



Community Impact Report 2019



**Working
only
in Kent
and Medway**

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Introduction



West Kent's mission is to create in Kent a prosperous, strong and sustainable society; a place of opportunity for all; where people can plan for their futures.

We invest in our communities, working to understand local need and work in partnership with residents and other organisations to build on community assets and develop and deliver successful services.

We also run a range of contracts and secured £1.3 million of funding from other sources in 2019 to support thriving communities across Kent and Medway.

The following pages give a flavour of our work and the impact it has had on individuals, groups and communities. If you would like more information on any of our services, please get in touch.

Heather Brightwell
Communities Director

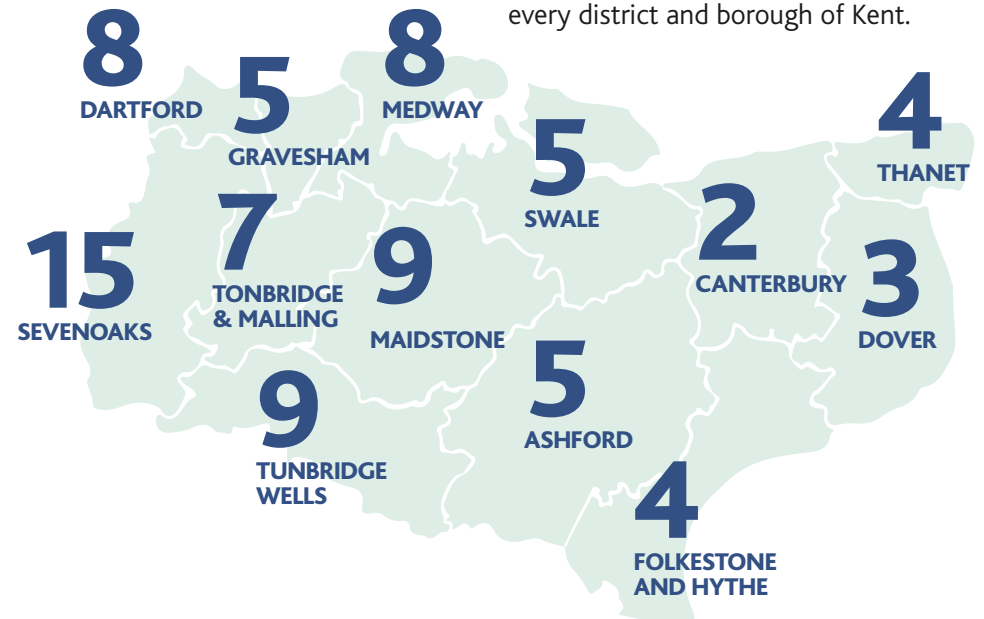
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We are running
21 CONTRACTS



We are a countywide organisation and currently provide at least two services in every district and borough of Kent.





OBJECTIVE:

Strengthening employability, skills and enterprise

365 BIKES



were saved from being sent to landfill



248 BIKES

were repaired and serviced by offenders and sold through Abacus stores

Abacus Furniture Projects

at Sevenoaks, Maidstone* and Medway.

Abacus stores raise income for our charitable projects and have a wider social purpose to provide low-cost furniture to those in need, divert good quality furniture from landfill and to provide training & employment opportunities. We are involved with projects like the Community Repaint scheme, the Kent Support and Assistance Service and the Syrian Vulnerable People's Relocation Scheme.

Our shops sell refurbished bikes through a partnership with HM Rochester Prison and Youth Offending Institute and Medway Norse. Bikes, collected at waste and recycling centres, are refurbished at the prison, giving offenders new skills and a qualification.



at Abacus stores

abacus



diverted from landfill

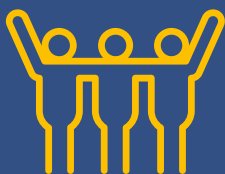


60 PEOPLE benefited from one of our Starter Packs

*our Maidstone shop is a partnership with Golding Homes.

The training and employment team

offers support to those looking to return to work and wanting to get better paid work. It covers CV writing, interview skills, internet job search, on line applications and accessing work experience. We also offer apprenticeships, careers advice and a range of training courses.



