



 **involve**  
**Impact Report**  
*2021/22*

# Impact Report

2021/22

Promoting choice.

Connecting people.

Challenging inequalities.



30 Turkey Court  
Maidstone, Kent  
ME14 5PP

Registered Charity number: 1066911

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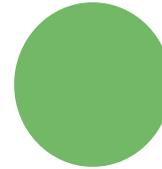
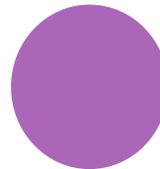
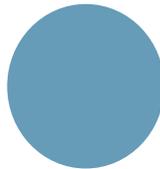




**STEPHEN O'CONNELL CBE**  
Chair of Involve's board of trustees

**Board of Trustees**

- Richard Leicester
- Andy Fairhurst
- Christina Hickson
- Duncan Simmons
- John Bennett
- Rachel Hewett
- Rachel Holweger
- Deirdre O'Donohue



# INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CHAIR

This is the third annual report of the Covid Pandemic period and again everyone at Involve has responded magnificently in the face of the threat from the virus, continued community restrictions and as the year progressed, the emerging cost of living crisis which will impact even further this year.

As with my previous two report introductions, I want to start by again acknowledging the deeply personal impact Covid will have had on many of our staff, volunteers, commissioners, partners and beneficiaries, and thank all our front-line workers and volunteers who have continued to provide vital services to those in need in these unprecedented times.

Our CEO's report sets out a range of tremendous delivery achievements by our staff and volunteers, often whilst managing their own fears and anxieties about the challenges we all face. I am once again struck by some of the very personal testimonies from our beneficiaries throughout the year, and the life changing difference our staff and volunteers have made to the quality of their lives. As Chair I not only feel deeply humbled when I read these stories but also immensely proud of all our staff and volunteers at Involve, and the very real difference they make to the lives of those in our community when most in need.

This year has also been another of impressive growth and success in terms of expanding our existing and new services to more beneficiaries. I particularly want to acknowledge the work of our outstanding CEO and her senior team in leading and building on our existing services whilst bidding, co-designing and mobilising new services.

This will be my last report as Chair and Trustee of Involve as I retire and with my wife start the next chapter of our lives away from Kent. I have learned so much over the last ten years from the outstanding team and board of trustees at Involve and I have been especially privileged to serve as Chair over the last four years.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of Involve in the last year and wish you every success in the future.



# WELCOME FROM OUR CEO

Charlotte Osborn-Forde  
*Chief Executive Officer*

This year started as last year's began, with coronavirus restrictions and 'lockdown', only lifting slowly as we moved into July, and with many staff, volunteers and beneficiaries feeling deeply weary, isolated and anxious.

But we moved forward with hope and developed a strategy focused on revitalising communities, reconnecting people and reaching out to the most disconnected and isolated; summed up by one phrase 'we go to them'. Carefully managing risk, and with training, guidance and equipment, we did just that; meeting people in parks, community centres, cafes, other charities and often in their own homes, to hear their experiences, share information, opportunities and connect to services and support.

Through the year, our staff completed **8,929 face to face meetings** with people who preferred this to digital or telephone contact, ensuring no one was left behind. Alongside this, we developed a 'proactive outreach' approach, visiting foodbanks and other services to reach people, and delivered 'West Kent Listens' to feed this insight back to policy makers and senior leaders.

This year we supported **30,918 people across Kent and Medway**, delivering 229,558 individual contacts, around half as telephone conversations. A significant proportion of these conversations (13,427) were to provide information and advice about the Covid vaccine, via our telephone helpline service delivered on behalf of the NHS. We were asked to mobilise this new service in just three weeks; developing systems, guidance, recruiting and training staff, to take calls from people feeling hesitant about the vaccine or not sure how to access, especially from ethnic minority communities or people experiencing disadvantage. Working closely with NHS partners, this was achieved with close integration and data sharing with GPs and vaccine services, demonstrating the significant benefit of partnership. 63% of people who used the service were from an ethnic minority and 98% had their query resolved.

Our other new NHS partnership is also focused on addressing inequality; 'Moving Forwards' a service co-designed with NHS Mental Health commissioners to support young people leaving care. Moving Forwards offers a personalised 'social prescribing' approach to people aged 16-24 to help them identify goals, make friends,

access services and build confidence. Care Leavers face some of the most complex challenges of any young people, indeed the 'Independent Review on Children's Social Care' recently stated '*The disadvantage faced by the care experienced community should be the civil rights issue of our time*'. This new service is already making great strides in integrating services and support around young people and inspiring them with a positive future.

As restrictions eased, our largest service came to life, 'Actively Involved' a flagship new approach to community health and wellbeing. Funded by Kent County Council social care to support people over 55 or under with complex health, the service launched in West Kent in April 21. Our innovative model for the service builds on the expertise, resources and community capacity of local charities and groups; the majority of the delivery funds are shared with 29 other local partners to offer a diverse range of activities and groups, from inclusive bee-keeping to fall-prevention dance classes. Working with the private care sector, we broker specialist support for individuals with complex needs, and provide transport, to make mainstream community activities accessible again.

**3,138 people, 90% of whom were disabled or with complex health**, reported reduced loneliness and improved access to activities in the first year of the service. In February 2022 it was extended to North Kent, with an additional 23 new partners engaged, launching 1st April.

Undoubtedly as the year ends we are facing significant structural challenges; widening inequalities, increased poverty, greater disconnection, loneliness and ill health, and traditional services are struggling to cope. Our work demonstrates these issues are not intractable, there are solutions, with different thinking and comparatively little resource. Lying dormant in our communities, in people denied opportunity, or limited by their anxiety, ill health, or strained by the stresses of adversity; people with insight, experience, potential, time and capability, to help themselves, their families and their community. This untapped potential is the 'renewable energy' of involvement, activation, participation and volunteering which it is our mission to mobilise, and it is needed now more than ever.



