


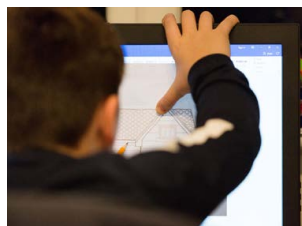
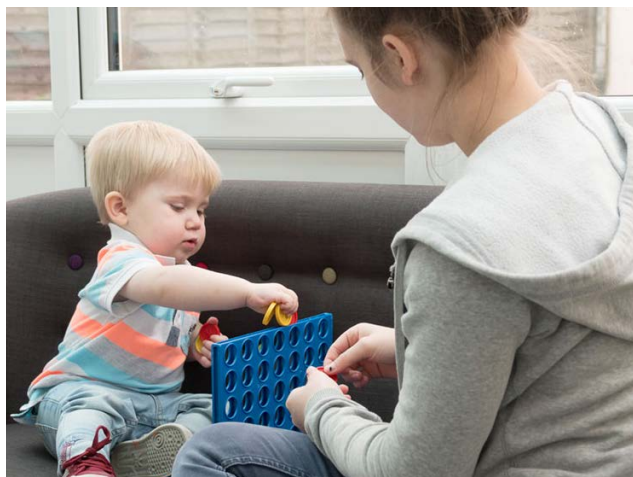
WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Social Impact Report 2018



somewhere to live
someone to love
something to do



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Introduction from Communities Director

West Kent is committed to being the leading community provider of affordable housing in Kent. Seeing the home as the foundation for a strong community, West Kent is clear that providing services beyond the four walls of the home and having a strong focus on the people living within them and in the wider communities in which they sit is part of the organisation's DNA.

West Kent has delivered community services since its inception over 25 years ago and has retained this interest in, and commitment to, community issues, despite numerous changes in the housing sector over that time. Our current approach is underpinned by a Communities strategy that seeks to understand, and works to meet, the unmet needs of communities across Kent.

In forming this new strategy we undertook a review of our approach to community services and determined that in order to meet our vision to build and support strong, cohesive and inclusive communities, that people need three things: somewhere to live, someone to love and something to do. All of our work, the way we structure our services and the way we describe the outcome of our services is linked to these three key themes.

In delivering the new strategy we renewed our commitment to deliver quality services, work with a range of partners to deliver the best possible outcomes and to seek to empower communities so that they can help themselves into the future. In addition, we committed to sharing the results of our work to be able to represent our service users and seek to influence commissioners, policy makers and other agencies to better understand communities and their needs. We are doing this in part by engaging with academic research and peer review and also by producing an overview of our work and its impact.

This report is the first of what will be an annual impact report of our work in the previous year. Social Impact and Social Value have been active topics of discussion for organisations in recent years. This report is a first attempt to shape our approach to reporting social impact. We are working with others to refine and develop this approach in future years, but present this first report as an overview of the scope and impact of our services and hope it helps illuminate the scale and scope of issues that affect communities in Kent.

While we aspire to reach a point where communities in Kent are empowered to the point that they no longer need West Kent to support them, we realise, that in the short term, we must be alive to the issues that significantly affect Kent residents, and seek to work creatively, compassionately and with integrity to tackle them, in partnership with all those who share our vision.

Will Campbell-Wroe
Communities Director





We seek to be a countywide organisation and currently provide at least three services in every district and borough of Kent.



Over £3m of community services are provided by West Kent.

The following report seeks to set out in some detail the scale and impact of our community work which is wide and varied.

132,957
engagements in the year



Served 35,000 customers in our community cafe

45,000
hours
of volunteering supported



220 vulnerable and isolated people were served dinner on Christmas Day



491 unwanted bikes

125 tonnes of waste furniture and 491 unwanted bikes reused by the community



111 households in crisis received a week's worth of food



550 young people accessed health services

All of our projects meet one or more of the community needs 'somewhere to live, someone to love and something to do' this is indicated on each project by a House, a Heart and a Checklist.





Our three stores in Sevenoaks, Medway and Maidstone provide low cost new and recycled furniture to local residents. 2017 was an unusual year as our Maidstone store was closed for over six months for a relocation to the Shepway estate. This means our figures are lower than normal years:

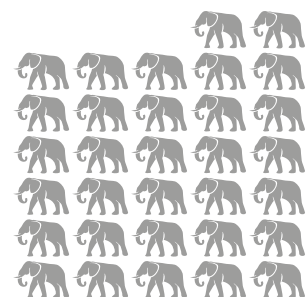
We provided low cost furniture and household items to 3,776 households across Kent who would otherwise have gone without essential furniture or turned to high cost credit.

