



Social Impact Report 2020



**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.

Investing in our communities was more important in 2020 than ever before, as we faced the

impact of Covid. It's been amazing to see how people in our communities came together to support each other through such a challenging time. Thanks to the ongoing support of our partners, funders and commissioners, and the commitment and creativity of our staff, we were able to adapt our work to deliver alongside them and make a difference when it mattered most.

As well as the ongoing investment from West Kent, we met our 2020 target of securing over £1.3m of funding from other sources to deliver services across Kent and Medway.

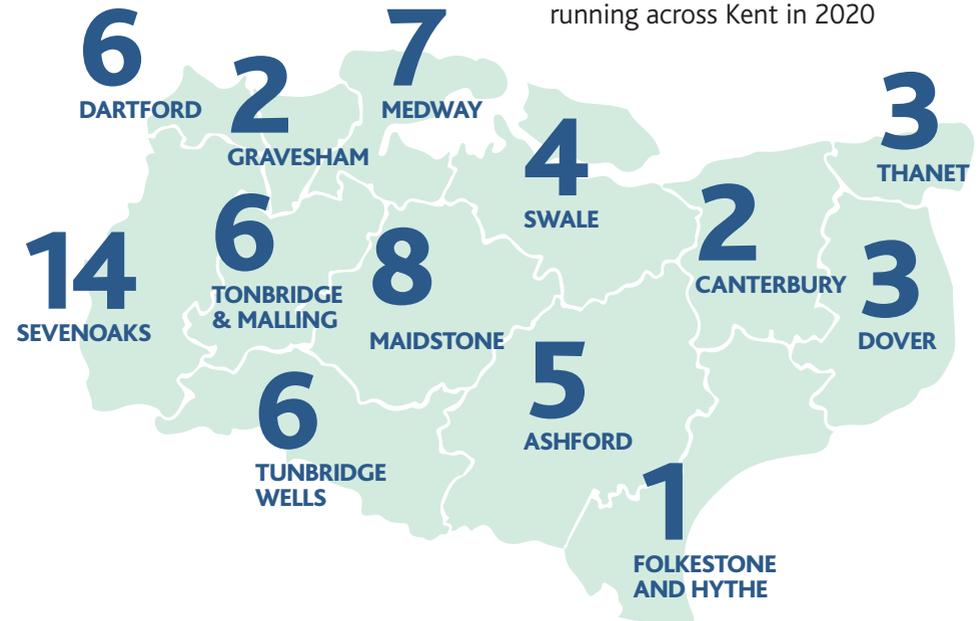
The following pages give a flavour of our work and the impact it has had on individuals, groups and communities. If you would like more information on any of our services, please get in touch.

Heather Brightwell
Communities Director

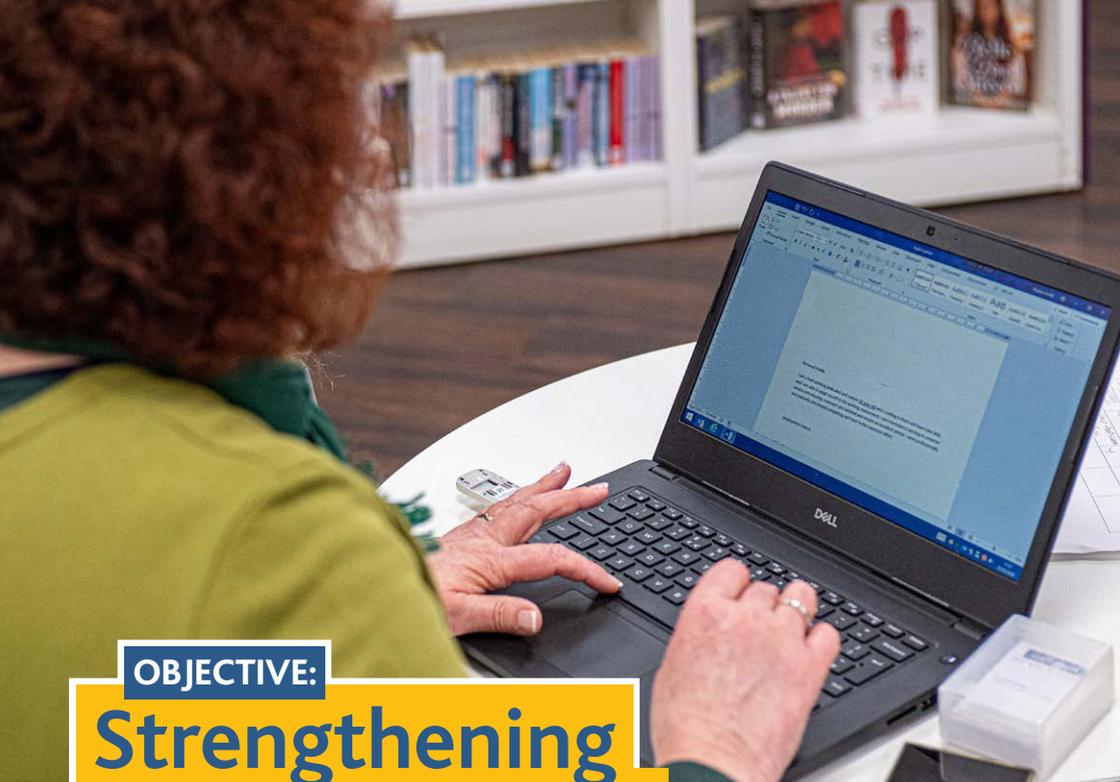
heather.brightwell@wkha.org.uk



We are running
**39 GRANTS
AND CONTRACTS**



Delivering county wide: the number of community projects and services running across Kent in 2020



