

Read our
magazine
on the go!

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Neighbourhood news



A fresh chapter for
Neighbourhood News

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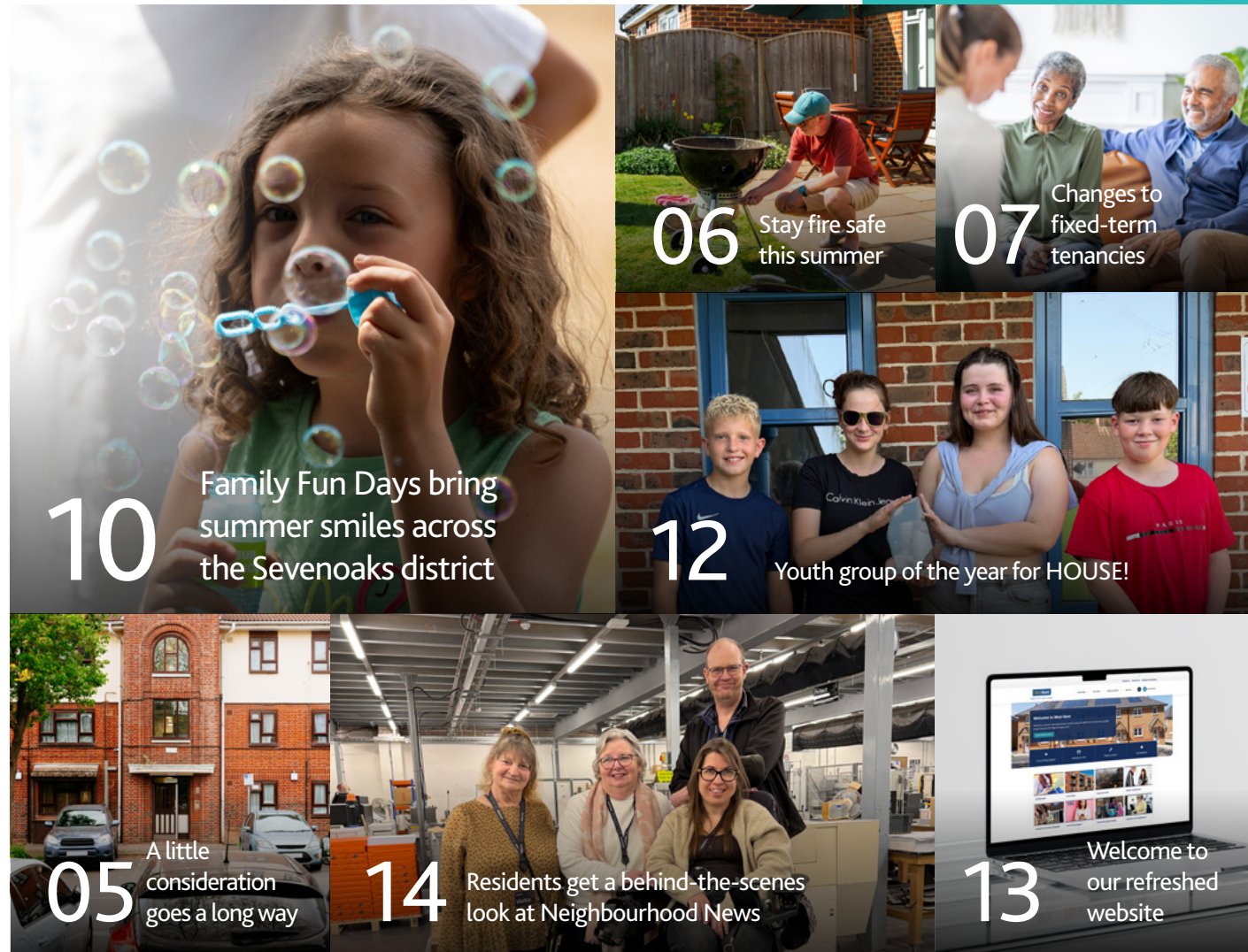
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Getting in touch

Customer services

Contact our customer service advisors to report a repair, get advice about finding a home or for any other housing related questions.

