



Impact report

2022/23

Healthy, connected
people and
communities

Contents

p. 4-5	Introduction from our chair
p. 6-7	Welcome from our CEO
p. 9	Strategic support
p. 10-11	Data and impact
p. 12-13	Financial overview
p. 14-15	Our work and delivery
p. 18-19	Community Navigation
p. 20-21	Actively Involved
p. 22-27	Social Prescribing
p. 29-32	In focus: Carers
p. 33	Moving Forwards
p. 34-35	Children's Health and Wellbeing
p. 36-37	Postural Stability
p. 38-39	Community Transport
p. 40-41	Helping You Home
p. 43-47	In focus: Innovations in Children's Services
p. 48-49	Our Partners
p. 50	Our Funders

Introduction from our Chair



This is my first year as Chair of the Board of Trustees at Involve Kent, a position I am proud to have been elected to at the Annual General Meeting in December 2022.

I would like to start by passing on my gratitude to the outgoing Chair, Stephen O'Connell who served on the Board for over 8 years, including 4 years as Chair. Stephen's legacy and work to support the development of Involve into the large, effective, and impactful organisation it is today will most certainly help us to continue to evolve and grow over the years to come. The Board all wish Stephen all the best with his retirement.

In a year that included both a change of Chair and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) I would also like to recognise the work of Charlotte Osborn-Forde our outgoing CEO. Charlotte worked for Involve for 18 years, including over 11 years as CEO.

Under Charlotte's leadership the organisation grew significantly and now supports more people than ever before. Charlotte's dedication, talent and persistence has been key to the organisation achieving growth and has ensured that people and communities remain central to our work. This year, we are delighted to have welcomed our new CEO, Andrea Wiggins, to Involve and we look forward to Andrea leading the organisation into its next chapter. I am also hugely grateful for the fantastic interim leadership shown by members of our senior team over recent months whilst we awaited Andrea formally joining us.

Our CEO report highlights the tremendous achievements of our staff and volunteers over the last year and I am immensely proud of all the work they have undertaken. Involve has continued to support some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, particularly through the difficult economic times we have faced.

The entire Board of Trustees and I take time to hear case studies of the work of Involve and we are always moved by the difference our staff and volunteers make to the quality of the lives of so many people. I would like to pass on my personal thanks to all our volunteers who work tirelessly in the community, on our behalf, to provide much needed support to so many people.

We have seen Involve continue to grow and reach more people with more diverse and innovative services. We are now one of the biggest providers of Social Prescribing Services in the Country and we have extended our flagship personalised support for the over 55s to Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley through the KCC funded 'Actively Involved' programme.

In addition, Involve Kent has continued to innovate, establishing new models for supporting more people in our communities. The Board would like to thank all who have helped to develop, mobilise, and deliver such a fantastic range of new services.

Involve Kent is a truly amazing organisation made up of so many brilliant people. The successes outlined in this report have only been possible due to the dedication, commitment, and determination of so many talented and driven individuals.

I look forward to continuing to see Involve grow and develop over the year to come.

Richard Leicester
Chair of Involve Board



Introduction from our CEO



Throughout this year Involve has continued to work in partnership with communities across Kent and Medway to offer personalised individual and community support.

After 2 years of intermittent lockdowns aimed at controlling the spread of Coronavirus, this year saw society open up due to the vaccination programme, which Involve supported through offering pro-choice advice and guidance in the shape of the vaccine hesitancy helpline.

Although many aspects of society returned to normal, many in our communities were still affected by the years of intermittent fear, isolation, lack of routine and deconditioning. For Involve, this meant adapting our services to ensure we offered a high level of intensive support where needed. In this period, we undertook 9745 home visits, more than at any time in our history, and worked intensively to support people to reintegrate into communities and positive activities.

This year also saw its own challenges with costs of basic goods and services increasing through high inflation, this was especially the case with the cost of foods, gas, and electricity and the impact of this was especially profound throughout the winter, where over 50% of the people we supported asked for help with their household financial situation.

Involve worked intensely with both the health system as well as Borough and County authorities to minimise the impact on those most vulnerable to these price increases. This included working with Maidstone Borough Council to fund 'Warm Hubs', spaces where people who could not afford to heat their homes could gather, engage in their community and positive activity, and get advice or support as needed. We were also able to support people to maintain heat in their homes with a voucher scheme.

This year also saw Involve continue to grow as an organisation to support more people in more areas of Kent. This included mobilising and running our flagship 'Actively Involved' programme across Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley. Funded by Kent County Council, this innovative model for the service provides personalised support to people over 55 and those under 55 with long term health conditions, whilst supporting over 58 other voluntary and community sector organisations to build on their expertise, resources and community capacity to deliver a range of exciting and engaging activities and support. This has ensured that many diverse activities are available which range from fishing to beekeeping, keep fit to eel counting.

In this period we also launched a new Social Prescribing Project in Hospital Trusts to support with hospital discharge, ensuring again that we supported people to build on their assets and to identify the support that would be most useful for them. In this period we also extended our work with GP surgeries by providing more Social Prescribing and Children's Health and Wellbeing Navigation roles than ever, making us one of the UK's largest employers of link workers with over 50 staff now working in this area.

