

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

# Social Impact Report 2019



somewhere to live



someone to love



something to do





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# Introduction from Communities Director

After thirteen years at West Kent, I am proud to be taking up the role of Communities Director in 2019 as the organisation enters its fourth decade. We have always provided more than just landlord services because we care about the people and places where we work, and remain firmly committed to developing projects and services that build and support strong, cohesive and inclusive communities.

We believe everyone needs somewhere to live (with all basic essential needs met, not just housing); someone to love (positive relationships and an understanding of the needs of others, not just oneself); and something to do (positive engagement in worthwhile activity). As you'll see through this report, the work we delivered through 2018 is all connected to these three themes.

Our approach to helping make this happen is underpinned by our Communities Strategy that seeks to understand, and works to meet, the unmet needs of communities across Kent. As a result of this broad approach, we deliver a variety of projects and services. It might be about offering short term, practical help in a crisis, for example, making sure someone has a bed to sleep in and a cooker to feed their family. It might be supporting and equipping people to tackle their own challenges over a set period of two to three years, whether that's an adult struggling to live independently and sustain their tenancy or a young person making the transition from primary to secondary school. It can also be a long-term piece of work designed to gradually understand a particular group or area, what their future needs might be, and what role we may be able to play alongside individuals and other organisations to help meet them. We have worked across this spectrum in 2018.

This is our second social impact report. Like many other organisations, we have ongoing conversations about how best to capture and demonstrate the impact and value of what we do, especially with such a variety of services. This report is just part of that picture. We are working with others to refine and develop our approach – finding the balance between showing the scale and scope of our community investment without losing the voices of the people who drive and benefit from our work.

We also want to share learning about what's needed, what works and what we have had to change along the way. We have seen some exciting new pieces of work get up and running in 2018, as others came to an end. We were pleased to see our youth work expand into new areas, relocate two Abacus Furniture stores, and to pilot two new joint housing related support services in Medway. One of our services came to a planned end when Kent County Council took it back in house, but we were very pleased with what had been achieved and the knowledge that we were handing back a thriving service. We also took the decision to close a social enterprise café as it became apparent that others may be better placed to deliver, and our resources will be better used elsewhere.

We continue to learn from successes and challenges and deliver quality services that make a real difference to people across Kent. We look forward to further developing our work in partnership with residents, funders, commissioners, policy makers and other agencies in 2019.

**Heather Brightwell**  
Communities Director







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



£1.46 million  
secured for  
community  
services

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



81,245 hours of  
housing related support  
delivered in Medway



217 isolated people were  
given a free Christmas dinner



More than **99 tonnes** of waste furniture was  
recycled rather than being sent to landfill



Young people  
attended our  
services **5,913** times



**10** apprentices were  
recruited at West Kent



**6,680** people benefitted  
from a Linda Hogan  
Community Fund grant.



**145** bikes were  
saved from landfill,  
refurbished and sold

**2,733**  
volunteer hours  
at our Abacus stores



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.





# Social Enterprise



We have Abacus stores in Sevenoaks and Maidstone, our Medway store closed in March 2018 and a new one will open in 2019 in Walderslade. Our stores provide low cost new and recycled furniture to local residents.

We provided low cost furniture and items to 5,126 households across Kent who would otherwise have gone without essential furniture or turned to high cost credit.

The Abacus stores sold 99,000 kilogrammes of recycled goods that would otherwise have gone to landfill. That's the equivalent of:

2,500 black sacks of rubbish – the average annual non-recycled waste of 243 homes.



2,500



243

Our Abacus stores host volunteering placements, trainee posts and are the base for a number of different projects including :



Relove a bike



Sevenoaks Men's Shed



Furniture Bursary Scheme

They have also supported The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme



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 good quality food and a safe and friendly venue for local residents. It has been challenging for us to operate as a social enterprise, and while we've built a small group of very loyal customers and hosted some fantastic community events, we began the search at the end of 2018 to find another provider to take over delivery going forward.



## Case Study - Abacus

Tracey has been a regular customer of the Abacus shop for many months and over that time she has purchased clothing, bric a brac and some small items of furniture. Recently the team noticed she was becoming a more frequent visitor and staying slightly longer each time, enjoying a chat with the team.

When we first met Tracey she was anxious, staff engaged her in conversation and over time built a good relationship and she came to trust them. Tracey had started to visit almost daily, and the team could see that this was because she was lonely.

Tracey was becoming more open and less anxious with each visit. She felt she could pop in freely and not be judged on her appearance or anxiety levels, she hadn't felt this way before..

During one of her visits staff asked her if she would like to come in and volunteer at the shop. They felt this could help give her a sense of purpose and valuable experience for re-entering the workplace in the future. After some thought

and discussion, Tracey was asked to help with the merchandising and display of bric-a-brac in the shop as she had previously shown a keen interest in this area.

She was delighted and started regular volunteering sessions.

Tracey has several medical conditions and is unable to work. She misses the camaraderie of the work place that she once enjoyed, and this adds to her depression and feelings of worthlessness.

She volunteers most afternoons when she is well and has embraced the experience thoroughly. Her confidence growing daily, she feels needed and has developed a sense of belonging.

She has told us that the volunteering opportunity with us has *'changed her daily routine immensely' and she 'now has a reason to get out of bed in the mornings'. She also added 'I generally feel more at ease around*

*people now and when out in the community, I enjoy a good chat with the customers as well as my shop colleagues'.*

Not everyone is able to say, or willing to admit, they are lonely or miss having conversations and company with people that care for them.

