

**GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 1st July, 2025**

**10.00 am**

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,  
Maidstone**



## **AGENDA**

### **GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 1 July 2025 at 10.00 am**  
**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,**  
**Maidstone**

Ask for: **Hayley Savage**  
Telephone: **03000 414286**

#### **Membership (13)**

Reform UK (9):	Mr O Bradshaw, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr S Dixon, Mr R Ford, Mr B Fryer, Mr D Sian and Mr P Thomas, and vacancy
Conservative (1):	Mr N Williams
Liberal Democrat (1):	Mr M J Sole
Green (1):	Mr P Stepto
Labour (1):	Ms C Nolan

#### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

- 1 Introduction/Webcast announcements
- 2 Election of Chair
- 3 Election of Vice-Chair
- 4 Apologies and Substitutes
- 5 Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
- 6 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2025 (Pages 1 - 12)
- 7 Kent County Council - Introduction to Growth and Communities Division (Pages 13 - 22)
- 8 Performance Dashboard (Pages 23 - 46)
- 9 25/00043 - Old Rectory Business Centre Management Contract (Pages 47 - 62)
- 10 25/00046 - Get Kent & Medway Working Plan (Pages 63 - 94)

- 11 25/00005 - Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent and Medway (Pages 95 - 166)
- 12 Work Programme 2025/26 (Pages 167 - 170)

### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Benjamin Watts  
General Counsel  
03000 416814

**Monday, 23 June 2025**

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

### GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 6 March 2025.

PRESENT: Mr A Sandhu, MBE (Chairman), Mr D L Brazier (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr M A J Hood, Mr S C Manion, Ms J Meade, Mr J Meade, Mr M J Sole, Sir Paul Carter, CBE and Rich Lehmann

ALSO PRESENT: Mr D Murphy and Mrs C Bell

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities), Ms H Savage (Democratic Services Officer), Ms S Berdo (Strategic Programme Manager), Ms B Hooker (Head of Coroner Service), Mr Jarvis (Kent Downs and Marshes Leader Manager), Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mrs S Nurden (Kent and Medway Economic Partnership's Strategic Programme Manager), Mr M Riley (Project Manager), Mr S Rock (Head - Trading Standards), Mr M Rolfe (Head of Community Protection), Mr S Samson (Head of Economy) and Mrs S Thompson (Head of Planning Applications Group)

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

##### **253. Apologies and Substitutes** (Item 2)

Apologies were received from Baldock, Mr Cannon, and Mr McInroy. Mr Lehmann was present virtually as substitute for Mr Baldock and Sir Paul Carter was present as substitute for Mr Cannon.

##### **254. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda** (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

##### **255. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2025** (Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

##### **256. Presentation from Locate in Kent** (Item 5)

*Mr Nick Fenton, CEO Locate in Kent, and Ms Karima Kamel, Business Development Manager Locate in Kent, were in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Nick Fenton, CEO of Locate in Kent, and Ms Karima Kamel, Business Development Manager at Locate in Kent, showed a video and PowerPoint presentation, the slides for which are attached to the minutes.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
  - Focus was on areas with common skills, interests and abilities, and not just individual districts. For example, Locate in Kent was currently focusing on a green corridor which would encompass Dover, Thanet and Canterbury, and a project in West Kent that would incorporate three districts.
  - Regarding areas for business development sometimes land was allocated for commercial space but having commercial property available to showcase to businesses at any given point was important, especially due to competition with the rest of the country.
  - The main priority for Locate in Kent was business investment and identifying a location for the best fit. A company or project setting up in one district could benefit a wider area in terms of job creation, tourism and business opportunities.
  - Opportunities for young people to work locally rather than commuting to London or elsewhere was important.
  - A project had a specific skills agenda that included work with the local education authorities to ensure that the skills necessary were provided for.
  - Every town in Kent was different with various offerings in terms of attractions and challenges and there was not one solution for all.
  - It was important for commercial development to sit alongside housing to provide local opportunities and reduce travelling time.
  - It was important to accommodate the expansion of manufacturing companies in Kent so that they stay local and retain the experience and skills of their staff.
3. RESOLVED to note the presentation.

**257. Verbal updates by the Cabinet Members and Corporate Director**  
(Item 6)

*Mr James Pearson (Head of Libraries, Registrations and Archives) was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mrs Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, provided an update on the following:
  - (a) Kent Libraries had been hosting freecycle events across the county to help local families find costumes to celebrate World Book Day. Libraries across the county were offering themed story times and incentives such as one pound book tokens for preschool children.
  - (b) From April 2024 to January 2025, visits to Kent libraries had increased by 4% compared to last year, with e-book and e-audio book usage up 12%. The archive service remained a key resource for Kent history, with in-person visits up 4%. The registration service continued to meet demand, with ceremonies increasing by 4%, including a 22% rise in citizenship ceremonies.

- (c) Broadstairs Library had been shortlisted for the Library of the Year award as part of the British Book Awards 2025. The Know Your Neighbourhood project in Thanet was helping vulnerable residents access library services and community support.
- (d) A long-term solution was being worked on for the Folkestone Town Centre Library and Mrs Bell had recently met with Creative Folkestone regarding their idea for the Grace Hill building. Proposals from other community organisations would shortly be invited through the Asset of Community Value process.
- (e) The Dover Discovery Centre's refurbishment was progressing on track for completion in the summer and multiple library spaces were being modernised using developer contributions.
- (f) Her Majesty the Queen visited Canterbury last week where she unveiled a statue of Aphra Behn, one of the first English women to earn her living as a professional writer. Mrs Bell said it was an honour to represent KCC at the event, alongside the Leader, the Chairman, the Chief Executive, and other senior officers. The Queen was taken on a guided tour of The Beaney by the Council's Head of Service, Mr James Pearson. The visit received extensive media coverage and was a special day for Canterbury and Kent as a whole.
- (g) The archives service had resumed its popular program of talks at the History and Library Centre in Maidstone. Mrs Bell was looking forward to attending the first talk for this year on Monday, 10 March, which would explore the life of Sir Edward Deering, who lived from 1598 to 1644. The talks were free to attend and open to all. Kent Archives was featured in and supported the first episode of Edward versus George, which was a Channel 4 historical series exploring the royal feud between Edward VIII and George VI.
- (h) A webinar hosted by the Kent Association of Local Councils explored options for local parish councils to fund community warden services, and over 20 councils had shown interest and six had committed to funding. The wardens were being trained by the NHS to deliver advice on stop smoking, and signpost to the stop smoking service.
- (i) The coroner service had settled into their new accommodation at Oakwood House which provided excellent facilities for supporting families and delivering an efficient judicial service. The introduction of the medical examiner role had led to a review of operations with referrals now becoming more complex. On 13 February, the High Sheriff of Kent visited the coroner's facilities at Oakwood House.

