



The Test Bed Fund



The Test Bed Fund End of Year Report 2020-2021

Executive Summary

The Test Bed Fund is funded by Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group and managed by MVA's Befriending Team. It offers grants to organisations operating locally in Medway or Swale for the provision of services and activities that seek to strengthen community cohesion through befriending services. It is specifically designed to pilot new and innovative ways of working.

We are looking for:

- New initiatives to be explored/ tested
- Specialised conditions-focused befriending support
- Locality-based befriending services
- Further development of existing services
- Stimulating local activities

It is important to note that, during the period of this initial year of Test Bed Funding there was a global pandemic which dramatically altered the landscape of needs and funding, and therefore made some differences to the projects funded, and how these projects operated.

Introduction

17 projects across Medway and Swale were funded by the Test Bed Fund (TBF) during this first year, and £85,000 was disbursed across these projects.

The projects were:

- Medway Diversity Forum-Connect All
- South East Gender Initiative- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Pansexual Support
- Swale Community and Voluntary Service- Befriending
- Walderslade Together- Keep Calm and Carry On
- MEGAN CIC- Peer 2 Peer
- The Mess Room- Out of Sight Not Out of Mind
- Medway Voluntary Action- Bridging the Divide
- Kent Muslim Welfare Association- Activity Access for All
- Kent and Medway Nigerian Association- Heart of Gold
- Swale Citizens' Advice- Money Talks
- The Octopus Foundation- Shed Wellbeing Project
- Sheppey Matters- Garden Gate
- Friendly Faces of Kent- Remain Protected
- Sateda- Project Hope
- wHoo Cares- Parent Peer Support Group
- Age UK Medway- Pen Friends
- Mutual Aid Road Reps- Let's Get Chatty



The Test Bed Fund

Each of the organisations provided interim and full written reports during and at the end of their projects, and many attended monthly verbal reporting and support sessions as well as participating in a group WhatsApp which was well used between organisations.

Training sessions were also help for participants in evaluating projects, measuring impact, undertaking baseline measurements, and report writing.

Performance against Outcomes

We were looking for:

• *New initiatives to be explored/ tested*

17 projects were undertaken as part of this programme. 14 were full successes, one was a partial success with the project taking much longer to get off the ground than anticipated (Pen Friends), one did not work and was converted into another project (Parent Peer Support Group), and one was unable to recruit sufficient volunteers, so will continue in a different form (Activity Access for All).

• *Specialised conditions-focused befriending support*

8 of the 17 projects were specialised conditions-focussed programmes:

- Connect All (Various ethnic minorities)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Pansexual Support
- Peer 2 Peer (mental health)
- Out of Sight Not Out of Mind (blind and visually impaired people)
- Bridging the Divide (digitally excluded adults)
- Heart of Gold (Nigerian and other ethnic minorities)
- Project Hope (domestic abuse)
- Parent Peer Support (young parents)

• *Locality-based befriending services*

6 projects were locality based:

- Swale CVS
- Walderslade Together
- Swale Citizens Advice
- Sheppey Matters
- Friendly Faces of Kent
- wHoo Cares

• *Further development of existing services*

5 projects were further development of existing services:

- Swale CVS
- Walderslade Together
- Megan CIC
- The Mess Room



The Test Bed Fund

- The Octopus Foundation

•Stimulating local activities

2 projects looked at stimulating local activities:

- Activity Access for All (transport)
- Let's Get Chatty (coffee mornings and walking)

Incidents, compliments, complaints and lessons learned

Most projects were very well received, and the only complaints related to a lack of ability to extend services which was impossible during the pandemic due to Government restrictions.

There were an enormous number of compliments across all projects, with participants being overwhelmingly positive about the activities provided.

Case studies

More than 30 case studies were provided across projects. This is a small sample of them:

Case Study 1- MS- Bridging the Divide

MS was referred for telephone befriending calls. While carrying out his telephone assessment for the befriending programme, Louise thought and suggested he might be perfect for the tablet scheme. MS has varied interests which he's managed to read up on using the internet but most importantly and the biggest benefit to MS is that he's been joining in with the MVA member and volunteer Zooms. MS has anxiety issues, struggles to speak to people on the phone and in group discussions and by joining in with the Zooms he's had the opportunity to join in and grow in confidence. Through getting to know other members of MVA through the Zooms MS has now taken the next step in attending coffee meet ups in person.

Case Study 2- NS- Keep Calm and Carry On

NS came to us a while ago and would only engage with telephone befriending as she did not want to leave home. She has commented on how well she had been matched with a befriender, and that she trusted her- "She just gets me". NS feels that the befriender has helped her to manage her mental health and anxieties making her less suicidal and giving her something to look forward to every week.

Case Study 3- KH- Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind

KH was finding lockdown incredibly hard, and had to ban the use of "that word" with her family as it triggered dark times and took her to an unhappy place.

After her initial doorstep visit she kept in touch with the coordinator via WhatsApp; the coordinator taught KH how to leave messages there which is better for visually impaired people. KH's work produced through this project was a snapshot of her emotions and summed up how she felt. This was challenging for her both physically and emotionally, but she felt it gave her a voice. Subsequently KH taught someone else how to crochet via WhatsApp, attributing her skill-sharing to the confidence she gained during this project.