A further 1,149 customers donated their unwanted goods to the stores rather than sending them to landfill.

The stores generated a combined income of approximately a quarter of a million pounds.

The stores sold 125 tonnes of recycled goods that would otherwise have gone to landfill. That's the equivalent of:

32 Elephants,



14,000 black sacks
of rubbish,



14,000

The average annual
non-recycled waste
of 227 homes.



227

Our new Maidstone store at the heart of the Shepway estate opened in January 2018 and is a joint project with Golding Homes.

In addition to the furniture we worked with Medway Council and HMP Rochester to retrieve and repair over 500 bikes taken to household waste sites in Medway. We sold 491 renovated bikes in 2017.

Placed wheel to wheel the reclaimed bikes would stretch for over one kilometre, the same length as twelve football pitch.

In addition to our general services we have worked closely with statutory partners to provide basic furniture and household items to refugee families setting in the UK after fleeing violence or oppression in their own countries. As with any family providing the basic support of somewhere to live provides the same foundation for these families to settle and become an active and positive part of their local community.



Case Study

Mary first came into contact with West Kent as a young person, accessing our youth work in her town. As a Youth Extra member she helped plan and take part in a trip abroad in 2008 to do some community work there alongside ten other young people, receiving a Rising Stars Bursary to help cover some of her costs.

Now in her late twenties, Mary is a West Kent tenant. She is a single parent to an eight-year-old daughter and was recently awarded guardianship of her three young siblings following family breakdown.

The eldest child has complex mental health needs. Mary gave up her job to care for her and was waiting on a benefit award decision due to her change of circumstances for her and the children. Prior to this Mary had been struggling financially and too embarrassed to ask for any support. Two of her siblings attend a youth project, and after enquiring how they were and hearing about the situation, the youth Project Leader as well as West Kent's Housing team have been offering extra support to the family, liaising with social services,

encouraging the children to attend school, and helping Mary address some of her debts.

Abacus Furniture Project staff noticed an appeal by a member of staff published on the intranet asking if any assistance to help the family could be given by donating furniture, household goods, toys and food. They contacted the member of staff to find out what was needed.

A full list of essential items was identified and space was made available for local donations to be dropped off to the warehouse. We could donate & deliver most of the items to the family including large wardrobes, chests of drawers alongside many other items and a roll of carpet.

We signposted Mary to the local parish nurse after further needs came to light and to the services of the KSAS contract, which we believed she would meet the criteria for more help. We also contacted the local Lions Club who were also able to help provide some additional carpets for her home, and the HERO project for further support with her financial situation.

Mary was overwhelmed by the delivery of donated items and thanked us for the support she received from Abacus Furniture Project, West Kent Staff and the local community. Because of us all working together Mary received food bank vouchers, toys and essential items of furniture and her house was finally beginning to feel like a home for her and the children.

Mary and her family are now being fully supported with all relevant agencies within the community.

Not all individuals or families are able to ask for help and many try to pretend everything is ok. By speaking to just one trusted person who recognised key concerns and could communicate on behalf of Mary, all agencies involved in this case have been able to make a substantial and positive change to the family's life.

Named in honour of one of our former colleagues, the Linda Hogan Community Fund is run by West Kent Communities to specifically support small, local charities and community organisations that struggle to access other forms of funding, but that create a big community impact from a small amount of money. The fund is open to community organisations across Kent the maximum grant is £500.

In 2017 we provided grants totalling £15,000 to 56 different organisations. Projects were supported across Kent and delivered a wide range of services from supporting victims of traumatic crime to providing community gardens and activities for socially isolated groups of all ages and backgrounds.

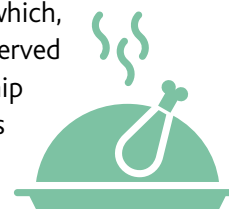
Some of the grants given provided the full cost of a project but many contributed towards bigger initiatives. Overall our £15,000 of funding supported £186,000 worth of services in Kent.



A total of 17,917 people benefitted from a service or activity funded, or part funded, by the Linda Hogan Community Fund.

Every year we receive a number of requests from organisations providing Christmas activities and meals for the most vulnerable members of society who are otherwise isolated over the Christmas period. In 2017 we supported 26 Christmas events for people including isolated older residents, people with mental and physical disabilities and victims of domestic abuse.