We continue to work both locally and nationally to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of social prescribing and to advocate for further investment and recognition across health and social care.

Our work with children and young people also grew this year and a new project called Connect! enabled us to work with young people with neurodiversity and provide a space where we could collaboratively design and deliver social activities in line with their interests. We also worked with the health system to pilot personal health payments so that families could be in control over the things they needed to increase the quality of their lives.

In this year we supported 24,601 people across Kent and Medway through 140,003 contacts with people, including 9745 face to face visits to people in their homes. Supported by an ever-growing number of volunteers Involve facilitated 2842 group activities including tea dances, trips to the coast, games groups, coffee mornings, exercise groups and nature walks.

As this year ends, we continue to see enormous structural challenges with widening inequality, growing poverty, high levels of loneliness, isolation and exclusion in our communities in addition to the large system challenges of long waiting lists, lack of capacity and diminishing budgets across both health, social care and many voluntary sector organisations.

Our approach continues to demonstrate that these issues are not insurmountable, our experience shows that solutions lay dormant in communities up and down the country and can be released with comparatively little resource, innovative approaches and by placing people and communities at the centre of all we do.

I would like to end by paying tribute to Charlotte Osborn-Forde who worked tirelessly for Involve for over 18 years, including 11 years as CEO. Charlotte left Involve at the end of this year to become the CEO of the National Academy for Social Prescribing. Charlotte leaves behind a tremendous legacy at Involve and her innovative approach, drive for excellence and constant challenge of norms will live on in the organisation for many years to come.

Gary Wells
Interim CEO



“Involve are the most efficient and responsive service I have encountered, and I am not sure how I would have coped if I had not had support from you.”

- Community Navigation Client

Strategic Support

Our core outcomes for people:

Improvements in personal, self-reported quality of life measures, which evidence demonstrates are directly related to health and quality of life.



Our core services to deliver this:

Navigation and social prescribing: Short term services building skills, confidence, resilience and linking people to groups, services and support.

Personalisation of health and care resources: Direct payments, personal health budgets, care coordination, community crisis vouchers and brokerage of care and support.

Community wellbeing: Direct payments, personal health budgets, care coordination, community crisis vouchers and brokerage of care and support.

We believe everyone should be able to access services and activities in their community, which is why we have over 60 partnerships with charities and other local organisations - to promote choice, connection and independence.

Data and Impact

At Involve we are committed to measuring the impact of the work we do with individuals and communities in the most academically robust way possible. We do this by both collecting and analysing the stories of the people we support, and by asking people a series of questions before we start working with them and then again 12 weeks later.

This mix of qualitative and quantitative data enables us to link our support to improved outcomes for the people we work with. In addition, we collect data on demographics to ensure that we are inclusive, accessible and that our work is effective with all social groups.

24,601

people were supported by
Involve between April 2022
and March 2023



61%

reported having a disability or
long term health condition



61.1%

identified as female



29.8%

were unpaid carers

58.6%

 aged over 60

28.2%

 aged 25-60

13.2%

 under 25

In addition, 8% of the people we supported were from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Our primary aim is to support people as individuals in the most person-centric way possible. We use a **'what matters to me'** approach, meaning that improvement can be varied, individual and hard to tangibly measure and compare. To provide robust impact evaluation, we measure wider impact indicators including health, wellbeing, loneliness, physical activity levels and resilience to problems. By measuring these indicators with large numbers of clients we can measure and impartially demonstrate the impact of our work.

To measure wellbeing, we use the Office of National Statistics (ONS) wellbeing tool, this is an objective measure that allows us to baseline our datasets against national ONS population data.

On average our clients scored 6.31 out of 10 on happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness; the national average for these is 7.7. The national average for anxiety is 2.93 and our clients averaged 4.24. This demonstrates that we are reaching the right people in our communities – people feeling low, dissatisfied with life and anxious.

Our data shows significant improvements in wellbeing, health and problem solving, with average scores increasing by **23.5%**, **15.37%** and **16.38%** respectively. For those who increased their physical activity, there was an increase of 70 minutes per week per person. These increases in scores show Involve services have a positive impact on the people we work with.

Designing our own impact tools gives us the flexibility to respond to current events, challenges or topical issues. The cost-of-living crisis which began at the end of 2021 became a concern for many of our clients and those in our communities. To record the impact it was having we introduced three new questions into our monitoring and evaluation, focussing on financial inclusion, difficult choices between whether to turn on the heating and worries about money.

Our data showed:



50.3%

needed financial inclusion support



12.7%

had to go without food or heating



24.7%

said they were often worried about money

Only 21% of people said they never worried about money.

At Involve we strive to collect meaningful data that truly reflects the value of our services. Adapting our tools to include topical themes is just one of the ways we can innovate. As we move forward, we will be seeking new ways to collect, analyse and explore our data, making us a leader in creating an evidence base for the sector.

Financial Overview



After significant income growth in the previous year, the financial year to 31 March 2023 was very much a year of consolidation and action as new contracts won in 2022 commenced.