*Malcolm, 82, has cerebral ataxia, uses a wheelchair to mobilise, struggles to speak, hear, and is visually impaired and housebound. Malcolm was supported by Actively Involved to achieve his dream of cycling again, at Cyclo4all*

# OUR VISION AND OBJECTIVES

## **Our vision is healthy, connected people and communities.**

We offer diverse services, but they all aim to achieve the same thing for people; to improve quality of life, health and happiness. We do this through providing support around each person's unique needs and interests, and making the most of local services, groups, agencies and communities.

Our objective is to reach out to and support people feeling lonely, isolated, struggling with ill health, frailty, mental health problems and facing issues such as disability, demanding family or caring responsibilities, poverty or other life challenges or adversity.

Through the support of our skilled staff team of 120 people, plus our dedicated volunteers, to work in partnership with other services such as the NHS, social care, GPs and charities, to help people find hope, confidence and connection to live the life they choose.





We believe everyone should be able to access services and activities in their community, which is why we have over 60 partnerships with charities & other local organisations - to promote **choice, connection & independence.**

# OUR REACH AND IMPACT

At Involve we are committed to measuring the impact of the work we do with individuals and communities in the most academically robust way possible. We do this by both collecting and analysing the stories of the people we support, and by asking people a series of questions before we start working with them and then again 12 weeks later. This mix of qualitative and quantitative data enables us to link our support to improved outcomes for the people we work with. In addition, we collect data on demographics in order to ensure that we are inclusive, accessible and that our work is effective with all social groups.

Our primary aim to support people as individuals using a ‘what matters to me’ approach in the most person centred way possible; this means that improvement can be varied, individual and hard to tangibly measure and compare. In order to provide robust impact evaluation, we measure wider impact indicators including; health, wellbeing, loneliness, physical activity levels and resilience to problems. By measuring these indicators with large numbers of clients we can robustly measure the impact of our work.

Between April 2021 and April 2022, Involve supported **30,918** people , the most we have ever engaged as an organisation.

Of these **63.47%** reported having a disability or long-term health condition, **63%** identified as female, **31%** were carers. The age range varied from 54% being over 60 years old, 33% between 25 – 60 years old and 13% being under 25 years old. In addition 7% of the people we supported were from ethnic minority backgrounds.

To measure wellbeing we use the Office of National Statistics (ONS) wellbeing tool, this is a robust measure as ONS collect population data which helps us baseline our datasets. On average our clients scored 4.4 out of 10 on happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness, the national average for these is 7.7. Again with anxiety the national average is 2.93 and our clients averaged 4.96. This demonstrates that we are reaching the right people in our communities; people feeling low, dissatisfied with life and anxious.

Finally, if we look at the levels of improvements the data demonstrates large amounts of impact, wellbeing for example improved on average by **23.5%** (the equivalent of moving from 5 – 7.4 on the scale), health improved by 14.5% and problem solving by 12.6%. For those people who increased their physical activity, we saw significant improvements; a massive 83 minutes a week per person.



Gary Wells  
**Deputy CEO**



Of the **30,918**  
people supported

**89%**  
reported improvements in  
wellbeing.

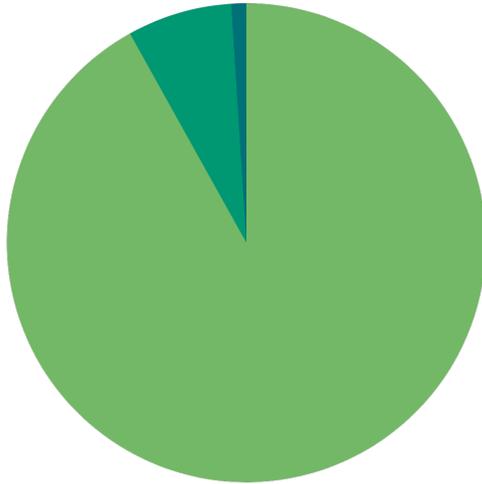
**46%**  
reported being less  
lonely.

**32%**  
reported an increase in  
physical activity.

*All of the people we  
worked with  
reported an  
improvement in at  
least one area.*

Involve recognise that the  
impact achieved is due to the  
hard work of both our staff and  
the people they support.

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



## Income £4,404,222

Contract Income: 91%

Grants and charitable income: 7%

Trading Income: 1%

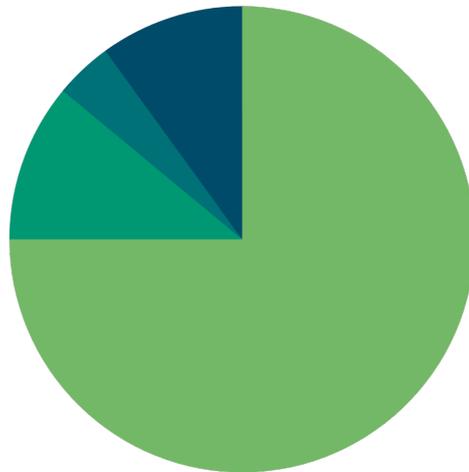
## Expenditure £3,787,288

Salaries: 75%

Voluntary Sector Support: 11%

Project Delivery: 4%

Support & Governance Costs: 10%



# OUR TREASURER

In our last financial year, income was £4.40m, up over 57% on the previous year - the biggest increase for some time. Growth was driven by our continued success in tendering for contracts to support those most in need in our communities. Involve's experience in servicing a diverse range of needs gives us a unique ability to see the big picture and help innovate new solutions.

