start up initiative to develop an amateur dramatics company from scratch to put on its first show and become sustainable into the future. The project involved working with children and young people so the development of safeguarding policy and practice was essential.

The project was matched with local a lead volunteer from Caldicot Musical Theatre Society who provided 25 hours funded mentorship. This centred around organisational structure and setting up a back account, compliance safeguarding and health and safety as well as practical support around putting on a show. The purchase of a SumUp credit card payment device, eased the burden of payments and reduced the need to hold petty cash, streamlining that aspect of the project.

Additional media support was provided by MCC in kind to produce a promotional video to promote the show. 6 hours editing and 3 hours filming would have a commercial value of £500. The video was shared by 43 people (which is high) and was viewed over 3100 times.

Key Successes, Sustainability improved by generating the revenue through ticket sales to fund the next performance and becoming a CIO. Safe working practices to deliver high trust activities achieved especially in relation to safeguarding. Tested 'pay to teach' model of mentorship



Case Study in link: [Be Community Plus - Addams Family English Subtitles - YouTube](#)

Cwtch Angels

Cwtch angels is a CIC aimed at working with the community to combat the cost of living and reduce food waster. They run a community fridge and a community shop in Abergavenny.

They were matched with a local mentor with extensive experience in supporting organisations to develop charity shops who provided 25 hours of funded mentorship support.

Mentorship was not without its difficulties for this project. There was dissent within the group about the need for support. However, important and necessary health and safety

advice was offered with regard to the premises, stock and management of volunteers. The project is currently moving to larger premises.

Bulwark Community Centre

Bulwark Community Centre is a Charity Trust based in the Bulwark district of Chepstow.

The project was matched with a local consultant who had recently been successful in supporting another similar Chepstow based community centre with a successful Big Lottery application.

Mentorship included community engagement of 350 people, which informed the application of a big lottery application to improve accessibility for the building to provide more services for people with disabilities and youth provision. They also received support around trustee development and diversity. There were no purchases associated with this project.

Key Successes: Improved sustainability and upscaling through award of circa £99,500 from the big lottery and the development of trustees.

Monmouth Bee Festival

Monmouth Bee festival is coordinated by the Bees for Development Charity. They wanted to increase community involvement and ownership of the festival to increase its sustainability in the long terms.

They were matched with a local consultant mentor with experience in running Monmouth Busking Festival and received 4 hours funded mentorship. There were no purchases associated with this project.

Mentorship centred on generating buy-in from local community groups. A plan was put together to enhance community education opportunities through the festival, to develop fringe events run by community groups and to have more community groups holding information stalls to highlight their projects and recruit volunteers.

Key Successes: Doubled number of community stalls resulting in volunteer recruitment and awareness opportunities for community projects contributing towards their sustainability. The event also increased free educational activities.

Caerwent Community Centre

Caerwent Community Centre is a charity based in the Caerwent district of Caldicot. It provides a meeting resource for local community groups and individuals for social, educational and recreational purposes. A wide range of wellbeing activities and groups are provided at the Centre.

The aims were to increase the amount of projects using the space by installing the internet and connectivity equipment throughout the centre. They received 5 hours mentorship in kind from a MCC specialist, borrowed kit to test products before purchases of equipment was made on their behalf.

Key Successes: Improved sustainability by increasing facilities at the centre leading to more bookings and partnership working. Because of increasing the connectivity in the centre a new partnership has been developed with MHA to provide IT classes for local residents.

Wye Gymnastics – Coffee Beam

Wye Gymnastics are a small local charity that provides a range of wellbeing opportunities like Caldicot Community Fridge, projects for older people living well with dementia and youth provision.

The aim of their project was to develop a café in a portacabin to diversify income to improve sustainability, provide volunteering and employment opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide low cost meals to combat the cost of living. They were matched with a local business consultant with experience in catering who provided 25 hours of funded mentorship.

Key Successes: Despite frustrations due to planning agreement, mentorship has provided invaluable assistance in understanding the day-to-day delivery of a community café. Support from an mentor with extensive catering experience has been extremely reassuring for the group, as they plan the new café. Support from an individual with a depth of understanding of health and safety and food hygiene related requirements has been invaluable and boosted the confidence of all concerned.

Black Mountain Jazz

The aim of this project was to make an application to the charity commission to become a CEO and develop marketing strategy to diversify income.

They were matched with Caryl Cresswell Community panel member/mentor (returned university lecture in community development) who provided 25 hours voluntary mentoring. Purchases were made on their behalf for website and marketing development.

Key Successes sustainability instead by establishing CIO status, the project has widened its reach and secured much-needed new Trustees. A clear, phased approach to development and links with the University of South Wales to devise a Marketing Strategy, means the project is well placed to meet its aims to appeal to a wider audience including starting up a number of youth projects.

Halls Together

Is a collective of 20 Community Halls across Monmouthshire who have the aim of working collaboratively to increase sustainability. The development of a website was purchased through the scheme.

The project received website development and support from University of South Wales Masters in Marketing students to develop a marketing strategy.