One of our largest challenges has been the news of potential KCC funding cuts which could have a profound effect on our communities but also impact the way in which Involve will continue to support those most in need. Trustees have supported the management team to model how changes to income might be responded to, whilst at the same time, helping to inform funders of the consequences of any cuts.

This will continue to present uncertainty for service users as well as Involve staff over the coming months.

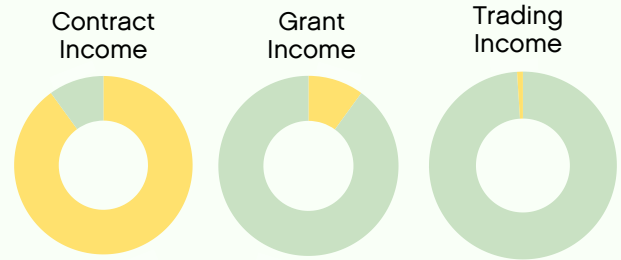
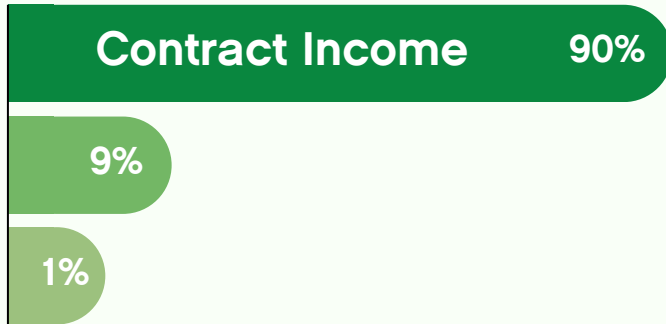
Strategic growth has continued but at a more modest pace as focus has moved to managing the renewal of some of Involve's existing PCN contracts, to ensure stability and diversity of income flows.

Whilst future funding might be less certain in the present wider economic and political environment, our financial position remains robust and well-managed so that we can continue to deliver the much needed and valued support to our ever-growing community.

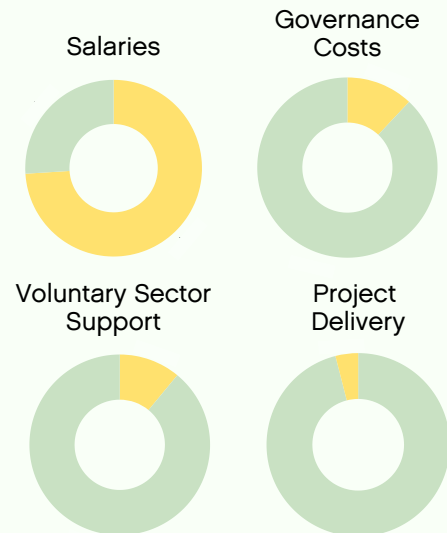
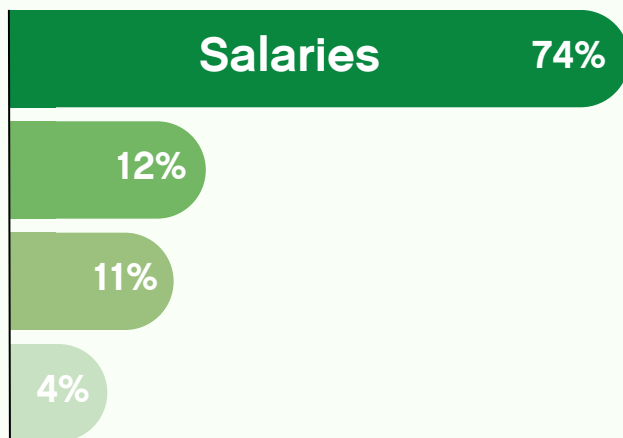
Once again, my thanks go to the management team – Gary, Jane and Jo – who demonstrate a sound understanding of the finances and have stepped up to cover greater responsibilities during the recruitment of our new CEO in 2023.

Duncan Simmons
Treasurer

Income



Expenditure



Our Work & Delivery



Throughout another year of unprecedented, and at times complex, referrals of children and adults to our services, our committed staff have worked tirelessly to support vulnerable adults and those caring for them, children and families, from hospitals, GP surgeries, in community settings, at home visits and b hospitals,

Our approach to reaching out into the community has strengthened further with our attendance at food banks, setting up activities for children and adults in their local communities where people want them and can easily access, and building peer support and sustainable networks to reduce isolation, loneliness and improve happiness. We mobilised new services working from the acute hospitals and our focus on health inequalities has ensured a targeted approach to our reach into the community. Encouraging client feedback and acting on it, our approach to personalised care influences all our work with children and adults.

100% of staff and Trustees have completed the Esther Ambassador training and 4 staff are Esther coaches.

We encourage staff to work collaboratively alongside people, taking time to listen to “what matters to me” in a focused conversation, doing with rather than doing for. We endeavour to provide a collaborative approach to personalised support. Focusing on what is positive in someone’s life and how this can be built upon, their interests, abilities, network of people and community, rather than making the deficits the entire focus.

