

Making a Difference through volunteering

A big thank you!

We are grateful to the many funders and donors who have all contributed to the services and projects of KCV, they include in alphabetical order - Age UK Herne Bay & Whitstable, Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Folkestone Town Council, Garfield Weston Foundation, Kent Community Foundation, Kent County Council, The National Lottery Community Fund, NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board, Philip & Connie Phillips Foundation, The Roger de Haan Charitable Trust, Thanet District Council, the Tudor Trust and our 500 Club and Christmas raffle supporters.



About Us

Kent Coast Volunteering covers Dover, Folkestone & Hythe and Thanet, designing and delivering volunteer involving services with a unique expertise.

Our staff and volunteers are inspired by the difference they and KCV make, most live in the communities we serve and our culture is shaped by our shared values about the power of volunteering and social action.

Our core purpose is volunteering – we are here for the individual and the organisation.

Kent Coast Volunteering Annual Report 2023-2024

Connecting communities through volunteering and volunteer-led projects





Introduction

October 2023 – September 2024 included expansion of our volunteering brokerage service with a youth volunteering project in Thanet and the inaugural Excellence in Volunteering Awards across Folkestone & Hythe district. We were successful in our first attempt at crowdfunding, and we launched our accessibility project.

Our in-house projects the Community Transport Service and Good Neighbours Service continued to do vital work with staff, volunteer befrienders, volunteer drivers and office volunteers reducing loneliness and isolation and transforming lives.

We are in a good position to look forward, and to explore ways to expand our services, supporting our communities, combatting loneliness and isolation and improving lives. We are proud of our achievements during this period and the impact we have made.

Vision

Our Vision and Mission continues to be a future where Kent's coastal communities improve their quality of life through the power of volunteering and social action, connecting communities across East Kent through volunteering and community-led projects.

Mission

Volunteering is at the heart of everything that we do. Our service has always been focused on those that are most disadvantaged, including older, disabled and marginalised groups such people who are economically disadvantaged - and even young people.

Leadership

Long-time Trustee and Volunteer Driver, John Sutton, is our committed chair, ably supported by former chair Eddy Pugh. Long-time trustee Suzy Addley stepped down in April 2024 and Anouska Ladds is poised to step down at this year's AGM, holding on to help us - despite relocating to Singapore. We thank them for everything they have done for KCV. John Gallagher became a trustee at our 2024 AGM. Cameron Fitzwilliam-Grey who joined us the year before has already proved invaluable. Thank you to our dedicated trustees Heather De Souza, who supports us on the ground in Folkestone with teaching and events, and Vebi Kosumi whose knowledge of the sector is invaluable in board meetings.

Finances

For the first year in a long time, we ended our financial year with a surplus to reinvest in our charity, thanks to the introduction of Gift Aid and some healthy bank interest.

Grant funding remained a key source of support, though the funding landscape continues to be challenging, with charities facing increased competition for smaller pots of funding.

Our charity continues to explore ways to diversify funding through council and health contracts, as well as income generation.

A generous exit grant from Tudor Trust, who backed our brokerage service in Thanet for three years, helped our charity remain secure.

And The Garfield Weston Foundation granted us a generous award to continue our work.

Support from Kent Community Foundation has been invaluable as core funding is so difficult to find, and the charity's additional help and advice has been hugely supportive.

We'd also like to thank Funding for All and Charity Mentors Kent and Medway for their support this year.



Volunteering Awards

We added a string to our bow with the inaugural Folkestone & Hythe District Excellence in Volunteering Awards, organised and hosted on behalf of Folkestone & Hythe District Council. The awards are an opportunity to recognise and reward volunteers and celebrate VIOs.

Nearly 100 entries were submitted, with nominees ranging from volunteers supporting food initiatives, repairs, and financial assistance to those involved in environmental groups and dementia services. The 2024 awards recognised volunteers of all ages, including those in their 80s, busy parents, and individuals offering stability and support to young people. Other nominees included those organising waste reduction efforts, fundraisers, and social events, all contributing to the vibrancy of the community. The awards highlighted the abundant kindness and talent across Folkestone, Hythe, and Romney Marsh.

The stories on the following page highlight the powerful, life-changing impact of the Volunteer Connector service in building confidence and offering a sense of purpose to individuals facing various challenges.

Case studies

The Volunteer Connector service has made a significant impact, reaching 900 individuals and working closely with over 200 people to help them develop confidence and improve their wellbeing through volunteering. Notable success stories include:

- Naveed, an asylum seeker who volunteered at several organisations and is now working part-time, catering, and enrolled in university.
- Sophie, a retiree who wanted to connect with her new community and took on multiple trustee and executive committee roles after speaking to us.
- Tony, referred to us by the DWP who overcame anxiety through volunteering at a Thanet food project.
- Nina, a young volunteer with social anxiety, who now helps make costumes for the Great British Carnival using her fashion talents.
- In Dover, Kevin has been volunteering with Leaps & Bounds for a year, making a huge impact by helping maintain the site.
- Stefan, who has ill health, continues his graphic design work through volunteering, finding it a source of purpose and achievement.
- Mark, a volunteer connector in Folkestone, has been supporting Mr. T, who struggled with confidence due to his challenges and past volunteering experiences, but is now preparing for trial volunteering days.

