



involve 50



**Impact
Report
2024/25**

“ Involve’s services are crucial to me and others in a similar position. There isn’t enough help like this out there. Without services like yours, I would have really suffered and wouldn’t have the support in place that I do - thank you. ”

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Highlights of the year



31,260

people supported in 2024/25 across Kent



3,344

families supported
through Children's
Health & Wellbeing



739

children and young
people supported
through Connect!



5,860

unpaid carers
supported through
our carers' service

Message from a volunteer



Our volunteer, David, has kindly shared his experience of being a volunteer driver.

“I joined as a volunteer driver for the community transport service in 1999, when we were Maidstone Volunteer Bureau, after I took retirement. I found out about the charity through a neighbour who was already a volunteer.

I have enjoyed taking many people in my car over the last 26 years volunteering, often making myself available 7 days a week to be booked for trips. One particular trip sticks in my mind which is when I took 3 excited older ladies to Skegness so that they could enjoy a week's holiday there. I had to stop many times on the journey for them, and it took me over 5 hours to get them there, whilst driving back without them only took 2 and a half!

I also used to do a stint in the office on Friday afternoons, assisting the Transport Coordinator with booking trips for people and answering the phone calls. I also served as a Trustee for the charity for a few years too. For the past 26 years, volunteering driving has been a large part of my life and continues to be now.”

The success and longevity of this service is down to the wonderful dedication of our volunteers, who we, and the public who use the service, are incredibly grateful for.

Our volunteering opportunities are a great way to meet new people, connect to your community, develop your skills and feel a sense of achievement. If you would like to find out more about our volunteering roles, visit our website or email volunteering@involvekent.org.uk.



David, Kent Messenger
2002



“I love coming because I am surrounded by people that understand me. I have made friends and I feel safe there as people get me.”

- Young Person, Connect!

Strategic report

Welcome from our Chair

This year marks a truly special moment in Involve Kent's history, our 50th year of service and our 50th Annual General Meeting. It also marks the end of my time as Chair and Trustee, after 13 years of being part of this remarkable organisation. As I prepare to step down, I find myself reflecting not only on the journey of Involve Kent, but on my own personal journey within it.

During my tenure, I've witnessed Involve develop from a respected local charity into a leading force for community health and wellbeing. Involve Kent has grown in scale, reach, and influence, always guided by a deep commitment to tackling inequality, connecting people and promoting choice in order to improve lives. It has been a true privilege to be part of that transformation.

This past year has been a shining example of what Involve Kent stands for, the team have supported

over 31,000 people, 4500 more people than in the previous year, expanded services for unpaid carers and young people, and strengthened their role as a strategic partner in health and social care. Involve Kent has continued to lead in social prescribing, built new collaborations, and delivered innovative programmes that respond to real needs in our communities.

The Board has worked closely with our Chief Executive, Gary Wells and the leadership team to ensure strong governance, strategic clarity, and a culture rooted in compassion and inclusion. We've welcomed new trustees, said goodbye to long-serving colleagues, and laid the groundwork for the next chapter of Involve Kent's story.

As I step away, I do so with immense pride. I've seen first hand the dedication of our staff and volunteers, the creativity of our partnerships, and the impact of our work. Involve Kent is more than an organisation; it's a community of people who care deeply and act boldly.

My deepest gratitude goes to each and every one who has made and continues to make Involve the great organisation it is. I look forward to watching Involve Kent continue on its journey and next chapter.



Richard Leicester
Chair of Involve Board

Welcome from our CEO

This year marks a profound milestone in Involve Kent's journey, our 50th year of service and our 50th Annual General Meeting. It's a moment to pause, reflect, and celebrate the extraordinary legacy built by generations of dedicated people: staff, volunteers, trustees, partners, commissioners and community members who have shaped this organisation into what it is today.

As I reflect on my first full year as CEO, I've been struck by the depth of commitment and compassion that runs through Involve Kent. From its grassroots beginnings to becoming a leading voice in community health and wellbeing, Involve has always been about people, supporting them, connecting them, and empowering them to thrive.

This year, we've continued that legacy with purpose. We've supported 31,260 individuals, expanded our services for carers and young people, and deepened our partnerships across health and care systems. But numbers only tell part of the story. Behind every statistic is a person, someone who felt heard, supported, and empowered. Whether we have connected people to support them to keep their house warm or feed their family or attend a social group that sparked new friendships, our work is rooted in supporting people to thrive.

We've also taken time to ask ourselves a vital question: What legacy do we want to leave for the next 50 years? That question has guided our thinking, our strategy, and our culture. It's inspired us to invest in co-production, to centre lived experience, and to build services that are not only effective but enduring. It's reminded us that our work is not just about meeting needs today, it's about creating the conditions for healthier, more connected communities in the future. Looking ahead, we remain ambitious. We will continue to advocate for the role of community-based support in tackling health inequalities, preventing and improving health conditions and we'll keep working to unlock the potential that lies within every neighbourhood.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this remarkable year. Your passion and belief in what we do is what makes Involve Kent so special. As we celebrate our past, we also recommit to our future, with hope, ambition, and a deep sense of responsibility.



Gary Wells
CEO of Involve

Financial report

We have continued to manage our finances prudently during the financial year to 31 March 2025 despite ongoing uncertainty around future funding to some of our core services.

This year saw notable growth in our work supporting children with neurodiversity and unpaid carers, areas with rising demand and where Involve Kent is increasingly recognised for its innovative, person-centred approach.

We remain vigilant in monitoring the external funding landscape and continue to work closely with the executive team to ensure our financial strategy remains robust and responsive. The Finance Sub-Group has played a key role in maintaining oversight and enabling constructive dialogue around risk, opportunity, and sustainability.

I would like to thank Jo Misiak for her contribution to our financial management during the year and to acknowledge her departure shortly after the year-end. Her work has helped lay the foundations for continued transparency and accountability in our financial reporting.

I would also like to thank our CEO Gary and our auditors, Burgess Hodgson for their support during the transition to our new Head of Finance and welcome Becky Smith to the team.



As we mark Involve Kent's 50th year, we do so with a clear focus on evidencing impact, challenging systems to think and fund differently, and ensuring our resources are used to create lasting change.



Deirdre O'Donoghue
Treasurer



Our work, staff and partners

The breadth and quality of our work across Kent and Medway is due to our amazing and dedicated staffing teams and managers, our partnerships with acute and community health services, our social care colleagues, our fellow VCSE organisations and the many care providers we broker services to. This has ensured that our reach into supporting communities is now vast and continues to grow at pace.

Everyone who works at Involve makes a difference to people's lives in their daily work. Whether it is our finance assistant processing invoices, our telephone navigators providing expert advice and a friendly call, our link workers or children's navigators seeing patients from GP surgeries, navigators completing Carer's Assessments or

assessing for equipment or supporting care leavers, link workers visiting foodbanks, youth coordinators setting up fun activities for children, our advocates ensuring a young person in hospital has their voice heard or a manager ensuring their staff are supported and safe from home visits. Whatever their role at Involve Kent, it is an important contribution to our reach into communities and our mission to ensure that children, young people, adults and those caring for somebody have choice and control over their lives, are connected to their communities, are able to thrive and have their voices heard.

This past year has not been without challenge to our staff and partners with further threats of cuts to prevention services they work on, increased complexities in the lives of the people they work with, and services closed due to funding being withdrawn. However, the commitment and dedication of our staff, management teams, partners and the positive outcomes for people using our services reminds me daily of how powerful the work they do is across Kent and Medway.

My truly grateful thanks to all our staff, management and partners for your inspiring and innovative work, your dedication, compassion and resilience.



Jane Thomas
Director of Services

50 years of Involvement



PM John Major & MP Ann Widdecombe
visit Maidstone Volunteer Bureau in 1994

Involve Kent was founded in 1975, known originally as Maidstone Volunteer Bureau, it had a clear mission: to recruit volunteers and connect them to local needs in the community. It aimed to challenge the perception of volunteering as something reserved for the middle-class and middle-aged. As Maureen Topp told the Kent Messenger in 1977, "This is a place you can come and say, 'here I am with so many hours and so much experience - or perhaps not at all.' We can put you in touch with people who need you."