2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- Members expressed thanks to library staff for their continued dedication to the service.

- Works had been undertaken to sustain the opening of Wood Avenue Library and the building would continue to be monitored.
  - Community wardens were engaging positively with local residents and community groups, however it was noted some areas of Kent did not have a warden and some parishes were working together to bring small pots of their resources together to fund part of a warden. Conversations outside of the meeting regarding specific locations were welcomed. Parish council funding would not subsidise the Council's service but would be used to expand it.
3. Mr Meade, Deputy Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, provided an update regarding the Council's partnership with the Chernihiv region in Ukraine which included the following:
- (a) In November 2024, the Leader of the Council and Mr Meade, at their own expense, travelled to Chernihiv to sign the agreement on behalf of the Council, and cooperation continued to evolve. In January 2025, Mr Meade visited the region again to take out 12,000 items of humanitarian aid directly to the hospitals in Chernihiv. He referred to a specific project at Mayfield Grammar School in Gravesend and paid tribute to Cobham Hall Independent School who had taken on three displaced Ukrainian students under full scholarship. Schools across Kent had continued to be outstanding in the way that they had welcomed and supported displaced Ukrainian children.
  - (b) Chernihiv had suffered from the targeted destruction of libraries and the Kent Library Service was working in partnership through the National Libraries Connected Scheme to support their libraries. Work was underway to progress relations across a number of spheres including culture, health, development and commerce with a number of large Kent-based businesses starting to explore opportunities for mutually beneficial relationships.
  - (c) To mark the third year anniversary the Leader of the Council and Mr Meade held a virtual meeting with Mr Chaus, the military governor of Chernihiv, to once again confirm the county's unwavering support for the people of Chernihiv and Ukraine.
  - (d) Mr Meade had recently attended a meeting with Meopham Parish Council who had had twinned with the Ivanivka territorial community and thanked the Chairman of Meopham Parish Council and the Parish Clerk for their help. Mr Meade was currently working with eight other parish and district councils across Kent to progress twinning arrangements and invited Members of the Council to pursue relationships with their parish councils, schools and community groups. Mr Meade thanked the local NHS trusts across Kent for donating surplus stock, and the hundreds of schools, community groups and individuals who were collecting and donating aid. Mr Meade expressed his sincere thanks to the Chernihiv Governor, Mr Chaus, and his team for their work in develop these relationships and thanked Irena who translated every document passing between the two authorities.



4. The Chair expressed his sincere gratitude to Mr Meade.
5. Mr Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, provided an update on the following:
  - (a) The Kent and Medway Economic Framework strategy set out five ambitions and 21 action areas that would support sustainable economic growth in the county and a full report would come later in the meeting.
  - (b) Significant progress continued to be made since the relaunch of the Kent and Medway Business Fund scheme. The Investment Advisory Board and its subgroup had recommended the approval of 41 loans, totalling £4.7million in the last year alone to businesses.
  - (c) Visit Kent continued to deliver a range of commissioned services to support the county's vibrant visitor economy. A recent report confirmed that visitor numbers and spend were back to pre-pandemic levels, with the sector providing over 77,000 local jobs in Kent. The 2025 Big Weekend, funded by KCC in April, would enable residents to enter a ballot to receive free passes to local attractions.
  - (d) The Department for Education confirmed at the end of February that Kent and Medway's bid for local skills bootcamps program had been approved. The programme would enable 50 courses for over 500 learners to be delivered locally to help people back into work and to enhance career opportunities for existing employees.
  - (e) Mr Murphy and the Kent Ambassadors would soon meet representatives from the Straits Committee from Belgium, Holland and France to understand the latest priorities for cross-border working and had recently met with the Deputy German Ambassador with the aim of promoting Kent and investment in Kent with international neighbours.
  - (f) A property in Folkestone which had been empty for over 20 years had had been renovated into five brand new flats through the No Use Empty scheme. There was due to be a No Use Empty presentation to the Local Government Association on 27 March. Since inception, more than 500 individual loans had been processed under the empty properties Initiative, and all funds for 2024, 2025 had been allocated. In 2024-2025, No Use Empty generated a return on investment of 4%, which amounted to £650,000.
  - (g) The Kent and Medway Business Growth Hub service, together with representatives from Kent and Medway Business Fund, had continued with a series of business road shows across the county offering signpost services to local and national businesses. The Growth Hub had launched a series of 11 accelerated workshops which were free to local businesses covering topics such as sales, marketing and finance. The workshops were recorded and uploaded to the Kent Medway Business Growth Hub YouTube channel for businesses to access in their own time.