Email: help@wkha.org.uk

Phone: 01732 749400

0800 169 1122 (out of hours)

Follow us on social media:

- WestKentHA**
- westkenthousingassociation**
- @1WestKent**

A fresh chapter for Neighbourhood News



We're updating Neighbourhood News to make it more helpful, more focused on your area, and simpler to use.

We've listened to residents and looked at how you like to get updates, so we'll soon be switching to a digital-first magazine.

What does that mean for you?

Most residents will now get Neighbourhood News by email instead of through the post.

If you don't use email, don't worry, you'll still get a printed copy. This includes residents in supported housing, KEHFA schemes, and over 55s schemes where we don't have an email address.

More local, and more often

We're also updating the magazine itself.

Rather than one version for everyone, we'll create different editions for each area. This way, you'll see more news about what's happening close to home.

We'll also send it out four times a year instead of three, so you'll get updates and good news more often.

If you're a shared ownership resident, you'll get a separate version with content just for you.

Why we're doing this

There are a few reasons for these changes.

Switching to digital means less printing and postage, which is better for the environment. It also helps us save money that we can put back into services for residents.

It also makes the magazine more accessible, like being easier to read on different devices or translate into other languages.

Don't miss out

We believe about 1,000 residents may have an email address but haven't shared it with us yet.

If this sounds like you, please check that your details are up to date so you don't miss future editions. You'll also need your email to use our new portal.

You can update your details on our website: www.westkent.org/updatedetails.

Want to be involved in more communications projects?



We've got lots of exciting projects planned for the next year, and we'd love for you to join in on anything that interests you. There's no commitment right now, signing up just means we'll send you updates and chances to get involved. The ways you can get involved:

- Website upgrade – test the new homepage and page layouts. Share your feedback on what works well, what's easy to use and where we can improve.
- Campaigns and publications – help shape key campaigns on damp and mould, repairs, rent and the cost of living. You'll also be able

to give feedback on important publications like our annual report and complaints report.

There will also be plenty of other chances to get involved as new projects come up.

You can join in as much or as little as you want. It's flexible, so you can pick the projects that interest you.

If you're interested in finding out more, visit confirmsubscription.com/h/i/576F7E93E7CA6B7F or scan the QR code.



Be part of shaping the future Neighbourhood News We're looking for Neighbourhood News Champions

You told us that you wanted Neighbourhood News to feel local, relevant, and useful, and we need your help to make that happen. We're asking residents to share great stories, photos, and updates from your communities.

As a champion, you'll share what's happening in your area. This might include local events, community projects, discounts at local shops, resident stories, or photos that show what your neighbourhood is really like. Your input will help us make sure the magazine reflects real people, real places, and what matters most to you.

You don't need any special experience. Just an interest in your community and a willingness to join in.

We're looking for champions across four areas:

- Sevenoaks, Edenbridge and Swanley
- Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone
- Medway, Swale, Dartford and Gravesham

- Ashford, Canterbury, Dover and Thanet
- By joining in, you'll help shape a magazine that really represents your neighbourhood and the people who live there.



If you'd like to take part, please visit confirmsubscription.com/h/i/71412B0C31DEE506 or scan the QR code.



A little consideration goes a long way



We all want to come home and find a parking space. Recently, we've received more reports of parking problems and disagreements in some of our car parks, so we'd like to remind everyone how we can work together to keep parking fair, safe and accessible for all.

Please park considerately

When parking, please ensure your vehicle is parked neatly within the marked bay. Taking up more than one space or parking too close to another vehicle can make it difficult for others to park.

If there are no marked bays, please leave enough room for other residents to park safely and get in and out of their vehicles.

If your household owns more than one vehicle, please be mindful of your neighbours. Where parking is limited, avoid occupying multiple spaces if alternative parking is available nearby. Sharing parking fairly helps everyone enjoy access to the car park.

Keep access clear

It's important that roads, entrances and turning areas remain clear at all times.

Poorly parked vehicles can block access for neighbours, visitors and essential services.