It can take time and patience to build trust and new relationships but volunteering in a safe environment for our socially excluded residents can be life changing.



## Case Study

Peter is a single parent to one daughter and suffers from a debilitating medical condition. He has recently been housed after a period of being homeless.

Peter was moving into his new property without anything to sit on or a bed to sleep in. His benefits were being assessed and he had very little income available to buy any essential items.

Abacus was asked by Peter's support worker if they had any furniture available to donate to him, Peter is a proud man and found it difficult to ask for help himself.

The team was able to help Peter with a free donation and delivery of a sofa for his living room to help start him off. The day before this was due to arrive the project had received an unexpected donation of some bedroom furniture. Peter was asked if this would be useful for him and his daughter and these items were gifted and added to the delivery.

Our delivery drivers arrived at Peter's home to deliver the items that had been gifted to him. He was visibly affected and overwhelmed with the team's generosity and the compassion they had displayed while he was going through a difficult time financially.

The staff at Abacus learned from the officer supporting Peter that he also needed new beds, bedding and some kitchen equipment. They directed the support officer to the Kent Support and Assistance (KSAS) service who made a successful referral for him to receive these items.

*Some days later Peter visited Abacus to thank the staff. During his visit he explained the difference the staff had made to him and his family by simply providing everyday items people would normally take for granted or discard, these enabled him to make his house into a home.*

He told the staff that this made him feel 'normal again' after a long period of struggles, and that they'd provided a solid foundation of items for his home that he can build on in the future to make a home for himself and his daughter. They can both now sleep comfortably, are warm and no longer have to sit on the floor.

Peter was given a much-needed double bed from KSAS to assist with his medical needs, he has benefitted enormously. Not only is he sleeping better and is on top of his illness but because he is well rested he walks his daughter to school more frequently, something they both very much enjoy.



Named in honour of one of our former colleagues, the Linda Hogan Community Fund is run by West Kent 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 and the maximum grant is £500.

In 2018 we provided grants totalling £15,000 to 41 different organisations. Projects were supported across Kent and delivered a wide range of services that included:

- projects tackling loneliness and isolation
- replacement of a worn-out canvas on a boxing ring used by young people
- purchase of a special needs tricycle
- a project helping unemployed people over the age of 50 learn new skills
- purchase of a new air hockey table for a youth club
- 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 £175,000 worth of services in Kent.

Every year we receive several requests from organisations providing Christmas activities and meals for people who are otherwise isolated over the Christmas period. In 2018 we supported 18 Christmas events for people including isolated older residents, people with mental and physical disabilities and disadvantaged children and young people.

In total over 833 isolated residents took part in a community Christmas activity, and 217 of the most isolated people were served a meal and provided with companionship on Christmas Day because of projects funded, or part funded, by the Linda Hogan Community Fund.

Over 6,680 people  
were reached by  
a Linda Hogan  
Community Fund  
activity



Involve Kent, who are based in Maidstone, applied for funding to run a craft workshop for people who have poor mental health. They used mosaic tiles to create decorative items for their community garden, and to sell in the community centre shop. Barbara Dagger, Fundraiser said, 'Individuals have met new people, formed social connections that will last, learnt new skills and felt part of something. 20 participants had significant support needs and taking part was an important step for them to engage in their community. Everyone involved benefitted from knowing the decorated items will brighten up the community allotment or be sold to raise funds for other vulnerable people.

A small group from Penshurst applied for funding to run a community event to commemorate the centenary of World War 1, including lighting a beacon. The group is raising further funds to erect a permanent World War 1 memorial in Penshurst Church. Richard Gerard-Sharp, one of the committee members, wrote to us to say, "our event helped create a good community spirit and social cohesion. It enabled the local community to pay their respects and recognise the sacrifice made by local soldiers from Penshurst who lost their lives in World War 1."



The Kent Enterprise Trust was awarded £500 to pay for a kettle, toaster, microwave, fridge freezer and crockery for their recently refurbished community garden tea shed. Community Development Officer, Emily Hill, said, 'it enables people on low incomes to come together and have a hot drink and food. We provide activities for older people and younger people to work together to grow their own fruit and veg while preventing social isolation. We also provide money management courses and accredited training to help reduce poverty and improve chances of employment.

*"Individuals have met new people, formed social connections that will last, learnt new skills and felt part of something"*



# Live Well Kent

Live Well Kent is a service commissioned by Kent County Council and Kent NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (GP- led bodies).

Led by Shaw Trust, Live Well Kent provides individually tailored support to help people take control of their health and wellbeing. West Kent delivers housing related support to individuals and families living in this area as part of the west Kent service.

As part of this support we:

- offer practical help to reduce rent arrears
- help with bills and claiming benefits and give advice on budgeting
- support those dealing with anti-social behaviour or work with those that are causing it to change their behaviour
- signpost to others that can help, for example to substance misuse services
- refer to food banks and Citizens Advice if necessary







**During 2018 we supported 179 clients**, helped them to sustain their tenancy and ensured that:



- each client's experience is welcoming and supportive
- all clients are always treated with dignity and respect
- every client contact is a kind, compassionate and positive experience
- people are supported to realise their aspirations and to work on the individual goals we agree in an action plan at our first meeting
- we recognise each client's right to take risks to develop and extend opportunities and ensure that they can choose the risks they want to take



Our aim is to:

- improve support for people with mental health problems
- get the best possible results we can with the resources that are available







## Case Study - Mental Health Housing Support

Caroline has high anxiety, she was suffering abuse from her grandmother and mother. Her Grandmother had advanced dementia, her mother and her partner had substance abuse issues. There was a lot of conflict at home and Caroline was living in a very toxic situation.