Key Success: The website is now in the using testing phase with the 20 halls imputing their various information. The website enabled halls to be booked directly and has live up to date information and will provide suitable alternative halls if the users first choice is already booked which will vastly improve sustainability.



Link to test Environment: [Halls Together | Promoting and supporting charitable village halls and community associations \(stackstaging.com\)](https://stackstaging.com)

Caldicot Community Garden

Caldicot Garden is community group that grows vegetables. They provide social and learning opportunities for community members including people with mental health issues and disabilities.

The project received purchases of signage to promote the project and the lead volunteer received level 3 forest school training (ongoing) to expand the project to the younger demographic and promote inter-generational working

Key Successes: Significant policy development around safeguarding compliance and health and Safety as a result of the training. Increased awareness of the project from signage resulting in recruiting additional volunteers.



Number of projects upscaled

11 of the projects took part in some form of successful upscaling activity or had laid the foundations and developed plans to implement upscaling in the near future. Projects demonstrated tangible upscaling during the course of the program either by increased volunteer numbers, through an increase in beneficiaries or by more projects using their facilities.

'I have already noticed an increase in use by young families with pushchairs and elderly people with wheelchairs who have never been in there before because of the constraints. I feel overwhelmed by the support we have had to achieve this.'

Judith Vicary – Friends of Bailey Park Garden

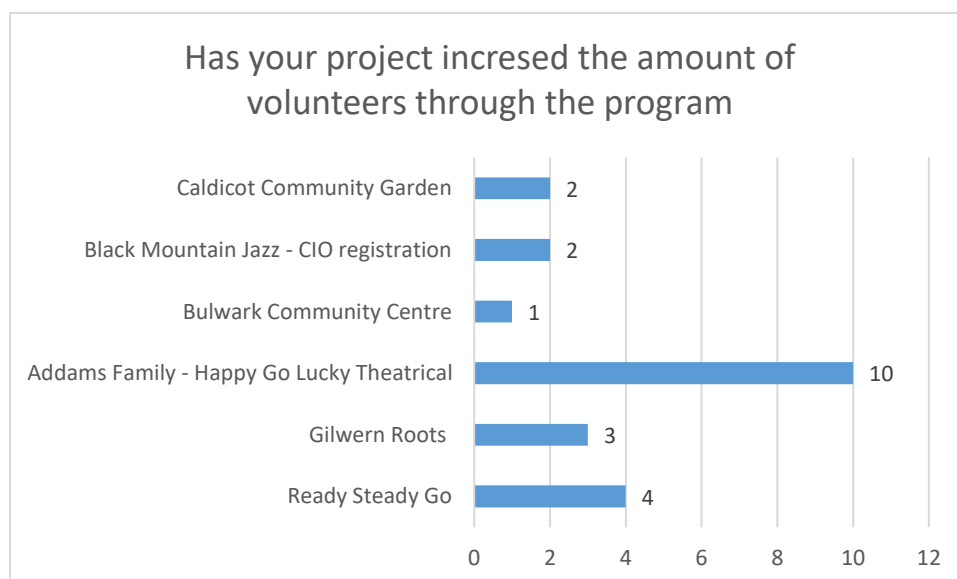
Due to the help with the large grant which we have since found out we have successfully been awarded, we will be able to support many more children, young persons and families across Monmouthshire. Initially in the region of 120 more people

Tracey Rowlands – lead volunteer for Ready Steady Go

Although the overall statistics showed a stable number of visitors over the 2 years, stall holders increased, offering greater diversity within the festival. We increased the number of free educational activities which was very popular. My feeling is that we have begun creating a foundation for other community groups to consider the potential in such a partnership.'

Emily Cullum – Bees for Development

The chart below illustrates increased numbers of volunteers because of the mentorship/purchases. In total 6 organisations reported an increase in volunteers (22 new volunteers in total).



Number of new initiatives piloted

The majority of projects were focused on upscaling existing work streams or making projects more sustainable. Two projects attempted to pilot new initiatives; Happy Go Lucky Theatre Company was a huge success in terms of generating new volunteers, developing safe working practices and sustainability for the future. The other project – Wye Gymnastics who are attempting to open a café have been delayed due to planning delays associated with change of purpose planning application in an area of high risk for flooding.