In 1997, the then manager Bridget Overton launched the V-team, a pioneering initiative that engaged young people with additional learning needs who had been excluded from mainstream education. Through community-based volunteering, such as helping to tidy gardens for elderly residents, the project offered a sense of purpose and belonging. After the V-team received its first community award in 2000, project leader Grayham Myer told the Kent Messenger, "This work helps two types of vulnerable people in the community. It gives some of the volunteers confidence they lacked in the past. It also helped the elderly and vulnerable people in the community."



Maureen Topp,
Maidstone Volunteer Bureau
Kent Messenger 1977

The V-team quickly expanded, welcoming volunteers who were unemployed, living with mental health conditions, or had additional needs. The demand for their services, which included gardening and painting and decorating, grew rapidly, especially among isolated elderly residents. Their impact was widely recognised, receiving the prestigious Queen's Golden Jubilee Award for Voluntary Service by Groups, presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent in 2003.



Many V-team members went on to join mainstream volunteer programmes, pursue training opportunities, and secure full-time employment. Their time with Involve has equipped them with practical skills, renewed confidence, and a deep sense of community connection.

One of Involve Kent's longest running services is the Community Transport Service, which has been serving Maidstone and surrounding areas for nearly 30 years. Run entirely by volunteers, this service supports individuals who are unable to drive or use public transport due to age, frailty or disability, helping them attend hospital appointments, visit the GP or dentist, go shopping, or even visit the hairdresser.

In the early 2000s, then manager, Bridget Overton, nominated two volunteer drivers, David Burrill and Peter Goldsmith, for the Pride of Maidstone award in recognition of their outstanding service. As the Kent Messenger described, "Caring, kind and patient are just some of the words used to describe a team of stalwarts who really do go the extra mile for those in need." Today, our team of volunteer drivers complete over 7,800 trips annually.



Driver Advert, 1997

In 2007, the organisation changed its name from Maidstone Volunteer Bureau to Maidstone Voluntary Action (VAM), reflecting its wider scope of services. These include Gateway Volunteers, Maidstone and Malling Carers Support, Brighter Futures for Older People, and the Macmillan Volunteer Befriending Service. In 2011, Brighter Futures, a Big Lottery Fund supported project helping over 65s live independently, earned the organisation its second Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

"Thank you for helping me see the importance of looking after myself. It's hard to admit when you need help, but I think my own health was suffering so much so I was at risk of breaking. The help I get now has made a world of difference"

- Carers Project Service User, 2013

In 2015, VAM changed its identity again, this time adopting the identify Involve Kent. The name pays tribute to its root in volunteering, with 'vol' proudly highlighted. Today, volunteering remains at the heart of what we do, whilst also working closely with the NHS and local councils to help people overcome challenges, maintain independence, and lead happier, healthier lives. From children to older adults, Involve continues to pioneer innovative approaches to community support, which you can read more about in this year's annual impact report.





Vision

Healthy, connected people
and communities



Mission

Promoting Choice
Connecting People
Challenging Inequalities



Values

People first
Valuing difference
Excellence with integrity
Innovation and learning
Proactive approach



Objectives

Community
Health and wellbeing
Activity
Independence
Resilience
Inclusion

Data and impact

At Involve Kent, we continue to measure the impact of our work with individuals and communities using a robust, mixed-methods approach. We combine quantitative data, captured through validated tools and structured survey, with qualitative insights from the people we support. This enables us to understand not only what changes but how and why those changes occur. Our commitment to inclusive evaluation ensures that our services insights are equitable, and effective across diverse social groups.

31,260 people were supported by Involve between April 2024 and March 2025

This included **4,736** clients through partner organisations. Of these, **2,505** clients accessed more than one service and **17,758** individuals were referred by Social Care and the NHS. We supported **3,850** children and young people directly who were under 18, as well as many families.



70.7%

reported having a disability or long term health condition



24.7%

reported living in social housing



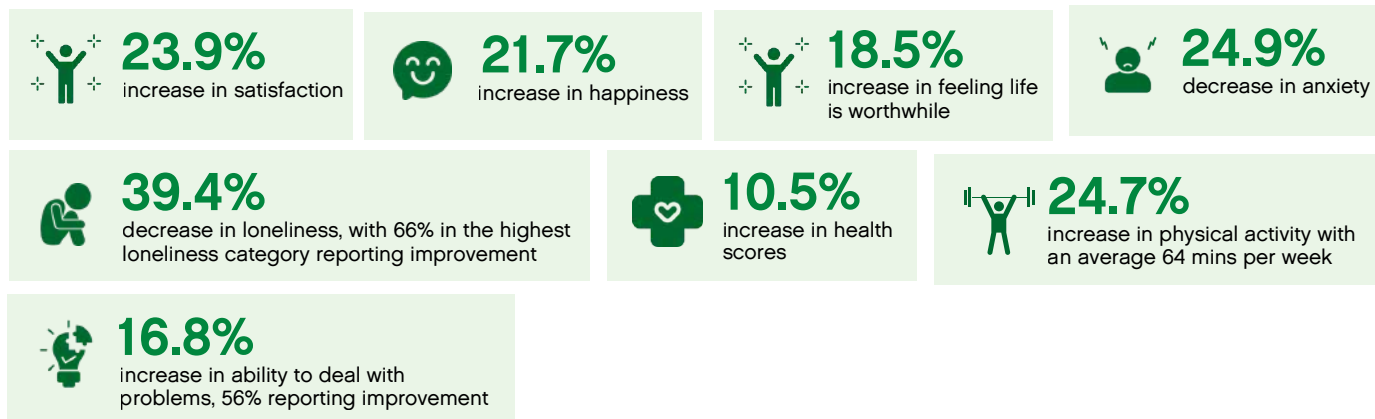
34.5%

reported living on their own

These figures reflect our reach into communities facing the greatest barriers to wellbeing and underscore our role in addressing health inequalities. Across projects, we saw particularly strong engagement from underrepresented groups in services such as Children's Health & Wellbeing, Hospital Social Prescribing, and Green Spaces.

We use the Office for National Statistics (ONS) wellbeing tool to benchmark our clients' wellbeing against national averages. Our clients typically begin their journey with us scoring significantly lower than the UK average on happiness, satisfaction, and sense of purpose, and higher on anxiety, demonstrating that we are reaching those most in need.

This year, our data showed:



Cost of living continues to affect the communities we serve. Our client data shows that **76.1%** worry about money and nearly **1 in 10 (9.98%)** have gone without food or heating due to financial hardship. These figures highlight the acute financial stress experienced by the people we support and underscore the importance of our holistic support model. By addressing both emotional wellbeing and practical needs, our services help people navigate the challenges of poverty, isolation, and poor health, ensuring that no one is left behind.

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These outcomes represent real, tangible improvements in people's lives and not just numbers. Our service-level data shows consistent impact across diverse services, with Social Prescribing (PCN) achieving the highest increases in satisfaction and happiness and Actively Involved West Kent reporting over 95% improvement in loneliness among the most isolated clients.

While data is essential, we know it doesn't tell the whole story. Throughout this report, we share case studies that bring our impact to life, stories of resilience, connection, and transformation. These narratives, alongside our data, form a complete and compelling evaluation of our work.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to innovation in impact measurement, refining our tools, deepening our partnerships, and amplifying the voices of those we support. In doing so, we continue to build a sector-leading evidence base that reflects the true value of person-centred, community-driven support.



“Having the help I have had has helped me cope better. I feel like I have the tools to get back in control. I have been more positive since having my Carer’s Assessment, and this has given me the ability to cope.”

- Carer

Our services

Community Navigation

Funded by KCC, our Navigators work collaboratively with people aged 55 and over to develop an action plan that identifies their needs and goals.

Navigators home visit where needed and provide practical support with:



Assessment and identification of community equipment. Knowledge and support to access assistive technology.



Help and advice including entitlements, making referrals and form filling.



Enabling people to identify services in their local community and, where appropriate, facilitating the purchase of services.