83 people were supported into training and employment



107 voluntary and community sector organisations took advantage of training courses we organised through the Training For All project, helping them to develop their work and access funding.



I would like to thank Pauline for supporting me back into full time employment. Knowing that Pauline was there to support me has given me the confidence to take control of my life and knowing that my travel was being paid for the first month of employment helped me a lot. I would definitely recommend this service to other people who are looking for work or a better paid job.



Resident supported into work

Other Services

Abacus didn't just sell bikes. Working in partnership, adults in Medway that couldn't ride a bike, or didn't feel confident, signed up for beginners cycling lessons with Better Medway.

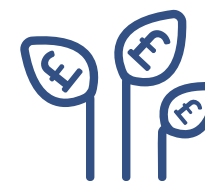


We partner with Men's Sheds, Kent division, to run a woodwork project at our Abacus warehouse in Sevenoaks. The Men's Sheds Association was originally set up as a meeting place for retired men. The Sheds are set up across the country for a variety of activities including model making, gardening, carpentry, bike refurbishment and woodwork.

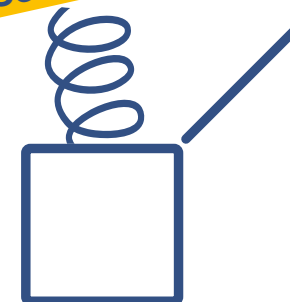
We supported budding entrepreneurs to realise their self-employment dreams by part funding week long courses in locations across the county.



360 ATTENDEES at events in 2019



270 NEW BUSINESSES started





OBJECTIVE:

Promoting wellbeing, and preventing crisis

Kent Support and Assistance Service

Working with Kent County Council (KCC) 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.

We offer furniture, household items, white goods, carpets and basic household equipment to clients assessed by KCC as being in crisis.

Thank you so much for the microwave and kitchen pack which arrived today! It means so much that I can finally cook myself a hot meal in my new home. A new start.

D, a KSAS client

974 FAMILIES/PEOPLE
were helped by
KSAS in 2019

Social Support and Supported Living

West Kent's social support services team focussed on delivering support to 24 people last year. They begin with agreeing a support plan, then their help can be for anything from helping

clients to take medication and attend appointments to preventing suicide. The support is intensive and long term, but the impact is significant as it enables clients to remain independent.

Medway Rough Sleeper Service

West Kent is commissioned by Medway Council to pilot a new service that will help rough sleepers in Medway.

The team offers a person-centred service that will help to reduce the numbers of people living on the streets or improve the health and wellbeing of those that are determined to remain there.

The team helps rough sleepers to get any help they need, for example to tackle substance misuse, to register them with a GP, to give benefit advice or to offer training with cooking skills or other life skills, but most importantly building trust and confidence in the Support Worker and service. An out of hours hotline is available at evenings and weekends to help the rough sleepers in an emergency.



37 PEOPLE
were helped by the rough sleeper service in 2019 (started August)

Other Services



Live Well Kent

We offered individually tailored support to 129 people living in Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells with ongoing mental health, to help them to lead a more fulfilled life.



Medway Support Services

We provide housing related support and floating support to clients referred from Medway Council.



378 PEOPLE
were given housing related support from our Medway teams



141 EX-OFFENDERS
and people with a history of substance misuse were given support and advice



OBJECTIVE:

Building active resilient communities

Youth services

We provide a range of youth services across the Sevenoaks district:

- HOUSE youth centre in Edenbridge and the Edenbridge Youth Forum
- Open access Youth clubs across the Sevenoaks district for 11-19-year olds
- Work in schools to support the curriculum
- 8-12s project for children referred to us for extra support



We worked with
1,382 YOUNG PEOPLE

Case study

Frank, 20, had previously attended HOUSE from the age of 14. After a spell of living homeless in another city he was back home and struggling to fit back in, find work and acclimatise. He was encouraged to come into HOUSE to talk.

As he began to talk to youth workers about his experiences, he told them he had been involved in dealing and running drugs and had come home to get away from it and start fresh. He knew it was only a matter of time before he would end up in prison, having been in trouble with the police before. He had applied for over sixty jobs since returning home and had heard nothing.