In total over 1,800 isolated residents took part in a community Christmas activity, of which, 220 of the most isolated people were served a meal and provided with companionship on Christmas Day as a result of projects funded, or part funded, by the Linda Hogan Community Fund.



The Swanley Link café is located within the Swanley Gateway, a central point for residents accessing key services including the post office, library, and services provided by West Kent Housing Association, Kent County Council and others.

The café provides a community focal point and is operated as a social enterprise providing good quality food and a safe and friendly venue for local residents.

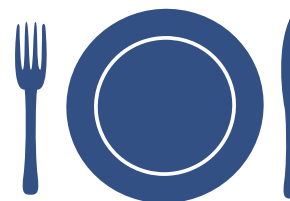
In 2017 the café served over 35,000 customers.



Two Apprentices worked in the café, working towards their apprenticeship qualification.



Ten volunteers worked in the café completing Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications in food hygiene.



Two women from the local women's open prison completed work placements in the café as part of their rehabilitation programme.

The café is provided with cakes through a partnership with Maidstone prison. Cakes are made within the prison, offering work experience for offenders.

The café staff hosted a range of community events across the year celebrating local and national events and working with local community groups.



Live Well Kent

Live Well Kent has been jointly commissioned by KCC including Public Health and CCGs in Kent from 1st April 2016 to provide a holistic offer of support for individuals living with mental health and wellbeing needs in Kent and to deliver support in line with national and local guidance and protocols.

As the strategic partner Shaw Trust now holds the contract with Kent County Council / Clinical Commissioning Groups, and sub-contracts to West Kent to deliver housing related support to individuals/families within the west Kent area.

The service is underpinned by:

- 6 Ways to Wellbeing
- Tracking of outcomes
- Improved inequalities, reduced stigma
- Crisis Support
- Co-production
- Developing Communities





As a direct result of the Live Well Kent service more people will:

- Connect to their communities and feel less lonely and socially isolated
- Have choice, control, and feel empowered
- Report and optimise physical and emotional wellbeing
- Live safely and independently and optimise recovery
- Be in stable accommodation and managing their life
- Achieve economic wellbeing
 - ensuring people's income is maximised, debts are managed and where appropriate applicable welfare benefits are accessed
- Feel satisfied with service delivery and service outcomes
- Be involved in service design, service offer and availability
- Access a wide range of opportunities to support their personal recovery which include (but are not exclusively limited to): lifelong learning, employment and volunteering, social and leisure, healthy living support including local opportunities to get fitter and make better lifestyle choices regarding food, smoking, alcohol and harm minimisation.
- Stay in or enter employment
- Be supported to be independent and manage their long term conditions
- Have increased social skills
- Be appropriately supported to manage their recovery



89
clients

89 clients across
1,762 engagements

During 2017 we supported 89 clients across 1,762 engagements, to ensure tenancy sustainment along with :-

- Ensuring that each client's experience is welcoming and supportive
- Ensured that clients are treated with dignity and respect at all times
- Ensure that every client contact is a kind, compassionate and positive experience
- Supported people to realise their aspirations and work on their own individual goals and to achieve the goals agreed in their individual Wellbeing Action Plan
- Recognise each client's right to take risks in order to develop / extend opportunities and ensure that clients are able to choose the risks they wish to take

Our aim is to :

- Improve support for people with mental health problems
- To get the best possible outcomes within the resources we have available



Case Study

Emily was referred to our service as the family were suffering with overcrowding. Emily is a lone parent with six children, four of whom have physical disabilities. She was referred to West Kent in need of a larger property with adaptations to allow the family to live independently. Though the client was proactive in carrying out various searches herself, she was unable to get anywhere with her local council. This presented a strain on her mental health and the wellbeing of the whole family. Over the course of two months Emily was supported to make a HomeChoice application, made contact with Kent County Council for a referral to the occupational therapy team and was supported to carry out searches on the homeswappers website.

This resulted in a review of her current home and some adaptations being made, and a recommendation that a

six bedroom property was required. Because of this her application for new housing was approved and the case was given a high priority banding.

The support provided by West Kent has enabled Emily to resolve her issues short term and have a long-term plan of action in place. This has supported her own mental wellbeing and taken pressure off of the family and allowed them to look forward to the future with confidence.



In 2016 we were successful in bidding for funding from the Money Advice Service, 'What Works?' fund that was in place to test ideas for improving the financial literacy of UK residents. All of the successful projects were required to have academic research into their efficacy and all of the projects would be collated into a national report completed by IPSOS MORI.