Please make sure your vehicle does not obstruct:

- Emergency service vehicles
- Refuse collection vehicles
- Other residents and visitors
- Contractors carrying out work on site

If a refuse lorry cannot access the bin store because of parked vehicles, bins may not be collected. This can create inconvenience for everyone and may lead to additional costs for arranging alternative waste removal.

By parking responsibly, you can help avoid missed collections and unnecessary charges.

Check your vehicle meets the requirements.

Only taxed and roadworthy vehicles with a valid MOT (where required) should be parked in our parking areas.

Some developments also have restrictions on vehicle size, so please check the rules that apply where you live and ensure your vehicle complies.

Visitor bays are for visitors

Visitor parking spaces are there for guests and should not be used as a resident's regular parking space. Keeping these bays available helps ensure family members, friends and carers can visit when needed.

Parking can be a challenge, especially where space is limited. A little thought and courtesy can make a big difference and help prevent frustration for everyone.



Stay fire safe this summer

As the warmer weather continues, many of us enjoy spending time outdoors with family and friends. We'd like to remind residents to take extra care when using BBQs and having bonfires.

Over the past few years, we have seen a number of incidents where fences, sheds and other garden items have caught fire. In some cases, these fires have spread quickly, causing significant damage to gardens, personal belongings and even homes.

Keep BBQs and bonfires well away from buildings. Fences, sheds, decking, garden furniture, and dry plants can catch fire very easily, especially during warm weather.

If you're planning a BBQ or bonfire, please:

- Keep it well away from fences, sheds, buildings and overhanging trees.
- Never leave it unattended.
- Keep children and pets at a safe distance.
- Have water or another means of putting out the fire close by.
- Make sure it is completely extinguished before leaving it.

Please don't use BBQs on balconies

For everyone's safety, BBQs should never be used on balconies.

Balconies pose a significant fire risk, as flames, heat, and smoke can spread quickly to neighbouring properties. What starts as a small incident can escalate rapidly, putting residents, homes, and belongings at risk.

A small fire can have a big impact

Unfortunately, some residents have already experienced damage to their homes, gardens, and possessions as a result of fires that got out of control. These incidents can be distressing, costly and, in some cases, dangerous.

Taking a few simple precautions can help protect your home, your belongings and your neighbours. We want everyone to enjoy the summer safely. By using BBQs and bonfires responsibly, you can help reduce the risk of fire and prevent avoidable damage.

Please remember: keep BBQs and bonfires away from fences and buildings, never use a BBQ on a balcony, and never leave a fire unattended.



Changes to fixed-term tenancies

The Renters' Rights Act will bring significant changes to tenancy agreements across the social housing sector. One of these changes is the end of fixed-term tenancies, which social landlords will no longer be able to offer.

As a result, we will be contacting residents who currently hold a fixed-term tenancy to offer them a fully assured tenancy, provided there is no ongoing court action relating to the tenancy.

What happens next?

We will be arranging a home visit with affected residents as part of our regular five-year tenancy review and catch-up programme.

During this visit, we will explain the changes, answer any questions you may have and arrange for the new tenancy agreement to be signed.

If you receive a letter, email, phone call or text message from us about your tenancy, it is important that you respond.

We're here to help

We understand that changes to tenancy agreements can raise questions. If you're contacted by us about moving from a fixed-term tenancy to an assured tenancy, please get in touch if there is anything you would like us to explain.

Working together to brighten our communities

A big thank you to three of our suppliers who have recently given their time, skills and support to help improve outdoor spaces for West Kent residents.

These projects have helped create safer, greener and more welcoming places for residents to enjoy, showing what can be achieved when organisations work together for the benefit of our communities.

Giving Linden House a fresh new look

Volunteers from Savills joined members of West Kent's finance and governance team for a day of gardening at Linden House in Sevenoaks.

Together, they transformed the communal garden by refreshing a resident's bench, planting colourful flowers and tidying up the outdoor space. The result is a brighter, more inviting area where residents can sit, relax and enjoy the garden.

Creating a safer space at Church Road

Residents at Church Road, West Kingsdown, are now enjoying a more secure communal garden thanks to support from AD Group.