We put a CV together with him and started helping him look for full time work, he wanted "to earn honest money, stay busy and keep himself out of trouble".

Thanks to all of you for helping me get some work sorted. I want to be doing something positive with my life instead of lazing about and taking drugs. I want out of that life. I want to be working and earn for myself and build a better life. HOUSE has helped me take some first steps towards a better future, like the youth workers always said, and I couldn't have done it without you.

In 2019:

- We launched a new programme in primary schools in Sevenoaks to support year six children to move to secondary school, equipping them with the knowledge and resilience to manage this life change in a positive way.
- Edenbridge Youth Forum members achieved an accreditation from a national awarding body for their work on their WW1 Centenary Project.
- We set up a new Sevenoaks District Youth Assembly, a youth forum to discuss issues and make positive change in the area they live.
- We developed our 8-12s swimming programme, supporting members to swim, further, faster or deeper.
- We developed a new programme called CookHOUSE, which supports 11-19-year olds to come together to cook meals, which they sit and eat family-style. The programme gives participants the opportunity to learn about food hygiene, the nutritional makeup of a balanced meal and how to build a recipe from scratch.



Linda Hogan Community Fund

Named after one of our former colleagues, the Linda Hogan fund provides grants to small, local charities and community organisations.



In 2019 we provided grants
TOTALLING £15,000
supporting 32 different
organisations across Kent.

These included:

- a trip to the seaside, including free rides at a funfair, for a group of families from Edenbridge living under the government set poverty line
- training a group of volunteer mediators based in Sevenoaks to provide vital support helping people resolve conflict within their communities, including those with mental health and additional needs
- a falls prevention course for a group of residents living at a housing scheme in Edenbridge for the over 55s
- helping a community church based in Dartford pay for a lunch and entertainer to celebrate their 40th anniversary
- a performance and all-age circus skills demonstration and workshop at Turn the Tide Festival in Dymchurch
- cross-cultural and intercultural community-based arts workshops in three venues across Sittingbourne for 90 people. Workshops and activities included music, Maori and contemporary dance, painting and textile printing
- a 5 week DJ Workshop for young people between the ages of 14 and 19, as well as marketing material, textiles and fabric for printing and foods from different cultures in Sittingbourne.

In 2019 we:



Funded eight
Christmas events,
**BENEFITING OVER
600 PEOPLE**



6,513 PEOPLE
took part in an activity
funded, or partly funded
by the Linda Hogan
Community fund

Not just a landlord

Investing in our communities has always been hugely important to West Kent. It's not just about the specific projects we fund and deliver through our communities teams; we support all our staff to make a difference.



Our staff are given three paid volunteer days a year to support their local community in whatever way they choose



Each year West Kent supports a charity nominated and voted for by staff – last year we raised £8,258 for Mind



We have an ongoing commitment to employ around ten apprentices across our business each year, with varied opportunities from retail and customer service to ICT and housing and property management



We run regular painting and decorating courses so our residents can learn new skills



Our contractors offer opportunities for apprenticeships and work experience



We support young people with work experience opportunities and work with local schools to offer mock interviews to help them prepare for the world of work



We attend job fairs and career events to share information about careers in social housing



Our Emerald schemes (housing for older people) act as a community hub for older residents living in the surrounding community, with social activities and facilities for others to come in and enjoy

Thank you

Thank you to all the organisations that fund our communities work:

- Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council
- Children in Need
- Community Repaint
- Cranfield Trust
- Dunton Green Parish Council
- Edenbridge Town Council
- Golding Homes
- Great Stone Bridge Trust
- Green Family Fund
- John Coldman Charitable Trust
- Kent Community Foundation
- Kent County Council
- Kent County Council – Combined Member Grant Scheme
- Medway Council
- MOAT Foundation
- Sevenoaks Lions
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Shaw Trust
- Stronger Kent Communities
- West Kingsdown Parish Council
- Whitehead Monckton Charitable Foundation

Want to find out more?

We develop, deliver and support projects in consultation with residents, other organisations and funding bodies. We are happy to hear from anyone who shares our vision and wants to work together to benefit communities across Kent.



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