Our project launched in 2017 and engaged 150 young people aged 16-24 years living in Sevenoaks, Medway and Maidstone. The participants were split into three groups, the control group had an initial briefing only, a second group had some group support and the final group had one to one support. We wanted to establish what effect, if any, the more intensive support had on young peoples' ability to manage money and their long-term education and employment aspirations.

We have worked with Kent Canterbury Christchurch University to evaluate the programme and the work is still in progress. Early indications suggest that those with more intensive support and advice are more aware of their money and what they spend it on, are more ambitious for their futures and more likely to start and continue saving for the future. A full evaluation report will be completed and published in 2018. That report will not only inform our approach for the future but it will be part of the national debate on financial literacy of young people.





Training for All

As part of the Stronger Kent Communities consortium we have provided a range of training sessions to support the voluntary and community sector in Kent. We have provided 18 half day courses in topics identified by organisations in the sector. Organisations paid a nominal amount to attend the training, and we had 180 participants in 2017.

The training courses included:



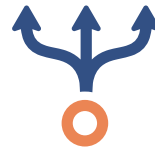
Fundraising from
grant making trusts



Budgeting



Governance



Impact and
outcome setting



Social media
fundraising.

A diverse range of people attended including: a church project, mens' shed, young people's project, a hospice, a refugee group, citizen's advice, Homestart, child bereavement, armed forces welfare, county park, a health charity and a railway heritage project.

As well as universally positive feedback on the training the participants identified future training needs and we will run a similar number of courses on relevant topics in 2018.

"Excellent trainer who was able to demonstrate how to improve applications and what not to do"

Home Start participant



Thriving Local Communities

As part of the Stronger Kent Communities consortium we have provided intensive one to one support to small community organisations to allow them to develop and support their local community. Some of these are new groups and others are long standing groups that need support to develop.

In 2017 we worked with 20 community groups over a number of weeks and supported them with issues such as agreeing a formal constitution, setting up bank accounts, running events, recruiting and managing volunteers and fundraising.

Through the dedicated support of our staff the organisations are all now thriving and providing additional support to their communities.

“SWAG (Swanley and White Oak Action Group) formed some years ago to support social housing residents in a deprived part of Swanley... after meeting our Support Officer, the group leaders realised how much they had achieved and decided to arrange a community event with the intention to reach out for new members and keep the group going... the event had a very positive response and the SWAG management committee is more confident that they will recruit new active members. We are now working with the group to recruit new members and identify unmet needs in the area”

Home Start participant



Kent Libraries Volunteer Development Programme



In 2016 we successfully bid to run the Kent Libraries volunteer development programme. This involves us supporting volunteers across the 100 libraries in Kent to help make them active centres of the local community.

Our work involves recruiting new volunteers, and supporting them and the existing volunteers through training, support and guidance. We also work with staff within the libraries to help them support their local volunteers, again providing training, support and sharing good practice.

We also work with volunteers to broaden the number and range of activities in libraries and this has seen a number of new activities taking place in libraries across Kent including craft clubs, storytelling for a range of ages and role-playing clubs.



Overall in 2017 we supported 1,129 volunteers in libraries across the county.



Those volunteers provided over 45,000 hours of volunteering.



If those volunteers were paid the National Living Wage (as at 1 April 2017) the direct value of their work would be £344,000. They provide the same number of hours as 27 full time employed staff and are a valuable resource for Kent libraries and the communities they serve.





Community Hubs

In 2017 we partnered with Moat Housing Association to operate three Community Hubs in Gravesend, Gillingham and Sittingbourne. The Hubs are refurbished homes in the heart of local communities that support local residents to develop themselves and build strong and active communities.

The Gravesend and Gillingham hubs opened in the summer of 2017 and the Sittingbourne hub opened at the start of 2018.



We have exciting plans and ambitions for the community hubs and they made a good start in the 6 months they were open in 2017. Over that time 907 residents engaged with the projects and key outcomes for the first six months include:



138 young people took part in a range of positive youth activities and events



45 food parcels were provided to families in need through a partnership with the Tesco Fareshare Food scheme



109 Residents were able to access advice on affordable warmth and wider financial wellbeing



16 local residents were trained and supported to be volunteers in the hubs.



62 older residents were supported through regular coffee mornings that featured falls prevention, active lifestyle and dementia awareness sessions.



77 local residents received help and support with finding employment and took part in training sessions.

We also held a range of community events, coffee mornings and open afternoons to engage the local community and understand what services and support they need to help us plan for 2018 and beyond.



Training and Employment

West Kent offer a range of training and employment support from volunteering and work experience, to direct employment and supporting people to set up their own business. We believe this is a key part of helping people to maintain a home and to support strong communities through independent living.