- (h) Mr Murphy took the opportunity to thank members of the economic development team for their work and support over the last four years.
6. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
- Regarding the Skills Bootcamps Programme two market engagement sessions with potential providers had taken place. These provided an indication of what courses were required in the sectors included in the initial bid. A balance between in-person and online would be considered to ensure it was available as widely as possible.
7. On behalf of the Committee the Chair paid tribute to Mr Murphy and thanked him for his dedication and support in his role as Cabinet Member for Economic Development.
8. Mr Jones, Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport, provided an operational update on the following:
- (a) The Kent and Medway Economy Framework was progressing and he highlighted work relating to the Kent and Medway Innovation Partnership, the Growing Places Fund, the Local Skills Improvement Plan, the Integrated Work Health Strategy for Kent and Medway and the South East Creative Economy Network, and the return of international rail to Ashford and Ebbsfleet International Rail Stations. Work was taking place with the Department for Work and Pensions to launch the Connect to Work supported employment programme.
  - (b) Since April the Trading Standards team had saved vulnerable adults from losing almost £375,000 to fraud. In the last six months, the service had seized just over 185,000 unsafe items including 66,000 incorrectly labelled nicotine pouches and 100 packages of tooth whitening strips with dangerous levels of hydrogen peroxide. In 2024 the Trading Standards vape team seized over 25,000 illegal vapes and around 4,000 nicotine pouches.
  - (c) In terms of community safety there were currently 24 active domestic abuse related death reviews. The first themed event for 2025 focused on parental conflict.
  - (d) Regarding Kent Scientific Services, sample numbers at the laboratory were now 50% higher than pre-pandemic levels. All apprenticeships had completed their chemistry degrees and on the 26th of February, the lab hosted a delegation of food safety officials from Qatar investigating food safety controls.
  - (e) The Resilience and Emergency Planning Service were continuing to review and embed the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower inquiry and other incidents and regulatory duties for nuclear and chemical sites, high pressure pipelines and reservoirs.
  - (f) Active Kent and Medway Sport England had confirmed £250million investment to tackle inequalities in activity levels. The annual primary PE

conference would be held on 26 March and Active Kent and Medway continued to run grant funding programs benefiting thousands across the county.

9. RESOLVED to note the updates.

**258. 25/00034 - Proposed merger of the existing four coronial jurisdictions covering Kent and Medway into one jurisdiction**  
(Item 7)

*Ms Belinda Hooker, Head of Kent and Medway Coroner Service and Mr Mark Rolfe, Head of Community Protection, were in attendance for this item.*

1. Mrs Bell introduced the report and said the proposal to merge four jurisdictions into one was in accordance with guidance from the Chief Coroner. It would create opportunities for greater efficiencies and more cohesion across Kent and Medway.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposal to approve the merger of the four existing coronial areas covering Kent and Medway into a single jurisdiction as shown at Appendix A.

**259. Kent and Medway Business Fund Bi-Annual Monitoring - Q2 2024-25**  
(Item 8)

*Mr Martyn Riley, Project Manager, and Ms Susan Berdo, Strategic Programme Manager, were in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Murphy, Ms Susan Berdo and Mr Martyn Riley introduced the report and provided a presentation, the slides of which are attached to the minutes. Sir Paul Carter, provided context surrounding the scheme. Sir Paul Carter thanked Mr James McInroy and business representatives that sit on the board, as well as the officers involved in administering the fund.
2. RESOLVED to note the report.

**260. Risk Management: Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate**  
(Item 9)

*Mr Mike Hand, Risk and Delivery Assurance Officer, was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Mike Hand introduced the report which presented the strategic risks on the Council's corporate risk register and a summary of the key risks from within the Growth Environment and Transport directorate that were of particular relevance to the committee.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- In relation to risk GT0025, Capital Investment and Asset Management, significant levels of external funding had been secured through successful bids and projects were rarely aborted.

3. RESOLVED to note the report.

## **261. Implementation of the Kent & Medway Economic Framework**

*(Item 10)*

*Mr Alex Riley and Ms Sarah Nuden, Strategic Programme Managers, were in attendance for this item.*

1. Ms Sarah Nurden and Mr Alex Riley introduced the report which provided an overview of the progress in implementing the Kent and Medway Economic Framework and highlighted key areas.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
  - The Innovation Partnership was supported by officers within the Council and engagement took place with Medway Council.
  - The Kent and Medway Economic Partnership had officer based reach with all 14 Kent Leaders.
  - It was suggested that future cabinet committees could focus, one at a time, on the various themes included in the framework.

3. RESOLVED to note the report.

## **262. Adoption of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039**

*(Item 11)*

*Mrs Sharon Thompson, Head of Planning Applications Group, was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Murphy and Mrs Thompson introduced the report. Mr Murphy explained that the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013 -2030 was adopted by the Council in July 2016 and partially amended in 2020. It set out the strategy and policy framework for minerals and waste development in Kent, which included future capacity and supply requirements. The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, together with the Kent Minerals Sites Plan, formed part of the development plan for Kent and is the strategy for determining planning applications in Kent. He clarified that the Kent Mineral and Waste Local Plan was the overall framework and did not deal with individual sites.
2. Mrs Thompson explained that the plan was a statutory document which set out the planning strategy for minerals and waste development in the county. There had been significant changes to planning and environmental policy over the last 10 years including multiple changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the plan took into account council strategies such as the Environment Strategy and the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emission Strategy. The plan had been subject to extensive public consultation and a cross party informal members group. The pre-submission version of the plan was considered by County Council in December 2023 and an Inspector was

appointed by the Secretary of State in May 2024 who considered the plan to be sound and could be adopted subject to the modifications set out in the report (Appendix A). The adoption of the plan was a decision for County Council at its meeting on 13 March.

3. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
  - Mrs Thompson and her team were congratulated and thanked for their achievement and hard work.
  - Whilst not directly relevant to the adoption of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan the issue of planning enforcement was being explored with stakeholder partners to look at how waste crime was tackled within the county.
  - The plan was one of the first in the country to include circular economy objectives and this would change the focus on how waste materials were considered and used going forward.
4. RESOLVED to:
  - (i) Note the Inspector's Report (see Appendix A) on the examination of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039 (KWMLP);
  - (ii) Note the recommendations of the Sustainability Appraisal of the KMWLP (Appendix D); and,
  - (iii) Endorse the Cabinet Member's proposal to recommend the KMWLP (Appendix B), as modified, to County Council for Approval and Adoption.