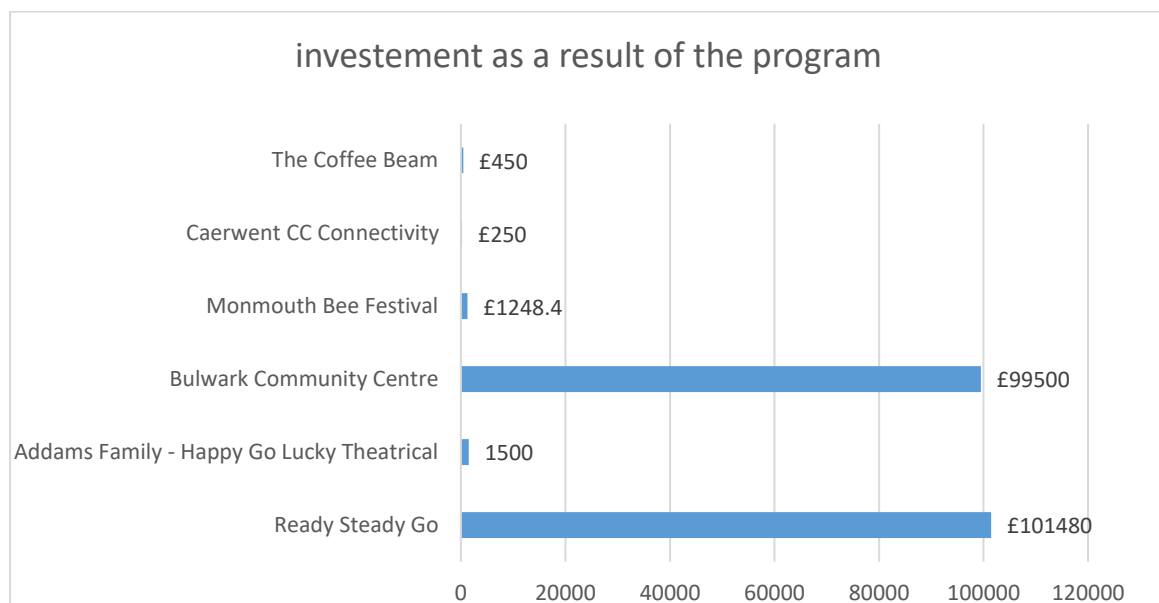
‘Opening night was amazing we sold out the drill hall, we put out 120 seats and had to put a few more out. It was incredible, we are planning to do little shop of horrors next year so the future’s exciting’.

Nick Taylor – Lead Volunteer Happy Go lucky

Number of projects becoming more sustainable because of the program.

11 of the projects involved reported that they have become more sustainable because of the project. Back Mountain Jazz, Bulwark Community Centre, Happy Go Lucky, Gilwern Root and Ready Steady go were all successful in recruiting volunteers into trustee roles contributing to greater resilience in their leadership teams.

The graph below shows the amount of investment levered into organisations during the course of the project.



The projects attribute the smaller funds as a result of being linked into opportunities through their mentor or MCC/GAVO and volunteers applying for funds independently. In the case of Bulwark Community Centre and Ready Steady Go who were awarded Big Lottery funding, both projects attribute their success to the support from their mentor.

'Filling out a Bid lottery application is hard, we would have been able to do it without the mentorship'

Hillary Beach Trustee Bulwark Community Centre

'We were put in touch with a local dissolving organisation who donated £1000 as a result of meeting our mentor and her explaining what our charity was about.

Through the help and guidance of our mentor we were able to complete and successfully gain national lottery funding of 99 thousand pounds. This will support the charity for 3 years.

Tracey Rowlands – Lead Volunteer Ready Steady Go

Number of groups achieving safe working practise for delivering high trust activities

Three projects have been supported to develop safe working practices in high trust activities to enable linking services from social care and health to collaborate with projects.

This includes Ready Steady Go, Happy Go Lucky and Caldicot Community Garden (once the forest school course is complete). All of these projects have developed specific policies, procedures and working practices around Safeguarding and other compliance related to supporting individuals.

Monmouthshire has a number of teams that provide wellbeing support that includes linking people into community based opportunities throughout the county. Whilst not all of the links are made into high trust activities, there is still a requirement that these organisations use best practice in terms of things like food safety or supporting volunteers. This ensures that the linked in person does not get ill, suffer an injury or have a bad experience as a result of the intervention.

Wye Gym, Gilwern roots, Cwtch angels, Friend of Bailey Park and Bulwark Community Centre have all made improvements in this regard either by improving accessibility or through the development of policy or practice.

Challenges and mitigating action

Unfortunately the project has been unable to match mentoring hours from MCC, GAVO and partners suggested in the original financial breakdown. However, successful and unsuccessful applications have received significant additional support from officer staff and partners. Only 12 hours of support delivered to Caerwent Community Centre could be considered as mentorship so we have only included these figures in the financial breakdown.

Conclusion and Learning

In summary, all three strands of the project have been successful, to varying degrees. Taken in conjunction with the CARP Evaluation report, it is clear that participants involved – through training and or receiving mentorship/purchases, have been very positive about its impact.

Moving forward, there are a number of process issues that could be improved. Namely, a clearer introduction to the mentorship scheme for projects that are enrolled, and timely reviews of progress should have been made directly with project volunteers. In hindsight, it would have been useful to hold monthly phone calls or visits to projects by officers of MCC/GAVO to provide additional opportunities for feedback.

Most of the recommendations for improvement (as advised by CARP in the Evaluation Report) could be implemented. Most issues were the result of time pressure upon MCC/GAVO staff with no additional capacity to deliver the scheme. Support from MCC/GAVO staff was in kind and balanced alongside the existing demands of their day-to-day roles. Additional staff to deliver the project would have been helpful and would be a recommendation for similar projects.

Learning from all three strands of the project will be widely shared and all reports will be available to partners eager to know more about the pros and cons of the approaches taken.

MCC and GAVO are grateful to the WCVA Strategic Volunteering Fund for the opportunity to deliver the project and for the learning it has provided.