Case Study 4- MD- Peer2Peer



The Test Bed Fund

MR was referred to this project due to feelings of loneliness. At first she was reluctant to speak to the Peer, but they built up a rapport and she began to speak openly about her isolation and the chaotic and unstable support network she had. She felt her Care Coordinator did not understand her needs, and they discussed how best to approach this.

MR was bored which led to negative behaviours, so they discussed aspirations to do a Master's Degree. The Peer supported her through the application process, and MR is now awaiting the result.

Case Study 5- MB- Heart of Gold

MB, a member of the Nigerian community, is a young man who had been involved in several police issues and incidents. He was to be given a sentence in Court, however KMNA stepped in with a reference and a recommendation that they would support him to have a change in behaviour. The Judge accepted the letter and MB was released.

MB is now working in an apprenticeship, and has turned his life around. He engages with KMNA on a weekly basis.

Case Study 6- S- Shed Wellbeing

Covid-19 left S unemployed, and he lacked confidence in interacting with others. He actively listened and participated in the sessions, and received assistance with completing application forms and creating a CV. Within 2 weeks of finishing the programme he secured full time employment- he believes that this project was a huge stepping stone to him returning to the workplace.

Case Study 7- T- Garden Gate

T is a mum to a young son; her partner completed suicide last year, her father had cancer and her mother had multiple health issues leaving her hospitalised.

T was very grateful for the support given as part of this project including building a garden bird box, delivered activities, doorstep chats, and contact with a Cruse trained bereavement counsellor.

T remains an active participant in the project, and offers regular updates on the improvement in her wellbeing.

Case Study 8- A- Remain Connected

A has been housebound for 4 years. He had had several falls, and had lost confidence in going out. He and his wife became isolated and lonely because of this, and they lost connections with friends, family and their local community.

A started to join the project's social media pages and Zoom coffee sessions, the online gardening activities, and reached out to other members through the buddy letter system. His wife also joined Zooms, and the pedometer challenge, going outside with the dog to up her steps. She is also involved with the Virtual Book Club and quizzes.

They are keen to continue and feel their lives have been transformed.

Case Study 9- I- Let's Get Chatty

One of the users of the MARR service became a volunteer for the Let's Get Chatty service. She now feels able to offer her help in exchange for the help which was given to her earlier. She feels that this service has helped to heal the community. "I did think as I was stuck at home I could try and do some good and pay forward as they say... I hope I do my best for someone and bring some light to their day"



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Service challenges

Operating the TBF and its 17 projects in pandemic circumstances has clearly presented many service challenges. These included safeguarding while working remotely, training volunteers (and staff), having to navigate necessary changes to the projects based on changes in Government restrictions, and difficulty (in some cases) completing ongoing baseline assessments to measure improvements in participants' health and wellbeing.

Headline successes

The vast majority of participants improved in at least one measure of health and wellbeing, with several projects declaring that 100% of participants improved in this manner.

Friendly Faces participants reported an 87% improvement in physical activity; Megan CIC participants reported a 64% improvement in their mental health and wellbeing; other improvements across projects included improvements in confidence (91%, Octopus Foundation), optimism (91%, Octopus Foundation), Happiness and life satisfaction (82%, Octopus Foundation; 95% Friendly Faces; 100% Swale CAB)

An outstanding feature of this TBF project has been to see how well the 17 organisations have worked together, and the new partnerships and alliances that have formed from this. A good example of this was when Friendly Faces had participants who could not engage due to digital exclusion, they referred their participant to MVA for a tablet; the participant was then able to engage in Friendly Faces activities.

The success of organisations to amend their projects as Government restrictions changed should be commended; for example, Sheppey Matters was intending to deliver to people's "Garden Gate", but then a new Lockdown occurred preventing this; they switched to deliveries of DAB radios, gardening kits and baking kits which could be delivered safely, and which gave participants activities to enjoy at home.

Several organisations learned how to write reports and to evaluate projects for the first time. Most of the projects had not previously used ongoing baseline assessments to measure improvement in health and wellbeing, but this is an invaluable tool for them moving forward.

Many organisations also found the monthly Zoom meetings and WhatsApp group really helpful: "I've never been involved in a project with so much help between grant application and final report before- the extra support has been incredibly helpful, and has improved our project, and will also improve future projects"- Wendy Daws, Mess Room.

"I'm really enjoying running this project. The Test Bed Fund Partners (grantees) are all so helpful, and it is great to know the support is there" Denny West, Swale CAB

Quotes from participants:

CH's support worker (who visits her twice a week) said "it's added some excitement to CH's day, given her a mental release. She's been joining in on Facebook a little too. CH has a TV but no package, so the tablet has opened up the world to her". [Bridging the Divide]

"My telephone befriender has been like a lifeline to me. I don't know what I would have done without her." [SCVS befriending]



The Test Bed Fund

“I needed it to keep my mind active during lockdown. Having something to concentrate on stops you dwelling on the negative elements of being isolated, especially from family” [OOS]

“When I grow up I want to be helping people like Bro Tolu is helping us” [Heart of Gold]

“C was so chuffed when she told me she received a baking box delivery. I was so worried about her spending long days on her own struggling to self-motivate. This thoughtful gesture has cheered her up” [Garden Gate]

“Joining the virtual FFOK coffee mornings has given me a new outlook as I have met some really lovely people who are also in a similar situation to me. It has opened up a way to form friendships, join in, and have some fun even though my situation at home hasn’t changed. It has given me hope and purpose. I am feeling more positive about my future because of this project” [Remain Connected]

Conclusion

This has been an extraordinary programme occurring during unprecedented times.