The team installed new fencing around the garden following concerns that the space was being accessed by people who did not live there, leading to incidents of antisocial behaviour. The new fence, which includes secure coded access, means the garden can now be enjoyed by residents in peace.



A community makeover at Bonney Court

Residents at Bonney Court in Swanley have also benefited from a fantastic team effort.

Volunteers from WW Martin worked alongside colleagues from West Kent and Ridge and Partners LLP to give shared outdoor areas some much-needed care and attention. The team rolled up their sleeves to tackle weeds, plant flowers, and give planters a fresh coat of paint, helping to bring colour and life back to the communal gardens.

We're incredibly grateful to everyone who took part in these projects. Their hard work and enthusiasm have made a real difference to the places our residents call home.

It's wonderful to see businesses, partners and West Kent colleagues coming together to support our communities and create outdoor spaces that residents can enjoy for years to come.



Help us keep your home safe - please allow access for your electrical safety test

Every five years, we carry out an electrical safety test (EICR) in your home to ensure your electrics are safe and working properly.

These checks help us:

- Keep your home safe to live in
- Reduce the risk of **electrical fires and electric shocks**
- Spot hidden problems early
- Make sure your electrics meet safety standards

We've recently seen more missed appointments, where our engineers can't get access when they arrive. These tests are a legal requirement, so it's important we can complete them to keep you and your home safe.

The test takes around three hours, and your electricity will be turned off for part of the visit.

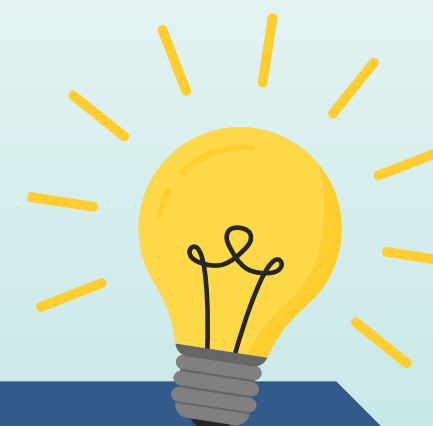
We know this can be inconvenient, but it only happens once every five years and helps prevent serious risks.

We'll contact you in advance and send a text when the engineer is on the way.

Missed appointments can delay these important checks and may require us to take further steps to arrange access.

If your appointment isn't suitable, please contact us as soon as possible to rearrange.

Thank you for helping us keep your home safe.



Please make sure you:

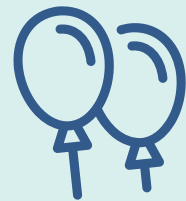
- Keep your appointment, or rearrange it in advance
- Check your messages so you don't miss updates
- Plan ahead for the temporary loss of power

Family Fun Days bring summer smiles across the Sevenoaks district

Families across the Sevenoaks District are enjoying a packed programme of free activities and entertainment this summer, thanks to the return of the popular Family Fun Days.

Funded and organised by Sevenoaks District Council, the events are run by Play Place and supported by town and parish councils, which provide venues across the district. Family Fun Days bring together a wide range of community organisations to offer children and families an opportunity to have fun, get active and connect with local services.

This year, our youth services team attended the events, providing a variety of free games and activities for young people. Their interactive sessions proved popular with children keen to test their skills, make new friends and take part in friendly competitions.



John Gleeson,
Head of Communities,
said:



It was fantastic for our youth team to be part of the Family Fun Days and meet so many local families. Our activities gave young people the chance to get involved, have fun and build confidence in a relaxed environment. The events are a great example of local organisations working together to support communities across the district.

Family Fun Days also welcomed support from Kent Police and other community partners, all working together to create safe, inclusive and enjoyable events for local families. Several locations also offered free bike marking by Kent Police, helping families protect their bicycles, reduce the risk of theft, and learn more about community safety.

Each event offers something different, with activities ranging from arts and crafts and creative workshops to sports, challenges and competitions.



Designed primarily for children aged 12 and under, the sessions provide an affordable way for families to stay entertained during the school holidays and discover what is available in their local community.

