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Gloucestershire
Gateway
Trust

NEWSlines

Summer/Autumn 2026

Three anniversaries, one amazing year

**Celebrating the people and partnerships behind a year
of doing things differently**

Communities across Gloucester and the Forest of Dean came together this spring to join us as we celebrated the first year of managing nine Children and Family Centres, the first year of delivering Youth Services in partnership with The Venture Community Hub and the Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF), and the first year of the Blackbridge Community and Sports Hub going from strength to strength in Podsmead.

It's been a huge year in the history of Gloucestershire Gateway Trust as we built

on the success of our unique partnership with Westmorland Family by bringing local family and youth services back into community management through cross-sector partnerships, growing our team and listening to community voice.

The first year's success has been made possible by the fantastic organisations and people we have partnered with, and the residents and families who continue to drive us forward.

Read more on these stories inside.



Children, families and young people enjoying GGT Fest in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean.
For the full story, see page 6



Birthday cake celebrations as the Blackbridge Community and Sports Hub marks its first anniversary. See page 5 for the full story



'Book Clown Ginger', created by Nova and Quinn with Jessica Wilson and Annaliese Broughton. Photo by Jade La Fisher.

International artist Jessica Wilson's globally-renowned photography project 'I See You Like This' is coming to Gloucester.

For the full story, see page 4



A brand-new gelato imagined by Gloucester Academy students and brought to life by Gloucester producers Wholly Gelato will be available in the Farmshops this summer, as part of our fifth Limited Edition project.

For the full story, see page 2

Students have got the gelato challenge licked

GAME, SET MATCHA!

A brand-new gelato imagined by Gloucester Academy students and brought to life by Gloucester producers Wholly Gelato will be available in the Gloucester Services Farmshops this summer, as part of our fifth Limited Edition project.

Ten more Year 9 students have been taking part in this year's Limited Edition business skills course – delivered by The Engine – which offers the opportunity to learn first-hand how to bring a brand-new product to market from scratch.

As part of the course the students formed four groups, each tasked with creating and pitching a new gelato flavour to a panel of judges including Westmorland Family buyers and Wholly Gelato.

The brand-new flavour, Game, Set, Matcha will go on sale in June as a Limited Edition to be sold throughout the summer.

Emily Tallontire, Head of Farmshop at Westmorland said: "Four flavours were presented and it was a tough choice, but we eventually set our hearts on Game, Set, Matcha – a fun play on words with a punchy flavour, what a great combination!"

"Matcha is very on trend at the moment, and



A tough job but someone has to do it – the fun side of market research

“ The experience really helped me develop my confidence and public speaking skills, even though I was really nervous to do the final pitch ”

Irene, Year 9, Gloucester Academy

the team paired it with a lovely strawberry ripple throughout which helped balance both colour and the flavour. This gelato is an eye-catching green colour, bringing a hint of summer to the counter. I would go as far to say it was ace! Perfect for a summer treat."

Working with inspiring local producers like Wholly Gelato is what makes Limited Edition so special. Will and Emily of Wholly Gelato

said: "We have been so thrilled to take part in the Limited Edition this year. The group have been a joy to work with, and are a credit to their school and themselves for the way in which they engaged with the programme.

"They have taken such care and attention at every stage, not only to create a striking new gelato flavour, but also to consider the way in which the flavour represents our values as a business.

"We have not introduced many new flavours ourselves over the last couple of years, so using this process reminds us of one of the greatest passions we have as business owners – flavour creation! We wish the girls all the best going forward and thank them for all their efforts over the last few months!"

This year Limited Edition was supported by Gloucestershire Careers Hub. Both Gloucester Services and Gloucestershire Gateway Trust are proud to be Cornerstone Employers and committed to creating high-quality careers and skills opportunities for local young people as they progress through their education and prepare for exciting futures.



Gloucester Academy students pass the Wholly Gelato taste test with flying colours



Fabric scraps to fashion staples

Local clothing producers' fabric ends are being handcrafted into must-have hair scrunchies by a community producer in Gloucester.

This is the second collaboration between Westmorland Family and The Emma Willis Sewing Room (The Amanah Community CIC) – a safe space in the Barton area where women of all ages and backgrounds meet for sewing and friendship.

The scrunchies have been crafted from fabric ends from Stroud clothing producer

Humphries and Begg and Herefordshire-based Indigowares.

Westmorland Lifestyle Buyer Jess Mills said: "I'm delighted to be part of this collaboration and love the quality and cool designs. What makes it even more meaningful is that the scrunchies are being made through an inspiring community project and gives customers the chance to buy a small piece of wearable craft."

The scrunchies will be on sale in the Gloucester Services Farmshops from June.