Testing new ideas in this way with short projects which were 6-12 months long created ice-breaker moments to reach new audiences. It should be noted that there was extraordinary diversity covered by the projects within this programme, and all the organisations taking part showed great dedication.

The Test Bed Fund enabled established but small organisations new opportunities to test ideas, and newly created organisations, some born of the pandemic, the opportunity to learn how to write funding bids, reports, evaluate, and run an organisation for the benefit of the public while improving participants’ health and wellbeing. This gives the programme as a whole a legacy, and a sustainability factor for the future.



The Test Bed Fund



Appendix 1- The projects **Medway Diversity Forum (MDF)**

Who We Are:

We promote social inclusion by working with people in Medway and Kent, who are socially excluded on the grounds of being members of minority ethnic communities, relieving the needs of such people and assisting them to integrate into society.

We provide support to reduce health inequalities and barriers they face and promote increased access to opportunities available from local authorities, service providers and other charities. We organise events, workshops, seminars, festivals, activities like, lunch clubs, exercise sessions, woodworking, training, and advisory sessions, to build their capacity, empower them to develop skills and confidence to make informed choices, improve quality of life and prevent isolation of the vulnerable people.

MDF currently represents 28 community organisations in Medway, and service providers, i.e. Medway Adult Education, Donate Life UK. Our current partners include Medway Public Health, Medway Voluntary Action, University of Greenwich, Diversity House, Ellenor hospice, Kent Police, Medway Spice Credits, VCS Leaders' Network.

What Our Project Is About: Connect All

In the light of emerging mental health issues due to the current pandemic, Medway Diversity Forum is fully committed to alleviate the disproportionate challenges BAME people are facing in Medway including language barriers to access services on line, lack of culturally appropriate support to cope with loneliness and bereavement. The project would involve:

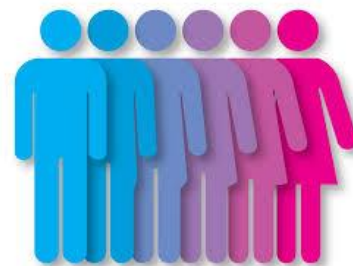
- Designing an activity pack for the vulnerable older adults and young people which would include a 15- page de-stress colouring book, using real-life stories of the lockdown. A professional artist will turn these stories into sketches and colouring book format. Each illustration will depict a real-life experience. After the books are delivered, a follow up call will be made to get feedback about the pack and general chat about their wellbeing. People will have the option either to ring us on the number provided in the pack or we can call them back.
 - A simple therapeutic tool to improve mental wellbeing, especially for people who are not engaging with the mainstream services, face language barrier and not digitally proficient.

Laying the foundation for starting a BAME befriending project. This will allow us to find out what befriending looks like for BAME people, the areas people need help with to ensure a correct match, how many befrienders would feel confident or comfortable working in the wider community because majority of them have been doing befriending within their own community groups. This project would allow us to link up with MVA's Befriending service and their training program for befrienders.





The Test Bed Fund



South East Gender Initiative (SEGI)

Who We Are:

Since 2011 SEGI have provided peer support and counselling services for the Transgender Non-Binary & LGBTQIA+ community. This support has developed over the years and currently comprises the following weekly services:

- Trans & Non-binary support Groups for Young People, Adult People, Parents and Carers of Trans & Non-binary People.
- An LGBTQIA+ Counselling service

Due to Covid-19 restrictions These services are currently provided virtually via Zoom video & What's App Messaging. SEGI is led by LGBTQIA+ people and the organisation is staffed and managed by volunteers.

We also provide awareness training and act as a resource for organisations on Trans & Non-binary matters. We work closely with Kent Police & NHS to prevent Hate Crime, improve access to Health Care.

We are a founding member of Medway Pride Community Organisation and work closely with other LGBTQIA+ organisations to help provide and improve local services for our community.

What Our Project Is About: SEGI Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Pansexual Support

SEGI have been receiving an increasing number of enquiries from members of the Lesbian community and older Gay men looking to access local support groups & Bisexual / Pansexual support services are not present in Medway.

Stonewall recently announced in their response to Covid-19 'Life has changed for all of us recently. But some lesbian, bi, gay and trans (LGBT) people are harder hit than others while socially distancing. It's clearer than ever that equality is not a luxury; it's essential for everyone's safety, health and wellbeing'.

SEGI who currently provide Trans/NB support services would like to expand these services to include separate support groups for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual/Pansexual People.

Initially due to self-distancing measures we would be looking to pilot these services virtually. We will need to employ voluntary staff to facilitate the service and build a self-supporting network of service users.

These groups will be created and managed by SEGI and based at MGSD Centre in Rochester. Which will eventually be available as a safe place for members of the groups to meet up on a weekly / Monthly basis.





