

Kent Coast Volunteering

Connecting Communities In
Dover, Thanet, Folkestone & Hythe

IMPACT
REPORT
2024-2025

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INTRODUCTION

At Kent Coast Volunteering (KCV) we connect people through volunteering to strengthen communities, improve wellbeing and create opportunities for everyone to thrive.

Working across the East Kent districts of Thanet, Dover and Folkestone & Hythe, we serve communities that include some of the most disadvantaged areas in the county. Every day, volunteers make a difference to the lives of people through companionship, mentoring, advocacy, practical support and community activities - they help people stay connected, independent and well - and they care for the places we share, leading environmental projects, maintaining community gardens, protecting heritage sites and improving local neighbourhoods.

At KCV, we support both individuals who want to volunteer and the organisations that rely on volunteers to deliver vital services. Through volunteer outreach, brokerage, training and best-practice support, we help strengthen the voluntary sector and create more opportunities for people to contribute their skills, experience and time. We design and deliver volunteer-led services that respond to some of the most pressing challenges facing local communities, including loneliness, isolation, disability, limited mobility and social exclusion.

In the last year alone, we supported more than 3,000 people and worked with almost 900 volunteer-involving organisations across East Kent. Our programmes include community transport, befriending and inclusive volunteering opportunities.

Volunteering creates benefits that extend far beyond the immediate support provided. It brings people together, fosters a sense of belonging and purpose, and helps individuals develop new skills and confidence. For many, volunteering is a pathway to better wellbeing, stronger social connections and greater resilience. This dual impact - improving the lives of those receiving support while enriching the lives of those giving their time - lies at the heart of everything we do.

This report celebrates the achievements of our volunteers, partners and communities over the past year, and the collective impact we have created together.



OUR STORY SO FAR



OUR MISSION

Kent Coast Volunteering was founded on a simple belief: that people have the power to create positive change when they come together to support one another.

Our vision is a future where Kent's coastal communities enjoy a better quality of life through the power of volunteering and social action. Our mission is to inspire, enable and champion volunteering, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute, connect and belong.

Over the years, we have grown into a trusted hub for volunteering and social action across East Kent, helping communities harness the skills, compassion and commitment of local people. Throughout our journey, our focus has remained firmly on supporting those who face the greatest challenges, including older and disabled people, individuals experiencing loneliness or social exclusion, people on low incomes, and those who face barriers to volunteering and community participation.

OUR PURPOSE

We raise awareness of volunteering and the difference it makes, celebrate the extraordinary contribution of volunteers, and support organisations to develop high-quality, inclusive volunteering opportunities.

We combine this sector leadership with hands-on experience of designing and delivering volunteer-led services, giving us a unique understanding of how volunteering can transform lives and communities.

The people behind KCV are deeply rooted in the communities we serve. Our staff and volunteers live locally, understand the challenges facing coastal communities and share a commitment to creating lasting positive change. Together, they bring energy, expertise and compassion to everything we do.

As we look ahead, we remain inspired by what volunteering can achieve. The story of KCV is, above all, a story of people - neighbours helping neighbours, communities coming together, and thousands of acts of kindness that collectively make East Kent a stronger, more connected and more resilient place to live.

OUR 24/25 HIGHLIGHTS

1

Folkestone & Hythe District Excellence in Volunteering Awards

Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh's volunteers were celebrated at a ceremony at Hawkinge Centre during Volunteers Week 2025. Dignitaries and community groups gathered to hear inspiring stories of everyday heroism, shining a light on the region's unsung heroes. With more than 100 entries, selecting finalists and winners was no easy task, with all demonstrating outstanding commitment to their communities. Categories were Corporate, Governance, Groups, Individual Volunteers and School/Youth. Thanks to Mrs Susie Warran-Smith, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, who presented the trophies, our judges, and Folkestone and Hythe District Council for funding the awards.