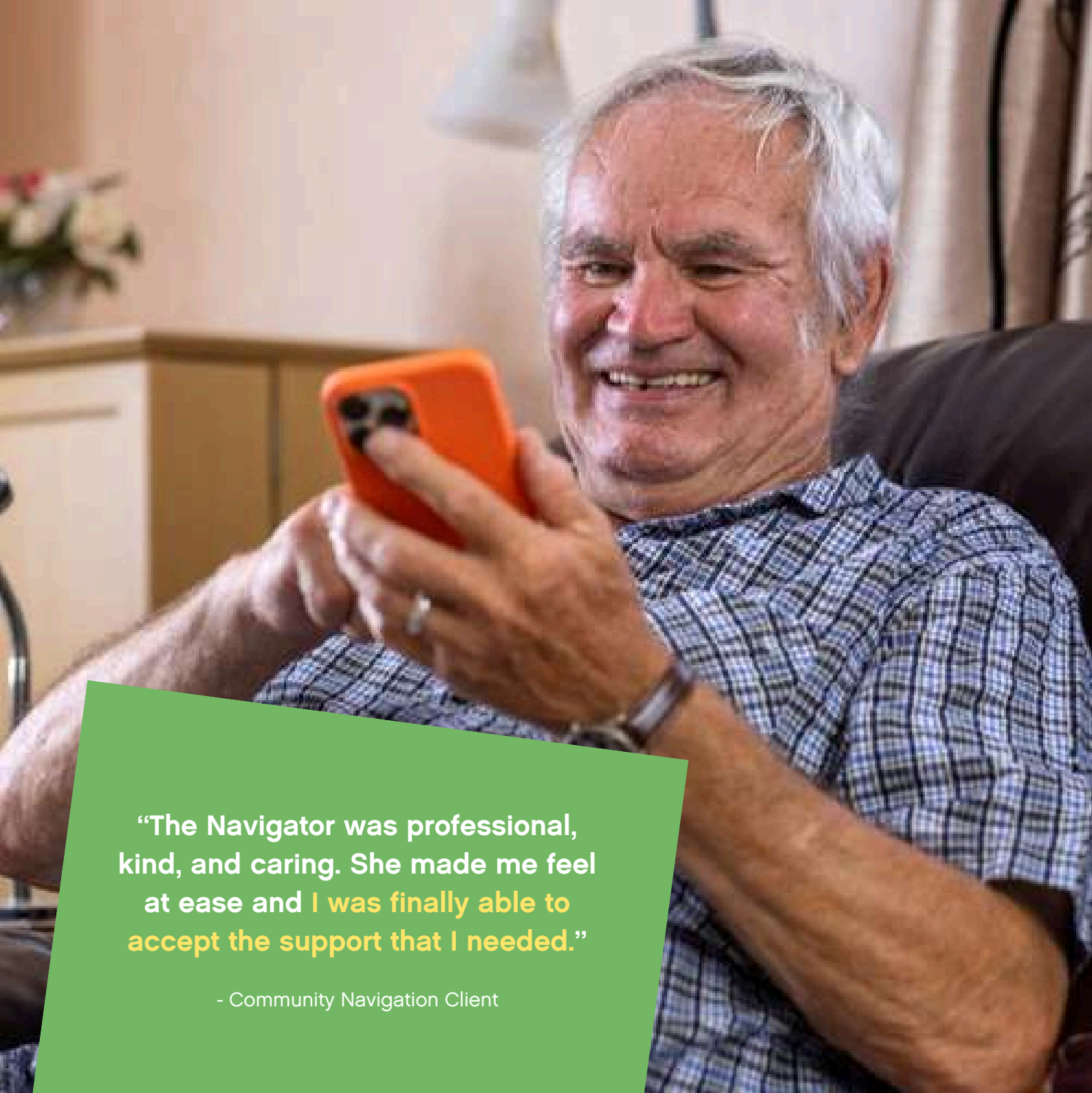
Accessing health and social care systems. Working closely with teams and organisations to make referrals.

“I had been living independently in my own home, following the death of my wife. I have several health conditions and had been managing well but was starting to find some things more of a struggle.

Katie visited and was able to request a half step at the front door and a half step and grab rails at the back door. She also suggested a rail inside the front door and she ordered it for me.

Katie also helped me to complete an Attendance Allowance form; I had started it but found the number of questions quite daunting. Katie went through what I had already answered and completed the rest of the form with me. I asked if she could also help with the Blue Badge renewal and she completed this with me at the same time.

I’m getting on very well with the equipment that you’ve put in place for me. The additional steps at the front and back door make a big difference.”



“The Navigator was professional, kind, and caring. She made me feel at ease and I was finally able to accept the support that I needed.”

- Community Navigation Client

Actively Involved

Funded by KCC, this service supports people aged 55 and over living in West and North Kent to access peer groups, activities, exercise, and information, either run by our staff or our wide and diverse network of voluntary sector partners. With a strong focus on increasing independence, reducing isolation, and therefore reducing risks of deterioration, frailty and the need for reliance on formal services.

There are two strands to the service: people with a level of care and/or support needs are supported by our Involve staff to develop a personalised action plan which assesses their mobility, anxiety, and support needs and identifies their interests, activities and support are tailored around these. Those with less need supported by our wide and diverse network of sub-contracted VCSE partners. Support is not time limited; but designed to address fluctuating needs preventing crisis and reducing demand on social care and the NHS.

Our staff support people by helping them to develop local coffee mornings, lunch clubs and other peer and activity groups in the communities where they live.

“ I am 74 and was moved from Yorkshire to Kent. I was lonely, didn't know anything about the area. I needed to get confidence to start a new life in Kent. I had no one to talk to. I have no words to describe how I felt. I was living in a black hole. I had nobody, no friends here. I was extremely low in confidence and very scared.

My Involve worker was so kind, warm and friendly. I am touched to know that you are there for me. There is someone I can call if I need support. You always have a way to make me feel better, you understand my needs, and you know my story. You always adapt to my needs.

Then you convinced me to socialise. You organised the minibus to collect me, the driver and Carol, the chaperone, are amazing. The group at the Priory is making me feel more secure, I love the conversations with other people, I laugh and feel part of something. I have met some lovely people, and I look forward to going. Now I am doing Postural Stability classes too and I look forward to continuing the support with Involve. I trust you. ”

Actively Involved Partners

People with varying levels of need were supported by a network of 46 voluntary sector partners contracted to run a diverse range of local activities including social groups, art, nature, leisure and exercise.

Our reach of partners covers all of West and North Kent and ensures this service and KCC funding reaches into all communities inclusive of people living in rural areas and those from ethnic minority communities. Just a few of our partners are detailed below showing the amazing impact of their work with older people.

Trinity Theatre

Feedback from attendance at a singing group for older people:

"I just wanted to let you know how much the Wednesday Encore Singing Group means to us. In 2021 my husband had a stroke which left him with a problem speaking and a year later he was diagnosed with post stroke epilepsy. After several years of failing memory, he was diagnosed with dementia in May 2024.

We joined the Wednesday singing group in the Autumn of 2022 and have attended regularly becoming the highlight of our week.

Although he has problems speaking, he enjoys singing and on occasions if he has problems asking me something he will try singing it! After a session we often walk back through Calverley Park singing some of the songs and it is a great boost to his mood.

As soon as we arrive, he is singing along with the others, the volunteers talk to him and not just to me and treat him as an individual. We find it a very friendly and accepting group. Being carer for someone with dementia is a very lonely existence and it is good for me to talk to other carers and to socialise and talk about normal things like films and theatre."

The Grand at Gravesham

Feedback from an attendee on an introduction to exercise course:

"I have attended The Grand for the ten-week exercise course. Since attending the sessions my confidence and mental wellbeing have dramatically improved, I have started running and genuinely looking after myself. The group has been a point of contact each week and allows me to reset for the rest of the week."

Social Prescribing

80% of our health is attributed to social factors, for example, our housing, employment, income, education, and our behaviours including our diet, how much we exercise, drink alcohol or if we smoke.