We supported 140 people with direct training and employment support.



60 people accessed introductory courses that aimed to build confidence to work and provided or updated basic computer skills.



17 people had intensive one to one support to get back into, or start work, with all 17 finding employment by the end of 2017.



West Kent directly employed nine apprentices and trainees in 2017 providing a route into, or back into work for local residents. Our experience is that many of these people stay with West Kent beyond their initial apprenticeship or traineeship and all continue in full time employment.

47 people were supported to set up their own business through Pop Up Business School, an intensive course with ongoing support and advice that allows budding entrepreneurs to make their ideas come to life. Providing access to free materials and resources that get most participants trading by the time the course has finished. We have had great success with this approach over the past few years with examples of residents making their own business idea work, and growing them so that they employ other people.



Case Study

Debbie was referred to training and employment support through a West Kent support officer.

Debbie is in her early 60s and when we first met her she was sofa surfing. Debbie had been a West Kent tenant but she had split with her partner and had spent the last eight years living abroad. When Debbie came back to the country she asked to be rehoused which happened in May 2017.


Debbie had spent the majority of her working life working in retail management, but she had made the decision that she no longer wanted the stress of managing people, she just wanted a job working on the shop floor. We worked with Debbie on a number of occasions and she told us that she was convinced that the reason she was

not having any luck with finding a job was because of her age. Debbie is a very capable lady who, having lived out of the country for eight years, needed assistance on how the job market works these days. We helped her to update her CV and provided training and support on using the internet to job search.

As well as working with Debbie directly we also referred her to support through the Royal British Legion Institute and their Work Routes Project. In July 2017 Debbie told us that she had a 16 hour a week job working as a Retail Assistant at a large homeware store in north Kent and is loving her new job.

This has been a very positive outcome for Debbie who now has somewhere to live and something to do, and feels as though she is back in control of her life.

"West Kent has given me my confidence and oomph back. It's easy to get caught up in your problems, but West Kent helped me look at what I could do rather than what I couldn't. I've come a long way in a few months and now feel I'm ready for whatever life throws at me next"





Medway Local Welfare Provision Scheme

West Kent has operated this scheme for Medway Council for the past three years and the scheme ended in June 2017 as funding for the scheme was withdrawn. The scheme was designed to provide support for households facing immediate hardship that may affect their ability to stay in their own home. The service often dealt with the most vulnerable people in the community who, through circumstances, often beyond their control, found themselves in short-term crisis.

The scheme supports people in this situation to get stabilised, remain in their home and stay independent rather than needing higher levels of need or support. This means we deal with households who are unable to afford to eat, heat their homes or buy basic furniture and equipment such as beds, cooking facilities and basic hygiene products.

In the last six months of the scheme from January to June 2017 we received 330 applications for support. All of these applicants were given either direct support or referred onto other services at the local authority or other charities such as food banks. Of those that received direct support from the service:



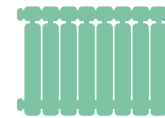
66 households were provided with a week's worth of healthy food from a local supermarket



47 households were provided with beds and other essential furniture



20 households were provided with cookers or other cooking equipment



27 households were provided with support with their utility bills so that they could heat their homes

All of the people helped through the scheme had exhausted all other forms of support and were likely to have presented as homeless or in severe need of statutory services if they had not been supported through this scheme.





Case Study

Bella was previously living in a Mother and Baby Foster unit with her youngest child. She has some learning difficulties but was managing well so moved into temporary accommodation and then into a permanent home.

Although she provided her one-year old child with everything he needed, she didn't have any money left over to provide basic furniture for herself or her two oldest children. They were living with their father as she had nothing for them to sit or sleep on.

The early help support team at All Saints Children's centre referred Bella to the Medway Local Welfare Provision scheme as they were concerned that she had nothing to sit or sleep on herself. She was keen to gain residency of her older children but until she was able to prove she could provide for them this couldn't happen.

Medway Local Welfare Provision has provided Bella with a bed for herself, bunk beds for her older children, a cooker and a sofa to sit on so that the family has somewhere to live together. Bella was very impressed with how quickly the application was processed and the items provided.

"I have no idea what I would have done without you, I can now have all of my family back together"





8-12s Project

The 8-12s project is a long-standing scheme that provides a safe space for young people aged 8-12 to develop themselves and their friendship group as they make the important transition from primary to secondary school, from childhood to young adulthood.