The Test Bed Fund



Swale Community & Voluntary Service (Swale CVS)

Who We Are:

We are still known as Swale CVS and we are an umbrella organisation covering the whole of Swale offering support to the voluntary and community sector (VCS) including back office support, bid writing, governance a training programme and admin support. We are the Trusted organisation for the Eastern Sheppey Big Local and the Accountable body for Ideas Test art programme.

We are also a Volunteer Centre recruiting and supporting volunteers and volunteer using organisations. We run projects using volunteers including a large volunteer transport service offering essential appointments (mostly health related) to our elderly and vulnerable clients, we have over 1300 transport clients and undertake in excess of 25,000 trips per year using volunteer drivers. We also have a one to one befriending service that has been accredited by the NCVO Mentoring and Befriending approved befriending provider.

What Our Project Is About:

We want to expand our one to one befriending service and add on a telephone and keeping in touch service and want to reach up to 250 socially isolated residents/clients across the whole of Swale and surrounding rural areas with a weekly keeping in touch call.

During the recent Covid 19 crisis we helped alongside Swale Borough Council (SBC) man the Sittingbourne Food Hub and undertook shopping and prescription collection to the shielded and vulnerable using volunteers. By doing this we came across more and more vulnerable and isolated people in urgent need of ongoing support and we were also referred many clients through the SBC helpline.

We want to keep in touch with the large number of these residents/potential clients and offer them a weekly keeping in touch phone call and being able offer further support from our transport service now it is gradually resuming and also our one to one befriending service offering a shopping and book swap/puzzles and games swap service if required. Many people we spoke to just are asking for someone to call and to do this call on an ongoing and regular basis and they want to build up a lasting relationship.

We have a number of volunteers wanting to help but we now need a part time member of staff to organise and set this up by contacting the client and asking their interests and matching them to a suitable and DBS checked volunteer. We also have volunteers that helped us while furloughed and say they could continue with this telephone keeping in touch outside of work hours now many have returned to work and we do not want to lose these volunteers either.





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Walderslade Together CIC (WALT)

Who We Are:

WALT currently has over 100 members drawn from the ME5 area. Under normal circumstances, we would be running coffee mornings, brunch, art & craft sessions and a Time to Talk mindfulness and wellbeing session, amongst other activities such as swimfit.

We also undertake shopping and prescription deliveries, and accompany members to GP and hospital appointments, as well as carry out befriending and welfare calls every week to members who are unable to join in physical sessions.

What Our Project Is About: Keep Calm and Carry On

Due to the coronavirus lockdown our activities in person have been curtailed and we now need to support our members in other ways, which include:

- Delivering activity packs for those now isolated at home.
- Running Zoom video conference calls in place of the wellbeing sessions.
- Increasing capacity for welfare and befriending calls with more mobile telephones and call packages.



The Test Bed Fund



Medway Engagement Group And Network CIC (MEGAN)

What We Do:

We offer support for adults (aged 18+) who have mental health issues living in the Medway, Swale, Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley areas. We run peer support groups for specific mental health issues including depression, anxiety, bipolar and personality disorders.

We also offer informal sessions including coffee & chat groups and social groups to reduce social isolation. In addition to these sessions, we hold Forum Events bringing together service users, carers and service providers to share information, feedback and help shape future services. We offer awareness sessions to support service users, carers, family members/friends and professionals to increase understanding of mental health issues.

MEGAN CIC is involved in the Medway REAP Partnership supporting people experiencing hardship crisis and has recently started an Outreach Project working one-to-one with individuals to tackle issues such as benefits, debt, housing, social isolation, access to services, etc. In the DGS area, we also run the User Voice Project feedback back peoples experiences of mental health services to Commissioners and Service Managers to improve the services available.

What Our Project Is About: Peer 2 Peer

During COVID 19 Outbreak, our services have changed dramatically to support the needs of our members. This has included offering Wellbeing Calls to check in with individuals to ensure they have support in place, where necessary, offer guidance, signposting and information regarding coping strategies, psychoeducation, etc.

Through this provision, we have identified a number of people that, regardless of COVID 19, would benefit from a regular befriending call from a peer – someone with lived experience of mental health issues that can offer empathy and understanding around individual circumstances.

We are experienced and recognise the value and positive impact in delivering peer support. Building on this and what we have learnt through COVID 19, we propose to employ a Peer Mentor who will take on a caseload of service users who require befriending from someone who understands their mental health issues.

We have come across many individuals who do not require Wellbeing Calls from our Support Workers but do require a listening ear due to social isolation, lack of support networks, etc. In addition to the calls, the Peer Mentor will encourage individuals to join MEGAN groups (Zoom) to check in with other members. Should individuals require additional support, our Peer Mentor would be trained to identify needs and would refer/signpost on to our Support Workers or other relevant agencies.





The Test Bed Fund



The Mess Room

What We Do:

The MESS ROOM, established by artists Wendy Daws and Christopher Sacre, is a creative, inclusive space where we facilitate fun, accessible and innovative artist workshops for all. Our open and collaborative approach promotes independence and community-led peer support, where all who work and play with us strive to break down barriers and reduce social isolation.

With over 30 years of combined experience working with diverse groups, our artists specialise in supporting deaf and people with hearing loss or blind and visually impaired people to express themselves in new and exciting ways, using a combination of inclusive activities and communication methods, including British Sign Language (BSL) and tactile materials. We work with schools, local artists and community partners to raise awareness, train and mentor the next genera/on of MESS ROOM advocates.