### **263. Trading Standards Checked** (Item 12)

*Rebecca Law, Business Innovation Manager, Steve Rock, Head of Trading Standards, and Ian Baugh, Head of Innovation and Business Intelligence were in attendance for this item.*

1. Mrs Bell and Ms Rebecca Law introduced the report which provided an overview of the Trading Standards Checked Scheme. As well as prevention of doorstep crime, the scheme played an important role in supporting small businesses in the trade sector and boosting Kent's economy. Two videos were shown to highlight the kind of situation the Trading Standards Checked Scheme was designed to avoid.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
  - Efforts were being made to increase the membership and awareness of the scheme across Kent.
  - Members of the scheme were provided with an accreditation which showed potential consumers that they were a trusted business.
  - Members of the committee recognised the importance of the scheme and expressed their support in raising awareness.
  - The cost of membership of the scheme could be paid monthly by direct debit.

- The full cost recovery element of the scheme would come from increased numbers and the offer being developed.

3. RESOLVED to note the report.

## **264. Kent County Council Capital Grant Scheme for Sport**

*(Item 13)*

*Ms Sophie Ward, Strategic Lead, was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mrs Bell introduced the report and the capital grant scheme was administered by Active Kent and Medway and designed to support the development of sports facilities and increase participation in physical activity.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
  - Four rounds of the scheme were run per year and approximately 20 to 30 applications were received per round.
  - Officers worked with applicants to build a stronger case where required to either apply again for grant funder or to work with an external grant funder.
  - The Scheme ran from April to March and would re-open again from 1 April 2025 with deadlines in May, August, October and February.
  - A summary of sports grants that were available would be helpful. There were organisations across Kent who could signpost community organisations to various different finance schemes.

3. RESOLVED to note the report.

## **265. Update on Inward Investment and Visitor Economy commissioned services for Kent & Medway**

*(Item 14)*

*Mr Steve Samson, Head of Economy, was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Steve Samson introduced the report and said plans for the future procurement of the services which were due to end in March 2026 would begin over the summer.
2. RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

## **266. Farming Economy - Presentation from National Farmers Union (NFU) and Produced in Kent**

*(Item 15)*

*Mr Alan Clifton-Holt, Regional Board Chair and Kent Officeholder for the National Farmers Union (NFU), Ms Carol Ford, Chair of the Fresh Food/Horticulture Group and Mr Huw Jarvis, Programme Manager, were in attendance for this item.*

1. Ms Carol Ford, Chair of the Fresh Food/Horticulture Group, provided a presentation by way of a series of slides which are attached to these minutes.

Ms Ford stressed the importance of ensuring that the fresh food sector was fully supported across all levels of government, especially in public procurement.

2. Mr Clifton-Holt spoke about the Land Use Framework, for which there was currently a government consultation. He said the NFU welcomed the Land Use Framework in relation to the pressures on land use such as housing, commercial use, transport, leisure and tourism, and renewable energy, each of which had a huge impact on land. He said it was expected that at least 9% of Kent agricultural ground would be lost to other uses each year. Mr Clifton-Holt spoke about the difficulties in relation to compulsory purchase and compensation rules which effectively gave power to local government to compulsory purchase land for other uses, for example housing. He stressed the importance of working with the Council to ensure that the Land Use Framework was sensible and balanced.
3. Secondly, Mr Clifton-Holt spoke about inheritance tax in particular agricultural property relief (APR) and business property relief (BPR). He explained that APR and BPR had had a zero rate band for the past 30 years. Land could be passed on to the next generation at a zero rate inheritance tax and BPR applied to business assets. Mr Clifton-Holt went on to explain the changes the government had announced in the autumn budget which included a million pound threshold of 20%. Farms were asset rich, with most valued in the region of £7million to £8million, and UK agriculture had a return on investment of, on average, 0.5 %. Therefore, farming was capital wealthy, but had a very poor rate of return. He explained the NFU had been campaigning hard, particularly on APR and there had been protests in London, petitions and letters sent to MPs. The primary legislation to change the inheritance tax rule would go before Parliament in September 2025. He stressed that this family tax was unfair and that farmers were now being forced to urgently reconsider their options.
4. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
  - Members expressed their support for the issues presented and welcomed a report back to the committee.
  - Members discussed the importance of food security within the UK and educating residents to choose UK produce.
  - Members expressed their agreement with the points raised regarding tax relief on agricultural land. It was noted that a motion regarding this was resolved at County Council on 19 December 2024.
  - Food production in England was still viable and should be protected.
  - The UK was capable of growing high-value quality produce and different crops were being grown due to climate change in the UK providing more opportunities.
  - The significant amounts of money that could come from renewable energy and housing was a temptation to a lot of farmers. The Land Use Framework would be useful to the wider community in providing a balance.
5. RESOLVED to note the presentation.

**267. Work Programme 2025**  
(Item 16)

RESOLVED to note the Work Programme.



**From:** Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration

Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 1 July 2025

**Subject:** Kent County Council – Introduction to Growth & Communities Division

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** n/a

**Future Pathway of report:** n/a

**Electoral Division:** All Divisions

**Summary:** The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview and introduction to the Growth and Communities division, one of three divisions in Kent County Council's Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate. Growth and Communities services encompass the breadth of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee's existing remit.