The project focusses on deprived areas of west Kent where children are identified as needing additional support to make this transition. All children attending the project are referred by their school, by their parents or by another agency working with the child.

The project runs one night a week during the school term it provides a programme of activities, designed with the young people, to allow the children to build their confidence and self-esteem, to improve their behaviour and to be more positive and build friendships and be prepared for the transition to secondary school. Activities typically include sports, craft activities, quizzes and themed events.

The project runs six clubs in five areas across west Kent that are well used. In 2017 we had 180 children registered for the project and 4,140 attendances overall across the year.

The children report that they enjoy the club and make new friends, that they build their confidence through the club. They particularly enjoy the ability to have a say in what activities take place and to be able to be responsible for elements of the club and the way that activities are delivered.

We hope to be able to add an additional club in west Kent in 2018.





Case Study

Oliver has been coming to the club for eight months. He was referred to develop his social skills and build his confidence, he is a highly intelligent child and has been bullied at school for not having the same interests as other children and for doing well with his school work. Oliver's parents are separated and he has little contact with Dad. Mum has mental health problems and is unable to leave the house due to anxiety. Oliver is the eldest of three children and is required to do many of the jobs around the house including the food shopping and helping with his younger siblings.

Since coming to the club Oliver has become more and more confident and presents as a happy and relaxed child, as one of the older ones he has taken on duties like running the tuck shop and helping set up activities. In addition to this Oliver often takes on the role

of pacifier and negotiator when other children in the club have fallen out, he is able to see both sides of a story and works with children to help them smooth out their differences.

We spoke to Oliver's Mum recently and she said that his confidence and self esteem have grown since attending the club, she said he loves coming and has encouraged his younger brother to attend as well. Mum said Oliver has made new friends and has been able to identify with children who have similar interests to him. She was delighted to tell us that Oliver had recently suggested he take the 11+ exam, Mum was unsure what this exam involved and did not know you could have additional tutoring. Oliver took the exam and came top of his class! He will be starting at Grammar School this September.





The HOUSE project is a youth centre in Edenbridge in Kent. The centre was designed and set up after consultation with young people following a long history of working with young people in the area. The centre is designed to offer a safe space to young people with a particular focus on offering health and emotional support to them. The centre provides a focal point for health services to engage with young people, making it possible for them to come to young people, rather than young people having to go to them. The centre also has a small music and recording studio. While the centre has a health focus it is an inclusive, open access youth centre offering

sessions for anyone aged 13-19 in Edenbridge (or those up to the age of 25 with additional needs).

The HOUSE project operates three open access youth sessions a week, and in addition hosts the Edenbridge Youth Forum, a smaller group of young people who work with West Kent to design the services provided to young people in the area. The youth forum work with staff at the HOUSE but also share their views and aspirations with a range of organisations, statutory and voluntary providers, who work with the young people of Edenbridge.

In 2017 the HOUSE project ran 144 sessions with 2,184 attendances at the open access sessions.

While attending those sessions:



92 young people engaged with smoking cessation support services



There were 343 engagements with alcohol and substance misuse support services



There were 115 engagements with sexual health services



27 young people took advantage of readiness for work advice and support



Case Study

We recently supported Mary Anne who has attended HOUSE for the last three years.

Mary Anne came into the HOUSE Project one evening and asked to speak to a member of staff. She said that she felt suicidal because of bullying at school, which she had reported some time ago to teachers. Although some action was taken by the school, the bullying continued and Mary Anne did not feel she could report it again. She suffered in silence and the situation deteriorated. She disclosed that she now wanted to take her own life because she could not face the bullying.

As soon as Mary Anne disclosed that she was suicidal, our member of staff dealt with it as an urgent safeguarding issue. West Kent's Safeguarding Lead for Children was consulted and immediately contacted social services. Arrangements were made

for an urgent treatment at hospital and it was agreed that Mary Anne would be accompanied to hospital by two members of the HOUSE staff team.

The hospital provided immediate help and put in place support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The school has now taken more effective action to address the bullying. Mary Anne is now making good progress and our staff team will provide any further support that Mary Anne needs.





Medway Generic Housing Support

West Kent is commissioned by Medway Council to provide generic housing support services across Medway. The service supports vulnerable clients from a range of backgrounds to provide long term support. It helps them remain independently housed by supporting their immediate housing related needs and underlying support issues.

Clients are referred by Medway Council or by other statutory or public services with any number of vulnerabilities, but many clients have learning disabilities, mental health issues or addictive behaviours. We also support clients who have been the victims of domestic abuse or who are ex-offenders.