Social prescribing supports people to address these challenges and other unmet social needs with a holistic approach that focuses on “what matters to me” - giving people choice and control regarding how they manage their health and wellbeing.

Social Prescribing at the GP

Our Link Workers work with GP surgeries and they typically support patients for up to 3 months. Reducing demand on clinical time and providing a holistic approach to care and support. We work with many other partners, charities and services to improve the health and wellbeing of patients.



39%

increase in life satisfaction
following social prescribing
interventions

“Social prescribing provided support in recovering from past domestic abuse, empowering me to continue advocating for my children and alleviating my stress. There were days when I lacked motivation, but my Link Worker consistently motivated me to get outside, reconnect with friends, and participate in meaningful activities. All these aspects were incredibly important to me and had a significantly positive effect on my wellbeing.”



Social Prescribing

Social Prescribing in the Community

Funded by NHS Kent and Medway, we have worked to ensure this service meets the needs of those most at risk of health inequalities in West Kent. Our Link Workers take an outreach approach by attending food banks, community groups, temporary housing, global majority groups and religious venues and identify people experiencing poverty, housing insecurity, language or cultural barriers who may not be accessing any services and feel disconnected from their community.

Our Link Workers support people to access health and social care where they are not engaged, register at a GP surgery or dentist, access community support, and services to improve their health and wellbeing.

Practical support is also offered by completing forms for people, applying for grants to purchase food, bedding, clothes or pay energy bills.

 **1,018**

people supported through
community social prescribing

 **83%**

had a long-term health
condition or disability

 **125**

people supported to engage with
health professionals regarding an
unmanaged health condition

“At this point, you and Involve have been the only continuity and reliable support I have received.”

Social Prescribing

Case Study

“ I did not have a phone so was not contactable by services. I was really struggling financially as I was only in receipt of Universal Credit and had used food banks. I only left my flat to get food from the local shop. My house was in disrepair. I have different mental health conditions which affect me every day, I could not keep on top of housework or have the money to do so. I also did not have an oven, hob or microwave so really struggled to cook and spent more money on food. I was in thousands of pounds of arrears with my water company.

As I do not have a contact number my Link Worker wrote me a letter with an appointment date and time and visited me at home at first. She made a great effort to see me at home and understand my situation. She helped me to contact Southeast Water to register me as a priority customer and look into whether I could receive a social discount or a one-bedroom discount. She collected and delivered a few food parcels to me making sure it included foods I could prepare and eat. She was also in



communication with my housing association and visited with them so they could see the state of my property. She helped me to complete the PIP form, contacted my GP for evidence as I did not have any and completed the telephone assessment as I do not have a contact number. I was awarded enhanced rate for daily living and standard rate for mobility. With this money I can get myself new clothes and shoes online which were ruined by the maggot infestation. I'm going to buy an air fryer which means I will be able to eat more of a variety of food.”

Social Prescribing

Online Directory

This work also enables us to populate our quality assured directory of voluntary and community sector services, groups and activities that people can browse or professionals can use to access support for someone. There are over 1000 services and activities across Kent and beyond now listed.

Funding the VCSE

We were also delighted to be able to award £25,000 to 14 community groups to run inclusive activities, examples being Singing for Health, walking football, gardening, healthy slow cooking and a variety of other activities focused on improving physical health and reducing isolation.

Here's how our support has impacted two VCSE organisations:



The Stones Community Trust were awarded £2,500 and 84 people benefitted.

The grant covered the staff, volunteers, material and venue hire costs to allow The Stones Community Trust to launch a new 'Women's Walking Football' programme for 30+ women to improve their physical and mental health. This course is aimed at individuals who would be unable to take part in running football and is accessible to those at all stages of fitness. The grant also contributed towards the staff costs and venue hire for them to continue their popular 'Mind Stones' exercise programme which is attended by 54 men from the Maidstone area.



Fusion was awarded £2,338 to run the Diabetic Slow Cooking Course. This is designed for individuals who want to improve their health and wellbeing through positive lifestyle choices. Participants learn how to prepare healthier, home-cooked meals while gaining a deeper understanding of the benefits of nutritious cooking.

The course also includes group discussions, where attendees share their knowledge, personal experiences, and journeys.

Social Prescribing

This creates a supportive network and an ideal setting for signposting to additional services when needed.

The results from this course are:

- Confidence in cooking from scratch average increase of **1.6 points**
- Confidence in using a slow cooker average increase of **1.3 points**
- Knowledge around healthy eating average increase of **1.2 points**
- **100%** of participants said they were able to eat more healthily
- **75%** of participants said they can now access activities that improve their health, **75%** of participants said they now understand how to live more healthily
- **100%** of participants said they can now make friends and be less alone

Hospital Social Prescribing

We were honoured to extend social prescribing into Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Hospital Trust working onsite with staff to support patients being

discharged from hospital with any non-medical social needs and to reduce unnecessary A&E or unplanned admissions.

Support was provided for up to 6 weeks from discharge by a Link Worker who home visited patients and worked to a holistic approach, focusing on building trust and “what matters to me” with the patient. Patients referred were often very vulnerable, isolated and needed practical support with:



Accessing food, medication, or charging electricity



Digital inclusion - to set up online shopping, direct debits for utility bills, and benefits



Purchasing practical items often through grant funds - beds, cookers and clothing



Form completion



Help with telephone calls or emails to services

And referring and supporting them to access services.

Unfortunately, the service was ended in March 2025 due to budget constraints, however we hope that we can work with MTW again in the future.

Social Prescribing

Professional Feedback



“I wanted to express my gratitude for the support given by Michelle to my patient. He has very severe psychiatric problems which have reduced the

ability to access healthcare. He has a life threatening rheumatological problem and was in intensive care earlier in the year with it. He was unable to access healthcare, but came to clinic yesterday with his partner and dog in the car. He had nothing but praise for Michelle. Her involvement has likely helped save this man’s life through helping him engage with care.”

Case Study

“I accepted help from Involve when a Link Worker brought me my medication from the hospital that I needed to take to stay alive. I felt unsupported and alone, I couldn’t leave my flat and I had such high anxiety and paranoia that I checked myself out of hospital before I had the infusion I needed, or my medication was ready to take with me. I didn’t know where to go for help and didn’t trust anyone to help me.

My Link Worker understood that my behaviour, language, tics and lack of eye contact are all part of my conditions and gave me the time I needed so I could begin to trust her and be able to think about letting her help me.

On several occasions she contacted my GP for me, to arrange a fit note, sort out my medication, arrange a home visit for my blood tests and confirm upcoming appointments. She also collected the fit note and took it to the UC office and delivered paperwork from the hospital to the GP surgery.

I struggle in the shower as I cannot stand for long. My Link Worker arranged a shower stool for me and a perching stool for the kitchen as I cannot cook a meal in one go or complete the washing up without needing to sit down. She knew how hard it would be for me to accept the delivery so made sure I knew when it was coming so I could prepare myself to open the door.

I was eligible to get a Motability car, but I didn’t know how to do so or how I would manage with

Social Prescribing

the paperwork and getting the vehicle. My Link Worker explained it all to me and took me through the options, costs involved, and the process. She arranged for me to visit the car showroom, and with the help of my neighbour, I met her there for an appointment. I could not have managed any of this by myself and I now have a car that is a safe space for me so I can get to medical appointments, the chemist, do my food shopping in person (early or late when no one is around), and know that I am able to leave and get home safely at any point I need to do so. This has been life changing for me.

My Link Worker helped with my benefits; she also applied for a Blue Badge for me. When I received a letter from my landlord saying I owed £850 in arrears, she supported me to call them and arranged a payment plan for me to pay back what I owed.

I didn't believe when I agreed to let the Link Worker in with my medication that there was anything that anyone could do for me. I am so glad I did."

 **615**

people referred and supported

 **38%**

decrease in anxiety scores



Helping You Home



Helping You Home is funded by Maidstone Borough Council and delivered in partnership with Maidstone Hospital. Coming home from hospital can be a vulnerable and challenging time for people and their families. Helping you Home provides practical support for people being discharged home to a Maidstone property by completing home safety checks and fitting key safes, lifelines and moving furniture to enable delivery of a hospital bed.