3

Inclusive Volunteering

Championing Inclusive Volunteering
In line with our Vision for Volunteering, we have prioritised breaking down barriers for marginalised groups. Our Deaf Awareness Project has been transformative, delivering interactive sessions that empowered organisations to welcome D/deaf volunteers. Through a strengths-based approach, we successfully supported individuals with profound hearing loss and neurodivergence into meaningful roles, proving that the right support can turn potential into community contribution.

2

Thanet pilot projects

The Community Champions Fund, supported by Thanet District Council and the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, delivered a fantastic array of experiences. From meditative forest bathing at Monkton Nature Reserve to high-octane Charleston dance classes, foraging with Margate Mushrooms, and flower arranging at The Garden Gate Project, volunteers and charity sector staff came together to relax, meet new people and enjoy something new in recognition of their incredible work. Hundreds of roles were published in a bumper directory in our local magazine, Community Ad, packed with opportunities from across Thanet. Our youth project showed how volunteering can open doors, improve wellbeing and empower young people to play an active role in their communities.



The winner of our youth category Holly with Deputy Lieutenant of Kent Mrs Susie Warran-Smith

TRIBUTE TO JOHN SUTTON

5th February 1949
- 3rd June 2026

We remember with gratitude and affection our friend, volunteer driver, trustee and former Chair, John, whose contribution to Kent Coast Volunteering has left a lasting legacy.

John first joined Shepway Volunteer Centre more than 14 years ago, looking for a meaningful way to give back to his community.

It quickly became clear that he was the perfect volunteer. He loved driving, enjoyed meeting people and genuinely cared about helping others. As a volunteer driver, he became a familiar and much-loved face to hundreds of community transport members. Many would ask for John by name, appreciating not only his reliability but also his warmth, kindness and good humour.

Whether he was taking someone to a medical appointment, sharing a story on a journey or simply offering a friendly smile, John made people feel valued. He was generous with his time and rarely turned down a request for help.

Alongside his role as a volunteer driver, John served as a trustee for more than a decade at both Shepway Volunteer Centre and Kent Coast Volunteering, where he later served as Chair.

He played a pivotal role during a significant period in our history, helping guide the organisation through change and supporting the development of what is now Kent Coast Volunteering. His commitment, sound judgement and unwavering focus on the people we serve helped shape the charity we are today.

John was also a valued mentor and source of support to staff. Many colleagues remember his guidance, encouragement and willingness to share his knowledge, particularly around finance and governance. He helped welcome new team members, supported them to grow into their roles and was always willing to offer advice when it was needed.

Even during his illness, John's commitment never wavered. He continued to volunteer and fulfil his trustee responsibilities for as long as he was able, reflecting the extraordinary dedication he showed throughout his time with KCV.

John was a passionate advocate for community transport, a champion of volunteering and we are immensely grateful for everything he gave to KCV and to the communities we serve.

John will be greatly missed, but his legacy lives on in the thousands of journeys made, the people he supported, the organisation he helped build and the countless lives he touched along the way. Our thoughts remain with his wife Ruth, daughters Emma, Sarah and Rosemary, his grandchildren and all those who loved him.



OUR 2024/6 STRATEGY



1: Increase Participation in Volunteering

We will inspire more people to volunteer and ensure opportunities are accessible, welcoming and inclusive for everyone. By reducing barriers to participation, we aim to engage people from all backgrounds and life experiences, helping them contribute their skills, build confidence and strengthen community connections.

Our goal: Grow and diversify the volunteer workforce across East Kent, with a particular focus on people who are currently underrepresented in volunteering.

2. Strengthen Volunteer-Involving Organisations

Strong organisations create meaningful volunteer experiences and deliver greater impact for communities. We will continue to provide guidance, training and best-practice support to charities, community groups and public sector partners.

Our goal: Build the capacity, resilience and effectiveness of volunteer-involving organisations across East Kent.