We encourage and support people to have choice and control in what they need to access to live well in the way they wish to, helping them to set goals and supporting them to achieve those goals collaboratively.

Another key to the Esther approach is encouraging an open and no blame culture; enabling staff to reflect on and improve their practice in a supportive one-to-one or group environment, promoting learning and sharing with colleagues and management. We recognise the emotional impact working with people can have on our staff and have implemented that all Managers with responsibility for front line working staff are trained in clinical supervision to encourage safe reflection and emotional support to staff, who at times work in challenging situations.

We fully recognise that our staff are our most important asset.

We also continue to raise the profile of unpaid carers (those caring for a family member or friend) and hosted a panel of Carers in partnership with the KCC practice development team where they were able to share their experiences of caring for a loved one with KCC staff in a live streamed event from our offices at Turkey Mill.

This was an emotive event, and we were delighted to support Carers to have their voices heard and lived experience valued.

We also attended the University of Kent and took along 3 young people from our Moving Forwards service to share their lived experience of growing up and leaving care with first year medical students. A moving and valuable experience for all.

We continue to promote and facilitate a user voice not only throughout our own services but to influence and shape the commissioning of health and social care services.

Jane Thomas
Director of Services





“When we first met, [our Navigator] **wanted to help us**. Because of you we now have a council property, you organised funds for help and more support for us to purchase appliances. **There is no one else that helps people like you do.**”

- Community Navigation Client

Our services

Community

Navigation

Community Navigation enables people 55 and over or with complex health to connect to services and support to improve their health and wellbeing and manage demand on NHS and Social Care. Funded by Kent County Council.

Our Navigators support people to:

- Explore and build social networks and enable access to a range of activities.
- Support people to access the health and social care system (statutory and non-statutory), working with teams and organisations to make referrals.
- Enable people to identify services within the local community. Where appropriate, facilitate purchasing of services, such as care at home to meet goals and short and long-term needs.
- Assessment and identification of adaptation, equipment and assistive technology needs and arrange for supply as appropriate.
- Help and advice including entitlements, making referrals and form filling.



- Make referrals/provide information around local services and opportunities, liaise with other specialised community services to ensure appropriate links are made.

4,030

People supported this year

90.5%

Had a disability or long-term health condition

Case Study



“I had been discharged from hospital following a stroke as I cycled to work in Tunbridge Wells. I had no support network, significant rent arrears, and my landlord was threatening to evict me.

Prior to my stroke I had been working full time. I had no money coming in apart from Statutory Sick Pay. Katie supported me to make a claim for Universal Credit over the telephone as I do not have access to a laptop. She then supported me to obtain the documents required and attended the appointments at the Job Centre with me to verify my identity and get the claim up and running as I was still struggling to communicate with people after my stroke.

My landlord served me with a Section 21 notice. I had to leave because I had run up significant arrears when I was in hospital.

Also, an effect of my stroke was that I forgot my PIN numbers and how to access my accounts.

Katie worked with the council to find me a new place to live and with the support of the council and Community Warden helped me to pay off as much of my arrears as I could afford.

She attended the meetings with me and accompanied me to the new flat when I visited and signed up for it. She made sure I had everything I felt I needed to be able to live here. She also helped me to register for Council Tax, TV Licensing, and the water company to set up my bills.

Katie supported me to notify Santander of my health issues and explained that I needed a new PIN number for my cash card.

When I moved into my new property, I only had a mattress and my armchair. Katie supported me to find a bedstead at a local charity shop and obtained grant funding for me for a brand-new fridge freezer via Glasspool.

Katie has done well. The flat is a godsend. I'm looking forward to going back to work properly once my legs have healed, this is important for me as it will make me feel that things have gone back to normal.”

Actively

Involved

This service provides a lifeline for those 55 and over (or under with complex health) and living in West and North Kent, to connect to their local community by attending groups, activities, day trips and Christmas parties, with access to support and information to stay well. Funded by Kent County Council, the service aims to reduce loneliness and increase independence, reducing people's reliance on formal services.

Working closely with a range of voluntary sector partners, we provide people with a diverse menu of local activities, groups, and trips. The service is inclusive, with support offered for people with mobility issues, frailty, and anxiety.

Our Activity Coordinators support people by creating with them local coffee mornings, lunch clubs and other groups where people may have common interests. These regular social events encourage social connection and a sense of community. Where possible people are encouraged to be physically active, access their community and build relationships, all of which contribute to healthy aging.



59%

Reported a decrease in
loneliness

Case Study



“I was struggling daily to come to terms with the loss of my husband, I had become very isolated. My family live quite some distance away so I could go weeks without seeing anyone. It was a dark time for me.

Peppa listened to how I was feeling and how low I had become. At first, I was reluctant to consider attending any social groups. Peppa was very patient with me, and I didn't feel pressured, Peppa called me regularly and over time gently persuaded me to come along to a group with her.

I attended a local Involve coffee morning with Peppa and although I was very nervous and apprehensive, Peppa reassured me and stayed with me at the group. The following week I went along independently and was warmly greeted by everyone there.

I have been attending for a year now and the impact the group has had on my mental health has been life changing for me. I have made so many friends there and we often meet up away from the group at each other's homes.