 **331**

people supported with practical assistance

“Very happy with the lifeline, thank you for the support and installing it.”

“It’s a relief to have the lifeline all in place. Thank you so much.”

“Thank you for such a quick service. Key safe all working well.”

Postural Stability

Postural Stability are specialist exercise classes that are offered in community venues across North and West Kent, run by our qualified instructors and supported by dedicated volunteers, who guide the class through gentle and progressive exercises each week for a total of 36 weeks. Working at their own pace and when confidence has improved, they learn techniques to get up from the floor safely in case they fall.

After the exercise there is time to chat and make friends over a cup of tea or coffee, speakers are also invited to talk to the group about staying fit and well and keeping safe at home.

People are supported to move onto further exercise or activities at the end of the courses to ensure they continue to maintain their mobility and balance and connect with others.



95%

of people maintained or improved
their mobility confidence levels



Community Transport

The service provides accessible, affordable and reliable transport for people living in Maidstone and Malling who cannot manage on public transport due to age related difficulties, frailty, disability or illness. Enabling people to get to hospital or GP appointments, day centres, attend social groups, activities or be able to visit friends and family independently.

 **7,837**

trips completed

The service can only run with the dedication from our volunteer drivers which increased to an all-time high of 56 during the year and our 3 Office Support Volunteers who support our Transport Coordinator, Tracey. Drivers kindly use their own cars to transport people and drive our 2 minibuses with up to 10 people onboard.

Dad passed away peacefully on Saturday evening and thanks to your driver, Dave my Mum had seen Dad just days before on the Wednesday.

Please would you extend my deepest thanks to both Dave and Robin. I know Robin was really fond of Dad. It's hard to put into words what it meant to the family that in their 60th year of marriage, they were still able to be together. ”

“ I wanted to thank you for all the help you and Involve Kent have given me in enabling my Mum and Dad to see each other, despite being in separate care homes.



Green Spaces

Our Green Spaces social prescribing project in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council came to an end in March 2025. Focused on wellbeing, the project supported Maidstone residents to get involved in gardening activities and develop the town centre green spaces to help keep them feeling connected to their community. All volunteering sessions were led by a qualified and experienced gardener who was always on hand to share helpful advice and tips. The project both improved often neglected small green spaces in the community in addition to supporting wellbeing and a sense of community ownership in the volunteers.

 **88**
volunteers

 **111**
sessions

The sites:

Maidstone Amphitheatre, Brenchley Gardens, Brewer Street Churchyard, Allotment, Maidstone Community Support Centre (front beds), Rose Garden, Secret Garden, Trinity Park, Woollett & Camden Street, Pride Boat, Palace Garden, Old Boat Café Beds, Archbishop's Palace (Knot Garden), Museum (front courtyard), Fairmeadow

(subway beds), Coronation Square, Goodsell House, College Road Carpark Beds, Magistrates Court Beds, Riverside Bed

Impact on volunteers

100% said they enjoyed taking part in the volunteering activity

96% said they felt more connected through being involved

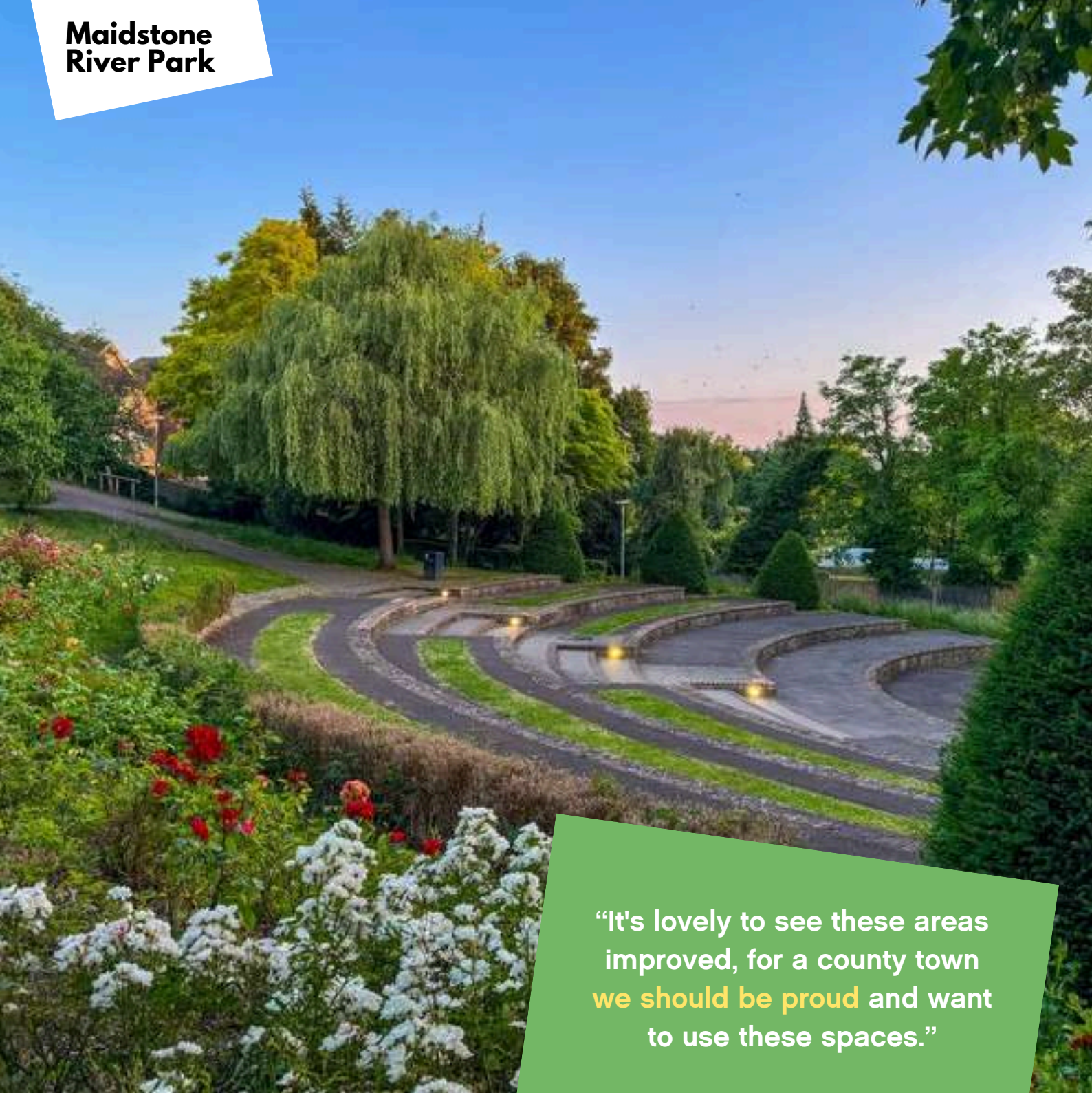
100% said it improved their wellbeing

98% said they are more likely to volunteer in the future having taken part.

Why did people volunteer?

The main reason volunteers wanted to take part was to support or to give back to the local community. There was also a drive to be part of a team and to do something together. Many volunteers wanted to improve the look of the town and maintain its green spaces to make it better for residents and businesses.

Maidstone River Park



“It's lovely to see these areas improved, for a county town we should be proud and want to use these spaces.”

Children's Health & Wellbeing

Our Navigators are based in GP practices and work with children, families and carers where the child has a long-term health condition, neurodivergence and/or mental health issues. Helping families to coordinate referrals and care, providing information and advice, and acting as a key point of contact for the family. Focusing on what matters most to families, a personalised support plan is developed with wide ranging actions from navigating statutory services and diagnostic pathways to supporting them to achieve their goals.

Case Study

C, aged 15, was struggling with anxiety and isolation. Unable to access school, experiencing overwhelm and social anxiety, C could not leave the house, and would be physically sick when he did. He was desperate to overcome this and found it so frustrating.