3. Reduce Loneliness and Social Isolation

Through befriending, community transport, social activities and other volunteer-led services, we will continue supporting people who are at risk of becoming disconnected from their communities.

Our goal: Help more people build meaningful relationships, maintain independence and improve their wellbeing.

4. Create Inclusive Opportunities and Tackle Inequality

We believe everyone should have the opportunity to participate in community life. We will continue to develop programmes that support disabled people, older people, young people and those facing social or economic disadvantage.

Our goal: Ensure volunteering and community support are accessible to those who need them most.

5. Build Stronger and More Resilient Communities

By bringing people together around shared goals, we help create communities that are connected, compassionate and able to respond to local challenges. We will continue to support community-led action that improves neighbourhoods, protects the environment and strengthens local networks.

Our goal: Empower communities to shape positive change and improve quality of life across East Kent.

Together, these priorities will guide our work as we continue building a future where people, organisations and communities are connected through volunteering and empowered to make a lasting difference.

VOLUNTEERING

Through our volunteer connector service, we have been empowering people through volunteering.

This ranges from supporting people to overcome feelings of isolation, mental health challenges and even getting people into work through connecting them with volunteering opportunities over an extended period of time.

This year saw a return to more one to one support with those from marginalised communities and additional needs. And we expanded our volunteering brokerage service and widened our infrastructure support offer for volunteer-involving organisations across our districts - thanks to The National Lottery Community Fund's ongoing support - and, in Thanet, thanks to funding from Thanet District Council, via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund additional projects took place (see highlights).

We provided network and knowledge sessions covering a wide variety of volunteering-related topics, including accessibility with our partners Palm Deaf. And Making Connections Dover brought together almost 50 organisations to share learning and build stronger local volunteering networks. Public facing events included Spring Sandwich Community & Volunteering Event, where one organisation signed up six prospective volunteers and also linked up with St John Ambulance who will be providing free first aid at their future events.

We celebrated volunteers in our second Excellence in Volunteering Awards for the Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh area with funding from Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

Across Thanet, young people made a remarkable impact through volunteering, supporting charities, community groups and local projects while building skills and confidence. Through our Youth Project, in collaboration with Pie Factory Music, 14–24-year-olds organised fundraising events to save their youth centre, supported hospice residents, created promotional films, helped at food and heritage projects, cared for green spaces, and took part in sports and creative volunteering. Young volunteers with SEND contributed through gardening, litter picking and media projects, while others discovered opportunities aligned with their passions, from history and fashion to policing and community support. Several participants progressed into employment, demonstrating how volunteering can open doors, improve wellbeing and inspire young people to play an active role in their communities.

Working with our partner, Palm Deaf, questionnaires designed by our deaf accessibility co-ordinator were sent out to members of our community who are deaf and hard of hearing and who volunteered to share their stories. The results of this questionnaire have been used in a report by charity Healthwatch Kent who are using them to inform a wider campaign to enable easier access to GP services for deaf people. Deaf participants also volunteered to share their stories on camera to raise awareness of the issue and the resulting video supported charity Sign Health's 'Still Sick of It' campaign.

We were awarded the NAVCA Volunteer Centre Quality Award (VCQA) in July 2025, demonstrating our effectiveness and professionalism in the delivery and breadth of our services.

40

Deaf volunteers took part in the healthcare campaign

65 YOUNG PEOPLE

took part in co production & social action, gained skills for work & creative skills, and supported charities, CICs and community groups

ACCESS TO DOCTORS FOR DEAF PEOPLE



What is it like?

70% Of Deaf people said their GP is not Deaf accessible



57.5%



Of Deaf people, between the ages of 18-99, rely on a hearing relative, spouse or friend to book their Doctors appointment for them over the phone.

27/40 Deaf people said,

they prepare a note and deliver it by hand to the reception at their Doctors to book their appointment due to communication barriers.

50%

Of Deaf people aged over 65 said their GP Doctor changes regularly, which leads to confusion, and the lack of consistency makes communication even more difficult.