Service users work with support workers to identify their needs and develop a clear support plan where they work with our staff and are referred to other specialist organisations who can help support their needs. Support can last for up to two years and progress is regularly reviewed with the clients and support plans updated.

The nature of support varies from client to client but there is clear evidence that the service supports vulnerable clients through a difficult period in their lives and ensures that they are able to remain in their home and tackle their needs. In meeting their core needs of somewhere to live the client is able to build towards engaging positively with the wider community over time.

In 2017 West Kent supported 277 clients across the Medway Towns through this service.





Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS)

Working with Kent County Council we support clients in crisis across Kent by providing goods and services that allow people to remain in their home and work through a period of short term crisis.

The clients supported by the project are assessed by Kent County Council. They are individuals and families who have suffered a short-term issue and don't have the money to deal with the issue and don't have any means of support, or they are vulnerable clients who are setting up home for the first time after a traumatic or life altering event and need help to set up a stable home.

Working with a number of voluntary sector partners we offer high quality reused furniture and household items where possible, or provide good quality, low cost new items. We also provide white goods and carpets and basic household equipment. For some clients we also work with a national supermarket to provide a weeks worth of healthy food if the client cannot afford to feed themselves or their family.

We provide one off support and help to stop a spiral of events that would cause a real crisis. We help to keep people in their homes and stop them falling into higher needs statutory services.



In 2017 West Kent supported 3,319 clients with furniture and household goods ranging from beds and sofas to cooker, fridges and basic kitchen equipment.



Sherwood Partnership Family Support Project

We work in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to deliver support to families in the Sherwood area. The project works with 16 families at a time to improve the life chances of families in need by providing support in housing, employment, educational and family welfare.

The project provides intensive support to nine families and broader support to a further seven at any one time and has a good track record of moving families to stable foundations and providing support for those who need the additional support of statutory agencies.



Over the course of 2017, 31 families received support from the service. Families are referred into the services by schools, medical professionals and other statutory and community services.



Kent County Council Contracted Youth Services

West Kent has delivered youth services in Sevenoaks for the past 15 years and at the end 2016 was awarded the contract from Kent County Council to deliver youth services in the district for the next five years.

Despite our long association with youth services in the area we completely redesigned our services to meet the needs of young people across the district. Our new service aims to work in all parts of the district through a youth-led approach. To achieve this we have split the district into six areas and rotate services around the district so that there is always something happening for young people in the district and at different points in the year there is focus on each part of the district.

Young people have the chance to shape the services delivered to them through a youth forum in each area. Each area receives a focussed programme of work once a year followed by a mini festival to celebrate their work and link to other agencies and services. Outside of the focussed period we continue to offer detached youth work session, operate the youth forum and run regular events.

As well as engaging young people in specific areas of work we have developed a programme of e-learning that allows young people to engage in learning and development in their own time at a community venue or from their own home, using technology to tackle the bedroom culture it has created.

After a successful first year in 2017 our youth programme in Sevenoaks provided



3,994 engagements



Support Services

Social Support and Mental Health Support



West Kent operates a social support service which is regulated by the Care Quality Commission. Our services were inspected by the regulator in 2017 and found to be good in all areas with progress towards becoming excellent in some areas.

The services are focussed on delivering support and social care services to clients within their own homes. The work supports some of the most vulnerable members of the community who have often refused other services or who are very reluctant to engage at the outset.

As with our other support services we work closely with the client to assess their needs and develop a support plan that is regularly reviewed. Our work focussed on helping our clients to lead successful independent lives. This is often a long process and all milestones, no matter how small are celebrated and support adjusted to develop the client.

While no two clients issues are the same the level of support is often around supporting clients to engage with other agencies, especially health and social services. Support can be as basic as helping clients to remember to take medication and attend appointments. For many clients simple tasks that others would take for granted, like going to the shops or attending health appointments, are signs of significant progress.

Due to the nature of the clients our support is long term and the number of clients is relatively low. The impact however is significant as it enables clients to remain independent and in their own home, preventing them from falling into high need and high cost statutory services.

We supported 29 clients over 3,741 engagements.





Case Study

Many people feel the need to double check the gas is off and the front door is locked before they go on holiday, but few of us find ourselves doing it over and over again.

For Lily, checking and rechecking everything around her became an obsession that took over her life, upset her studies and left her anxious and exhausted.

It was when she was at her lowest ebb that West Kent stepped in and offered Lily a place in a supported housing scheme in Sevenoaks.

Four years on, Lily looks back on that move as the best she ever made and believes it was a vital step on her journey to recovery.