Whilst growth in turnover is perhaps exciting, it brings new risks to the organisation which require careful financial management. Recruiting new staff has proved challenging and costly in the post-Covid jobs market. Whilst contract income is secure, payment timings are sometimes difficult to control and require close management of cashflow. Our improved financial processes introduced in the last financial year, have enabled us to budget carefully ensuring reserves remain adequate to fund ongoing activities.

Finance sub-group meets each month to allow trustees a review of management accounts and discussion of financial performance. We are supported by external professionals - our auditors and new bankers - who work to ensure our ongoing growth and financial needs can be met. I am indebted to the trustees who attend for their supportive challenge and debate. The Involve team always demonstrate a sound understanding of the position meaning that we can re-forecast efficiently and keep finances on track.

Our new finance manager, Jo, has transformed the in-house financial reporting process to enable easy scrutiny and understanding.

Finally, a huge thank you to the senior leadership team - Charlotte, Gary and Jane - who continue to manage the finances with an inclusive and supportive culture where the end user is always the key consideration even where difficult financial choices have to be made.



**Duncan Simmons**  
***Treasurer***

# OUR APPROACH

Throughout a year with unprecedented referrals on some of our services, our committed staff teams worked tirelessly, despite the effects of Covid, onsite with clients at the hospitals, in the community, home visiting and supporting by telephone. Covid also affected our staff themselves and their families. Despite all of this we were committed to continuously improve our services for the people who access them. To work smarter, encourage client feedback and act on it.

We decided to further implement a personalised care approach in an everchanging environment across Involve. We fully implemented the ‘Esther’ model and strength-based practice.

Four staff were trained to ‘Esther Coach’ level by the Kent Design and Learning Centre and the rest of our client-facing staff to the ‘Esther Ambassador’ level- this also included some Trustees. We encourage our staff to work collaboratively alongside clients, taking time to listen to “what matters to me” from people in a focused conversation and doing with rather than doing for. Then, to reflect on their work, the feedback from the person, and exploring what could be improved.

Key to the ‘Esther’ approach is encouraging a ‘no blame’ culture; at Involve we enable staff to reflect on and improve their practice in a

supportive one-to-one or group environment, to learn and share with their colleagues and managers. Managers are trained in clinical supervision to encourage safe reflection and emotional support to our staff, who at times work in challenging situations.

Working with clients, we endeavour to provide a collaborative approach to personalised support. A focus on what is strong in someone’s life and how this can be built upon, their interests, abilities, networks of people and community rather than making the deficits the entire focus. This means encouraging and supporting people to have choice and control in what they need to access to live well in the way they wish to, helping them to set goals and then supporting them to achieve those goals collaboratively.

This approach allows us to show a person’s progress and build case studies, helping people to reflect back on their individual journey but also enabling us to demonstrate the outcomes for clients and impact of our work to commissioners and partners. It gives confidence we are always seeking to improve our support to people in Kent. We realise the challenges ahead but are confident that our approach to training our staff and focusing on the experience our clients receive, will ensure safe and meaningful support for those who access us.



Jane Thomas  
***Director of Services***

**“Thank you, you really helped to keep me stable, you saved my life in a way, you listened so well and you were right there with me, I have never had support like that in my life”**

**- Involve Client**

# NEW SERVICE: MOVING FORWARDS

Learning to budget to keep on top of the bills, working out how to get organised in daily life to fulfil work and home commitments, and learning how to keep yourself healthy is a huge learning curve for any young person, especially for those that do not have families or Carers to rely on for support or to live with.

That's where we come in.

Moving Forwards is a brand new service that supports young people aged 16-24 that have either left care or are preparing to leave. The service was co-designed with NHS Kent and Medway, to understand if a 'social prescribing' approach could be an effective way to improve the mental health and life chances of care leavers. It launched in January 2022.

Our specialist Care Leavers Navigators understand barriers that these young people may face and our one-to-one approach ensures that the support we give is guided by what matters most to them. The support we offer is varied and spans from practical support such as providing links to other useful organisations, helping with budgeting, sourcing accommodation to social and emotional support such as regular, weekly meetings and linking people to provide friendship and consistency.

Already we are achieving positive outcomes for people; improvements in anxiety, health and reductions in loneliness.

# 25

Number of young people supported within the first three months.