Caroline is on Employment Support Allowance and has a supportive boyfriend who works part time and was also a paying lodger at the family home. Her mother was not working and relied on their income and rent.

She was referred to us for housing support by her wellbeing navigator at Shaw Trust who felt her housing situation was detrimental to her mental health. She was at risk living with

her family and needed to move to accommodation of her own to aid her recovery and to help her move on with her independence.

Caroline was given support to approach Maidstone Council for housing advice and then to undertake a telephone interview. Our team worked with her to apply to the housing register and submit the documents that were necessary for her application. The support continued throughout the process with Maidstone Borough Council so that she understood the bidding system and was able to secure a home.

Once in her new home, we visited Caroline to ensure that she was paying all her bills and had registered for council tax and other utilities.

*Caroline is now in her own accommodation with her boyfriend where they are living independently and managing their own tenancy and household budgets.*

She has escaped the very negative environment she was living in at home with her mother and grandmother and is in a better place to aid her recovery to better mental health. She feels more empowered, less anxious and hopes to start the process of looking for work to maximise her income.



# Training for All



**Stronger Kent Communities**

*A leading provider of support for the  
voluntary sector in Kent*

As part of the Stronger Kent Communities partnership we have provided training sessions to support the voluntary and community sector in Kent. We have provided 15 half day courses in topics identified by organisations in the sector. The sessions were charged at a minimal rate and we had 150 participants in 2018.

The training courses included:

- Fundraising from grant-making bodies
- Outputs, outcomes and impact assessment
- Diversifying your income
- The accidental fundraiser
- Evidencing need
- Presentation skills
- Tendering and procurement

Feedback from participants

*'Outstanding – despite  
30 years' experience, it is good  
to be re-trained'*

*'Very thorough well-presented  
course'*

*'Excellent course'*

*'Very useful'*

*'Many practical tips to take away'*

*'Fast paced with lots of very useful  
information'*



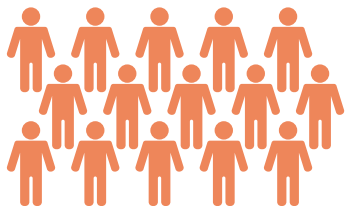


## Helping people into work

We run an employment support service which is open to all Kent residents. We offer a bespoke service, providing a wide range of support and training including help with CVs, job search and interview skills. 47 people were referred to our service and we delivered 80 interventions, helping residents to secure employment in the housing and leisure sector.

We also provided a range of work experience and training including nine apprenticeships with 29 accreditations achieved by young people including CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme), First Aid, Health & Safety and ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network).

## In 2018:



15 people were supported into work providing £49,904 cost saving in benefits.



We provided nine apprenticeships

15 people were supported into work providing £49,904 cost saving in benefits (9 apprentices and six into work).

## Employability Day

Nine people attended an Employability Day. West Kent, Sevenoaks District Council, Catch 22 and Supajam held a free event that targeted people of working age who were unemployed and living within the Sevenoaks district. Professionals offered support including 'getting shortlisted', 'presenting yourself at an interview', and 'improving your confidence'.





## Case Study

Jane is a West Kent tenant who works as a postal sorter on a casual basis for The Royal Mail in Rochester.

One of our tenancy support officers asked us to contact Jane as she was struggling to secure work on a zero-hour contract and not earning any money. Our Training and Employment Projects Officer, Pauline Smith, met with Jane to update her CV, it was obvious how tired she was. She had begun work at midnight and had come straight to the meeting.

By chance, West Kent's Head of Facilities mentioned to Pauline that a West Kent cleaning vacancy in Sevenoaks had not been filled. Pauline worked with Jane on an application and supporting paperwork that needed to be completed by the next day. She also worked with Jane on interview skills.

Jane was successful in getting the cleaning position and she was delighted that she had been given this opportunity, she is also very pleased that it is a permanent position.







# Pop Up Business Schools

In 2018 we worked with other housing associations in Kent to provide Pop Up Business Schools in Maidstone and Sittingbourne.

West Kent has committed to funding Pop Up Business schools as part of a European funded programme called Increase managed and led by Optivo to help people into work.

These are free start-up events to help people start small businesses and make money doing what they love.

They show people how to start without spending any money, make a great website for free, and get a first sale.



## POPUP MAIDSTONE OVERVIEW

181

SIGN UPS



98

PEOPLE  
ATTENDED

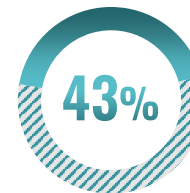
20

days  
OF WORKSHOPS



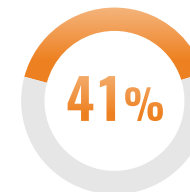
7.6

days  
AVERAGE ATTENDANCE  
over both 2 week courses



TRADING  
and 57% almost ready

EVENT IMPACT



MADE A SALE  
by the end of workshop

## WHAT IS THE POP UP BUSINESS SCHOOL?

The PopUp Business School is a start-up training course that's the complete opposite of the traditional approach to starting a business. Forget business plans and funding – we get people going quickly, testing their ideas to make money doing what they love.