OBJECTIVE:

Strengthening employability, skills and enterprise

175 BIKES



were saved from being sent to landfill



109 BIKES

were repaired and serviced by offenders and sold through Abacus stores



398 volunteer hours

at Abacus stores

Abacus Furniture Projects

at Sevenoaks, Maidstone* and Medway.

Abacus stores provide low-cost furniture to those in need, divert good quality furniture from landfill and provide training & employment opportunities. They also raise income for our charitable projects. We are involved with projects like the Community Repaint scheme, the Kent Support and Assistance Service and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme.

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

Stores had to shut in March, but staff continued to work behind the scenes, providing essential furniture and furnishings for emergency accommodation and for those moving into temporary accommodation. A click and collect service was launched so that customers could still make purchases until stores were able to safely re-open.



abacus



25 PEOPLE benefited from one of our Starter Packs



46 TONNES of furniture diverted from landfill



6 FAMILIES helped by Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme

*our Maidstone shop was a partnership with Golding Homes, the shop was closed in summer 2020.

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.

The service is normally delivered through job hubs based within local communities in Swanley, Sevenoaks, and Maidstone but last year this work was restricted and we could only offer them at the beginning of the year and then we did the majority of our work online.

West Kent employed one apprentice whose apprenticeship ends in September 2021.



Dawn and Pauline were fantastic, they even said they could help with travel and uniform costs if I needed it. I've gained a qualification and a whole new job market has opened up for me. I am currently working in a Covid testing centre, but when that ends, I feel confident now I have a new qualification and feel positive about looking for other work.

Security training course attendee.



In 2020 the West Kent training and employment team:

ASSISTED 28 PEOPLE
FIND EMPLOYMENT

HELPED 343 PEOPLE
ATTEND JOB RELATED EVENTS

SUPPORTED 203 PEOPLE

TOOK THE SERVICE OFFER ON-LINE DURING THE PANDEMIC AND
DELIVERED VIRTUAL AND ONLINE EVENTS
SUCH AS POP UP JOB EVENTS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CLARION FUTURES,
GOLDING VISION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF WORK AND PENSIONS

RECEIVED FUNDING FROM THE LOTTERY THAT HELPED US
SUPPORT 103 PEOPLE AGED 24
AND OVER WHO HAD BEEN MADE REDUNDANT OR WERE
AT RISK OF REDUNDANCY, BACK INTO WORK.

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



217 ATTENDEES
at online events
in 2020



At Pop up Business schools,
ONE NEW BUSINESS HAS ALREADY 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. We provide 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, this help really is saving me and my baby!

I am extremely grateful for the provision of this and for all of your help especially the chat with you over the phone and your kind support.

Thank you so so much from the bottom of my heart.

D, a KSAS client

1,326 HOUSEHOLDS were helped by KSAS in 2020

Social Support and Supported Living

West Kent's social support services team focussed on delivering support to 23 people last year. They begin with agreeing a support plan, then their help can be for anything from helping clients

to 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 deliver a service to help rough sleepers in Medway. The service expanded in 2020 to include a Home Visiting Service.

The team offers a person-centred service to reduce the number 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. We provide an out of hours hotline at evenings and weekends to help rough sleepers in an emergency.



51 PEOPLE were helped by the rough sleeper service in 2020

Supporting independence



Live Well Kent

We offered individually tailored support to 138 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.



538 PEOPLE were given housing related support from our Medway teams



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



“My son’s confidence is now sky high, he socialises with children his own age and loves every minute of the project, and it’s his best part of the week. Everything he makes and brings home is put up in the house or garden with the bird house for example. He feels safe and enjoys learning new things like cooking and making things. During the last few months it has been extremely stressful for everyone, without the 8-12s he would have struggled to continue but this was the one thing he looked forward to and spoke about the most. I cannot thank the project and staff enough.”

Parent of a child that attends Young Adventurers.

“Young adventurers has given my children the opportunity to learn more skills and safely engage with others, rather than being totally isolated during these difficult times, whilst following Covid rules. My children and I are a one parent unit. The club gives me time, confident in the fact they are in safe hands. And the children have parent free time, so that they can gradually ease into independence before secondary school and teenage years.”

Parent of a child that attends Young Adventurers.