# 45.84%

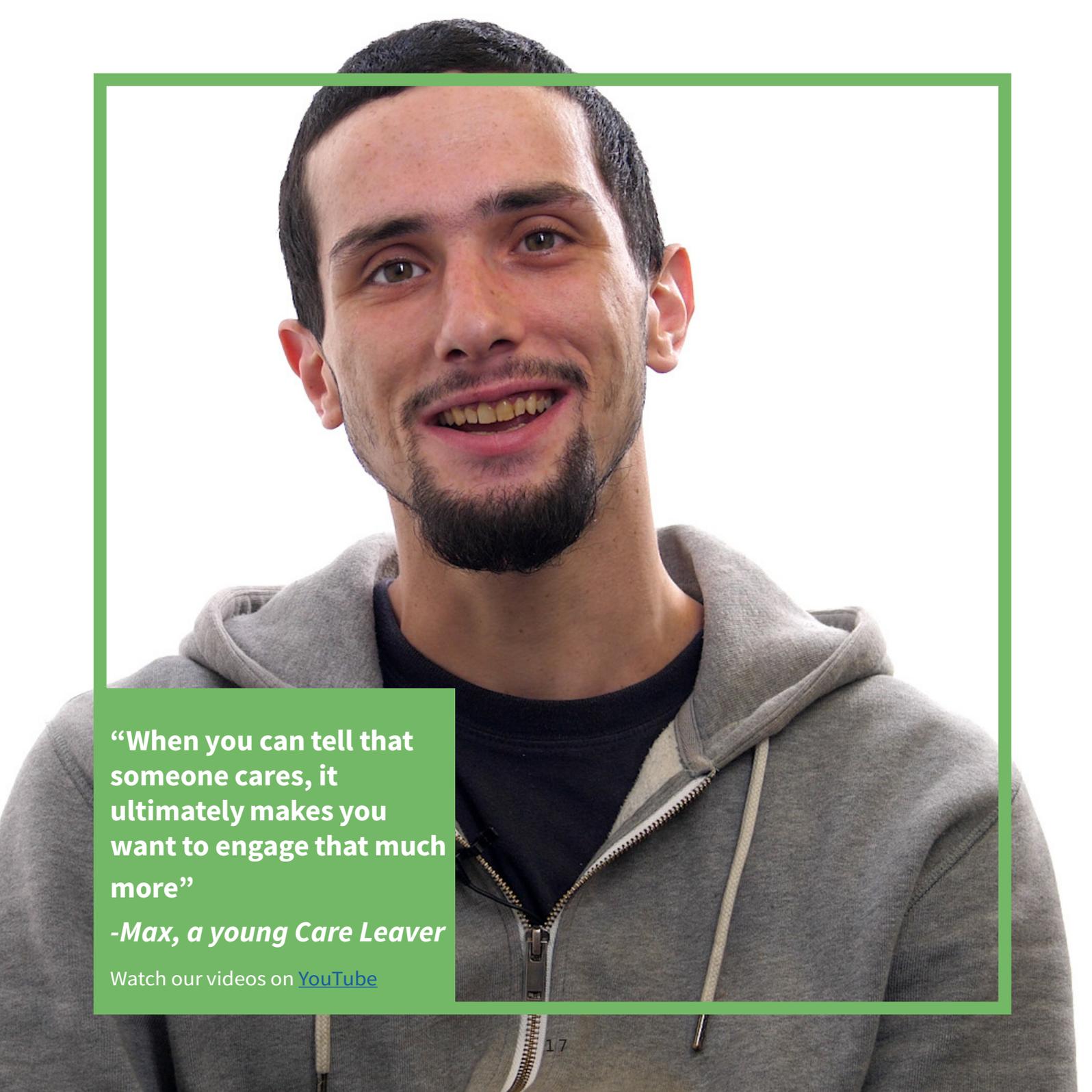
Percentage decrease in anxiety for each person.

# 31.26%

Percentage increase in health scores for each person.



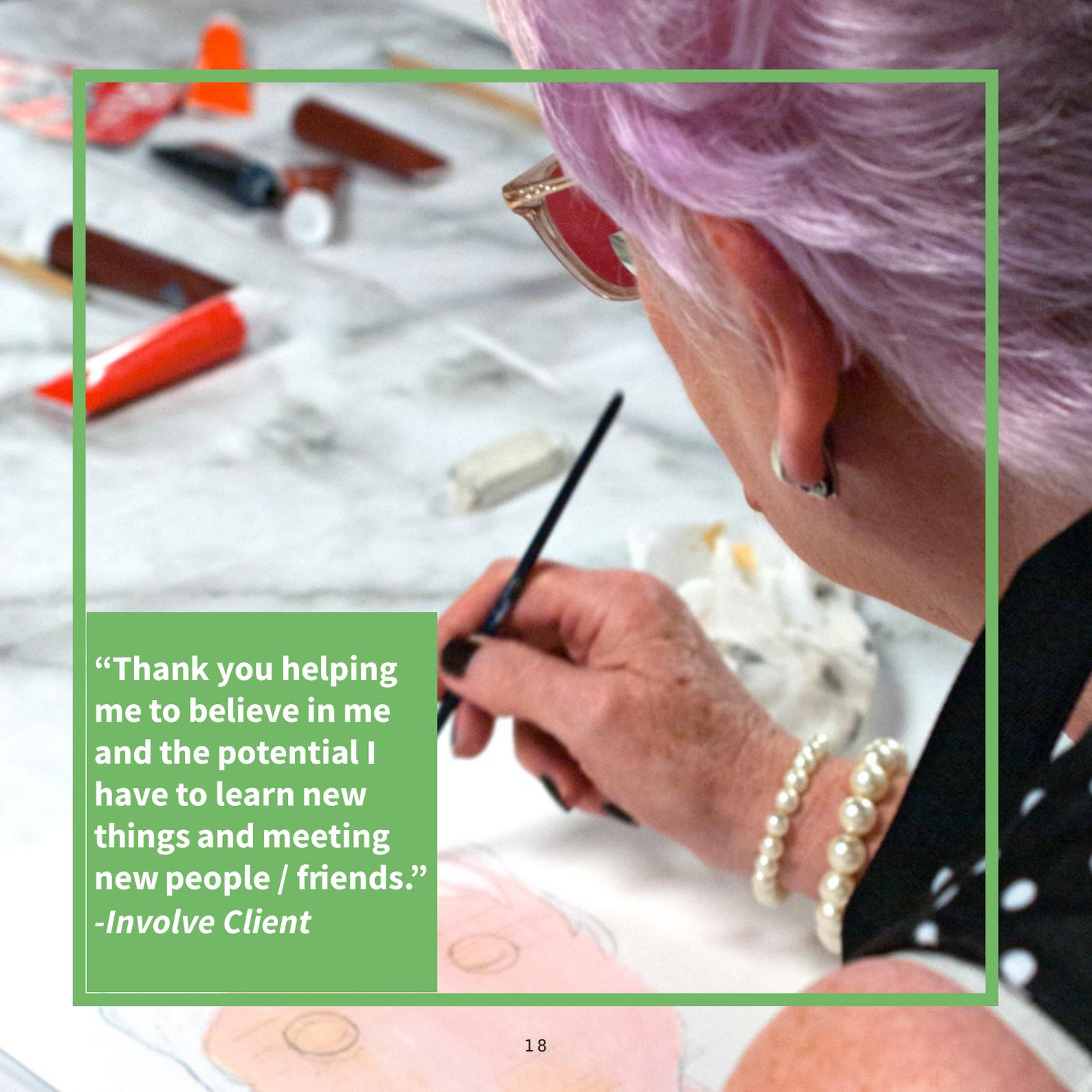
**Kent and Medway**  
Clinical Commissioning Group