Meet the new lead butcher who's clearly a cut above

In a career journey of dedication and passion, our Gloucester Services colleague Iontas has recently stepped into a new role as the Northbound Butchery Services Leader after taking part in our Bridging the Gap course back in 2019.

Since then Ian has mastered every step of the craft, moving from his first role in the cold prep sandwich room, to becoming a butchery apprentice and now to Butchery Service Leader.

Ian's commitment is a testament to the fact that hard work and ambition pay off, constantly developing his own craft, as well as leading the Northbound team to drive record-breaking sales.



Iontas' promotion to Butchery Service Leader is proof that hard work and ambition pay off

Local jobs are a top priority

One of the core objectives behind the creation of Gloucester Services was to offer sustainable jobs and income to local people. As at March 2026, 26% of colleagues overall and 35% of colleagues in service leader or management roles are from the communities GGT works alongside. To find out more about working at Gloucester Services and current vacancies you can visit the Westmorland careers website

<https://careers.westmorlandfamily.com>, and keep an eye on the Gloucester Services Facebook page for details of drop-in recruitment events that happen several times a year.

Bridging the Gap is a three-day employability skills course run by Gloucestershire Gateway Trust for people facing barriers or who find the traditional recruitment process challenging. It aims to help them find meaningful and sustainable employment.

Bridging the Gap started in 2017 and is run in partnership with Gloucester Services. All participants who complete the three days are guaranteed an interview for a real job, with on average three quarters being offered employment as a result.

Visit www.gloucestershiregatewaytrust.org.uk/bridging-the-gap to find out more.



'Book Clown Ginger', created by Nova and Quinn with Jessica Wilson and Annaliese Broughton. Photo by Jade La Fisher.

Project puts parents in the picture

GL4 CIC have been bringing arts and culture to Matson in Gloucester for a decade, including everything from national theatre productions and circus shows, to VR dance and music.

In their latest collaboration, GL4 have teamed up with Hillside Primary School and international artist Jessica Wilson on her globally renowned photography project 'I See You Like This', offering a rare opportunity for children to express their perspective on how they see their adults.

Hector MacInnes, Participation Producer at GL4 said: "I See You Like This makes time for a conversation that is difficult to have in the busy lives of parents and carers – to really find out what young people think of the adults in their lives. It also trusts the young people to express the relationships in their own ways, making work that is meaningful but also incredibly fun. None of this would have been possible without the amazing staff at Hillside Primary who create such a welcoming environment for things like this to happen in."

Look out for an 'I See You Like This' installation at our Community Gallery at Gloucester Services coming soon.

The joy of reading for everyone in Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire's Year of Reading (GYOR) is underway, an initiative designed to strengthen reading culture across the county, running alongside the National Year of Reading.

GYOR has been shaped by a survey of 6,615 children across Gloucestershire who revealed that the things that matter most to them about reading include having time to read without pressure, being able to choose what they read, having access to a wide range of books and having supportive and calm environments to enjoy reading in.

Working alongside school-based initiatives and library programmes, our community partner Read With Me is committing to:

- Expand opportunities for children to read regularly with a volunteer
- Support schools to deliver 'Stay and Read' sessions, including visits from special guests
- Encourage families to build simple, sustainable reading routines
- Provide free pre-loved books

Ways to get involved

- Volunteer to read with a child
- Support reading at home, even in short, regular sessions
- Engage with your local library



- Go to a Read Together after school session at a Children and Family Centre
- Become a governor at your local school

Linda Cohen, Founder of Read With Me said: "We want to encourage everyone in our communities to get involved. Reading is key to so much: it broadens our horizons, develops curiosity and is proven to make us happier."

Read With Me provides volunteers in over 110 county schools, helping improve children's literacy, social skills and confidence through one-to-one sessions. For more about volunteering, visit www.readwithme.org.uk or more about GYOR visit www.gloucestershireyearofreading.org.uk.

Pride of Place investment launches a new era for communities

The communities of Matson and Robinswood in Gloucester are set to receive a 'once-in-a-generation' investment of up to £2m a year for ten years as part of the

government's Pride in Place programme.

GGT's Chief Executive Jason Dunsford has been appointed as Chair of the board - which will also include local residents - and said: "I am so excited and honoured to have been offered the role of Chair for the Matson and Robinswood Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board and steer this exciting opportunity for this community.

"My commitment as Chair is to make sure that this investment is genuinely led and controlled by the people who live here, that it draws in further funding and opportunities, and that our collective story continues to prove that when you put community in charge, anything is possible."