What is already good?

17.5% of Deaf people are comfortable using an app or online portal to book their GP appointment.

What is not so good?

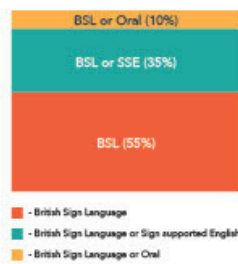
35% of Deaf people said they'd prefer to be independent and book their own GP appointment rather than rely on a hearing person to do it for them.

What needs to improve?

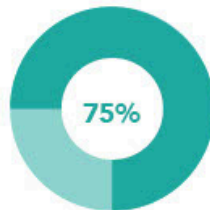
47.5% of Deaf people said that booking their GP appointment made them feel a negative emotion or that they associate it with a previous negative experience.

The statistics and research within this report is based on studies, questionnaires and feedback completed by 40 Deaf people living in the county of Kent in the UK between the ages of 18yrs - 99yrs. The report research was funded by the 'Lottery community fund', organised by 'Kent Coastal Volunteering' and obtained by 'Palm Deaf BSL Training LTD'.
*Statistic extracted from NDCS (Nation Deaf Children's Society) reports.

We asked Deaf people how they prefer to communicate, here's the outcome...



75% of Deaf people find it difficult to make their Doctors appointment



100%

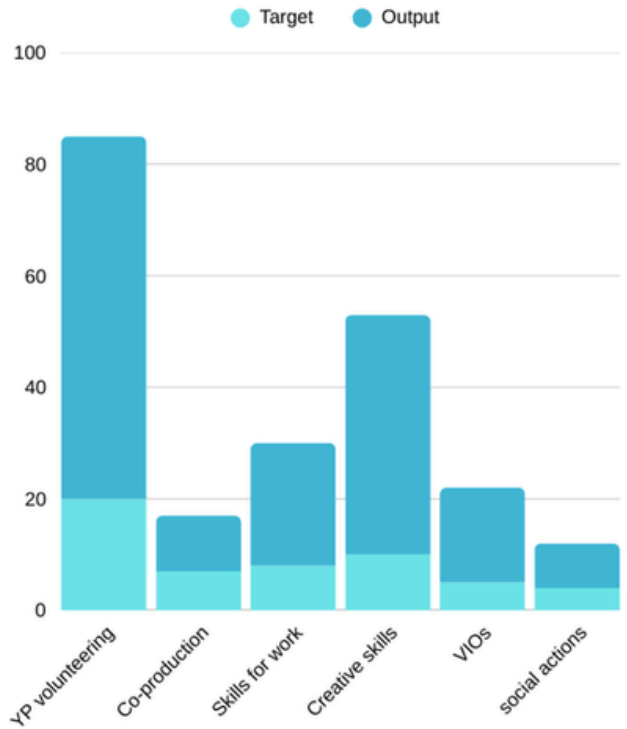
Of Deaf people aged 18-25 years said that barriers when booking their GP appointment made them feel either **frustrated**, **confused** or **reliant**.

Here's some feedback and ideas for improvement from the Deaf community...



Did you know?

Deaf individuals born in the UK often learn BSL as their first language. Only about *13% of Deaf children speak English as a second language. Since BSL and English differ greatly in grammar and structure, reading English can be challenging for some Deaf BSL users. Imagine having to speak BSL fluently every day—that's the reality many Deaf people face in a predominantly hearing society.



Students help hardworking transport volunteers with free vehicle checks
Budding mechanics have learned new skills while operating a free vehicle check for hard working volunteers.

The East Kent College cohort welcomed members from Kent Coast Volunteering (KCV) to their learning base in Broadstairs. They ran diagnostics checks which included a computer scan and tyre pressure check.

Nick Gilbert volunteers as a driver providing essential transport for a range of trips such as hospital appointments and shopping trips.