Last year Involve started an additional group in my area at a venue I had suggested, and I have been attending that group since it started, and I have taken on the role of greeting newcomers and welcoming them to the group as I remember how nervous I was in the beginning.

I have been on garden centre trips, trips to the coast and had an amazing Christmas thanks to Involve and the party they arranged, I was dreading Christmas as it's usually a very difficult time for me but last year was the first time in many years that I enjoyed Christmas.

I still find it difficult to express the impact that the support from Involve has had on me.

Now I feel like I have purpose. I have friends I can call if I am having a bad day and people that care. I have become so much more physically active. I can offer support to others that are going through a bad time and give them hope because if I was able to come back from how low I was then anyone can.”

Social Prescribing

Many things that affect our health can't be treated by doctors or medicine alone, like loneliness, debt, or stress due to financial pressures or poor housing. Social prescribing provides non-medical support by connecting people to services to address these challenges, and other unmet needs. The aim is to support people to address these needs holistically, using a person-centred approach, thus giving individuals a greater sense of control over their own health and wellbeing.

Involve has led the development of social prescribing across Kent and Medway, working closely with medical services and the NHS to enable GPs, Nurses, and others to refer people to a Link Worker to help them access non-medical support.

“The support I received from [my LW] has been a pivotal turning point in my journey toward improved mental and physical health”



Social Prescribing

from GP Surgeries

We now have Link Workers in more than 80 GP practices across Kent. We have seen the service diversify to include Health Coaches and Link Workers with specialisms, such as mental health, cancer, and palliative care.

GP Link Workers typically support patients for up to 3 months, including visiting at home and accompanying people to introduce them to activities and local groups or services to provide ongoing support. As part of this we work closely with many other community groups and charities, promoting their services on our directory and helping them accept referrals for people with health issues to take part.

“I cannot put into words how the support I have received has helped my mental and physical health. [My Link Worker] stayed in regular contact with me with calls and texts and it was just so nice to know that someone was there and cared.”



5,510

People supported this year

27%

Reported increase in their physical activity levels



Social Prescribing

in the Community

Not everyone accesses their GP or the medical care they need, e.g. due to homelessness, mental health illness, poverty, disability, language or cultural barriers.

These and other issues can impact on people's health and increase the risk of illness. Funded by Kent and Medway NHS, our innovative approach to addressing health inequalities in West Kent repositions social prescribing, working with community groups such as food banks, advice centres, homelessness services and councils to engage people.

Adopting an outreach approach in West Kent, we have been able to support people experiencing the most adversity and inequality. People experiencing homelessness, debt or mental illness alongside complex physical health problems who struggle to access services. Practical support is offered by applying for grants for people to purchase food, bedding or cooking equipment alongside support to access a GP, benefits, and housing.

949

People supported this year

38.2%

From the most deprived areas

32%

Decrease in loneliness after intervention

Case Study



“I had just been through a traumatic violent incident and was referred to Involve by Social Services. I was 34 days sober and my work as a self-employed gardener was failing. I was struggling financially, and my house was a mess, I had let everything go in the past 2 years due to my excessive drinking.

The Link Worker sat with me and encouraged me to claim Universal Credit and made a PIP application phone call. She supported me to write the PIP assessment form and was there for emotional support when I was assessed over the phone. PIP was awarded within weeks.

The LW also checked on me each week to ensure I had kept the Universal Credit claim going.

The LW applied for grant funding for a £200 supermarket voucher, so I was able to stock my cupboards and fridge. I received £150 towards heating costs from Maidstone Council’s fuel voucher scheme, and I was supported to make an application for council tax support. She also applied for grants to improve my home.

The LW also suggested joining the allotments that Involve run, she suggested she could collect me and come with me for the first session. I went and I really enjoyed getting out, passing on my gardening knowledge and meeting new people. I am now a volunteer at the allotments.

Whilst being supported I have also been encouraged to attend my appointments for psychological support. The support I have received was just what I needed, and it was at the right time for me. I feel that if I hadn’t met the LW I wouldn’t have faced my problems.”

Hospital

Social Prescribing

Our latest social prescribing project is in partnership with Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Hospital Trust working with hospital staff to support patients being discharged from hospital with any social needs and reduce unnecessary attendance at A&E or unplanned hospital admittance.

The support provided is for up to 6 weeks and includes practical support such as collection of food parcels as well as support with finances, debt, access to equipment and help to access the community and reduce isolation.

30.2%

Decrease in anxiety

34%

Increase in life satisfaction



Case Study



“I was very anxious and had self-harmed as I wasn’t coping and had been admitted to hospital. I felt that I didn’t want to be here anymore. I struggled with everyday tasks and had let everything build up around me.

My Link Worker helped me check how much income I have, and when it comes into my bank account, so I know how much money I have each week.

She called D&G to confirm the arrangements of an engineer to come out to fix my broken fridge freezer and helped me write this information on my calendar.

She confirmed all my direct debits and insurance policies and called the Council and DWP for me and asked for a letter to be posted to me to confirm all my benefits that are in place.