The Family Fun Days continue to be a popular feature of the summer calendar, bringing communities together and providing free opportunities for children to learn, play and stay active during the holidays.

For families looking for a fun day out, the events offer a welcoming environment packed with activities, community support and plenty of opportunities to make lasting summer memories.



Get involved and win!



Residents from across Kent are reaping the rewards of getting involved and sharing their views, with a range of prizes on offer throughout the year for those who take part in resident involvement activities.

Resident feedback plays a vital role in helping us improve our services, shape future projects and better understand what matters most to our communities. To thank residents for taking the time to get involved, we regularly offer incentives and prize draws linked to surveys, consultations and engagement activities.

Most recently, five residents each won a £25 Love2Shop voucher after taking part in our resident involvement opportunities. The winners came from Dartford, Ashford, Swanley, Otford and Rochester.

In addition, one lucky resident from Shoreham won a fantastic family prize – an annual pass for four people to Leeds Castle.

Every piece of feedback helps us learn, improve and ensure we're delivering services that meet the needs of our residents.

So why not get involved? Your voice matters, and it could pay off, too!



**Find out more about
resident involvement opportunities:**

Visit: www.westkent.org/residentinvolvement

Email: residentinvolvement@wkha.org.uk



Youth group of the year for HOUSE! We've got something to celebrate!

HOUSE, our youth club in Edenbridge, has been named Youth Group of the Year at Sevenoaks District Council's Making It Happen Community and Voluntary Awards.

The award recognises the positive impact HOUSE has on local young people, providing a safe and welcoming space where they can make friends, learn new skills, try new activities and build confidence.

One young person who attends the club shared what HOUSE means to him:

"The youth club is great to go to. It's good for kids to go outside rather than play games inside. And the most fun thing here, in my opinion, is playing pool with my mates and getting to know everyone".

This fantastic achievement is a testament to everyone involved, especially the dedicated

HOUSE team, who work hard each week to create opportunities for young people in Edenbridge to learn, grow and thrive.

Congratulations to the staff and young people at HOUSE on this well-deserved award!



Want to hear more from the young people who attend HOUSE? Scan the QR code to learn what they have to say about the club and what makes it such a special place.



Welcome to our refreshed website

We've launched a refreshed and improved website to make it easier than ever for residents to find the information and services they need.

Over time, our website at www.westkent.org had become dated, and feedback from residents indicated that some information was difficult to find. We carefully listened to those comments and used them to shape a complete site refresh.

The result is a more modern, user-friendly website with clearer navigation, updated content and an improved design that works better across desktop, tablet and mobile devices.

Members of our resident communications network played an important role in reviewing the website, testing new features and providing valuable feedback throughout the redesign process.

Their input helped us understand what was working well, what could be improved and how we could make it quicker and simpler for people to access the information they need.

The refreshed website offers:

- A cleaner, more modern design
- Easier navigation and improved search functionality
- Better access to key services and information
- Improved accessibility
- A more mobile-friendly experience

Why not take a look yourself?

Visit www.westkent.org and explore the new site.





Residents get a behind-the-scenes look at Neighbourhood News

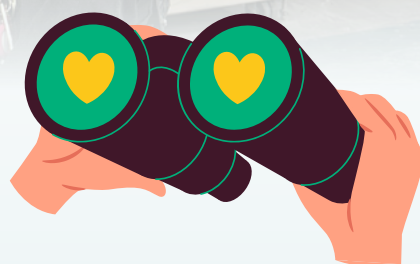
Have you ever wondered how Neighbourhood News comes together?

Earlier this year, members of our inclusion group and resident communications group were given a unique opportunity to see exactly how the magazine is produced during a special visit to Resource, the design and print agency behind the publication.

The trip to Leeds gave residents an insight into the entire process, from the first design concepts through to printing and distribution. They toured the agency's offices and print facilities and met the team responsible for bringing each edition to life.

One of the day's highlights was watching the latest edition of Neighbourhood News come off the printing press. Resident, Kim, was even given the honour of pressing the button to start the printing process.