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
- Outreach Youth work to engage young people in their community
- Work in schools to support the curriculum
- Young Adventurers (formerly 8-12s project) for children referred to us for extra support



We worked with **576 YOUNG PEOPLE**

Young Adventurers achieved these outcomes:



72%
of parents felt their child’s self-esteem had increased since starting with the project

32%
STRONGLY AGREED that their child’s social skills and positive interactions with others had improved and 68% agreed

74%
STRONGLY AGREED that Young Adventurers has helped their child stay connected to their friends during lockdown

Supporting Communities

In 2020 we:

- Moved our sessions online, adapting to the needs of young people and the restrictions of covid
- Checked in with all families at the start of lockdown to see if they needed any support
- Helped children overcome limitations such as ICT kit, to help them fully participate
- Delivered 268 care packages and activity packs to support children and families through lockdown
- Provided ingredients and delivered cooking sessions over zoom, introducing new recipes and skills to bring children and families together
- Delivered boxercise classes in partnership with Olympia Boxing
- We ran a young women's mental health support group as a result of the pandemic.
- We published the young peoples pocket guide for Sevenoaks of services and support available
- Did a Sevenoaks- wide survey to find out about the current needs of young people, 200 young people responded
- 90% of parents strongly agreed that young adventurers provide a good range of activities





In 2020 we:



Supported 24 organisations to run a **CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY**



8,395 PEOPLE took part in an activity funded, or partly funded by the Linda Hogan Community fund

Linda Hogan Community Fund

In 2020 we made some changes to make it easier to apply, with an online application process and free support from our Fundraising Coordinator to help small and new groups who weren't sure if they were eligible.



In 2020 we provided grants **TOTALLING £15,500** supporting **44 different organisations** across Kent.

These included:

- activities during a respite holiday for disabled children aged 4 – 16 who attend Maidstone Mencap
- weekly delivered food shops to people who have suffered significant financial reductions due to Covid-19 by the Lockdown Larder
- A day trip to Hastings for members of the Ashford and Tenterden Umbrella, a mental health organisation
- hall hire costs for West Kent Mediation to continue their valuable mediation meetings (under normal circumstances these would take place in service users' homes)
- delivery of 51 fresh food boxes to shielding patients by The Kent Kidney Patients Association, who support renal patients across Kent
- provision of healthy, daily packed lunches, fun educational family packs, wellbeing packs for parents, and free online resources such as 'keep fit' and meditation sessions by the Prince of Wales Youth Club in Canterbury
- specially made up food hampers, including a small gift, to older people who were on their own at Christmas, by Companionship at Christmas, Sittingbourne
- delivery of activity packs for children, including stickers, colouring and puzzle sheets and a craft activity to 16 families with 33 children. Also, face masks and face shields, hand sanitiser, hand wash and hand cream for each family, from Home-Start Sittingbourne and Sheppey
- a fridge and freezer for Ashford Vineyard church who support people fleeing domestic abuse
- free walking route maps made available for visitors to Halstead for the Halstead Walking Group who wanted to help the increased numbers of people walking in their village
- creative resources to participants of Shakespeare 21, a drama group based in Hadlow for adults with Down's Syndrome, to enhance their online sessions during the pandemic

Not just a landlord

We worked with the Housing Diversity Network to help us understand how we can better promote equality, diversity and inclusion across our communities

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 £1600 to support One Big Family



Our contractors offer opportunities for apprenticeships, work experience and support our charity efforts

251 HOMES

were adapted with grab rails, lever taps, half steps and stair rails

£52.5K

was spent on adapting homes to help people live independently

£270K

was claimed from local authorities to make adaptations to 42 homes

£40K

We made £40K of improvements to one home to help a child live more independently

WestKent Together

We introduced a new community service to help residents stay connected and supported through difficult times. It's a phone line residents can call to get help and support from specially trained staff. Residents can be linked with internal and external support services, whether it's needing food or medication delivered, employment advice, money advice or just someone to talk to.

Since the service was launched in June we made over 200 calls to 23 residents.

I want to say a massive thank you to George. He has been supporting me via the West Kent Together project with weekly telephone calls. George is never in a rush and listens to everything I have to say. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him; I was having suicidal thoughts at one point and he has helped me to have a more positive outlook on life and I thank him for everything he has done.

A resident that used the service.



Thank you

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

Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council, Cole Charitable Trust, the Cranfield Trust, BBC Children in Need, Edenbridge Town Council, Gatwick Airport Community Trust, Golding Homes (Golding Vision), Great Stone Bridge Trust, John Coldman Charitable Trust, Kent Community Foundation (Green Family Fund and Lawson Endowment for Kent), Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Medway Council, Migrant Help, MOAT Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, Sarah D'Avigdor-Goldsmid Charitable Trust, Sevenoaks District Council, Sevenoaks Lions, Stronger Kent Communities, West Kingsdown Parish Council and the 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.



Peggy-Sue Nicholson
Head of Communities
peggy-sue.nicholson@wkha.org.uk



Shane Convey
Business Development Manager
shane.convey@wkha.org.uk



Thomas Foreman
Wellbeing Services Manager
thomas.foreman@wkha.org.uk



Dawn Grant
Employability and Enterprise Manager
dawn.grant@wkha.org.uk

West Kent Housing Association
101 London Road, Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1AX

visit westkent.org
or call 01732 749400

🐦 @west_kent 📘 WestKentHA
📷 @westkenthousingassociation