She also arranged for the Council to come and take all my bulky waste away so my garden could be cleared of rubbish.

She took photos of all my financial information and liaised with a debt worker so I can be supported by them to pay off my debts at reasonable amounts. I had trouble with my new Smart Meter, so she helped me get this checked and the replacement meter returned to the company with no charge.

I feel happier knowing that my debts will be sorted, and I will be able to budget the money I have to buy the things I need. I feel I am in a better place mentally now and that things are starting to get back on track. I have not been re-admitted to hospital as I am not hurting myself anymore.”



“The support has massively helped my mental wellbeing, I feel **very supported** and much **more confident** than before, I now have something to look forward to and feel more **positive** about going out.”

- Actively Involved Client

In focus



In focus:

Carers

In Kent, an estimated 148,341 people aged 16 and over provide unpaid care to a family member, partner, or friend who is disabled, has an illness or long-term condition, or who needs extra help as they grow older.

In the areas of Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks (excluding Swanley) Involve are contracted by Kent County Council to provide ongoing practical support to carers such as: conducting Statutory Carer's Assessments, issuing Emergency Carer Cards, assisting with hospital discharges, sharing advice and guidance on carer's rights as well as providing emotional and social support to help the carer to look after their own health and wellbeing.

During April 2022 to March 2023:

5,446

People supported this year

3,354

Referred as new to a caring role

71%

Identified as having their own disability or health condition.



In focus:

Carers

Hospital Discharge

Our 2 navigators Natalie and Sally based at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Hospital Trust and sited with the integrated discharge team, identified 928 Carers during April 2022 to March 2023, and supported them with appropriate information, advice, emotional support and of their right to a Statutory Carer's Assessment from Involve on behalf of Kent County Council.

Of those, 450 accessed brokered support services to help them in caring for their family member or friend on discharge from hospital. Services brokered included sit calls, welfare checks, and night sits to enable the carer to sleep, work, take a break and/or access the community. Also support at home with cleaning, laundry, and shopping.

“

Natalie is always on the end of the phone, quick to act and very compassionate to relatives. I am confident when discharging patients with her that they will be looked after. The frailty unit would not run without Natalie and Involve. We are very grateful to her.

- Hospital Occupational Therapist

”



Community Support

We were very happy to be able to restart our face-to-face Carer Forums after the pandemic. The Carer Forums are a chance for those caring unpaid for a family member or friend to meet others, gain peer support, have their voice heard by Involve, the NHS, social care, or other agencies, gain information from a variety of speakers and gain confidence.

The value of peer support for carers can also not be underestimated, whether at our carer groups, or by us helping to connect together carers who live near each other or wish to chat to another carer in a similar situation by telephone. Some carers have now formed WhatsApp groups and gain peer support daily by chatting together. The benefits of others' lived experience can be valuable and help to ease the isolation that many carers experience. We look forward to strengthening the peer support of carers further within West Kent.

“ I was feeling more upset watching my wife's health decline and there was nothing I could do to stop it. I was able to go out socially much more easily before my wife's health declined but now, she couldn't be left.

I really wanted to meet with my friends to play golf to improve my mental wellbeing and physical exercise and Involve supported me with exploring how they could help. I received a Carers Assessment from Involve and short-term funding to cover costs to give me a break, Involve also applied to the Royal Marines charity (I had been in the Marines as a young man) who generously granted me funding so I could continue to get regular breaks to meet with friends and enjoy my golf and exercise at the same time. I also had some breaks from Crossroads.

I am happy with the support from Involve Kent and value their regular contact. ”

Case Study



Moving

Forwards

Learning to budget and keep on top of bills, working out how to get organised in daily life to fulfil work, education, home commitments and keep yourself healthy is a huge learning curve for any young person, especially for those that are leaving care.

That's where we come in.

Moving Forwards supports young people aged 16 to 25 that have either left care or are preparing to leave. The service was co-designed with NHS Kent and Medway to understand if a “social prescribing” approach could be an effective way to improve mental health and life chances of care leavers.

Our Care Leaver Navigators understand the barriers that young people may face, and our one-to-one approach ensures that the support we give is guided by what matters to them most. Support is varied and includes practical support including help with budgeting, sourcing accommodation, access to social and emotional support including activities, hobbies and linking young people to provide peer support, friendship, and consistency.



Trips arranged this year were to Thorpe Park, Leeds Castle Christmas fair and Ninja Warrior activity centre.

94

People supported this year

30%

Increase in happiness



Children's Health

and Wellbeing

This is an innovative service providing 'social prescribing' to children, young people and their families, working with GP practices and in partnership with schools and health services. This service offers long-term support to children and their families by helping to coordinate care and support, access information and guidance and ensure they are aware of and engaged with relevant services and organisations.

Our Navigators are based in the GP practices and work with children from 0 - 18 (or up to 24 with SEND) and their families/carers where the child has a long-term health condition, particularly neurodevelopmental issues (such as autism) or mental health concerns both pre and post diagnosis.

The Navigators respond to current needs and identify gaps in children's services across the county. This enables us to focus our approach and look for funding to test pilots to meet those needs e.g. testing of children's personal health budgets and co-production of activities for children and young people with neurodiversity.