### THERE WERE 20 DAYS OF WORKSHOPS INCLUDING:

- How to start a business with NO money
- How to build a website for free
- How to make money from your sofa
- And so many more.

The PopUp was jointly funded by:

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

goldinghomes

*"These sessions were very useful at guiding me how to manage my money now and in the future in order to prevent being in debt – thank you."*

### The Money Advice Service

In 2018 we undertook research with 16-24-year-old apprentices and trainees after a successful bid for funding from the Money Advice Service 'What Works?' The research set out to understand the financial capabilities of the young people and how this influences their choices as to whether they take up and/or sustain employment opportunities.

We worked with 155 young people living in Sevenoaks, Maidstone and Medway, who were preparing to leave school or were moving into independent living, splitting them into three groups:

**Group 1** – took part in small group learning sessions, received one to one support

**Group 2** – took part in small group learning sessions, no one to one support

**Group 3** – control group, received no support work

### What we wanted to find out:

- What elements of financial capability current and prospective apprentices and trainees believe are influencing their choices as to whether to take up and/or sustain employment opportunities like apprenticeships and trainee/entry roles.
- To what extent can we show that tailored small group learning and one to one support helps to improve their financial capability.
- How does improved financial capability influence this group's choices as to whether to take up and/or sustain employment opportunities like apprenticeships and trainee roles?

### What we asked:

- How they manage their money before the training, how they seek advice and their attitude to money.
- What they would like to do in the future about employment and training, what influences those decisions.

### What we found:

- The young people who took part in the small group training (groups 1 and 2) started to manage their money better, managing and preparing for life events, including saving.
- The young people who took part in the small group felt more confident about managing their money and able to make positive financial decisions.
- Participants mainly sought advice from family and friends about financial matters before the course, afterwards they expanded this to include looking on the internet and using online tools, looking up financial products and using comparison sites.
- Employment choices are influenced by parents; the training made no difference to this.
- One to one support had very little additional impact on the mindset of the young people, except those that were experiencing particularly challenging circumstances, the group training appeared to have made the most impact overall.
- Young people have a good awareness of apprenticeships but mixed feelings about them. Negative perceptions were more of a barrier than financial capability.

# Thriving Local Communities



**Stronger Kent Communities**

*A leading provider of support for the  
voluntary sector in Kent*

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 2018 we worked with 27 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 now thriving and providing additional support to their communities.

Hope provides both open and discreet services to disadvantaged women of all ages and backgrounds. Many beneficiaries, fearing men, go to Hope for friendship and support due to experiencing domestic violence, sexual abuse and/or bullying. This results in mental health problems, low self-esteem, isolation, depression and poor physical health.

They said after receiving support through the Thriving Local Communities project:

*“Just wanted to say that Eva has really helped us. She understands our needs. She will go out of her way to provide information that HOPE is in need of. With that, it brings so much joy to those who may not be able to afford and enjoy our services. The users feel free, happy and most of all valued.”*





We ran the Kent Libraries Volunteer Development Programme until September 2018 when Kent County Council took the contract back in-house. The project involved us supporting volunteers across the 100 libraries in Kent to help make them active centres of the local community.

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

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



Overall in 2018 we supported 1,105 library volunteers in libraries across the county.



Those volunteers gave 33,205 hours of their time.



If those volunteers were paid the National Living Wage (as at 1 April 2018) the direct value of their work would be £272,613.





# Community Hubs



West Kent provides community support from three community hubs at The Vineries in Gillingham, Warrior Avenue, Gravesend and Cavell Way, Sittingbourne.

The hubs, provided by Moat and funded by Moat Foundation, offer advice, social activities, somewhere to meet and perhaps even the pathway to a career.

The buildings are open five days a week, with the support of volunteers and offer a wide range of services that reflect local needs.

Facilities include an IT suite/training room, a one-to-one counselling room and a children's chill out area as well as a fully-fitted kitchen and a comfortable meeting space on the ground floor

## In 2018

- We hired two apprentices
- We recruited 13 new volunteers across the three hubs, in roles such as volunteer befrienders, youth work volunteers and intergenerational volunteers.
- 180 young people have attended our youth sessions or taken part in our half term/ summer programmes.
- 136 people have been supported with employability training and advice.
- We held 75 different sessions aimed at supporting older customers.
- We held seven successful intergenerational projects,

helping to change perceptions among older people of the younger generation

- One of our youth forums raised money by planning, promoting and hosting a charity event at the Gravesend Cyclo park. They cycled the distance from the Gravesend hub to Darent Valley Hospital.
- Our float, which was created by the hubs' arts and crafts group, came second at the 2018 Northfleet Carnival. They hand-made every prop and the judges and visitors were really impressed with the dedication, love and thought that went into the design.





# 8-12s Project

The 8-12s Project is a long-standing scheme that provides a safe space for children 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 areas 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 children help us design a programme of activities that allows them to build

confidence and self-esteem, improve their behaviour and be more positive. We help them build friendships and prepare them for the move to secondary school.