He said: "I started as a volunteer driver four years ago and have made some good friends. My wife and I moved from Cornwall to be

Now KCV's Chair of Trustees, he says the need for volunteer drivers has increased significantly. He said: There's a terrific need even more so since the pandemic. We had 100 drivers which has reduced to 50 – that's a huge decline."

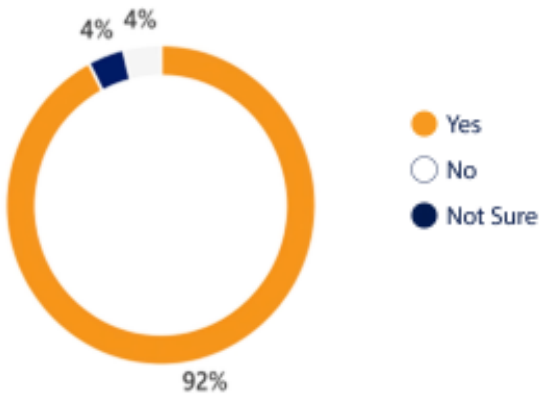
He added: "I decided to volunteer after I retired and being in an office job thought it would be good to get out and meet people. For anyone unsure of whether to sign up I would say to them 'Just do it – you won't regret it!'"

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICE

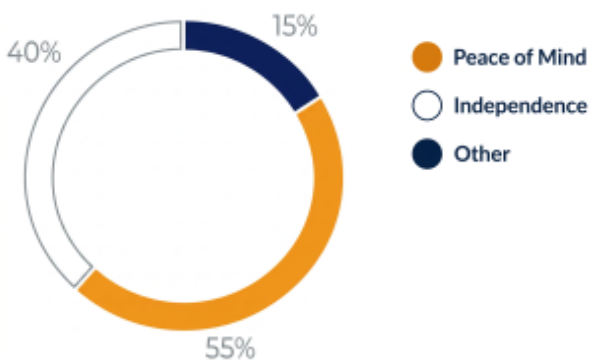
Through our community transport service, we have been connecting people to essential services and social events through volunteering.

We continue supporting people who are at risk of becoming disconnected from their communities and have helped people build meaningful relationships, maintain independence and improve their wellbeing.

Our ongoing survey shows the community transport service enables 92% of respondents to access appointments they might otherwise be unable to attend.



Other benefits include peace of mind and independence.



Volunteer Spotlight: Darren Madden is a Volunteer Driver with Kent Coast Volunteering's Community Transport Service whose kindness and dedication have made a lasting difference to the people he supports. More than simply providing transport to medical appointments, Darren offers companionship, reassurance and a caring presence during some of life's most challenging moments. From accompanying people to important cancer treatment appointments to sharing in milestone moments such as "ringing the bell" at the end of treatment, Darren's compassion goes far beyond expectation. Beneficiaries describe him as reliable, supportive and a great listener, whose quiet commitment has brought comfort, confidence and hope to many.



100%
WOULD RECOMMEND
OUR COMMUNITY
TRANSPORT SERVICE
TO OTHERS

GOOD NEIGHBOURS SERVICE

Through our volunteer befriender service, we have been transforming lives.

We think people's stories speak for themselves. Some names have been changed.

Case studies:

- Mike, recently bereaved, was overwhelmed with grief and social anxiety. He now enjoys weekly outings with Bob – they go for coffee, walk, laugh, and visit old friends. Bob says, "Seeing how much it's helped Mike – and me – is exactly what I hoped for."
- Fred, a man living with severe epilepsy, had become increasingly withdrawn. Cliff, his befriender, brings companionship and emotional support. Coordinator Michaela Lockett observes: "There's a real joy there for both of them."
- Pam, living with Parkinson's for over 40 years, had not left her home in Deal for months. Befriender Sarah now takes her for drives along the seafront, restoring her joy and dignity.
- Clive was taken by his befriender Pat back to the Harbour, where he once worked – a meaningful reconnection with his past.
- Lucy, a befriender, meets her match in Morrisons to do puzzles and play board games – simple acts that have given her match something to look forward to every week.
- One beneficiary, living downstairs in a bed in the living room due to mobility issues, his wife in a nursing home, was acutely lonely and not coping at home. His befriender supported him to get help to tackle his chores, to reconnect with his friends and

community – and to start seeing his wife again who he'd not seen in more than a year.