2,626

Children supported this year

35%

Reduction in loneliness



“We have a plan and a place to start, this feels incredible. **A flicker of light and hope at the end of the tunnel**, we know this is going to be a journey but knowing that we now have a place to start, and destination **feels like having a huge safety blanket over us.**”

- Family

Postural

Stability

This year we continue to run postural stability classes. These are 36-week courses offered to people across West Kent and Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley who have had falls or whose worry about falling is inhibiting their lives. Supporting people to gain strength and balance sees great outcomes and ensures people are able to live longer independently in their own homes.

The Postural Stability programme, delivered by specialist level 4 instructors, continued to receive high volumes of referrals.

240

Clients attended across all boroughs in North & West Kent (between April 2022 - March 2023).

64%

Clients who started completed the full 36 week course*

*this figure includes clients who began the programme in 21/222 and Q1 of 22/23

82%

Clients reported maintaining or improving mobility confidence levels

83%

Maintained or improved their functional fitness tests from first assessment

In 2022/23 we worked closely with local communities to widen access to the programme. We strengthened our engagement with the Sikh community in Gravesend and now have two dedicated classes at the Gravesend Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara site. These classes are separate for men and women and are supported by volunteers who provide translation, ensuring the programme is widely accessible.





“It has given me much more **confidence**, I feel **safer** doing activities and domestic chores.”

- Postural Stability Client



Some of our Volunteer Drivers

We are very fortunate to have a fantastic group of Volunteers within the Community Transport Team. We have 4 office volunteers based in The Hub with Tracey, our Transport Coordinator who assists with taking and filling booking requests, along with dealing with cancellations, amendments, and ad hoc enquiries. This year we moved over to new transport management software (RoadXS) and a new phone system, and the volunteers have all adjusted extremely well to working on the new systems.

We have around 30-35 drivers active at any one time, all using their own cars to transport the clients from across Maidstone and Malling to a wide variety of appointments, day centres, social clubs, etc. The demand for the volunteers is always high and increases each week, this is due to a lot of the public transport links being reduced across our coverage area, and families unable to take their loved ones to appointments due to the cost-of-living crisis and being unable to take time off work.

Community

Transport

We also have a smaller group of 8 Minibus Volunteer Drivers who do an amazing job driving our two minibuses, which are booked out most days for coffee mornings and activities. Community Transport supports many individual clients across Maidstone and Malling, but we are also proud to support our fellow colleagues and their clients across other teams at Involve, including Actively Involved, Care Leavers Team, Postural Stability and the Youth Programme – using both the minibuses and drivers with their own cars.

9,000

Trips made a year

600+

Clients supported

Our drivers are worth their weight in gold, and we are truly grateful for all their time and support that they give to Involve and the community, many go above and beyond, and they are fantastic at spreading the word about the great work that Involve as a charity do. We are proud of the number of clients we can support, and the feedback we receive is fantastic.



“I would be stuck indoors without the kind drivers from Involve who pick me up and take me to the groups, I am unable to use public transport due to my mobility and certainly could not afford taxis. **These drivers are my lifeline to the outside world.**”

- Community Transport Client

Helping

You Home

Often after a stay in hospital, a person's circumstances will change. This may mean that they now need adaptations or changes made to their home, to not only make their transition back home easier, but to also prevent future hospital admissions. It could also be that their home was a factor in their admission to hospital.

Helping You Home is a practical service that works with people in Maidstone to make homes safer and more accessible.

We conduct Home Safety Checks prior to a hospital discharge, help with moving furniture such as moving a bed into the living room, and installing lifelines. We also ensure access to other services such as adaptations, social prescribing and community navigation.

The service provided supports the person's quality of life and reassures family members or carers of their safety. This service is delivered in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council and Maidstone Hospital.





“The service you provided for my Mum was excellent. Trevor was a very polite guy and explained how the key safe worked and it was fitted extremely quickly and very well. **I would recommend this service.**”

- Helping You Home Client



“You are able to think out of the box when applying for a Personal Health Budget, which other funding streams don't always allow you to do so you can really tap into things which are of interest to the children and young people, and which will make a **difference to them on an individual level.**”

- Professional

In focus



In focus:

Innovations in Children's Services

Following on from our successful Children's Health and Wellbeing service working within GP surgeries from 2020, we have developed the following services and support for children and young people through identifying gaps in the county and working to test new approaches to improve wellbeing for children, young people, and their families.

CONNECT!

The Connect! programme is for children and young people aged 11-18 with an Autistic Spectrum Condition, or on the pathway to an ASC diagnosis living in Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling Boroughs.

The aims of the programme are:

To create fun opportunities in an Autism Friendly environment.

To allow young people to create connections with peers through shared interests to develop their social skills.

To empower young people to build their confidence, resilience, and wellbeing.

To give parents and Carers the chance to have a break and meet others going through similar experiences.