With the help of social prescribing support from his Children's Navigator at his GP practice, C was encouraged to access the Inspire programme, a local scheme to help young people that are facing challenges. The programme supports young people to create

new friendships, introduce them to healthy lifestyles through sport, and open new doors into work with opportunities to learn new skills. C also decided to join the gym at the local leisure centre. Meanwhile, the Navigator supported the family to access CAMHS for mental health support, and his parents were provided with various self-confidence boosting tasks to slowly build his resilience. His confidence grew day by day and he decided to investigate a new education setting for a fresh start.

C now has had 98% attendance, his form teacher says he is flourishing, joining in social activities, going out with friends and accessing education with a newfound confidence and zest for life. He continues to attend the gym, paying for it himself using his benefits that the Navigator supported him to claim.

“Without Children's Navigation support and help we would never have considered moving schools, and he would not be the boy he is today!”

- Feedback from Mum

Children's Health & Wellbeing

The team have also worked across the following:

NHS Kent and Medway Transformation - This is Me

Staff from four Maidstone based GP Primary Care Networks trained to ensure families are appropriately supported to access this new alternative to the previous diagnostic pathway. Included as an integral part of the Community Resource Team and package of support being offered to families accessing This is Me.

Children and Young People Mental Health MDT

Working closely with PCN Children and Young People's Mental Health Practitioners (NELFT), wider agencies and organisations with a collaborative approach to addressing the high levels of CYP presenting with poor mental health, self-harm and incidents of suicide in West Kent.

NHSE Pilot - East Kent Children's MDT

Two Navigators continue to lead on the development, planning, facilitation and reporting around NHSE Children's MDT, working closely with key clinical PCN staff and wider agencies.

Primary Care Neurodiversity Pilot

Navigators at participating PCNs have led the development of projects piloting innovative approaches to supporting families in Primary Care.

Navigators have engaged NDUK to create a programme of bespoke support sessions based on the needs and gaps identified, due to commence soon in Malling PCN.

Sittingbourne PCN Navigators have created a schedule of themed coffee mornings with families and experts, as well as using the Unique Child Programme for individual support.

Weald PCN - Family Focused Link Worker

Testing a unique role recognising the wider needs of families where a child has additional needs.



of **3,344** families supported this year reported an increase in ability to deal with problems

NHS Personal Health Budget

From March 2022-2024 Involve Kent ran a Personal Health Budget Pilot, delivering to children and young people either diagnosed with, or suspected to have, a neurodivergent condition. Following the success of this pilot, it was agreed in 2024 to continue the contract but with a focus on those children and young people on the waiting list for an assessment, to ensure support was being offered during the waiting period of a person's neurodivergent condition journey.

A Personal Health Budget is funding which can be used to purchase items and/or services for children or young people who are on a neurodivergent diagnostic pathway, receiving support from the This is Me! team in Maidstone, or attending a PINS school, with the aim of improving a specific wellbeing outcome.

The latest pilot has received 109 referrals across Kent. The project needed to be scalable and sustainable, therefore a model was developed which reflected a small grant application process, rather than a Coordinator Key Work model. Referrals have been made by GP Primary Care Network Children's Navigators and Link Workers, This is Me! Practitioners and from PINS schools.

The average cost has been £257.35 with an average rate of 78% of families stating that their Personal Health Budget was able to meet the agreed wellbeing need.

Case Study

Before receiving a Personal Health Budget (PHB), A was awaiting autism and ADHD assessments and struggling with emotional regulation, leading to outbursts, sleep issues, and difficulty attending school assemblies. His Children's Navigator worked with him and his mum to create a support plan, recognising the need for ongoing, multi-source effort.

The PHB funded sensory and calming items including loop earplugs, a worry bear, sleep device, blackout tent, vibrating cushion, weighted blanket, and bean bag to help A manage crises and triggers.

Weeks later, A's mum shared that the items had transformed their Christmas, helping him calm down and sleep through the night for the first time in years.

NHS Personal Health Budget

His improved sleep also benefited Mum's sleep. At school, the earplugs enabled A to attend assemblies, and overall, he was much happier and better regulated.

Mum stated, "I would have got him the sleep items years ago if I had known the difference it would make!"

30% improvement in mental wellbeing

22% improvement in physical wellbeing

38% improvement in emotional wellbeing

25% improvement in social wellbeing

"Now he has the headphones he can get a bus which he wasn't before. This means he is a bit more independent, and I don't need to run him around everywhere so much, so it frees up my time."



"Having the swing for E has changed our lives. We knew she liked the sensation of swinging but because of the winter she couldn't always use the garden so we couldn't utilise that to help her. Having the indoor swing means she can use it whenever she needs to, she says it gives her the sensation of being safe and she will even do her reading in it, I can't describe how much it has changed things for her."

Connect!

Connect! provides short break activities to 9 to 18-year-olds with moderate needs relating to neurodivergence across Kent. A co-designed programme of widely varied and exciting activities run after-school, at weekends, and in school holidays. To engage those not in school there are also weekday home education sessions to support children and young people to socialise, develop peer relationships and make friends, build resilience, confidence and life skills in a non-judgemental environment that is tailored to be considerate of individual needs and sensitivities where possible.

Activities are chosen to ensure they both engage and challenge the young people and are based on what they tell us they would like to do. Previous activities have included:



rock climbing



water sports



cinema



cooking



yoga



animal experiences



archery



bushcraft/
forest school



theatre



outdoor
activities



bus/train
journeys



gaming
workshops

To ensure accessibility across the spectrum of needs of Connect! we considered not only what they told us they wanted to do, but also what might further enhance the schedule of activities:

Online groups

Games played are easily accessible to young people and highly familiar, giving them the opportunity to join an activity where they may be resistant to face to face activities. Many children and young people have joined the online session as an introduction and progressed to putting comments in the Chat, then joining in online,

Connect!

building friendships and connections with others then working towards attending activities in person. Online sessions are free of charge to ensure that there is always an activity available where cost is not a consideration and they can attend consistently as they build their confidence and beyond. We extended the sessions by half an hour at their request as they wanted to stay online and chat with each other once the game was finished.

Youth club style sessions

In addition to our programme of activities, we set up regular social sessions in community settings where we offer a drop in option especially to children and young people who are new to Connect! or prone to overwhelm/anxiety. They and their families are encouraged to pop into the session and leave as needed allowing them to familiarise with the setting, activities and peers while building confidence and self-managing their anxiety. Activities at these sessions are less structured to allow for more transient attendance e.g. board games, arts and crafts. Fidget toys and comfort items are made available and they are encouraged to bring their own if it's helpful. Staff make themselves available to meet and greet new attendees at these sessions further supporting a soft introduction to the service.

 **8,446**

people supported during April
2023 to March 2024

- 99.7%** of children reported feeling safe at an activity
- 96.5%** of children reported increasing their independence
- 92.7%** of children reported having tried something new
- 89.2%** of children reported all three of the above outcomes at once at a session
- 90%** of parents told us that they feel like Connect! gives them a break
- 95%** told us that Connect! meets the needs of their family

“I can unmask and relax and talk to people with less judgement there.”

Connect!



Case Study

When A began attending activities, his parent would come along each time, he would mainly stay with a parent throughout. With some gentle encouragement he started to spend longer periods of time engaging with the group.

As A attended more regularly, these periods of group engagement steadily increased as initial friendships formed. After a few months of attending, A started to attend independently with a parent dropping him off and picking up after. This has enabled A to rapidly build confidence and develop his social skills.

Activities that A attended includes a full day of outdoor activities, engaging in confidence building activities e.g. high climbing and zipline in a safe environment, which they have refused to engage with/attend in the past as reported by family.

“ I like spending time outdoors and mixing with people my age. I've felt more confident as I go to more events. I don't mind school now.”