The visit also showed how resident feedback helps shape the magazine's content, ensuring it reflects the issues, stories and achievements that matter most to our communities. Residents learned about the creativity, collaboration and planning involved in producing a publication delivered to thousands of homes across West Kent.



Resident, Catherine, was particularly impressed by the company's environmental approach: *"I was very impressed with how Resource takes into consideration how they would impact their carbon footprint, everything that could be recycled, and even giving the plain paper that was not up to scratch to the local schools."*

The visit was a valuable opportunity for residents to gain a greater understanding of how their voices help influence our communications and ensure Neighbourhood News continues to meet residents' needs.

Your Voice, Our Action: Making service charge information easier to understand



Residents told us that some of the information we provide about service charges could be clearer and easier to understand. Through scrutiny panel meetings, residents told us they were unhappy with how we communicated important information, such as rent letters. They felt these were often unclear, too long, and included too much jargon, corporate language and repetition.

We had also received complaints about service charges and wanted to take a fairer approach.

We listened to this feedback and reviewed how we present information to residents.

As a result, we've made improvements to our communications, helping ensure key information is simpler, more accessible and easier to follow. By using clearer language and improving the way information is presented, we're helping residents better understand the services they receive and the charges that apply to them.

Using insight from the panel, we created a leaflet and a letter that were clear, easy to follow and quick to read. The input was important in bringing a more human voice to our communications.

The results have been very positive. We expected a high number of

calls from residents about the service charge letters. Instead, the clear, helpful information led to far fewer enquiries than expected.

By listening to resident feedback and involving them in shaping our communications, we've been able to turn feedback into real change. This has helped us create a more human approach, making important information clearer and more accessible for everyone.



Restoring safety in Bishop's Crescent

Creating safe neighbourhoods is a priority for West Kent, and a recent case in Bishop's Crescent, Tenterden, highlights the importance of listening to residents and taking action when concerns are raised.

Residents contacted us following ongoing anti-social behaviour, including criminal activity, intimidation, and persistent noise. Many told us they no longer felt safe in their homes and that the issues had been affecting the community for several months. Our community safety team worked closely with residents, Kent Police and local partners to build a clear picture of the issues. This included gathering evidence, reviewing reports, conducting risk assessments, and supporting residents throughout the process.

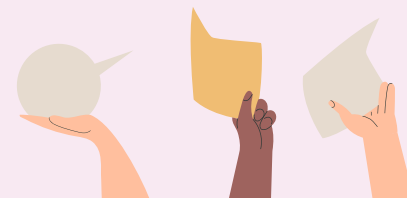
When it became clear that stronger action was needed, Kent Police successfully applied for a Closure Order through the Magistrates' Court, with support from our community safety team. The order restricted access to the property linked to the anti-social behaviour, bringing immediate relief to local residents.

Following the court's decision, we worked with Kent Police and contractors to secure the property and prevent further disruption. Residents reported feeling safer and more comfortable in their homes as a result.

This successful partnership demonstrates how resident concerns can lead to real action and positive change. By working together, we can help ensure our neighbourhoods remain safe places to live.



If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour, please contact us so we can help. Visit www.westkent.org/asb or call 01732 749400.



Building skills and wellbeing through community partnerships

A successful partnership project has helped local residents develop new skills, boost their confidence and create opportunities to support others in their community.

West Kent provided a £1,000 Community Chest grant to support the Sevenoaks Peer Support Training Programme, delivered by West Kent Mind with additional funding from Sevenoaks Town Council. The programme gave local residents the opportunity to take part in a ten-week training course focused on peer support and wellbeing.

Eight people completed the programme, with half of the participants being West Kent residents.

The course was based on the Scottish Recovery Network peer support model, which helps people use their own lived experience of mental health

challenges to support others facing similar situations. Participants learned practical skills including active listening, setting boundaries and providing safe, supportive guidance.

Many participants reported increased confidence and a stronger sense of connection with others. The programme has already created new opportunities, with several attendees applying to volunteer with West Kent Mind and others expressing interest in future paid peer mentor roles.

Through our Community Chest grants and partnership working, we're proud to support projects that help local people thrive and strengthen the communities we serve.



WestKent

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