Volunteer Brokerage

Our Volunteer Connector service is entering its third and final year, delivering a volunteer 'matching' service and supporting volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) in the Thanet, Dover, and Folkestone & Hythe areas on issues relating to volunteering. The service reached 897 VIOs, organised networking and knowledge sessions, and launched an Accessibility Project focusing on deaf awareness. Key achievements include the Dover Volunteer Connector's involvement in initiatives like the Dover Volunteer Hub and the Deal History Alliance. In Folkestone, one highlight was helping Ripple of Hope, a group supporting women dealing with grief, by providing infrastructure support and volunteer policies, connecting them to relevant organisations to secure funding and develop their website. As a result, Ripple of Hope is thriving. The service also formed a partnership with Thanet District Council's Community Champions Programme to support local VIOs.



Good Neighbours Service

We would like to highlight the valuable work of volunteer befrienders in the Good Neighbours Service across Thanet, Dover district and Folkestone and Hythe. Our befrienders provide both practical and emotional support, improving clients' quality of life and helping them make positive changes. Stories of volunteers encouraging clients to leave their homes after years of isolation show its impact.

Our befrienders add that extra layer of support people sometimes need to make other important changes in their lives.

This year, we successfully relaunched our Dover district service and were successful in our first crowdfunder for 'Super Befrienders,' a pilot project.

We thank long-time supporters The Philip and Connie Phillips Foundation and Age UK Whitstable and Herne Bay - and Roger De Haan Charitable Trust, Folkestone and Hythe District Councillors and Folkestone Town Council for stepping in to support the service.

Project Outcomes

Jessie, our Folkestone Coordinator, shared one reason she thought the service was important. She said that many clients had passed away without family or friends, but the service's befrienders offered companionship and support until the end.

Jessie said: "Sadly, we have had a few clients pass away. They didn't have any friends or family, which is not uncommon as their children grow older, their partner's pass away, as well as friends they have loved for years. Our incredible befrienders have been with these people up until the end of their life, providing care, comfort and, most importantly, friendship. I believe the greatest impact of the service is giving people that care and knowledge that they won't die without someone who cares for them."

The loneliness resulting from bereavement often leads people to seek help from the Good Neighbours Service, with clients regaining independence with a befriender's help. This includes Patsy whose life started again after venturing out with her befriender following a period of grief-induced isolation. Patsy started driving again and has since been on a cruise.

Case studies

John, a widower, lived on top of a steep hill and had been unable to go out for a few years, as he was unsteady on his feet. He relied on his neighbour to take him to hospital appointments and paid someone to walk his dog. The only other contact he had was when his shopping was delivered. John said the driver was very kind and took the food into his kitchen, as it would take him 'all day'. John was matched with Kate who brightened up his week and John said his world completely changed. An email from Kate reads: "He does as much for me mentally as I do for him :) he's just worried about being a burden on me. Now he's realising he's not."

Margaret, dealing with multiple health issues, had isolated herself in her apartment for years until she was matched with Pauline. Margaret initially felt anxious about meeting her new befriender and almost cancelled the match. However, after a reassuring conversation with Pauline, who explained the support she would provide, Margaret agreed to a first visit. Since then, they have formed a strong bond, with Margaret enjoying their conversations and feeling comfortable with Pauline. Pauline has also helped Margaret overcome her anxiety about leaving her apartment, even assisting her with walks and spending time in the garden. Margaret looks forward to more outings once the weather improves.



Community Transport

Thank you to our dedicated staff, all our volunteer drivers and our brilliant team of office volunteers who make this possible.

Around 50 drivers using their own cars manage more than 6,500 trips getting people to and from medical and other health related appointments across Kent - and social trips wherever possible.

We currently have more than 1000 members of the service, part funded by the NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board, which supports some of the most isolated in our community to attend NHS appointments.

Project Outcomes

The transport team, now with three staff members, 9 office volunteers, and 50 volunteer drivers, continues to provide vital support to those in need.

Client feedback highlights the service's importance, with many praising the drivers and the emotional support provided, especially for hospital visits.

The charity aims to expand the service, especially to support those with life-threatening illnesses like cancer and younger disabled people, who are no longer eligible for NHS non-emergency patient travel. However, this expansion depends on recruiting more volunteer drivers.

Would you like to be a driver
transport@kcv.org.uk 01304 380513.

Find out more
<https://www.kcv.org.uk/what-we-do/community-transport/become-a-driver/>

Client feedback

"We think the service is absolutely wonderful and all the drivers are absolutely wonderful and the whole set up is absolutely wonderful and we don't know what we'd do without it. We can't speak highly enough of it." Mr and Mrs B.

"This service offers transport, and it is lovely just having someone going with you and someone to talk to. Going to the hospital is the only time I go out." Mrs H.

"I think it's wonderful. I have really regular appointments and it's a lifeline for me." Mrs H.

"We would like to have the opportunity to say a very big thank you for all your kindness, it is very much appreciated," Mr C.

"Just can't Thank you enough for this service, such a help to me and my Mum," Mrs. D.

"Reliable, friendly and very helpful. In the past nine months, I have benefited from about 5 lifts to hospitals, each time with a different driver, and every single one has been kind and caring. Each driver has been punctual with good knowledge of where I am going and where to park for best access to where I've needed to go," Mrs B.