## In 2018 we:

- Delivered over 200 8-12s club sessions, at over six locations in the Sevenoaks district.
- Had over 80 children registered as members.
- Held 'Creepy Crawlies' sessions at each club, so children could learn about and handle reptiles and bugs.
- Took 48 children on a residential week to Bewl Water, allowing them to meet other members from other areas, and learn independence by being away from home.
- Delivered the 'passport to the world' project, where children received a stamp in their club passport each week when they learnt about a different country. They learnt some of the language and tried some food from that country, broadening their view of the world around them.
- Took 20 children to a Clip & Climb centre to help with confidence building and measured risk-taking skills.
- Took 60 children to Gravity Force and Jump In trampoline parks, promoting a healthy lifestyle to include fun exercise activities and give the children a chance to experience an activity they might not otherwise be able to.
- Took each club swimming three times in 2018 and challenged the children to swim deeper, further or in a different style (through the medium of team games) while closely monitored by staff.
- Took 60 children to a roller disco, giving them the chance to take part in a weekend activity and meet children from other clubs.
- Took ten children from the newly launched

Edenbridge nurture club on a summer trip to the seaside, many of whom have not been out of Edenbridge before.

- Took 50 children to a Christmas pantomime, where they met Claire Sweeney and had ice cream and got to spend some time with the new friends they had made at other clubs.





### Case Study

Casey was first referred to the 8-12s project in November 2017 and has been attending weekly during term time since then. She was originally referred to us because she had trouble making new friends and did not have access to other clubs in her area as she was from a low-income family.

In the first six months of 2018 staff at the Dunton Green club noticed that at times Casey was either quite emotional and unengaged in the session or was very energetic and did not want the session to end. It was quite difficult to engage with Casey's mum, as we knew she had several health problems, which put a lot of pressure on Casey.

In October 2018 Casey's mother passed away after having a stroke. It was all very sudden and with nothing in place for future care for Casey and her brother and sister. Staff at the 8-12s club did not see Casey for a couple of weeks as the

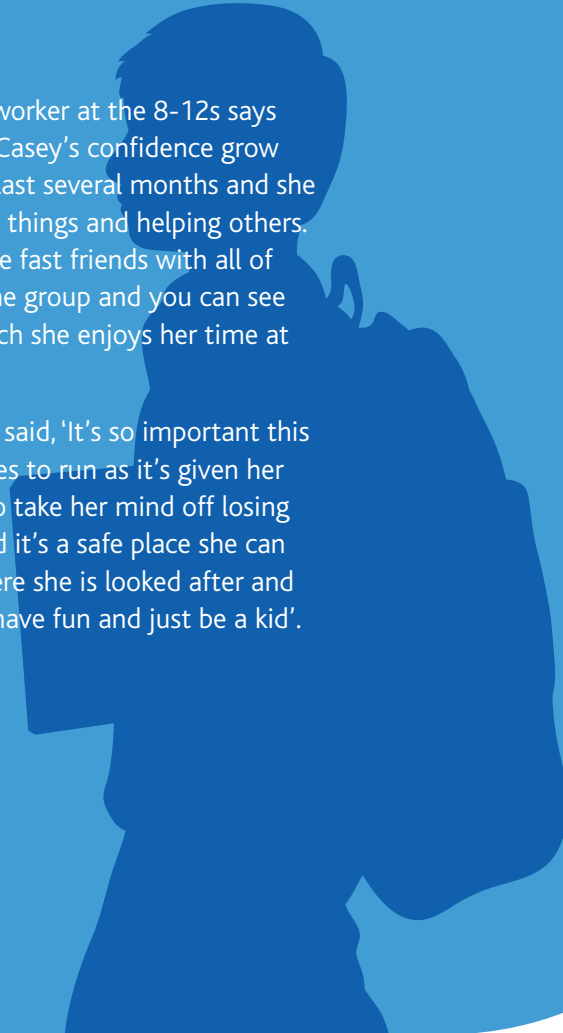
family was taking some time to grieve. The Family Liaison Officer from Dunton Green Primary School contacted us and said that Casey was really missing school and her friends at the 8-12s club and was hoping to be back soon.

Casey is living permanently with her aunt nearby now and is really pleased she can still attend the 8-12s club.

Casey said *'I really love coming to the club because there are lots of activities and the staff are really kind to me. I've got loads of friends here and I get to try new food and get a stamp in my passport. I love going on the trips and we go to loads of really cool places like pantomimes'.*

Casey's key worker at the 8-12s says 'I have seen Casey's confidence grow again in the last several months and she is trying new things and helping others. She has made fast friends with all of the rest of the group and you can see just how much she enjoys her time at the club'.

Casey's aunt said, 'It's so important this club continues to run as it's given her something to take her mind off losing her mum and it's a safe place she can come to where she is looked after and has time to have fun and just be a kid'.





The HOUSE project is a youth centre in Edenbridge in Kent. The centre was designed and set up after consultation following a long history of working with young people in the area. The centre is designed to offer a safe space with a focus on offering health and emotional support to them. The centre provides a focal point for health services to engage, rather than the young people going 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 11-19 in Edenbridge (or those up to 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 works with West Kent to design the services provided to young people in the area. The youth forum works with staff at HOUSE but also share their views and aspirations with a range of organisations, statutory and voluntary providers, who work with the youth of Edenbridge.

In 2018 the HOUSE project ran 150 sessions with 1,848 attendances at the open access sessions.

While attending those sessions:



149 young people engaged with smoking cessation support services



There were 230 engagements with alcohol and substance misuse support services



There were 89 engagements with sexual health services



58 young people attended sessions to learn about healthy eating and how to cook



274 took part in youth arts -this includes music production, recording studio use, DJ skills workshops, guitar lessons, film and video production and arts and crafts.