As professional artists we also develop unique commissions and exhibitions to promote the exceptional abilities of our participants, organise cultural events and projects that support inclusivity and equality for all.

What Our Project Is About: Out of Sight Not Out of Mind

'Out of Sight Not Out of Mind' is for Blind and visually impaired residents of Medway. MESS ROOM will connect with this hidden community to offer guidance and support to get creative at home and instill the confidence previously gained at the studio. Wendy Daws volunteers with the Kent Association for the Blind (KAB) running art groups for adults with sight loss.

The adults are concerned with their isolation, lack of creative stimulation and need to connect with their peers. As it is not possible for studio meetings Wendy aims to connect the group by inviting everyone to make art wherever they are. By responding to individual needs, supplying materials and tailoring artists support she will explore new ways to enable others to create by methods other than traditional 'face to face sessions' - by phone, email, Zoom, visiting doorsteps.

It's about giving individuals the permission that creativity can happen anywhere. The photos will be available for digital display, online and for publication. These artworks will be exhibited at Rochester Art Gallery. The project does not end with the exhibit each other but find it difficult to pick up the phone. Sight loss has formed, Out of Sight aims to re-connect the group.





The Test Bed Fund

Medway Voluntary Action (MVA)

Who We Are:

Medway Voluntary Action is the infrastructure organisation for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector in Medway. We work to reduce barriers to participation, and to build self-esteem, resilience and aspiration in the individuals and communities in Medway.

Embracing and reflecting the diversity of the VCSE in our work, we provide an open and welcoming environment accessible to all. Operating in a culture of continuous improvement and reflective learning we act as a catalyst for social change through our central hub of information, support and guidance to support and empower Medway communities to come together to help improve their lives and solve problems that are important within their communities. Part of these roles include these activities:

- Running the Befriending programme,
- Hosting Simply Connect (the Social Prescribing and wellbeing navigation tool),
- Hosting networking and information sharing sessions in person and virtually,
- Signposting funding opportunities to the wider sector,
- Providing training

What Our Project Is About: Bridging the Divide

This is a pilot project to facilitate digital connectivity for socially isolated members of the community in Medway and Swale without access to IT.

- 37* people will receive a tablet which is already set up (with appropriate apps etc) with a pre-paid sim allowing connectivity, plus an easy to understand booklet with photographs showing them how to use it.
- Participants will sign a waiver explaining that they will have to return the equipment if not used, and paid for if damaged.
- They will be supported by our young outreach volunteers (R2R), digital volunteers from Carers First, MidKent College and from the Nigerian and Muslim communities in Medway.
- Participants will be assessed before and after the programme to see if their health and wellbeing has qualitatively or quantitatively improved over the project.
- If they have engaged with the project and improved their health and wellbeing they will be offered the opportunity to keep the tablet; if they have not engaged with the project and not improved their health and wellbeing then we will arrange for it to be re-used.

For those who wish to keep the tablet, a donation will be requested it will be at the discretion of the recipient as to how much they can afford, the minimum being £2, the maximum being £75 (to allow for full cost of the tablet)

* Additional funding granted meant the total number of tablets available





The Test Bed Fund

Kent Muslim Welfare Association (KMWA)

Who We Are:

KMWA usually supports the local Muslim Community providing education, religious activities, emotional and wider support. The Mosque is a Third Party Hate Crime Hub (linked in to the Police).

They provide IT support for the community and for those who have been subjected to racial abuse; and discussion groups about modern living covering many themes including science, philosophy, religion, broader cultural topics, protecting the young and more.

KMWA are very active in the Interfaith Community, taking part in the Peace Walk, Medway Interfaith Action, National Interfaith Week, hosting open Mosque sessions and being a key member of the Communities and Faith Forum over the pandemic. Over Lockdown KMWA has been very busy helping Medway Council and ALL communities across Medway across the following:

- Making emergency food deliveries for Medway Foodbank;
- Collection/ delivery of pet food;
- Collection/ delivery of prescriptions;
- Transport to medical appointments;
- Buying food for people across communities (food paid for by the recipient);
- Appropriate non-urgent medical advice given to the community from GPs, pharmacists and dentists within the Muslim Community;
- Taking referrals from other communities (e.g. the Hindu community) to support their members who had no family in Medway.
- Making befriending calls
- Making face masks and PPE

What Our Project Is About: Activity Access For All

Activity Access for All will be a safe and inclusive community transport scheme for people living in Medway who need to get to a medical appointment, school appointment, or social connectivity activity (e.g. community coffee morning) and who cannot afford a taxi, have no family available to transport them, are unable to use public transport, or whose public transport options have been limited because of social distancing.