"I had no confidence, I was anxious the whole time and I wasn't able to concentrate at college," she recalled. "Now I feel calmer and more settled, I don't have the same anxiety attacks and life is better in every way."

Lily has now moved out of the supported housing scheme, although she still lives in social housing in

the same village and she still has support from her West Kent case worker.

"I still have occasional issues but now I know how to deal with them. I am able to get myself back to feeling OK instead of continuing in a downward spiral, which is what used to happen," said the 26 year-old, now the proud mum of a four-month-old daughter.

"Supported housing gave me a new start and I will always be grateful for West Kent's help during what was a bad time for me. I felt life was years and years away, but now that's all changed."

Lily, who has also learned to drive, now lives independently with just one hour's support a week from West Kent. She explained: "I may be independent but I always know I'm not alone."

It's a long way from the life she used to lead. After several spells in a psychiatric ward she spent two years in a residential care home before moving into her own private rented flat when she felt the time was right.

Staff at the care home had helped her with life skills and Lily was keen to go to college, but life on her own proved tough. "I became anxious and developed OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) tendencies," she recalled.

"I spent my time checking everything, the cooker, whether or not I had locked the door, even the boiler pressure. And even when I knew I had checked something five minutes earlier, I just had to check it again."

Continued on next page...

Case Study

"I couldn't concentrate on my college studies because I spent my time worrying about what I might have left on at home, even though I had already checked everything several times."

Lily moved back in with her mum but knew she had to move on with her life, which is when she spoke to West Kent and found herself in Dunton Green with the support of her "lifesaver" from West Kent, Gill English.

"I felt settled and happy there and I stopped needing to check everything," she recalled. "It was a fresh start and I stopped feeling anxious. I was able to go to college without worrying and I felt I had got my life back."

After two years in supported housing Lily is now engaged, looking after her baby daughter and living independently. "It had an amazing impact on my life and I now feel able to move forward," she said. "West Kent are still there when I need them but I am stronger within myself, too."

"What I particularly liked about living in supported housing was the fact that I wasn't left to struggle with issues on my own, but at the same time I wasn't treated like a child."

The other thing that works well is the fact that the support is tapered and can be slowly reduced as the tenant builds up their own confidence. It really has changed my life."



Conclusion



As the period of austerity continues we see an increasing demand for community and support services alongside a reduction in services. The community and voluntary sector has seen many smaller and medium size organisations struggle to survive, let alone flourish and respond to the increasing demand.

West Kent is in a strong position, at the heart of local communities, and with the scale and focus to respond to community issues. We are trusted by local residents to be an active part of shaping and supporting communities and their most vulnerable members.

With over 25 years experience of community work, this report sets out the scale and impact of our work and, as with every previous year, 2017 has seen us grow our services to meet local demand. Our community strategy makes clear our intention to develop services across Kent and continue to work directly, and with a range of partners, to understand and tackle unmet needs. We expect our services to continue to grow and remain flexible in approach and are open to working with any organisation that shares our values and aims to meet our vision to build and support strong, cohesive and inclusive neighbourhoods across Kent.

Looking Ahead

West Kent has a Communities Strategy that sets out the clear commitment to the role of community services as part of the overall offer of West Kent. We seek not only to continue to provide the high-quality services we currently operate but to continue to be flexible and innovative in our approach to understanding and tackling unmet need in communities across Kent. We seek to use our resources as effectively as possible to have a positive impact on Kent communities.

As we seek to grow and establish ourselves as a truly Kent wide organisation we have set some clear priorities for the coming year. We want to further our understanding and knowledge of east and central Kent to match our understanding and partnership networks in west and north Kent.

We recognise that the period of austerity continues to impact on the scale of services that statutory agencies can provide and also affects communities and individual households' ability to look after themselves and build strong communities. This creates a high level of unmet needs. While we remain interested in understanding all areas of unmet needs we have decided to focus our approach in 2018 on the following three priority areas:

Services for
older people

Support services that
support independence
and stronger
communities

Working effectively with
partners in the housing
and voluntary and
community sectors

We will keep these areas under review.

As part of our work with partners in the housing sector, we are working with the Kent Housing Group's Social Impact sub group to work towards a standard social impact framework for Kent that will allow us, individually and collectively as a sector, to describe the impact of community services.



West Kent is happy to hear from anyone who would like to access our services, work with us, fund our work, or share any feedback on our work. We are also happy to support other charities and community organisations who share our vision to build and support strong, cohesive and inclusive communities across Kent.

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