**Recommendation(s):** The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any comments to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services or Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Growth and Communities is about Good Growth – a joined up approach to physical and social infrastructure for both existing and new communities. The services in this division, and therefore in the bailiwick of this committee, are about local economy, spatial development, strategic infrastructure, and employment at the core, but closely wrapped around must be the wider determinants that are at the heart of sustainable communities – well-designed place, feeling safe and involved, with opportunity at the heart.
- 1.2 An All-Member Induction briefing was delivered on 16th June 2025 about the Growth and Communities group of services, and Members of this committee who were unable to attend that are invited to [watch the recording](#)
- 1.3 Growth and Communities comprises six core groups:
  - 1.3.1 Community Protection
  - 1.3.2 Economy

- 1.3.3 Innovation and Business Intelligence
- 1.3.4 Libraries, Registration and Archives
- 1.3.5 Planning Applications Group, including Minerals and Waste Planning Policy
- 1.3.6 Strategic Development and Place

## **2. Community Protection**

- 2.1 Leading a broad range of community protection services to ensure our Kent communities feel safe, secure and resilient. The Community Protection team comprises four key services:
  - 2.1.1 Community Safety: Creating safer and stronger communities in Kent. Leading and facilitating the Kent Community Safety Partnership which is the top tier of community safety in Kent, and is statutorily responsible for preparing an annual Community Safety Agreement. Managing the multi-agency Kent Community Safety Team. Delivering statutory Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews. Managing the Kent Community Warden Service which is a key part of KCC's efforts to support the elderly and vulnerable without reliance on formal social care. Improving resilience, and additionally fostering wider community cohesion and wellbeing. Key driver on population health and wider determinants.
  - 2.1.2 Coroner Service: Managing the strategic and operational aspects, fulfilling statutory obligations to the Senior Coroner for Kent & Medway. Supporting families through the coronial process. Medway contribute to costs for this service. The coroner service investigates deaths that are violent, unnatural, of unknown cause, or that occur in state detention.
  - 2.1.3 Kent Scientific Services: Analytical testing of food, feed and consumer goods to support businesses and protect consumers. Toxicology testing for HM Coroners. Maintaining statutory standards of weight and measure. Joint working with Trading Standards and Port of London Authority.
  - 2.1.4 Trading Standards: Delivering a wide range of statutory functions that protect consumers, safeguard and support legitimate businesses, prevent or control animal disease outbreaks and control the storage of dangerous goods like petrol and fireworks. Key areas of focus are fair and accurate trading; product safety; weights and measures; combating crime such as scams, counterfeit goods and rogue traders; and food standards and safety. Key driver on population health and wider determinants.

## **3. Economy**

- 3.1 Delivering a range of programmes and activities that help to boost the local economy through supporting local businesses and tackling barriers to growth. The work of the team is underpinned by the Kent and Medway Economic Framework. The Economy team comprises eight key functions:

- 3.1.1 Economic Programmes and Strategy: The Kent & Medway Economic Framework is the (relatively recently adopted, just over one year old) overarching economic strategy for the county which focuses on supporting business growth, the skills & employment agenda, access and productivity, infrastructure, and place. The Framework is the work programme of the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (see below). The Business Advisory Board provides regular intelligence to KCC and its partners about economic challenges faces by the local business community.
- 3.1.2 Business Investment: offer financial support to Kent & Medway businesses through the Kent & Medway Business Fund, aiding growth and job creation. Prioritising businesses that show growth, innovation, increased productivity, and local supply chain commitment. A scheme providing loans up to £600,000 over five years. Uses an evergreen government funding investment managed by KCC working to an Independent Board. Typically provides an update to this Committee every six months.
- 3.1.3 Commissioned Programmes: The Economy team commissions four principal programmes: Kent & Medway's Visitor Economy (Visit Kent) and Inward Investment (Locate in Kent) service supporting the tourism sector and encouraging businesses to establish a base and grow in the county. The Kent Foundation provides support to primarily young entrepreneurs through mentoring from experienced business owning volunteers to grow their (the young entrepreneurs') businesses. Produced in Kent champions the food and drink sector in Kent and Medway.
- 3.1.4 Health and Economy: Working on the Integrated Strategy for Health & Work and its implementation plan in partnership with the Integrated Care System to tackle some of the health-related challenges that keep people out of the workforce. Coordinating the activities of the Strategic Partnership for Health & Economy. There will be a separate report on this strand of work to Committee today, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2025.
- 3.1.5 Kent Ambassadors: Managing the Kent Ambassadors programme, a network of highly successful and experienced individuals across all spheres of professional life, residing or working in Kent, to enhance, drive and support 'Team Kent' – aka all aspects of life and business in Kent.
- 3.1.6 No Use Empty: Award-winning scheme offering loans to revitalise empty residential and commercial properties in Kent, improving the physical urban environment and supporting regeneration and commercial activity. More than 8,000 empty properties have been brought back into active use over nearly 20 years of the scheme. £64.3m financial support offered by No Use Empty, leading to total of £110.7m investment into Kent.

- 3.1.7 Business & Sector Support: Supporting local businesses and strategic economic sectors in Kent through management of the Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract. This is a fully funded government service that enables small and medium sized businesses in Kent and Medway to access local and national business support through a one stop shop: information; navigation; signposting; diagnostic assessments; and guidance.
- 3.1.8 Skills and Employability: Overseeing the development and implementation of the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan which, with a range of partner organisations, focuses on tackling challenges in the field of health, skills and employment. There will be a separate report on Get Kent & Medway Working Plan to Committee today, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2025. More broadly, Skills and Employability function is focussing on improving the skills and employability of individuals in Kent to match vacancies in key industry sectors. The Kent & Medway Employment Task Force considers challenges and opportunities in the skills and labour market arena, championing initiatives that support Kent's residents and employers.

#### **4. Innovation and Business Intelligence**

- 4.1 Responsible for division-wide continuous service improvement, innovation and support. The team lead on service reviews, the management and utilisation of intelligence and data, digital innovation and digital systems management, online and offline external communications, and provides a single divisional business support function for the day-to-day administration of services and projects. The Innovation and Business Intelligence team comprises five key services:
  - 4.1.1 Business Innovation: Leading on new, innovative and cross cutting agendas for a range of place-based services and themes. Lead on population health for the Growth, Environment and Transport directorate, addressing wider determinants i.e. the social, economic and environmental factors that influence a person's health beyond individual choices and behaviours.
  - 4.1.2 Business Support: Providing a single business support function and approach for the division.
  - 4.1.3 Communications: Delivering innovative and creative communications strategies that align with business plan priorities.
  - 4.1.4 Intelligence and data: Providing a specialist criminal intelligence capability for Trading Standards supporting its 'intelligence-led' service delivery model. Providing a dedicated waste crime intelligence analyst to the Kent Resource Partnership, and host a Serious Organised Crime analyst who works across KCC and a number of external partnerships. Providing a range of vetting and due diligence services for KCC.
  - 4.1.5 Digital Systems: Guiding and supporting services across the division with their current and future digital technology strategies

ensuring the timely and effective management and development of core specialist business applications.