This project will not only enable people to get to their appointments a encourage young people to volunteer; to understand the ethos of volti way street; they will learn that they give their time and energy, and wi understanding how different communities are affected by the pander differences, and how their gift of time has a transformative effect on t





The Test Bed Fund

Nigerian Community Association Kent & Medway (NCA)

Who We Are:

The Nigerian Community Association Kent and Medway is a voluntary organisation with an open and individual membership to all Nigerians in Kent and Medway. It is set up to support the socio-economic and welfare needs of Nigerians living in Kent and Medway. NCAKM is a not for profit and an all-encompassing organisation, with board members made up of individuals from our local community. Our activities include, but not limited to:

- Advice and counselling to Nigerians who may need help and support within our own frame of cultural understanding.
- Pro-creation of activities and events designed to unite Nigerians and to improve Nigeria's image.
- Endeavour to end poverty within our community by supplying food items to individuals, families, elderly and vulnerable people
- Assist Nigerians to access public services and facilities
- To advocate for improved service standards beneficial to Nigerians in service provision
- Providing a befriending service to Nigerians moving to Kent & Medway
- Providing peer support to Nigerian families needing help & solutions for common issues

What Our Project Is About: Heart Of Gold

The Heart of Gold project focuses on the elderly, lonely, homeless, vulnerable and low-income families providing them with food, Hygiene essentials & befriending needs through the support of our network of community volunteers.

With so many people losing their source of livelihood, & elderly living on basic minimum pension, we have had to increase our volunteer capacity and our food outreach days have gone from 3 days a week to every day of the week. Our volunteers do not just deliver food parcels to the elderly's they also spent time chatting with them to help ease isolation..

COVID 19 has been a learning curve to enable us meet not just the demands of the groups we support but also the increased demands for support and assistance from families that have reached out to us. We have provided our services to people from all nationalities. We believe that with the financial support we will be better equipped to keep up our hard work in these difficult times whilst also ensuring that consistency and continuity are maintained.



Swale Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)





The Test Bed Fund

Who We Are:

Our Aims

To provide the advice people need for the problems they face. To improve policies and practices that affect people's lives

Our Principles

To provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination

Our Values

To focus on customers, achieve results, continuously improve, promote equality and fairness, value each other and work together

Locally, we provide services for our clients through a committed and well-trained primarily volunteer workforce, offering face-to-face and telephone advice from locations in Swale's three main towns of Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness.

We are a campaigning organisation as well as an advice-provider and we seek to continually review and improve the services we offer for the people of our community. These Aims and Principles drive the work that we do with clients, in negotiations on their behalf, and in dealings we have with the various agencies we encounter through providing fair and independent advice. They also inform our own internal operating practices, staff and volunteer policies, recruitment, training and support.

What Our Project Is About: Money Talks

Whilst we are an established debt advice provider, that work is fundamentally reactive – we see clients when they already have a problem, not before. This project allows us to support individuals and households before they get into a situation where formal debt solutions are necessary, by providing an informal and friendly setting to explore spending habits, sources of income and ways to manage finances.

The project will include links to the Swale CVS Befriending service and Swale Food Bank, as well as our own general advice team to provide a channel linking basic financial needs to wider support infrastructure so that beneficiaries have access to a friendly voice, a decent meal, and tools to help manage household bills.

Clients will either self-refer or be referred in, for a short period package, with one-one discussions including current and past habits, understanding of types of debt and prioritisation, basic budgeting – all considered within the context of the wider household judgemental manner. We aim to use the tenets of befriending helping the beneficiary avoid deeper financial trouble.





The Test Bed Fund

The Octopus Foundation

Who We Are:

The Octopus Foundation works with hard to reach groups, or those who are often on the periphery of mainstream or popular service provision.

We have previously worked with young people at risk of exclusion, using informal diversionary activities to re engage them in formal education. This has included small group work programmes, focusing on anger management and behaviour modification using both discussion and activity based sessions as well as providing one to one support.

Our main area of work at present is an independent Shed Project, providing activities for older men, including ex servicemen, many of whom are lonely and isolated, and lacking purpose after retirement. We have a well equipped carpentry workshop where our shedders produce items both to take home themselves and to donate to the project as a means of raising extra funds, and in so doing, also raising their feelings of self worth. We also provide broader activities such as arts and crafts, cooking sessions, jigsaw puzzles and board games, whilst encouraging reminiscence and general debate. Our main aim within this area of work is to bring people together to support each other through shared interest and companionship.

What Our Project Is About: The Octopus Foundation Shed Wellbeing Project

It is widely recognised that support services and social provision aimed at people with mental health issues and particularly men, is an under resourced area in Kent and Medway.

Therefore, due to the success of our older men's independent Shed Project, we would like to expand this to by encouraging membership from younger men with a range of both physical and mental health problems, who would also benefit from the activities we are able to provide. We have the capacity, capability, resources and facilities to deliver positive diversionary activities to meet a range of needs. Alongside this, we also have the knowledge, skills and personal experience of mental health issues and life in general to provide a safe environment in which to support people with empathy, understanding, respect and acceptance.

We know through our referral agencies that the need is great. Colleagues from the Medway Social Isolation Network, RE to inform them as soon as v wanting to join our project.