Matson is one of the communities about to get a 'once-in-a-generation' funding injection



A 12-month milestone for hub

There were celebrations in Podsmead at the end of April as Blackbridge CCBS and Freedom Leisure marked the first year of the Blackbridge Community and Sports Hub. Over the past year, the hub has established itself as a vibrant focal point for health, wellbeing and community activity in the local area.

The Blackbridge Community and Sports Hub is also home to the Blackbridge CCBS Youth Work team who run three youth nights a week in the Social Space – supported by GGT – delivering more than 130 sessions and engaging with over 115 local young people since the hub opened.

The hub has also been bringing residents together through community coffee mornings, evening and weekend social clubs, games

nights, quizzes, walking football and breakfast clubs – all of which are open to non-members as well as members.

One resident said: “For the past year I have seen neighbours become friends and the seeds sown for a wider community.”

Mark Gale, Founder of GGT and a Director at Blackbridge CCBS said: “We were all very excited to celebrate the first birthday of this special £7 million project. It took more than a decade of hard work to bring our Community and Sports Hub to life. The vision came from local people who wanted to improve their wellbeing, the hub was built by local contractors E.G. Carter & Co Ltd and together with our partners we have created a new sports and leisure quarter serving Podsmead and the south of Gloucester.”



Clubs and activities have gone from strength to strength at the Blackbridge Community and Sports Hub



Do you know your numbers?

Throughout 2026 Blackbridge CCBS are partnering with Freedom Leisure, Gloucestershire FA and Gloucester City AFC to run a community-first health initiative which encourages people to take control of their heart health.

Jim Hart, Project Manager at Blackbridge CCBS said: “Heart of the Game is about taking health awareness on the road, to help fans and communities understand how important blood pressure is as an indicator of health, making it easy to take a blood pressure check in a relaxed environment.



Alex McIntyre MP gets his blood pressure checked at the Heart of the Game launch at Gloucester City AFC

“Heart of the Game is about the first step towards understanding your heart health. By knowing your numbers, you can make a choice, if you have to, to make the changes you need to live longer and have a better-quality life.”

Blood pressure checks are available at the Blackbridge Community and Sports Hub and will be coming to a number of local football clubs and events throughout 2026. For more information visit www.heartofthegame.org.uk

GGT FEST IS SIMPLY THE BEST

We were delighted to welcome families from across the community to GGT Fest to celebrate an incredible first year of delivering open access, community-led Children and Family Centre services, and managing the Youth Support Services contract for Gloucester and the Forest of Dean.

Across two fun-filled, free events in April – one in Gloucester and one in the Forest of Dean – more than 1,300 people joined us to celebrate. Families enjoyed a wide range of activities, from face painting, glitter tattoos and henna, to inflatables, mini golf, a climbing wall, arts and crafts, sports, games, and a make-your-own smoothie bike.

Young people aged 10+ also had access to an exclusive VIP Youth Zone, delivered in partnership with The Venture Community Hub in Gloucester and Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF) in the Forest of Dean.

One GGT Fest visitor said: "It's been wicked. I can't believe it's all been free to be honest, there's so much for the kids to do and lots of entertainment."

Over the two days, we were proud to welcome a brilliant range of our partner organisations, who brought their energy, expertise and a selection of activities that kept children and families entertained throughout the day.

Alison Walker, Director of Children and Family Services at GGT, said: **"These events were a celebration of children, young people and their families designed to bring everyone together and show how community driven, partnership work can bring sustainable outcomes."**

"The opening year of the Children and Family Centres represents the beginning of a journey, with attendance growing from 9,000 to 47,000 visits. Our community-led approach underpins everything we do and provides a strong foundation for the service's next stage of development."

A huge thank you to our partners in making our GGT Fests so special, and to everyone who joined us. Your presence made the days vibrant, welcoming, and filled with hundreds of happy families.

Centres have a brand-new website

We have a brand-new website for our nine Children and Family Centres across Gloucester and the Forest of Dean, where you can find what's on across the centres

and a booking system for our groups and activities.

Visit www.glosfamilycentres.org.uk or scan the QR code:



[glosforestfamilyhubs](https://www.facebook.com/glosforestfamilyhubs)



[glos_forestfamilyhubs](https://www.instagram.com/glos_forestfamilyhubs)



Voice of the community steers funding

The voice of families is always at the heart of what we offer, so we recently launched a Community Chest Fund which gives families the opportunity to put forward ideas for groups and activities they'd like to run and would like funding for.

In the Forest of Dean, a local organisation put forward a proposal to run a neurodivergent group for children at our River Children and Family Centre. The idea was shared with

parents attending the regular community café, who offered a range of suggestions to help shape the proposal. These were reviewed by the organisation, who took them on board and amended their initial offering, resulting in a more responsive and community-led approach. The amended proposal has been approved and the new group is set to launch in June.