## **5. Libraries, Registration and Archives**

5.1 Delivering physical, digital and outreach services that support people throughout their lives. Delivering positive preventative services that contribute to improved health and wellbeing, help to tackle social isolation, foster positive wellbeing and combat digital exclusion. The Libraries, Registration and Archives Group comprises three key services:

- 5.1.1 Libraries: Across 99 libraries, improving literacy to foster a lifelong love of reading. Supporting our communities to find the information they need, to develop skills to access online services, become more active citizens and social interaction. Key driver on population health and wider determinants.
- 5.1.2 Registration: Registering key milestones in people's lives (births, marriages, citizenship and deaths) and the lives of their families. Come together to form strong community ties. Through our ceremony offer celebrating citizenships, marriage and civil partnership.
- 5.1.3 Archives: Conserve, protect and provide access to invaluable historical archive material for the county – includes local history collections such as historic maps, historical periodicals, visuals and audio-visuals, as well as important historical records: parish registers; tithes records; historic administration and business; records of estates; and personal items such as letters and diaries.

## **6. Planning Applications Group, including Minerals and Waste Planning Policy**

6.1 Shaping Kent's development and future through statutory planning functions and the Minerals and Waste Local Plan preparation. This Planning Applications Group, including the Minerals and Waste Planning Policy, comprises two key services:

- 6.1.1 Planning Applications: Delivery of the County Council's statutory planning functions – development management and plan making. Determining planning applications for minerals and waste management development in the county and for the County Council's own community developments such as new schools, along with pre-application advice, monitoring and planning enforcement.
- 6.1.2 Minerals and Waste Planning Policy: Preparation of the statutory Minerals and Waste Local Plan and associated Sites Plans which provide the context for determining planning applications for minerals and waste management development. Work with Kent District and Borough Councils as part of the Duty to Corporate responsibility on Mineral and Waste Safeguarding

matters to ensure that sustainable development is delivered.

## **7. Strategic Development and Place**

- 7.1 Leading KCC's approach to growth and infrastructure delivery in the county. Deliver a range of strategic and frontline functions to achieve outcomes relating to growth, the economy, health, wellbeing and inclusion to create diverse, distinctive and vibrant places. The Strategic Development and Place group comprises eight key services:
- 7.1.1 Broadband: Supporting the local delivery of Government-led programmes to extend gigabit-capable networks to properties that are not expected to benefit from telecom providers' commercial upgrade programmes. This team works to influence Government and providers to boost broadband connectivity across Kent.
  - 7.1.2 Gypsy and Roma Traveller Residents Service: Currently managing seven local authority Traveller sites, six of which are owned by KCC, housing 130 families. Allocating pitches, and supporting the residents through site management, support with accessing finance, and accessing wider services such as health. Responding to unauthorised encampments on land owned or controlled by KCC.
  - 7.1.3 Active Kent and Medway: Fulfils a strategic commissioning and coordination role for sport and recreational activities for the residents of Kent and Medway, working collaboratively to use physical activity to transform lives. One of 43 Active Partnerships in England, this service has the Vision "More people, More active, More often". This service is hosted by the County Council.
  - 7.1.4 Creative Economy: One of the county's top three 'industrial' sectors, and one of England's eight. Maximising the arts and creative sector's contribution to economic growth and community well-being. Working with the sector to ensure excellence in delivery and products while promoting wider participation. Leads on coordinating the delivery of Kent's cultural strategy to secure investment, and grow the county's creative product to further national and international acclaim. Key driver on population health and wider determinants.
  - 7.1.5 Strategic Planning and Infrastructure: Leading on the development of the Infrastructure Mapping Platform (IMP), a digital platform to deliver an accessible and interactive spatial view of Kent-wide planned housing growth and infrastructure data. Establishing the County Council's stance on growth and infrastructure matters at local, regional, and national levels, including engaging with emerging government planning policy and relevant consultations. Coordinating the County Council's response and ensuring the implementation of the council's policies and services across emerging Local Plans, strategic planning applications, Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects, Neighbourhood Plans, and the Community

Infrastructure Levy, and other planning documents as they arise. Working alongside strategic partners to lead on understanding the energy infrastructure needs for Kent. This includes potential around nuclear energy at Dungeness, and strategic energy planning – our Local Area Energy Plan will feed in an evidence base to the Regional Energy Strategic Plan and in turn the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan.

- 7.1.6 Developer Contributions: Negotiate and secure financial contributions, including Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), from new developments. These funds support the delivery of Council services, such as schools, highways, waste, social care, and public rights of way. This service reports annually to Committee with the County Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement.
- 7.1.7 Public Rights of Way: Responsible for the statutory management, maintenance, and development of Kent's extensive 7,000km Public Rights of Way (PROW) Network, valued at £142 million. Offers services related to Common Land and Village Green, while also maintaining the PROW legal record (Definitive Map). Leading the creation and maintenance of the King Charles III England Coast Path in Kent, covering 350km. Developing and providing new routes, promoting sustainable transport options for communities.
- 7.1.8 International: This function leads on Short Straits – a partnership approach to cooperation with neighbouring EU council equivalent organisations and British and foreign embassies to support principally economic, social and environmental shared projects with mutual benefit.