SHEPPEY MATTERS

Sheppey Matters





The Test Bed Fund

Who We Are:

Sheppey Matters has six community projects spread over the island operating from five bases and a mobile facility. The projects tackle the island's health and inequality issues, delivering health and well-being themes, engaging the community in various activities, social and learning opportunities, health messages and community engagement. Our projects are:

- A community transport scheme; three minibuses; one transporting elderly people to/from a day centre, one taking young disadvantaged children to/from school and a third providing day trips for the island's older residents.
- A health and well-being project focusing on obesity issues through two community chefs, a gardener and a youth worker. The project takes healthy eating, activities and social opportunities to local people
- healthy living centre; Sheppey Matters and partners successfully sought funding in early 2000s, delivering our own services plus enabling over 30 other community and agency groups to deliver their health and well-being services.
- Rural youth services for our young people providing universal clubs and sessions for children with additional needs, plus training for NEETs.
- A support network and specialist training to help families living with ADHD.
- Community radio Sheppey FM 92.2 – offers training and social opportunities for everyone; a voice for community groups to engage residents

What Our Project Is About: Garden Gate

During lockdown, we contacted our older residents by 'phone and newsletters, eventually introducing the 'garden gate' concept by meeting a resident at that spot. Participants were recruited through our own contacts and partners such as community wardens and fire brigade.

Conversations with residents and family members made it clear to us that a firm, but gentle hand is needed to encourage older people to actively participate in a route back to social interaction. However, this is not just for the elderly as referrals indicate younger isolated people also require contact. Pre-COVID many relied on the project to bring them out into the community and participate bringing joy and a sense of achievement. We hope to reintroduce people through taking shopping trips or just meet for a cuppa – one step at a time – with a view to long-term reintegration.

As session support, we will be leaving a small present such as a radio, a novel or a basket of fruit or vegetables (from our allotment) – to act as a reminder to the resident that our support is always available.

The project will be led by the charity's experienced Manager who will e- participants and assessing the distance travelled given the level of anxiety. We will share this information.

We have made other small funding applications knowing there is a need for a term project. Sadly, many residents have no clear vision for their future alone tomorrow.





The Test Bed Fund

Friendly Faces Of Kent

Who We Are:

We are a constituted company group who support adults over 18 to reconnect with their local community after suffering the effects of isolation and/or loneliness. Historically we do this via support group settings where we come together in a safe and friendly environment allowing members to feel able to talk and be heard. This offers a chance to form friendships and build relationships with other local people.

We organise wellness speakers, exercise, book clubs, healthy eating cookery, gardening, walking groups and educational outings.

Since Covid-19 we have had to divert our usual way of working to virtual online project 'Let's stay connected'. During this time we have seen an increase in our members via Social Media. We have found these new members are always isolated and lonely, they will not ever be able to join in our usual groups due to being housebound through mental or physical disabilities. This new phase of members whom historically we have not engaged with have said that they are actually enjoying the lockdown as it's opened up so many opportunities to engage with people through our Social Media pages, telephone support etc.

Once lockdown is lifted, we would therefore like to support these very vulnerable isolated and lonely members.

What Our Project Is About: Remain Protected

Online Workshops for housebound members and inclusion via Zoom to include: Coffee Morning Support Groups, Monthly Virtual Book Club Via Kindle, Virtual Walks, Armchair Exercise, Online Educational Courses, Healthy Cooking Classes & Virtual Garden Tutorials.

All housebound members will have the opportunity to connect and be included via Zoom with Physical Workshops, Coffee Morning Support Groups and Classroom Courses.

We will also offer a weekly Befriending call and a postal service where we can forward letters between members so they remain connected. We work with various support agencies where needed.

We feel this is a great way for all members to connect with whom are housebound to reconnect with people in support.





The Test Bed Fund

SATEDA

Who We Are:

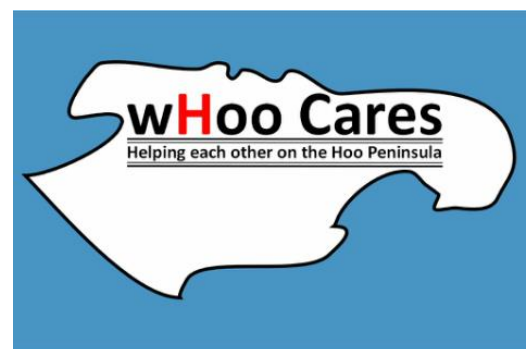
SATEDA provide a full range of services to families who've experienced domestic abuse. This includes individual support, Support2Court, group work and counselling. We have a unique employability programme which supports women who have experienced da to gain skills and confidence through supported volunteering and peer support. We also deliver preventative work, campaigning and influencing to ensure systemic change for victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

What Our Project Is About: Project Hope

Female volunteers with lived experience of domestic abuse, will write letters of hope to female prisoners in women's prisons across the Country. We will begin with East Sutton Park as our most local prison, and roll this out further afield throughout the year.

SATEDA's volunteers will be beneficiaries of this project, and all are residents in Swale and Medway. The prisoners will also be beneficiaries – however they will be women from across the country.

The Swale and Medway volunteers will benefit from the letter writing as it will allow them to use their experiences of domestic abuse to help others – it is widely documented that a high proportion of women in prison have direct experience of domestic abuse, and are often in prison as a result of the abuse. SATEDA's volunteers will have peer support training which helps them to use their lived experiences to help others, which in turn allows them to move on from their experiences of trauma – whilst growing their self-esteem and confidence. We have also identified an increase in our volunteers feeling valued when they are given projects which empower other women, and have a level of responsibility attached. They can see they are effecting positive change in others and this is very powerful.



wHoo Cares





The Test Bed Fund

Who We Are:

wHoo Cares is a community based organisation supporting vulnerable and socially isolated individuals on the Hoo Peninsula. Our aim is to empower local residents to have an active voice in the shaping of their care and support needs and to utilise the abilities, skills and expertise of local people through our volunteer programme.