## *Lest we forget*

When a group of Edenbridge young people, that attend House, was invited to attend a Remembrance Sunday parade towards the end of 2017, they could have just gone along and played their part.

But that wasn't enough for the Edenbridge Youth Forum members. As they thought about the invitation, the 11 to 19 year-olds realised how little they knew of the traditions around remembrance and the reasons behind it.

With the centenary of the first world war due the following year, the group decided they wanted to understand more about what Remembrance Sunday represented, and so began a remarkable project.

Oliver Davis: "My knowledge has increased in this area so much. We all came back with more insight and a better understanding about WW1 and what happened"

"The youth forum has always wanted to be as involved as possible in the community and so they decided they needed to understand the significance of the ceremony so that they could be fully involved in what they had been invited to attend," explained Youth Services Manager Charlotte Ede.

The young people set out to find out as much as they could about the First World War and its impact,

beginning their studies at the library, searching online and then talking to experts.

They identified a soldier from Edenbridge who died during the fighting in France and found out where he was buried, as well as several of his family members and others who had fought in the war and died after returning home.

It was then that they decided a vital part of their research was missing. "They realised that to be able to fully achieve what they had set out to with the project, they would need to go to France and see the areas where the fighting took place, visit museums and memorial sites and view artefacts," said Charlotte.

With the support of Cheryl Banks, Leader-in-charge at HOUSE, the 10-strong group managed to raise £8,600 to fund the trip, with support from the Stonebridge Trust, Waitrose and Edenbridge Town Council. They also contributed to the funds.

The four-day trip to Hardelot in October 2018 took in museums, memorials, cemeteries and towns that had been affected, while local expert guides also contributed to their research and brought home the impact of the devastating conflict.

Back in Edenbridge for the 2018 centenary Remembrance Sunday, the group again took part in the services and the procession, attending the service at St Peter's and St Paul's and then walking through the town.

Jocie Mears: "I was so saddened by the number of names on all the monuments. All those people who died. It really hit home just how privileged we are to live how we do today"

To achieve their aim of helping to highlight the impact of the First World War and improve understanding amongst young people and the community, the group has created information panels that include written research, poetry, collage and photos.

The boards were displayed in the Eden Centre library during the Remembrance period in 2018 and used at a presentation event in March.

## Case Study

Leroy is sixteen years old and has been attending HOUSE for nearly five years.

Last year Leroy was arrested for fighting and is awaiting trial at Crown Court for Grievous Bodily Harm with Intent.

Leroy comes from the travelling community in Edenbridge and often talks to the youth workers at HOUSE about his heritage and some of the more difficult aspects of balancing respect for his heritage, with modern life. Many of Leroy's friends from the travelling community have dropped out of school, to be educated at home but Leroy has stayed in school to get his education because he feels strongly that he will need it later in life.

Leroy has found school and social life sometimes very challenging, as he can be easily led by others who are a bad influence on him. He used to get into a lot of trouble with the police and make a lot of wrong choices, without fully considering the consequences of his actions.

Youth workers at HOUSE have been working with Leroy for a number of years, to encourage him to make good choices for his future and not allow negative influences to impact his life.

As soon as Leroy was released after his arrest last year, he came straight into HOUSE to seek help from the youth workers. Leroy knew he had made bad decisions and was coming to terms with the impact that it could now have on the rest of his life. Since this time, Leroy has made a lot of positive changes in his life. He no longer socialises with people who are committing crime and getting into trouble and comes into HOUSE three evenings a week. He has helped youth workers develop a project looking to prevent young people committing crime, and better understand their responsibilities under the law.

When Leroy comes into HOUSE he is a changed person. He helps other young people and challenges bad behaviour and lack of respect for others in a positive way.

He has become a really positive role model for other young members visiting HOUSE and plays pool and card games with them. Leroy said:

*"A good couple of years ago I would not even speak to the police whatsoever. Now I have a better relationship with the police and I will stop and talk to the police now on the street".*

Cheryl Banks, Leader in Charge at HOUSE said, "I have had the local Police Community Support Officer contact me and say what a delight it is to see how this young man has become so very polite and shows so much respect for himself and others now which is just fantastic news. All the staff at HOUSE have really noticed how Leroy has made big changes for the better in his life, and the impact this is also having on those around him."



## *Youth Worker – the best in the country!*

Cheryl Banks (pictured), Leader in Charge at HOUSE was awarded UK Youth's prestigious 'Youth Worker of the Year' award, for her many years of hard work and dedication to young people in the Sevenoaks district.

The award scheme recognises the achievements of an individual working with young people who has made a real difference - whether that be on a one to one, group or community basis.