## **8. Key Strategies and Policies**

8.1 The Growth and Communities Division work to a number of key strategies and policies as listed below:

- [Kent Community Safety Agreement](#)
- [KCC Trading Standards Enforcement Policy](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)
- [Kent and Medway Economic Framework - Kent County Council](#)
- [No Use Empty](#)
- [Libraries, Registration & Archives Strategy - KCC](#)
- [Minerals & Waste Planning Policy](#)
- [Developer Contributions Guide](#)
- [Kent Design Guide](#)
- [Infrastructure Funding Statement](#)
- [Serious and Organised Crime \(SOC\) Strategy 2023-2028](#)
- [Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#)

## 9. Finance

9.1 For 25/26, the Growth and Communities division has a net revenue budget of c. £32m

9.2 The gross budget includes c. £15m of income, totals £48m

9.3 The Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration portfolio has a gross budget of £6.0m, net budget of £4.2m.

9.4 The Community & Regulatory Services portfolio has a gross budget of £41.9m, net budget £28.6m.

9.5 Budget breakdowns 2025/2026:

Group	Gross (including income, grants and external funding)		Net (excluding income, grants and external funding)	
Community Protection	£14.8m	30.8%	£10.8m	33.6%
Economy	£3m	6.2%	£1.5m	4.6%
Innovation & Business Intelligence	£1.9m	4%	£1.7m	5.3%
Libraries, Registration & Archives	£18.4m	38.3%	£11.5m	35.7%
Planning Applications Group	£1.5m	3.1%	£1.2m	3.7%
Strategic Development & Place	£8.2m	17%	£5.2m	16.1%
Other	£0.3m	0.6%	£0.3m	1%
	<b>£48.1m</b>		<b>£32.3m</b>	

9.6 The Growth and Communities division has committed to £755.6k of savings for 25/26. The majority of these savings comprise of increased income and fees/charges across the division.

9.7 The Growth and Communities division has £177.7k of new spending pressures for 25/26. The majority of these pressures comprise of price inflation, staff and pay increases (essential for service delivery) and costs related to service delivery.

9.8 The Growth & Communities division has a Capital budget of £2.3m in rolling programmes (predominantly Public Rights of Way and also includes Sports



Facility Improvement and Village Halls and Community Centres)

9.9 The Growth and Communities division has an additional Capital budget of £8.5m for individual projects

9.9.1 Digital Autopsy

9.9.2 Essella Road Bridge (PROW)

9.9.3 Innovation Investment Initiative (i3)

9.9.4 Kent & Medway Business Fund

9.9.5 No Use Empty and Kent Broadband Voucher Scheme.

9.10 Full details of the revenue budget, savings, spending pressures and the capital budget can be found in the [Kent County Council Budget Book 2025-26](#)

## **10. Equalities implications**

10.1 The Growth & Communities Division works in line with our corporate equality objectives, complying with the Equality Act.

## **11. Conclusion**

11.1 The Growth and Communities division encompasses a vast and diverse set of services that are essential for the well-being and development of the community and of business in the county. With an integrated focus on sectors such as economic development, community engagement, regulatory and protection services, the division plays a crucial role in planning for, and supporting, thriving businesses and flourishing communities.

12.1 The division's commitment to growth and improvement is evident in its wide range of initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery, supporting local communities and businesses, and ensuring sustainable development. These efforts reflect a comprehensive and dynamic approach to addressing the needs of the community and promoting overall prosperity.

13.1 Financially, the division has shown prudence in managing its budget while identifying and addressing savings and spending pressures effectively.

## **12. Recommendation**

### **Recommendation:**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any comments to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services or Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration.

### 13. Background Documents

- [Kent County Council Budget Book 2025-26](#)
- [Kent Community Safety Agreement](#)
- [KCC Trading Standards Enforcement Policy](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)
- [Kent and Medway Economic Framework - Kent County Council](#)
- [No Use Empty](#)
- [Libraries, Registration & Archives Strategy - KCC](#)
- [Minerals & Waste Planning Policy](#)
- [Developer Contributions Guide](#)
- [Kent Design Guide](#)
- [Infrastructure Funding Statement](#)
- [Serious and Organised Crime \(SOC\) Strategy 2023-2028](#)
- [Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#)

### 14. Contact details

Report Author:

Laura Gilbert  
Executive Officer to Director, Growth  
and Communities

03000 410127

[Laura.Gilbert@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Laura.Gilbert@kent.gov.uk)

Relevant Director:

Stephanie Holt-Castle  
Corporate Director, Growth and  
Communities

03000 412064

[Stephanie.Holt-Castle@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Stephanie.Holt-Castle@kent.gov.uk)

From: Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration

Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 1 July 2025

Subject: Performance Dashboard

Classification: Unrestricted

**Summary:**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Performance Dashboard shows the performance of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and activity indicators for Quarter 4 of 2024/25.

19 of the 24 KPIs reported this Quarter achieved target and are RAG rated Green. Five KPIs were below target but did achieve floor standard and are RAG rated Amber.

KPIs and targets proposed for reporting 2025/26 performance are included in this report.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the performance report for Quarter 4 of 2024/25, and COMMENT on the KPIs and targets proposed for 2025/26.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Part of the role of Cabinet Committees is to review the performance of those functions of the Council that fall within its remit. To support this role, Performance Dashboards are regularly reported to Cabinet Committees throughout the year, and this is the third and final report for the 2024/25 financial year.

## 2. Performance Dashboard

- 2.1. The current Growth, Economic Development and Communities Performance dashboard provides results up to the end of March 2025 and is attached in Appendix 1.
- 2.2. The Dashboard provides a progress report on performance for the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2024/25 which were brought to Committee in May 2024. The Dashboard also includes a range of activity indicators which help give context to the KPIs.

- 2.3. KPIs are presented with RAG (Red/Amber/Green) alerts to show performance in the Quarter. Details of how the alerts are generated are outlined in the Guidance Notes, included with the Dashboard in Appendix 1.

### **3. Growth & Communities - Economy**

- 3.1 Five of the six indicators in this section achieved target, the exception being the number of visitor economy businesses supported; this fell 10 short of its target of 400 due to delays in agreeing the contract with Visit Kent.