Sarah Booth, Forest of Dean Community

Manager said: "I'm delighted that the Parent Voice Group has helped shape the development of a new group for neurodivergent children. It is wonderful to see families contributing to a service that is inclusive, supportive, and reflects local needs."

If you have an idea of a group or activity for your local Children and Family Centre, talk to the team there about the Community Chest or email familyhubs@ggtrust.org



FOCUS ON YOUTH WORK

Project delivers 30+ youth clubs

Thanks to an incredible network of delivery partners, in the first year of managing youth services for Gloucester and the Forest of Dean, over 30 youth clubs were up and running, delivering 478 youth work sessions and a youth fund co-created by a youth panel was piloted over the summer, allowing them to commission activities for local young people.

Gloucestershire Gateway Trust began delivery of youth services led by The Venture Community Hub in Gloucester and the Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF) in the Forest of Dean on 1st October 2024.

Fund is a runaway success story

Who better to decide what activities are provided for young people than young people themselves? That was the thinking behind the Gloucester Youth Fund, which was managed by a panel of young people who co-designed the fund, set priorities, assessed applications and awarded the funding of a total pot of £35,000.

In the 2025 pilot the fund received 36 applications so it was a tough choice, but the panel agreed to fund 15 activities which included football tournaments, clay workshops and a youth leaders programme, as well as bigger projects such as daytrips, movie nights, youth festivals and workshops. In total, 531 young people aged 11-19 took part in the activities and it was so successful that the Gloucester Youth Fund has returned in 2026, with a Forest of Dean Youth Fund set to launch shortly.

The Gloucester Youth Fund is run by The Venture Community Hub, supported by The Music Works and CHISPA CIC, and made possible by Gloucestershire Gateway Trust. All partners are proud signatories of the Power of Youth Charter, working with The #iWill Movement to help more young people lead social action in Gloucester.



Young Foresters have their say

Earlier this year youth workers from FVAF spoke to over 450 young people throughout the Forest of Dean to ask what would make growing up in the Forest better.

Fliss Simster, Youth Team Manager at FVAF said: "The overwhelming majority named outdoor places such as skateparks and recreational grounds as they places they like to be, with 80% feeling safe in the places they use.

"Of those that did not feel safe, the significant reasoning was 'other people', namely adults misusing substances.

"Better access to Wifi would help – especially in more remote places. Other desired improvements included clear



How the new space could look (AI generated)

environments, bins, places for kids, a place to go and 'a place that's ours'.

"As a result, we are working with local councils to transform unused buildings into youth dedicated spaces, such as the former St Johns Ambulance building in Coleford. Watch this space..."

Work with our Children and Family Centres

We're so lucky to work in partnership with many fantastic neighbourhood organisations, groups and schools who offer a wide range of support and activities in our Children and Family Centres. From 'Read Together After School' with Read With Me (which includes free books!), to debt advice and support with GL Communities, to getting children ready to start school with

Bee Ready with Mrs Summerbee – working with local people and organisations allows us to widen what's available to children, parents and carers.

If you work for a local organisation, school or community group and want to talk about working with us in our Children and Family Centres, email familyhubs@ggtrust.org

From trash to high fashion

Driven by a shared passion for creativity and environmental awareness, 'Trash Fashion' was an inspiring event planned and delivered earlier this year by young people aged 14-18 who attend the WOW Group at The Vibe.

They worked together to organise an event for other young people across Gloucester to encourage positive conversations around sustainability and environmental responsibility through fashion and performance.

At the Trash Fashion Show, all outfits were created entirely from recycled materials. Each piece reflected the theme, 'Fashion Throughout the Decades', showcasing not only the participants' creativity, but also their ability to transform discarded materials into imaginative designs.

The event also showcased a series of live performances from other local youth organisations, including The Music Works, The Redwell Centre and Your Next Move, whose performances added energy, creativity, and a strong sense of community to the evening.

"The event brought together more than 50 young people as participants and an audience of over 100. Trash Fashion created an empowering space where young people could express themselves, build confidence, develop new skills, and feel celebrated. The event highlighted the positive impact that can be achieved when young people are given the opportunity, support, and encouragement to lead meaningful projects" said Jules, Youth Work Development Co-ordinator at The Venture Community Hub.



COMPETITION!

To celebrate the National Year of Reading we're offering one lucky winner the chance to win a £150 National Book Token, which can be used for yourself or donated to your local school or community group!

All you have to do is scan the QR code to visit our Facebook or Instagram page and view the pinned post for how to enter.

Terms and conditions:

- One entry per person on each social media channel, but enter on both to double your chances.
- No alternative or cash prize will be offered.



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