- Feedback from A

Dynamic Support Advocates

The service supports young people aged 10 to 25 who:

- Have a confirmed diagnosis of a learning disability and/or autism, or are on the pathway for an assessment

And are:

- At risk of admission into a specialist mental health facility
- At risk of a 53-week placement breakdown, or
- At risk of detention in the criminal justice system with forensic involvement

Our team of advocates, all who have relevant lived experience, take time to build trusting relationships with children, young people and their families by offering flexible support including home visits, community visits and hospital visits. This is especially important where children, young people and their families feel let down by services. They ensure the child or young person remains in the very centre of their care and support needs. Acting as advocates to ensure the voices of children and young people are heard across the system and that their goals, aspirations and wishes are listened to and acted upon.

84 children, young people and their families supported during April 24 and March 25

“The advocates provide specialist support for our most complex young people and are regularly applauded for their skills, resilience, experience, knowledge, and compassion. They are essential to the work of the Dynamic Support Service and are valuable members of my service, and I am grateful for them and the relationship I have been honoured to have developed with Involve Kent.”

- Feedback from Peter Lewer,
Operational Manager, Kent & Medway
Dynamic Support Service

Case Study

“Ben has been our advocate, advisor, mediator, and information provider. He met with us and explained his purpose which helped us understand what he could do and provided us with regular contact and updates throughout his support for us.”

Dynamic Support Advocates

He has supported by helping find an alternative to the adult education courses J had been interested in about life skills/budgeting etc, sending information about similar courses via Mid Kent College. Ben has helped feed back our concerns about network decisions and actions and provided us with the previously requested contacts and complaint procedures we'd asked for and had never been given. He has provided other information on volunteer programmes like Men's Sheds in the area.

He has supported us in meetings and communicating with the social worker, and provided tips for what has worked before, and what myself and J feel would work better for communication. This is now being done and the relationship with the social worker has much improved for both me and J. He has provided feedback regarding advocacy options from his team for J to ensure our worries can be met and J feel more supported without my direct presence in meetings with professionals.

He has helped translate our frustration over communication to the social worker which has helped them to understand how they can influence other professionals currently not engaging as needed, or communicating as preferred. He has also put together a communication template for professionals to better understand how support and how communication is best adapted to suit J and myself.

He has ensured that we are kept in the loop and that professionals communicate with us more, so we know what is happening even when it's just updates on delays. He has also provided options on funding routes via Personal Health Budgets for tuition and given regular contact, updates and emotional support.”

In focus

Moving Forwards

 **127**

young care experienced
people supported

 **52%**

have a long-term health
condition or disability

 **20%**

from ethnic minority
communities

Moving into our fourth year of supporting care leavers between the ages of 16 to 25 we were delighted to have funding increased from NHS Kent and Medway to enable us to expand the service to all care leavers across Kent and Medway from January 2025.

Our Navigators take a holistic approach to supporting those who have left care or those preparing to leave care, working in partnership to complement and expand the support they can access through the local authority. Offering flexible 1-2-1 contact including home, and community face to face contact. Engaging the young person with developing a personalised, goals-based action plan that focuses on their health and wellbeing, interests and aspirations, and what support they may need to thrive and move forwards upon leaving care.



Moving Forwards

Personal Health Budgets Outcomes

We have also used Personal Health Budgets to enable care leavers to access hobbies and interests of a wide variety including gym memberships, dance classes, art equipment and bikes. Some examples include:

J was referred to The Arts Exchange in Margate. J is now having sewing lessons and support to build his portfolio. J was able to use the personal budget to purchase materials that he needed but could not afford to build upon his personal portfolio on his journey to working in the fashion industry.

H is due her third child. H spends a lot of time at home due to her young children and due to pregnancy risk. H is now making time for herself with diamond art which gives her time to relax and focus on her mental wellbeing. However, she was struggling to do this at her table due to back pain. H used her funding to purchase a small table and additional craft kits.

“Having the table means I can sit comfortably and do something that I enjoy. Diamond art is something I can do while my children sleep and still make time for me which helps my mental wellbeing.”

Having a Voice

We were proud to work with care leavers to enable them to be involved and present at the 2024 Young Adults' Mental Health and Wellbeing Symposium about their experiences of mental health services.

They spoke about their experiences of receiving support for their mental health and shared a diagram that they had developed with our staff that explained the impact of stigma on them. Professionals attending said it was one of the most valuable parts of the day. The young people attending enjoyed the day, felt well supported, and listened to.

We also held a focus group to co-design our new leaflet with care experienced young people, aiming to encourage more care experienced young people to engage with the service.

Moving Forwards

The focus of the group was to make the content more accessible and easier to read, ensuring that the information is clear and targeted towards the intended audience.

“ I feel valued and that I can make a positive change, and I could see this in designing the leaflet when looking at the before and after. It is good to hear other people’s opinions as well as giving my own. The new leaflet is what I imagined and is much more engaging. I feel it also gives me experience to talk in these settings which will help me in my interviews and group settings in the future. ”

- Feedback from young person

“ I liked being asked and included in the design of the leaflet. I felt that I was listened to and was able to have an opinion. It boosted my confidence by taking part, speaking in a group setting and being heard. I think the new leaflet is much better, more readable and will be more relatable for others. I am happy with how it turned out and being involved. ”

- Feedback from young person

Group Work and Activities

To ensure that our activities are engaging and co-designed with the young people, we send out feedback forms following participation, asking for their views on what they enjoyed, what could be improved, and what they would like to do in the future.

Through our ongoing co-design process with young people, feedback highlighted a strong desire for more consistent opportunities to connect beyond the existing monthly activity model. Young people expressed the need for regular, informal meetups to help build relationships and create opportunities to interact with peers.

In direct response to this feedback, we expanded our offer to include more frequent and accessible activities. This includes a new bowling centre group, providing a relaxed, social setting for regular engagement.

Young people who are also parents shared that childcare responsibilities often prevented them from fully engaging in activities.

Moving Forwards

As a result of their feedback, we have tailored some activities to be suitable for parents to attend with their children. While some had been supported to attend local parent and baby groups, they expressed that they struggled to build connections within these settings. Many felt isolated or different from other parents, as they didn't share similar lived experience.

They also identified a strong need for a space specifically for young people with care experience, where they could feel understood, safe and supported by peers who relate to their circumstances. In response, we are developing dedicated groups for young care experienced parents and their children, designed to offer meaningful peer connection, reduce isolation, and ensure they can access supportive, relevant activities.

“Attending activities with the Moving Forwards service has made the biggest impact on me as it meant I could get out of my accommodation. It gave me the opportunity to try new things, make new friendships, build my confidence and pushed me out of my comfort zone and I enjoyed myself more than I thought I would.”

“I have attended many activities but really enjoyed doing something for Halloween by going to Tulleys Farm Shocktoberfest. I also liked how sometimes we would do exciting, thrilling trips but also more relaxed casual trips to the zoo and Leeds Castle Christmas Lights. I have become a lot more confident and often meet with new people which I once didn't think I could do!

The Moving Forwards service has made a lot of impact to my mental health. I feel happier, more confident and less anxious meeting new people. Having the opportunity to get out and meet with other young people has meant I am hardly ever lonely. It has also improved my physical health as I am no longer sitting in my room playing games; I am working more, doing fun physical activity trips and on the move a lot more.”

“Being in such activities helps me a lot to gain confidence being around people and gives me the opportunity to meet new people every time.”

Moving Forwards

“I really enjoyed today. I loved meeting people who have been in the same situation as me and I loved how we have all now got along so well to the point we are going to meet up outside.”

After one year in the service young people experience:

 **23%**

average decrease in
anxiety scores

 **24%**

average increase in life
satisfaction scores

 **77**

minutes average weekly
increase in physical activity



Carers

 **5,860**
carers supported

 **81%**
reported a long-term health
condition or disability

In the 2021 census 158,512 unpaid carers were identified in Kent and Medway. Involve are funded by Kent County Council in the areas of Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks (excluding Swanley) to provide assessment and support to anyone aged 16 and over who are providing unpaid care to an adult family member, partner or friend.

The service includes the responsibility for completing Carer's Assessments on behalf of KCC social care and developing support plans with carers to meet their eligible needs. 700 were completed during April 2024 and March 2025. We take a holistic and person-centred approach with

carers ensuring equal partnership in all that we do and focusing with them on their health, wellbeing and ability to live the life they choose alongside their caring role.