"It is such an invisible (service), but for me, an extremely important time in the week when my befriender comes. I had a brain injury in 2016, and the social contact has been invaluable. She has encouraged me to become more independent, going for walks and recently going for a cup of coffee. For someone with a conventionally normal routine this may seem almost inconsequential. However, in my circumstances it has given me kindness, structure and support. I cannot praise my befriender and the scheme more highly. Thank you"

Volunteer wellbeing and growth:

Volunteers themselves have reported a deep sense of fulfilment and improved wellbeing.

- Lori, who supports a woman with early dementia, says: "I get as much out of befriending as my match does."
- Hayley, a retail worker, says: "My job in retail is soul-destroying, but befriending has brought me joy. In Joyce, I've made a new friend who gets my sense of humour. Thank you, Joyce."
- An octogenarian widower, initially volunteering to fill a void after his wife's death, has found purpose in helping another lonely man. His presence has been life-changing for both of them.
- Carole, "as a volunteer, I've felt genuinely supported and valued by the Good Neighbours Service, which is rare and makes a huge difference to my confidence and ability to help others."

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

SUMMARY

PROJECTS	DETAILS	OUTCOME
Community Transport Service	Volunteer drivers take 1,200 over 65s to essential medical and social appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independence, peace of mind, social connection, boosted health and wellbeing
Good Neighbours Service	A volunteer befriending service to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation among older people - benefitting 184 people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social connection, boosted confidence and health and wellbeing
Volunteering	Supporting people into volunteering, strengthening charities with volunteers, networking and best practice support and information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills, confidence, employability, social connection, boosted health and wellbeing, stronger VCSEF sector

Funding Summary

Donations

£6,962

Government Funding

£68,458

Grants

£135,101

Income generation

£65,793

Investments

£8,288

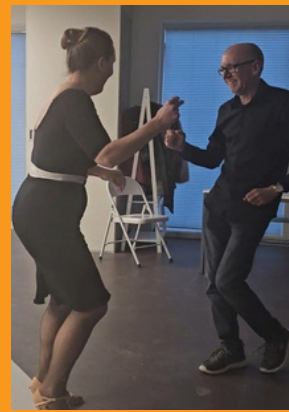
Accreditations: We were awarded the NAVCA Volunteer Centre Quality Award and our Good Neighbours Service is accredited by the Befriending Networks.

147

Volunteers

£284,602

in Funding



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to our trustees, staff and all our volunteers for everything you do to support Kent Coast Volunteering, our beneficiaries and our community.

And thank you to our individual supporters for your generous donations.

We thank The NHS Kent and Medway for its contribution to our Community Transport Service - and Kent County Council for helping us buy materials and equipment for our Community Transport Service.

We thank the following funders for supporting our Good Neighbours Service: The Philip and Connie Phillips Foundation with Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust, Social Enterprise Kent, Crowdfund Kent, which included donations from Kent County Councillors in Folkestone & Hythe, and Age UK Whitstable and Herne Bay.

We thank The National Lottery Community Fund for its generous multiyear support of our Volunteer Centre brokerage, networking, accessibility and best practice service through its Reaching Communities programme.

We thank Thanet District Council and the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund for supporting a raft of programmes for volunteers and the VCSEF sector in Thanet.

We thank Folkestone & Hythe District Council for funding our Excellence in Volunteering Awards.

We thank the Lawson Endowment Fund for a grant to develop a business plan for a proposed new gardening service.

WE THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR PROGRAMMES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



THANK YOU