**“When you can tell that  
someone cares, it  
ultimately makes you  
want to engage that much  
more”**

***-Max, a young Care Leaver***

Watch our videos on [YouTube](#)



**“Thank you helping  
me to believe in me  
and the potential I  
have to learn new  
things and meeting  
new people / friends.”  
-Involve Client**

# NEW SERVICE: NORTH KENT ACTIVELY INVOLVED

North Kent Actively Involved is a new service developed during 2021/2022 to enable people over 55 or with complex health to stay active, well and connected to their community, making the most of local groups and services. It is funded by Kent County Council and was launched in Dartford, Gravesend and Swanley in April 2022, following the successful launch in West Kent the previous year.

Our service encourages social connection, independence and gentle physical activity. Support is provided for people who may be very isolated, anxious or frail, such as door to door transport or the help of a support worker.

By working in conjunction with and maintaining strong relationships with partner organisations, we are able to provide clients with a menu of local activities to suit a wide range of interests; art, culture, sport, nature, local trips, as well as bridge gaps by organising peer-led groups that have been suggested by clients. This ensures that people have the opportunity to take part in activities and groups that interest them.

Through attending weekly groups, our clients are able to build friendships, revive old passions and try out a new hobbies. They can access information and advice to stay well and independent, and know where to turn for problems and worries.

Watch our video on [YouTube](#).

**During 2021/2022, 26 other charity and community groups joined us as partners to deliver this new service.**

**We are working with the Kent Equality Cohesion Council to open opportunities to diverse communities.**



**It is estimated that 40% of the burden on health services in England may be preventable through action on the determinants of avoidable chronic conditions; this means the circumstances that people grow up, live through and age in.**



Involve works with people and communities to improve health by promoting choice, connecting people and challenging inequalities.

Everyone deserves access to opportunities, services and support that is meaningful and relevant to them.

Our core services are:

Community Navigation

Carers and Young Adult Carers

Social Prescribing

Actively Involved

Childrens Health & Wellbeing

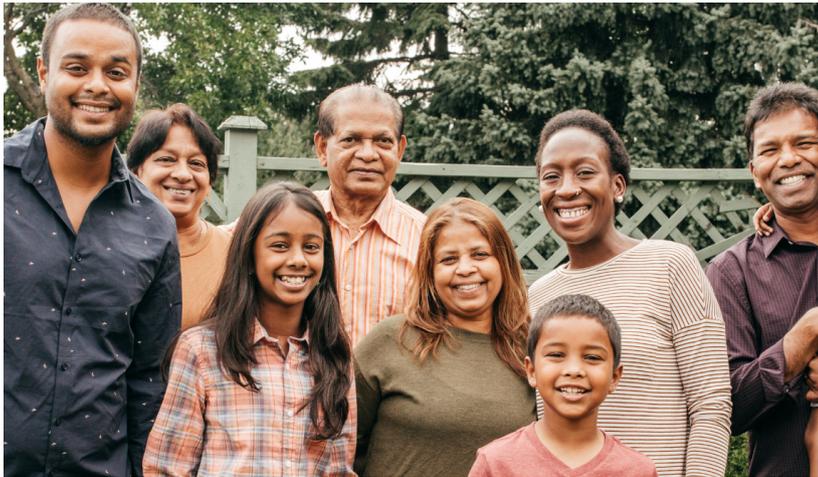
Community Transport

Wellbeing & Inclusion

Helping You Home

Life- changing conditions and bereavement

Postural Stability



# COMMUNITY NAVIGATION FOR OVER 55s

**3,307**

people over 55 or with chronic health were supported

We provide the 'Community Navigation' service, funded by Kent County Council in West Kent. This is a service for people over 55 or with complex health, and/or their Carers, which aims to guide and connect people to access services and support.

## Our team of Navigators;

- Explore and build social networks and enable access to a range of activities, which may include Carer support, peer support, befriending, exercise, arts & heritage, creative activities, physical activities, cognitive stimulation opportunities
- Support to access the health and social care system (statutory and non-statutory) and working with teams and organisation to make referrals
- Enable people to identify services within the local community. Where appropriate, facilitate purchasing of services, such as care at home, to meet goals and short and long term needs
- Assessment and identification of adaptation, equipment and assistive technology needs and arrange for supply as appropriate
- Provide assistance and advice including entitlements, accessing services and community activities, making referrals, building confidence through activities such as accompanied visits, initial outings and form filling
- Make referrals/provide information around local services and opportunities. Liaise with other specialised community services to ensure appropriate links are made.

**91%**

of people reported a serious health condition or disability.

On average, peoples happiness **increased** by

**26%**

**“The support I have received from Involve has been staggering and you have been very kind, understanding, professional and friendly. Also you have done everything you said you would do without any fuss and in a timely manner.”**

# COMMUNITY NAVIGATION FOR CARERS

**5,471**

carers supported, 70% of carers had a disability or health problem themselves



“We are a Bulgarian family, and I cannot work as a result of needing to care for my wife who became unwell and had to leave my jobs to do this. She needs 24 hour care, is immobile, cannot speak, is peg fed and having palliative care. We have been given notice on our flat and no council wanted to help us. I was feeling very angry and frustrated when I was referred to Involve...