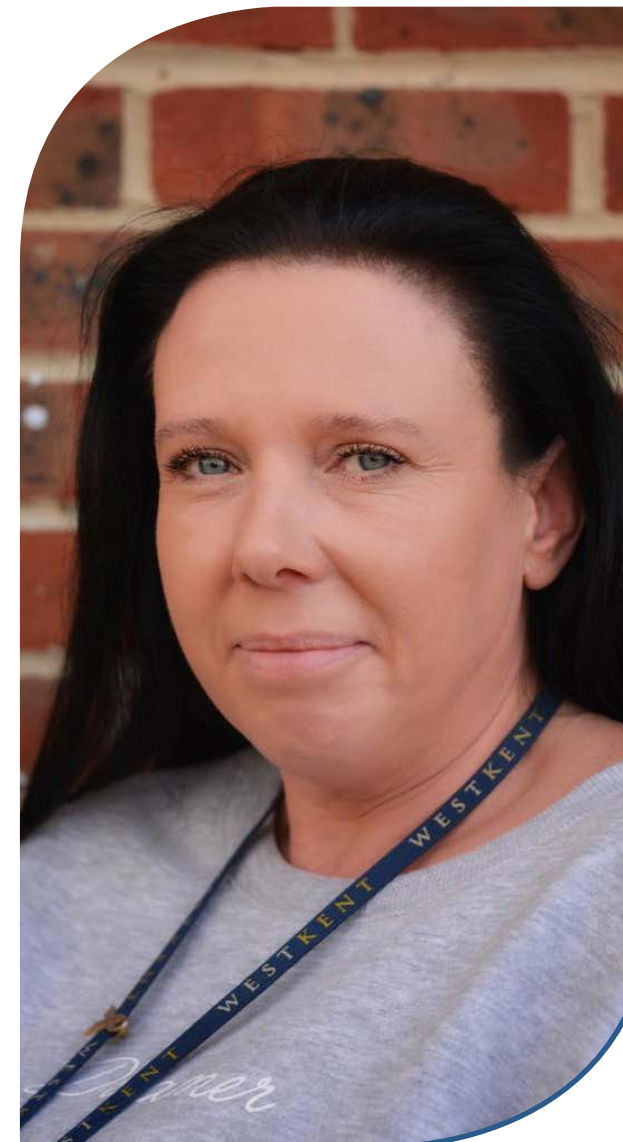
Cheryl has been a youth worker for 20 years, during this time she has proven herself to be a passionate supporter and advocate for young people, going above and beyond to ensure that their voices are heard. She has been the driving force behind the success of HOUSE and the Edenbridge Youth Forum.

In 2018 Cheryl:

- Helped five young people into work by supporting them to gain their CSCS card (necessary for a career in construction)
- Set up a crime prevention programme, building relationships between young people and the local police

- Worked in partnership with Edenbridge Town Council to paint murals on the walls and tunnels at train stations to prevent random graffiti
- Held one-to-one sessions with young people to provide advice on mental and sexual health, crime, relationships, bullying and cyber bullying and drugs and alcohol
- Supported two young people through court proceedings and in mental health facilities
- Raised over £10,000 to fund the trip to France for the centenary

One young person Cheryl has worked with said, "without Cheryl's support I might have been homeless, or worse. She has supported me with my mental health during a trying time, and in finding housing when I had nowhere to go. She is always there and knows so much about the support available to young people. Not only is she a wealth of knowledge, but she will be right by your side helping you to navigate through it all, encouraging you to keep going. She is the whole reason I want to be a youth worker. If I can support one young person half as much as Cheryl has supported me, I will be glad."





# 11-19s Clubs

11-19s sessions are an open drop-in club for young people funded by local town and parish councils, West Kent and Moat Housing Association and staffed by project workers employed by West Kent.

The project :

- Provides low cost recreational and educational activities for young people aged 11-19
- Promotes acceptable behaviour and responsibility
- Gives young people a chance to say what they would like in their local area
- Increases young people's awareness of health and well-being, substance misuse and anti-social behaviour
- Provides advice on training and employment.

In 2018 we



Added two more 11-19s clubs, one in New Ash Green and one in West Kingsdown.



Delivered 50 sessions in each area in 2018



Started work to get youth forums off the ground in both areas.



Started to work in Hartley, where we delivered six months' of sessions there and will continue this work into 2019







# Sevenoaks Youth Contract

West Kent has delivered youth services in Sevenoaks since 2001. We aim to work in all parts of the district through a youth-led approach. The district is split into six areas and we rotate services so that there is always something happening for young people. Young people have the chance to shape the services delivered to them through a youth forum in each area. 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.

We have 1900 young people registered with us across the Sevenoaks district as a result of our work on this contract.

We carry out Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) days in secondary schools.

We delivered a Careers Fest event in early 2018 at HOUSE in Edenbridge.

We delivered a Summer Programme of activities around the Sevenoaks district,

in each parish, providing activities for young people in partnership with local community Charity IMAGO.

We carry out intensive consultation with all young people aged 11-19 to access our services through focus groups, questionnaires and youth forums.

In 2018 our youth programme in Sevenoaks provided 5773 engagements





## *Case Study*

At a local school we met a young man named Callum. Callum was a little bit disruptive and found it tough to focus on the activities we were doing as a group. Callum told us he has difficulty concentrating at school especially when he is tired as he struggles sleeping at night and quite often goes to bed very late.

Our youth workers worked hard to ensure we adapted our sessions so Callum could join in. Over the weeks Callum engaged well with the programme. It was clear to us that Callum enjoys being given responsibility and praise, so we assigned him to be our 'special helper' and gave him responsibilities such as distributing hand outs and turning the lights on and off for our mindfulness sessions. Callum can find it hard to sit still so the youth workers were conscious that he may find the mindfulness class challenging.

Callum said he would like to join in and asked if he could have the soft mat to lie on in the hall as he finds the hard mats very uncomfortable and distracting. We ensured that we kept that particular mat for Callum. The youth workers were impressed by Callum's behaviour during the session, as he was able to lie down and participate, remaining still and quiet and focussed on his breathing.