In focus:

Innovations in Children's Services

The programme is funded by Kent County Council's Short Breaks service, and we have received additional funding for activities from Reconnect and Wards Estate Agents. All activities are co-produced with the children and young people by focusing on what matters to them and have included:



Bike rides



Mini golf



Trampolining



Online gaming



Arts and crafts



Fishing



Kayaking



Football



Archery



Baking



Animal experiences



Pizza making



Rock climbing



First aid training

All activities have a focus on:

- Building relationships at activities and finding common interests
- Recognising familiar faces, reconnecting, and sharing experiences and challenges
- Creating a sense of belonging – finding your tribe!
- Teamwork, peer support, patience, and compassion
- Developing friendships and connecting outside of activities
- Inclusive for home schooled young people
- Safe space for young people to access their passion and feel 'good enough'
- Introduction to clubs with support to join and progress a hobby/interest
- Stepping outside comfort zones – challenging sensory boundaries in a comfortable environment
- Giving young people a chance to shine and use their skills or knowledge of special interests to support others

In focus:

Innovations in Children's Services

“ At school people think I am weird, it's nice to be around other autistic people
- Young Person ”

“ We get to meet new people in a place or activity that we can feel safe in.
- Young Person ”

“ We really appreciate the break, it's not always easy. The girls are very fond of you, and we really appreciate the extra mile you go to help the children.
- Parent ”

“ My 14-year-old son has ASD and struggles to communicate in social situations. Connect has opened his world socially with such a great variety of activities to choose from. It has built up his confidence and he looks forward to going.
- Parent ”



Innovations in Children's Services

Personal Health Budgets

Working alongside Kent and Medway NHS, we are testing the use of Personal Health Budgets to improve the wellbeing of a child or young person from 0-25 years old who is diagnosed with, or suspected to have, a neurodiverse condition. The project aims to personalise care and meet a wellbeing need which cannot be met by statutory services.

There are two funding streams to the Personal Health Budget pilot:

Early Intervention funding (Rolled out in October 2022)

Aimed at providing early support to young people to minimise the risk of their support needs escalating.

Crisis Prevention funding (Rolled out in February 2023)

Aimed at supporting those young people at risk of requiring Tier 4 intervention or those stepping down from a Tier 4 placement and supporting their smooth transition back into a community setting.

As part of the Kent & Medway NHS 'Making it Work' transformation initiative, the aim is to demonstrate the effectiveness of early intervention and support both in meeting the needs of neurodiverse children and their families, and in reducing the pressure on diagnostic provision.

Since the beginning of the pilot in October 2022 we have supported 201 children and young people, 181 for the Early Intervention funding stream and 20 for the Crisis Prevention funding stream.

Personal health budgets have been used for a variety of support including access to hobbies, sensory equipment and therapy.

Case Study

Young person who was issued with a Crisis Prevention Personal Health Budget for an annual gym membership:

I have been going quite often, around twice a week. It has improved my mood and helped me to get out of the house more often. It has helped me both mentally and physically. I also go to the gym with my friend, so it has given me a social outlet.

I think it helped me with going to school because it has improved my mental health which makes it easier to go to school.

With thanks to our partners

We are proud to work in partnership with over 50 charities and voluntary organisations to enrich our Universal Wellbeing provision across both West Kent and DGS. Working together increases the pool of expertise and knowledge and increases our reach to support people from diverse backgrounds.

These partnerships have ensured we have a rich and diverse portfolio of activities available to our clients as well as specialist support and advice.

Thank you to our partners for your dedication, our collective efforts are making a tremendous difference to the quality of people's lives.

Total amount of funding secured by Involve for our VCS partners:

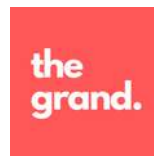
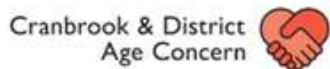
£507,037



West Kent Actively Involved Christmas Party



Over 55's Forum



With thanks to our funders

The Souter Charitable Trust
Kent County Council Support in Isolation
Kent County Council Engaging Communities
Together Fund Kent Sport
Movement for Good Awards Benefact Group
Thomas J Horne Memorial Trust
Kent Community Foundation
The Cobtree Charity Trust
Live Well Kent Innovation Fund
Marsh Charitable Trust
Staplehurst Parish Council
Maidstone Borough Council Community
Resilience Grants
Waitrose Community Matters
NHS Community Connections Maternity
Whitehead Monckton Charitable Foundation
Kent County Council Community Transport
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Pfizer
Esmee Fairbairn Charities Trust
Screwfix Foundation



Contributing to National Data

In this reporting year we worked with NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board to produce the first ever evidence of the impact of social prescription on hospital usage.

Working with a sample of just under 6000 people, we analysed system usage data for acute care for 6 months prior to, and 6 months post-social prescribing intervention. The results showed:



23.64%

decrease in A&E attendance
in over 55's with frailty or
poor health



18.78%

decrease in A&E attendance
in those aged 18-55 with poor
health



4.79%

decrease in unplanned
inpatient stays amongst
carers



5.18%

decrease in unplanned
inpatient stays for over 55's
with frailty or poor health

Not only were these results significant in demonstrating the impact of social prescribing, but they show determination and motivation from Involve to lead the way with impactful data and contributing to the evidence base.





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