Innovation

We were pleased to be involved by KCC in the innovative development of the new online Carer's Assessment in Kent. We ensured that carers were able to test the platform during the design phase and feedback their views on imagery, wording and ease of use. We are delighted the platform is live and carers in Kent now have another easy route to access support in Kent.

Hospital Discharge


1,086
445

carers supported through carer's hospital discharge service and provided with information, advice, emotional support and their right to a Carer's Assessment through Involve

received practical brokered support from hospital discharge funding.

Carers

Our work with Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Hospital Trust with onsite access enables us to identify carers caring for someone on discharge from hospital. We work as a part of the integrated discharge team to ensure appropriate support is in place to enable safe discharge home.

Our practical support includes night sits, sit calls, help with domestic tasks, and laundry. Enabling carers to rest or take time out when their caring role has increased, or they are new to caring for someone after a stay in hospital.

Short Breaks

315 carers accessed a short break from caring via our Rapid Response funding helping improve their health and wellbeing whilst the person they care for is safely supported at home or in the community. Our wide network of partners enables choice and control for carers and the person they support.

Forums

Our quarterly Carers' Forums continue to grow in popularity and empower carers to have their voices heard while also hearing from services, community partners and statutory services.

Our Southborough forum was focused on Mental Health and we were honoured to have guest speaker Matthew McKenzie FRSA BEM attend. Carers appreciated Matthew's presentation as he shared his own story as a carer of people with mental health conditions and read some of his poetry. Carers participated by sharing some of their own stories and difficulties with other attendees. Information was also shared by Crossroads and TELs, with further information stands from KCC, Active Kent and Medway, and Community Catalysts.

“A very emotional day in a good way thank you. I found all the information very helpful. It was good to meet other people and to talk to those who have been helping me.”

Our Maidstone forum included speakers from Citizens Advice Bureau, Kent Continence Service and KCC Community Wardens, with information stands provided by Community Catalysts, KCC TELs and Clarion Housing Group with details of the One Stop Shop (domestic abuse service). Forums are also a great way to connect carers with each other who may have similar interests, caring roles or are local to each other.

Carers

Training

Our training sessions are based on the needs carers have identified to us. This year we have expanded our partnerships to offer the following:

Moving & Handling

Moving and Handling Awareness workshops delivered in West Kent provided information for carers with demonstrations from NRS Healthcare occupational therapists who showed the carers how they can support their loved one to move whilst looking after their own physical wellbeing.

First Aid

Working with British Red Cross, First Aid workshops were delivered in different locations in West Kent. They gave carers confidence that they would know what to do in an emergency and there was time to ask specific questions and join in practical demonstrations.

Adapt and Recover

British Red Cross also facilitated two Adapt and Recover workshops in Tonbridge and Ditton. Carers learnt how the body reacts to stressful situations and times of sudden change; they were given

practical coping strategies to help in times of stress.

Virtual Dementia Tour

In March we held two training sessions with Training2Care for carers that support a friend or family member living with dementia and for some of our staff. The Virtual Dementia Tour allowed 32 carers and staff to experience what dementia might be like and understand simple changes that can be made to improve the life of someone living with dementia. All carers that attended gave very positive feedback that it helped provide a greater understanding of the support that could be provided and a much deeper understanding of the difficulties the person they care for may face.

Caring and Me

Caring and Me courses were co-produced with carers and delivered face-to-face at different locations across West Kent and online. Carers benefited from the courses and were able to discover different ways of coping and gaining confidence in their caring role.

Carers

Peer Support

We continue to support carers to connect with each other, reduce their isolation, gain peer support, confidence and take a break with face to face and online groups and activities across West Kent.

Case Study

“My partner and I were living a normal life before her stroke but then our lives turned upside down. We were referred to Involve by the hospital. Before the stroke, we were quite confident to find information and solve problems between us. After my partner’s stroke, I found myself unable to manage and felt completely lost with no one to help.

Involve issued me with a Kent Carer’s Emergency Card and supported to complete a Carer’s Emergency Plan. I was also supported to apply for a disabled person’s bus pass, a Blue Badge and Carer’s Allowance, all of which have now been awarded.

I attended the Caring and Me course and a Moving and Handling course.

Referrals were made for a Care Needs Assessment to social services, and we were supported to access community equipment and assistive technology.

The support from Involve has made a huge positive difference with very good results. The biggest positive change for me personally has been the courses that I have been able to attend through Involve, and equipment support for my partner. The courses have been very informative, and I have learned a lot, not only from the course leader but also from other carers.”



Young Adult Carers

Our personalised support to those aged 16 to 25 who care for an adult family member or friend includes proactive outreach work with drop ins at colleges, youth services and young carer services.

Both 1-2-1 and group support is available with access to a Carer's Assessment from age 18. We also run activities to bring carers together, have a break and have some fun.

Case Study

“ I was struggling to maintain my mental health and wellbeing. My confidence and self-esteem were at an all-time low. I lacked the funds to do activities I enjoy, and this was stopping me from having a break from my caring role.

I have been attending the monthly groups and activities for Young Adult Carers face-to-face. One of the activities I recently enjoyed attending was bouldering at the Chimera Climbing Centre. It was great fun to try something I would never normally do and to meet other young adult carers.

My community navigator has completed an

application to the Kent Community Foundation for the Grassroots Carers' Respite Fund for an annual gym membership. This was approved and has been beneficial to me.

I have been supported to access Shaw Trust for support with employment and the NHS Talking Therapies for support with my mental health and wellbeing.

I have been regularly attending the gym which has made an improvement in not only my physical health, but my mental health and wellbeing. My mood, motivation and confidence have increased. The support I have received from Involve has also helped me to improve my social connections. I now have a break from my caring role at least once a week.”

Outcomes

Thematic analysis of carer's feedback of our service has shown the following:

Theme Identified	Carer Summary Feedback
Emotional support and reassurance	Having someone to talk to who listens without judgement provided comfort, validation, and reduced feelings of isolation. Feeling emotionally supported and cared for.
Service satisfaction and availability	High satisfaction with the reliability, professionalism, and responsiveness of support teams. Carers appreciated consistent follow-through.
Information, advice, and communication	Carers valued clear, timely and tailored information - especially through Support Plans. Advice on navigating services and accessing resources was empowering.
Mental health and wellbeing	Support for mental health through counselling, peer groups, and emotional encouragement was transformative and often life changing.
Support planning and empowerment	Assessments and structured plans helped carers reflect, set goals, and feel more in control. Many felt empowered to take action.
Social connection and respite	Peer groups, forums and Rapid Response funded breaks helped carers feel connected, understood, and able to rest or engage socially.
Trust and continuity	Carers valued consistent, empathetic support from trusted navigators who followed through and stayed in touch.
Financial support	Help with Rapid Response short break funding, Carer One-off payments, and benefit applications provided financial relief and improved quality of life.
Identity and role recognition	Carers felt seen and acknowledged not just as caregivers but as individuals with their own needs and worth.

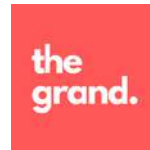
Support for the voluntary sector

Our partnership programme with over 45 charities and voluntary organisations has strengthened and continued to grow. We proudly work together to provide an extensive choice of accessible and culturally diverse activities and specialist support services for older people across North and West Kent. Our partnership portfolio of social, exercise, arts, and nature-based opportunities ensure that a wide variety of interesting group activities to suit all interests are locally available, and include arts classes, fishing, specialist exercise classes, craft groups, gardening and horticultural activities, nature walks, singing, theatre activities as well as many drop-in social groups.

£431,777

was secured for our VCS partners, strengthening the sector and providing resources to support communities. Our Social Prescribing Community Fund awarded an additional £25,000 to voluntary groups and organisations in West Kent to develop activities and provide volunteer placements.

We continued to host the West Kent Health and Care Voluntary Sector Alliance, a forum that brings together the VCSE in West Kent to work more closely with health systems. Throughout the year we delivered several online meetings to discuss topical issues including Support for Carers, Showcasing Impact and Working in a Veteran-Friendly Way.







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