Callum liked to check which West Kent team members would be coming to each of the sessions and would always ask after staff members if they weren't delivering that week, so we were really pleased to have built such a fantastic relationship with Callum.



# Medway Floating Support

## Helping vulnerable people to live independently



West Kent is commissioned by Medway Council to provide housing related floating support services across Medway. The service supports vulnerable clients from a range of backgrounds. We help them to remain in their home and live independently by supporting their housing related needs and any underlying support issues.

Clients are referred by Medway Council or by other statutory or public services and will have any number of vulnerabilities. Many clients have learning disabilities, mental health issues or addictive behaviours. We also support clients who have been the victims of substance misuse or who are ex-offenders.

Our clients work with our team to identify their needs and then we develop a clear support plan. We will refer them to specialist organisations who can help to support them. This support can last up to two years and we regularly review progress with our clients and update the plan if it is needed.

The nature of support we provide varies but we know from experience that the people that we work with through a difficult period of their lives can remain in their home while they address their needs. They can then build towards positively engaging in the wider community over time.

In 2018 West Kent:



Supported  
392 clients



Gave 51,156 hours  
of support



Supported 131 substance  
misuse/ex-offenders and gave  
them 29,909 hours of support



Helped 569 of our  
clients to achieve all  
their goals

Our services were inspected by Medway Council Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), and awarded top marks in most areas. The service has been awarded grade A for needs assessment and support planning, grade A for access, diversity and inclusion, and grade B for client involvement.





## Case Study

Joanne became reliant on alcohol during her husband's illness and after his death from cancer. She spent some time in The Priory but received no community follow up and as a result found it difficult to maintain her abstinence. She has four children – the eldest two are adults, one is at college and lives with her. The younger two are subject to Child in Need plans.

Joanne has a very limited income and has fallen into debt. She receives housing benefit but that does not cover her entire rent and so her private landlord started legal action to take back her home.

She experiences high levels of anxiety when dealing with anyone that she perceives as being in authority and her home was at risk because she was not trying to resolve the situation relating to the shortfall in her rent. She was

willing to engage with professionals but struggled to complete tasks when left to complete things on her own.

A member of the team worked closely with Joanne and her social worker for the children. She was supported to make an application to Homechoice and is now bidding on properties that are suitable for her needs. Joanne was eventually served with a Notice of Seeking Possession as she could not afford the huge increase in rent after her husband died. She is temporarily housed until her bid for a new home is successful.

Joanne engaged well with Turning Point who we encouraged her to contact to help with her alcohol addiction. She is 145 days free from alcohol and no longer needs to attend 1 to 1 sessions but attends group sessions.

The team has investigated her benefit entitlements and made a claim for ESA.

Housing benefit has been put in place for her accommodation.

*With our support, Joanne has overcome her mental health barriers and has learnt to think differently when faced with problems and stress. She has also cut down on her smoking and has noticed the difference financially.*

The children are happier and no longer worried about how their mother is going to be when they return home from school and the schools report that the children are thriving.





# Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS)

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

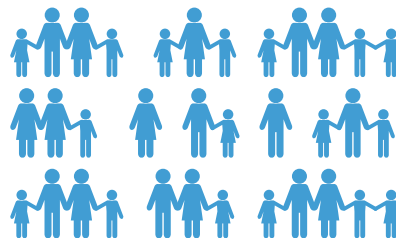
The clients supported by the project are assessed by Kent County Council. They are individuals and families who have suffered a short-term issue but don't have the money to deal with it and don't have any means of support. Or they are vulnerable clients who are setting up home for the first time after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

Working with voluntary sector partners we offer high quality reused furniture and household items, or we provide good quality, low cost new items. We also provide white goods and carpets and basic household equipment.

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 to live independently.

Client feedback:

*"What can I say? You have been so kind. It means the small money I have can be spent on food and I do not have to worry. Thanks from me and the children"*



754 families/individuals were helped by KSAS in 2018



# 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 can be 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 focusses on helping our clients to lead more independent lives.

This is often a long process and all milestones, no matter how small are celebrated with support adjusted to further help the client develop the skills they need for independent living.

This can involve working with the family too to support them in encouraging their family member to become less reliant on them or helping them to come to terms with the expected level of recovery.

Support can be as basic as helping clients to remember to take medication and attend appointments or as complex as suicide prevention.

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 25 clients over 2,639 engagements.



# 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 across communities in Kent.

We will, however, focus our approach in 2019 on providing services of a high quality in the three priority areas:

Services for older people  
- understanding needs  
around social isolation  
and wellbeing

Support services that  
support independence  
and stronger  
communities

Services for children  
and young people





## Conclusion



As the work delivered by other organisations across Kent evolves, with organisations changing their focus, growing or disappearing, and different services driven by new commissioning approaches, we will continue to see new unmet needs appearing in different areas. Financial pressures and national uncertainty also affect the abilities of individuals to look after themselves and others around them, and increases the demand for our services.

Securing funding will always be a challenge but West Kent is in a strong position, at the heart of local communities with a long-term commitment to the area, 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 and with over 25 years' experience of community work we are a partner of choice for many organisations. We are pleased to see a growing focus on community investment from our housing partners and others, and remain open to working with any organisation that shares our values and aims to meet our vision to build and support strong, cohesive and inclusive communities.



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

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