I do not think there is anybody else like you that can help people like us – when we first met, only Involve wanted to help us. Because of you we now have a council property, you organised funds for help and more support for us to purchase appliances. There is no one else that helps people like you do.”

According to research 1 in 9 adults in Kent are unpaid Carers and look after either a family member, partner, friend or neighbour who due to complex health needs are unable to cope without support. Unpaid carers come from all walks of life and backgrounds, and although caring for someone can be a positive experience, it can also be challenging.

Involve are the main point of contact for unpaid carers in West Kent and our role is to empower carers in their caring roles. We are contracted by Kent County Council and provide on-going practical support such as; conducting Statutory Carers Assessments, distributing Emergency Carers Cards, assisting with hospital discharges, sharing advice and guidance on Carers rights, as well as providing emotional and social support to help the carer look after their own health and social needs.

Carers wellbeing improved on average by

**12%**

**35%**

of Carers felt less lonely



# SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

**3,723**

people accessed social prescribing in GP practices

‘Social Prescribing’ means looking at the social and lifestyle factors impacting on a person’s health, and working with community groups and local services to address them. Involve has led the development of social prescribing across Kent and Medway, working closely with medical services and the NHS to enable GPs, nurses and others to refer people to a ‘Link Worker’ to help them access non-medical support.

We now have Link Workers in more than 100 GP practices across Kent, able to access the patient’s medical records through our unique digital innovation ‘Cloud Gateway VPN’ and work closely with medical and administrative staff. We have seen the service diversify to include Health and Wellbeing Coaches and Link Workers with specialism, such as mental health or cancer.

Link Workers typically support people for 3-6 months, including visiting at home and accompanying people to activities or meetings, with a focus on building connections to local groups to provide ongoing support. As part of this, we work closely with many other community groups and charities, promoting their services on our directory and helping them accept referrals for people with health issues to take part.

On average people felt their health **improved** by

**28%**

People accessing social prescribing reported average improvements in quality of life by

**36%**

“I am a 42-year-old woman who was diagnosed with MS and Functional Neurological Disorder. I live alone and struggle with my mobility and to go outside on my own, so I am therefore socially isolated at home. In the past I have had suicidal thoughts and I am under the care of the Mental Health Team. Since I’ve been getting befriending calls from the Chatty Café, I’ve felt my health and well-being improved a lot and I’ve not felt as lonely and isolated as I did before. I really look forward to our weekly chats and it’s given me a sense of routine and an opportunity to laugh and smile again...since doing the befriending service, I’ve felt a desire to connect with others. They really have been my lifeline and I can’t believe something that seems so simple (relatively) can have such an impact. A million thanks!!!”

# SOCIAL PRESCRIBING IN THE COMMUNITY

**724**

people supported

“I have three children under 5, I’m on my own and have hernia and bowel problems. I met the Link Worker at the food bank. She then visited me at home to complete a disability benefit appeal and managed to provide a lot of additional information this time round. The SPLW wrote this up with me and then sent me a copy so that I could get it printed locally. She even came to the food bank and carried my food parcels when I wasn’t able to carry the heavy bag back home because of my stomach pain. She liaised with the Council and managed to get my Council Tax arrears cleared and payments cancelled until the new financial year. She also put me forward successfully for a £200 grant, so I was able to replace my bedding that I had soiled when unwell. I was also able to buy a microwave which has been really helpful with young children.”



Not everyone accesses their GP or the medical care they need, eg due to homelessness, anxiety, poverty, disability, language or cultural barriers.

These and other issues can impact on people’s health, and increase the risk of illness, this is known as ‘health inequalities’. Funded by Kent and Medway NHS, our innovative approach to addressing health inequalities in West Kent re-positions social prescribing, working with community groups such as food banks, advice centres, homelessness services and councils to engage people, rather than relying on GP referrals.

Through this outreach approach, we have been able to support people experiencing the most adversity and inequality. This may be people experiencing homelessness, debt, mental illness alongside complex health problems and disabilities, and difficulties accessing services. Utilising grant schemes, practical support is offered, eg purchasing microwave, food or bedding, alongside ensuring access to essential services such as GPs, benefits and housing.

Support and peer groups are initiated and facilitated to enable people with similar conditions or interests to build relationships and share advice on managing life, eg chronic pain and long covid.

**72** people in crisis were issued with a supermarket voucher or fuel payment

**38%** of people supported lived in the most deprived areas of west Kent

# CHILDREN'S HEALTH & WELLBEING

**1,552**  
people supported



This is an innovative service providing 'social prescribing' to children, young people and their families working closely with GP practices, schools and health services, funded through contracts with Primary Care Networks.

This service offers long-term support to children & their families by helping to coordinate care and support, access information and guidance and ensure they are aware of and engaged with relevant services and organisations.

Our Navigators are based in the GP practices and work with children from 0 - 18 (or up to 24 with SEND) and their families/carers where the child has a long term health condition, particularly Neurodevelopmental issues (such as autism) or Mental Health concerns both pre and post diagnosis. Complementing the GP based service, additional programmes are developed including 'Connect!' to provide fun and engaging social and leisure groups for young people which are inclusive of their needs.

**62%** of families felt more able to deal with problems once supported by a Navigator.

On average, anxiety **reduced** by **14%**

## Sophie's Story:

Sophie had not been in school for 2 years due to her mental health. During this time she was sectioned and attempted to take her own life. She is now paraplegic and uses a wheelchair and has on going medical needs and a gruelling rehabilitation program. Sophie has Autism and mental health trauma. Sophie was referred to Involve's Connect! Service as part of her action plan with the Navigator. There was a healthy interest in the Connect! sessions and started to regularly attend. After the first session Sophie said "It went really well, it was relaxed and very welcoming & lots of interaction between young people." Sophie is now taking her exams and will be involved in future coproduction to develop the social events, her new friendships and Connect! service further.