Examples of volunteer support include in-home befriending, respite befriending to allow carers time away from home, accompanying individuals to community activities such as the local coffee morning and transport to health appointments or shopping. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the support we have provided has changed.

Our befriending support is mainly over the phone with shopping and prescription collections being done on behalf of our Partners, not alongside. With generous support from local businesses and groups we have also delivered over 250 'Isolation Survival Packs' to our Partners (clients) and members of the community with 10 specifically created for our Partners with advanced dementia.

We are slowly returning to face-to-face activities such as garden and walking visits and have recently started a Community Van which travels around the peninsula visiting our Partners who live alone, delivering items such as books, craft supplies, postage stamps and greeting cards.

What Our Project Is About: Parent Peer Support Group

Our project is to form a weekly Parent Peer Support Group for parents of school aged children, during school hours and term time. Initially run by staff, the group will transition to be run by the parents themselves with staff providing guidance and support when needed. To start, the group will be via an online platform moving to an in-person group when it can be done safely, following government guidelines.

The group will be open to all Hoo Peninsula residents although focus will be given to those living in Chattenden. Chattenden was identified by Medway Council's Children's Services Early Help team as the area most in need; the majority of their cases on the peninsula are within this area. Many parents coming from a domestic violence background have been rehoused there.

The aim is to provide an enabling environment for socially isolated and lonely parents where they can feel safe and included and part of the community by offering befriending in a group environment. Regular guest speakers on relevant, user suggested, topics will equip the parents with the skills that they need to improve their day to day lives and well being at opportunities such as volunteering.

In addition to the meetings which will focus on the parents, we will provide parents to positively engage with their children by giving the Spice Time Credit vouchers used for organised days out to





The Test Bed Fund

Age UK Medway

Who We Are:

Age UK Medway are committed to providing a range of services to support older people in their later lives. We work with older people to ensure that they are receiving the highest levels of care and support and work with the view that each individual will be catered for to their own personal needs and requirements.

We treat older people with respect and dignity and promote the independence of all elder residents within our communities by providing flexible and person centred care at the point of need. We also take pride in promoting and being a voice of for the rights of older people through campaigns and promotions.

What Our Project Is About: Pen Friends

The idea of starting a pen friend service is to encourage older people to participate in an alternative form of building friendships and opportunities to communicate with one or more people in a way they feel comfortable and confident with. People are lonely and isolated and this method of communication is relatively cheap and cheerful, it is likely to have been a familiar method of communicating with friends, family and loved ones throughout their lives.

Writing letters and having them posted off to a new person or an old friend to catch up with news, sharing memories of childhood and events throughout their lives bit by bit waiting to see if the other person had a similar or a different memory of the same events builds anticipation like waiting for the next episode of their favourite show.

The rush to answer questions, add bits of the story, wait again for a response could bring a real joy to people's lives with a simple pen and paper, the sky's the limit! How many will find coincidences in their stories and people they both know or places they have both been, did they both go to the same School or Dance Hall, did they have children around the same time in the same Hospital, it's a small world after all.

MUTUAL AID ROAD REPS
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE
WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY





The Test Bed Fund

Mutual Aid Road Reps (MARR)

Who We Are:

MARR is a Mutual Aid Community initiative which was set up in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, in order to reach out and offer support to hundreds of vulnerable individuals and families across the Medway Towns, many of whom have been self-isolating or shielding. A large number of individuals, for whatever reason were forgotten by the system, or were unable to access regular support and help at the time. We therefore were able to meet this need.

Our services since March have included: shopping errands for residents, prescription collections and deliveries, help with utility top ups, providing hearing aid batteries, PPE provision and our Let's Get Chatty service to support those in need of a human connection.

We are aware that as the situation evolves we will need to adapt and be flexible and immediate in our response. We are providing a vital service and are passionate about carrying on our work beyond the pandemic, as we foresee that many of our services will still remain relevant and needed. We are working closely with Medway Council's Vulnerable People's Hub, One Big Family & Gillingham Street Angels to provide consistent and effective help across Medway.

What Our Project Is About: Mutual Aid Road Reps (MARR) & Let's Get Chatty

Mutual Aid Road Reps - DBS checks

As stated above, we have a number of volunteers who have DBS certificates, but we would like to process this for all our active volunteers so everyone meets the required standards expected of volunteers working with the public and any vulnerable adults we work with.

Mutual Aid Road Reps - Promotion & Outreach

Promotion of MARR and information to encourage connections & requests for assistance. Promotion of the LGC Public Engagement Programme Methods of Promotion: Facebook ads, posters, leaflets, website and a monthly newspaper advert.

Mutual Aid Road Reps - Volunteer Accessibility - Travel Expenses

We will support our hardworking volunteers as far as we are able to meet essential travel expenses when they are working actively in the community supporting the isolated and vulnerable. We're passionate that poverty should not be a barrier to community volunteering & engagement.

Let's Get Chatty Service - Public Engagement Programme

Provision of our befriending service to those who are feeling lonely and isolated with the extension of the service to physical engagement via coffee mornings, allowing us to bring people together to form human connections and a sense of belonging and well-being within their community.