\*Sophie is a pseudonym to protect their identity\*

# COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

**1,074**

people supported

“The Involve driving service is so much cheaper and with more precise times to be picked up and dropped off again in comparison with taxi’s as they have a 20 minute waiting window each side of the journey times, which means I have to wait around to often. Also the Involve drivers offer more assistance and are so helpful with posting the odd letter for me etc. Very kind, friendly and helpful.

Geoff was my main man, driving me every week to my swim (priority trip), extremely efficient, polite, friendly, helpful and brilliant driver with a clever hybrid car. So we helped save the environment a little every trip and built up a fantastic rapport.”



Involve’s Community Transport service is a community based driving scheme for people living in the Maidstone and Malling area that helps people who cannot manage on public transport because of age, frailty, illness, disability or injury and do not drive.

Involve can provide trips to places like hospitals, foot clinics, day centres, shops, visits to friends or anywhere else people would like to go. The service plays a critical role in helping people keep connected to friends, family and local services, as well as ensuring people can access their GP and other health care.

This service is facilitated entirely by volunteers who either use their own vehicles or an Involve minibus.

Total trips made for the year 21/22 was around

**4500**



# WELLBEING & INCLUSION

**137**

people supported

Our 'Wellbeing and Inclusion' programme is designed to offer people facing significant life challenges and / or mental illness opportunities to take part in community activities, meet people in similar circumstances and build routine, friendships and new skills.

It is especially aimed at people aged 25-55. A range of fully supported opportunities are offered in Maidstone and Malling, all designed to develop skills and enhance wellbeing, such as community allotments, and art and craft groups.

The programme is funded by a wide range of charities and grants, all focused on ensuring no one is left behind. Alongside the activities, we gather people's feedback on their experiences and views of local mental health services, and feed these back to Health Watch; this is called 'Mental Health User Voice' and it helps improve services for the future.

**60%** reported being more physically active as a result of the projects

People, on average, reported feeling less anxious by

**18%**

"I would like to put in a positive word for Involve Maidstone, I came to Involve Maidstone after being put on a service break from another service due to my mental health being bad.

Just after my dad had passed away I was asked to contact Involve Maidstone and suddenly I found hope again. I felt they accepted me for who I was. Thank you helping me to believe in me and the potential I have to learn new things and meeting new people / friends."

# HELP YOU HOME

**388**

people supported



“Very satisfied with everything. Thank you so much as always for all of your help and support for Robert and our family. With your support we are safer, happier and it’s a huge help to us. My feedback on the service is excellent. Trevor was very friendly, professional and efficient and walked me through everything I needed to know.”

Occasionally after a long or short stay in hospital, a person’s circumstances will change. This may mean that they now require additions or changes to be made to their home to not only make their transition back home easier, but to also prevent future hospital admissions. It may be that their home was a factor in their ill health or admission to hospital.

‘Helping You Home’ is a practical service that works with people in Maidstone to make homes safer and more accessible.

We are able to conduct Home Safety Checks prior to a hospital discharge, help with moving furniture such as moving a bed into the living room, and installing lifelines. We ensure access to other services such as adaptations. Quite often the service we provide supports the person’s quality of life and reassures their family members or carers of their safety. This service is delivered in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council and Maidstone Hospital.

**20%**

of people felt less anxious after receiving the service

**100%**

reported satisfaction with the service



# LIFE CHANGING CONDITIONS & BEREAVEMENT

139

people supported

Our bereavement groups offer an opportunity to meet and talk with others who are going through similar experiences over tea and coffee in a friendly and supportive environment. Talking about their experiences, sharing tips and ideas to maintain health and wellbeing, and feeling connection to people in similar circumstances helps people to feel less isolated and offers hope.

Evaluation of this service shows that people who take part strongly benefit from the groups, feeling happier and less lonely.

Our Life Changing Conditions service provides emotional, practical and non-statutory advocacy support to people over 55 living in Maidstone and Malling affected by a health condition, predominantly through the support of volunteers.

On average, wellbeing scores improved by

**56%**

“I would like to express, that the meetings I attend on Wednesdays at the Hub in Maidstone run by Sharon and colleagues, is the best thing I could have done after losing my husband last October. If it wasn't for the kindness of your charity in providing a car to pick me up and take me back, I wouldn't have been able to go to these meetings, in which I'm extremely grateful... I wouldn't have been able to get through it on my own”

# FALLS PREVENTION SERVICE

**164**

people supported

“I’m going to postural stability classes as well as doing the excises at home. I’m not so worried about falling over now and I can go up and down the steps in my garden without any problem which is a big achievement for me!

It’s made me feel happier and more confident and I have made many friends. I now have a full and busy life. My son has recently commented that he see’s a big difference in my mental wellbeing.”



This service offers ‘Postural Stability’ group exercise classes funded by Kent County Council across north and west Kent. The programme includes advice, home exercises and information sessions alongside specially designed therapeutic exercise classes to help people over 65 who are at risk of falls to improve their strength, fitness and gain confidence in balance.

Our classes are run by specialist instructors who understand the age related concerns that people may face. The classes are clinically proven to improve balance and bone density over a 36 week period and prevent falls, or mitigate harm if people do fall. Critically, the classes help people to feel confident going out and about, preventing isolation and further frailty, and prove that older age does not inevitably mean physical decline.

The average age of participants is 82. During this period of Covid restrictions, the programme adapted to offer classes digitally, through provision of internet enabled tablets if needed, to help people maintain their mobility and keep moving.

**85%**

of people improved their confidence levels around mobility from their first assessment.

## **IN FOCUS: ACTIVELY INVOLVED**

This service provides a lifeline for those over the age of 55 (or under with complex health) and living in west and north Kent to connect to their local community by attending groups, activities and day trips, and access support and information to stay well. Funded by Kent County Council, the service aims to reduce loneliness and increase independence, reducing people's reliance on formal services. In the wake of Covid-19 it has been found that 1 in 3 people over the age of 55 are feeling more lonely and isolated than ever before; the service started in April 2021 in West Kent and in just one year engaged 3138 people. North Kent launched in April 2022.

Working closely with a wide range of charitable partner organisations, we provide people with a diverse menu of local activities, groups and day trips. The service is fully inclusive, with support offered for people with mobility issues, anxiety and frailty, such as door-to-door transport or the help of a support worker to take part. We create and establish local coffee mornings, lunch clubs and other groups too, connecting people with similar interests. These regular social events encourage social connection and sense of community. Where possible, people are encouraged to be physically active, access their community and build relationships, all of which contributes to healthy ageing.

# 3,138

Amount of clients supported

# 90%

of clients have a disability or health issue

# 62%

of people felt less lonely

**On average  
people felt 30%  
less anxious**

“ I was very lonely when I was referred into the Actively Involved team. I was also a bit apprehensive of getting out and meeting new people as it had been years since I had done anything on my own. Peppa reassured me and explained I wasn’t alone in how I was feeling and that she would be there to offer any support. During one of our first conversation Peppa mentioned the similarities between myself and another client of her’s and suggested I go along to the Involve coffee morning as Anthony would also be attending – I was originally uncertain of joining a group as I has assumed it would be all women so I was reassured when I knew there would be another Gentleman there. Peppa agreed to speak to Lin beforehand to let her know I was nervous about coming along and Lin agreed to meet me outside, so I didn’t have to walk in alone – this really gave me the encouragement to go along.

I met with Anthony at the group, and we were both surprised at how much we had in common. We are also both hard of hearing so are both aware of the struggles with this.

Since our first meeting at the coffee morning Anthony and I have met up several times as well as visiting our wives that live in the same care home together. We are also planning on attending an Involve day trip and lunch group in the near future.”



# IN FOCUS

## COVID VACCINE HELPLINE:

Involve works closely with the NHS to help connect with communities and reach people facing disadvantage or inequality. In June 2021, we were approached by NHS Kent and Medway to co-design and deliver a new service to help people find out more about the Covid vaccine, especially people from ethnic minorities, people without internet access or other literacy or access issues. Within just three weeks we had mobilised a brand new service, with a trained team of staff ready to take calls from the public, and to help GP practices call patients who had not come forward for the vaccine. Always careful not to offer medical advice, the Helpline Advisors utilised information from the NHS, charities and other reliable, verified sources to answer questions, never pressuring people and only ever offering information to help people make informed choices.

There was strong demand for the helpline, and it was effective in providing unbiased information to help people make an informed choice regarding the COVID vaccination.

Many people of different ethnicities have been contacted and engaged, including those who required further support such as translation services, home visits for housebound patients, or transport to appointments.

For many people telephoned, it gave them the opportunity to have their concerns addressed and consequently provided the impetus to book or find out more about walk-in clinics.

The helpline ended in March 2022. Going forward, for those who call the helpline, they will receive a message advising them to contact 119 for general advice or visit the Grab a Job website for information on local services.

**42,775**

patients were telephoned and offered information on behalf of GP practices

**3,832**

people telephoned the helpline for information and advice

**98%**

said they would book the vaccine as a result

**68%**

were from a minority ethnicity



“We called a lady who had sickle cell disease. Despite asking her GP about vaccine safety with her condition, she had not received an answer so had put off getting the jab without the appropriate medical advice. We were able to email her some resources from the Sickle Cell Society which contained a wealth of information about vaccine safety, a video, and a Q&A section. She was happy with this outcome as she wanted to have the vaccine but wasn’t sure if it was safe for her. Now she had the necessary information to make a decision.”

# DEEPENING CONNECTIONS: WITH THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS:

Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do at Involve, and our work with the voluntary and community sector is critical. Our aim is to help connect community organisations of all sizes, with each other, with people who could benefit from their services, and with the wider health and care systems, especially the NHS. To help organisations grow and develop, so that they can continue to support and strengthen communities and provide essential services, and to give them a voice.

We are proud to work in partnership with and provide funding to 46 charities and voluntary organisations this year, to co-deliver services such as ‘Actively Involved’ and support sustainability and growth of local groups and activities. We have secured funds from the NHS and Kent County Council to distribute small grants to community activities including foodbanks, social groups, singing classes, nature conservation and advice services.

Our Information Officer connects people and organisations working in the community to share information, good practice and to collaborate, running various networks, forums and a weekly e-news bulletin. This has included mapping community support at a local level to help people during Covid lockdowns, and now to address poverty.

521 Organisations have been engaged and supported, 1411 people receive our weekly VCS newsletter.

**Total amount of funding securing  
by Involve for our VCS partners**

**£463, 486**



# DEEPENING CONNECTIONS WITH THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS:

Without our funders we wouldn't be able to reach as many people as we have. It is with your support and generosity that we have been able to make an impact and ultimately a difference to real people and communities.

Kent County Council  
 Kent & Medway NHS Clinical Commissioning Group  
 Maidstone Borough Council  
 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council  
 EK360  
 Sevenoaks Council  
 KCC ASC Innovations Grant  
 Awards for All The National Lottery Community Fund  
 Golding Homes Housing Association  
 Cobtree Charity Trust  
 Cantiacorum Foundation  
 Maidstone Riverside Rotary  
 Arnold Clark Community Fund  
 Staplehurst Parish Council  
 KCC Covid 19 grants  
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 Blakemore Foundation  
 Edgworth Partners  
 Marsh Charitable Trust  
 Marden Parish Council



Staplehurst  
Parish  
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# SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS



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