### **4. Growth & Communities - Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA)**

- 4.1 2024/25 proved to be another positive and eventful year for LRA, marked by significant progress, and with all KPIs meeting target in Quarter 4. Libraries saw continued increases in visits, alongside higher usage of public PCs, Wi-Fi, and the e-library services. Attendance at events and activities also expanded, and notably the Know Your Neighbourhood project in Thanet which was focused on creating events to combat social isolation and loneliness within the district, resulted in a 54% increase in event attendance at Thanet's libraries over the year. Across the county, over 18,400 children took part in the Summer Reading Challenge, with Kent enjoying the highest rate of joiners in the South East, and the Archives Lunchtime Talks programme continued to draw strong attendance at Kent History and Library Centre.
- 4.2 Registration services experienced marked growth as well, with more ceremonies conducted (7,271 in total across the year) and a rise in the number of citizens welcomed through our celebratory citizenship events.
- 4.3 Over 796,500 visits to Kent's Libraries in Quarter 4 represents a 1% increase on the same period in 2023/24, while attendance to events and activities increased by 26% with over 60,900 adults and children enjoying a wide range of events to bring communities together and enhance wellbeing. Canterbury Library (The Beaney) was in the spotlight on 25 February 2025 when Her Majesty The Queen visited.
- 4.4 Library issues have decreased overall by 2% in comparison with Quarter 4 2023/24, with physical issues falling by 5%, but e-Book and e-Audiobook issues increasing by 7%. Work is being carried out within the service to improve physical issues, through further staff training on stock management, a review of the stock collection policy and events such as community days to promote library services, together with the exploration of the legacy of the Know Your Neighbourhood project which resulted in increased usage of Thanet Libraries.
- 4.5 Quarter 4 was also a busy period for the Archive service, with 855 visitors to the Search Room representing a 35% increase on Quarter 4 2023/24. The team have carried out extensive outreach across the year, promoting the service at Ramsgate Tunnels, Dreamland Heritage Trust Local History Day, and a National Sporting Heritage Day at Mid Kent College, as well as attending conferences at Maidstone's Brompton Barracks and Canterbury Cathedral. Remote enquiries to the service have also increased in Quarter 4 by 3% on the same period in 2023/24.

- 4.6 The Kent Ceremonies Team delivered 851 marriage and civil partnership ceremonies during Quarter 4, representing a 7% increase on Quarter 4 last year, while the number of citizens welcomed to the UK increased by 10% for the same comparison periods, with 1,216 citizens celebrating their British citizenship.
- 4.7 The number of birth registration appointments delivered fell by 4% in Quarter 4 in comparison with the same period in 2023/24, while the number of death registration appointments rose by 2%. Customer satisfaction with the Registration service for Quarter 4 was 96%, reflecting the continued dedication and support of the teams to providing excellent customer service at key moments during people's lives.

## **5. Growth & Communities – Community Protection**

- 5.1 Five out of six KPIs met target and so were RAG rated Green. The one KPI which did not meet target was the Percentage of local actions from completed Domestic Homicide Reviews implemented by target date (CST01). Performance for this KPI has fluctuated throughout the year, with below target performance in Quarter 4 due to a focus on older outstanding actions, which, when closed, are then included in the KPI calculation. The vast majority of actions now being monitored by the Steering Group are from much more recent cases.

## **6. Growth & Communities – Innovation & Business Intelligence**

- 6.1 Both KPIs in this section met their target for the year, although for the percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub supported by Community Protection (CP01), there have been no additional people supported during Quarters 3 and 4 due no victims being identified in these periods.

## **7. Growth & Communities - Planning Applications**

- 7.1 Of the two indicators in this section, one met target, while the other narrowly missed by one percentage point over the year as a whole. The KPI which missed target was the Percentage of statutory planning consultee responses submitted to the local planning authority within 21 days (Minerals & Waste) (PAG02); this KPI can be impacted when multiple consultations are received in a short period of time making it difficult to meet the response target for all. Other work also sometimes needs to be prioritised such as work on a Public Enquiry which was the case in Quarter 4.

## **8. Growth & Communities – Strategic Development and Place**

- 8.1 One of the three KPIs in this section met target and was RAG rated Green, with the other two being below target, but above their floor standards and so were RAG rated Amber.
- 8.2 The first Amber KPI is Section 106 developer contributions secured against contributions sought (DC08); there are an increasing number of applications with viability assessments as financial pressures on the market increase. This has led to the KPI being below target for the year overall.

- 8.3 The second Amber KPI is Percentage of public rights of way (PRoW) faults reported online (PROW14). This has maintained performance at or close to 87% across the year but not reaching its 92% target. The target is deliberately challenging in an effort to see more people reporting online. There are still some people who prefer speaking to someone on the phone, particularly if they have not used the online system before or they perceive an issue as urgent. A project has been completed aimed at assisting those reporting for the first time which is hoped may boost numbers further.

## 9. KPIs and targets for 2025/26

- 9.1 KPIs and targets proposed for 2025/26 are shown in Appendix 2. The majority of KPIs and activity indicators are proposed to remain the same as in 2024/25. **Two** KPIs and **two** activity indicators are proposed for removal, with **eight** new KPIs and **two** new activity indicators added. All indicators were agreed by the relevant Cabinet member and Corporate Director before the County Council elections in May. The new Cabinet members and Cabinet Committee members are invited to comment on these before reporting commences for the current financial year.

## 10. Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the performance report for Quarter 4 of 2024/25, and COMMENT on the KPIs and targets proposed for 2025/26.

### Contact details:

Report Author: Matthew Wagner  
Chief Analyst  
Chief Executive's Department  
03000 416559  
[Matthew.Wagner@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Matthew.Wagner@kent.gov.uk)

Relevant Director: Stephanie Holt-Castle  
Director for Growth and Communities  
03000 412064  
[stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk](mailto:stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk)

# **Growth, Economic Development and Communities Performance Dashboard**

## **Financial Year 2024/25**

### **Results up to end of March 2025**

Produced by Kent Analytics

## Guidance Notes

### RAG RATINGS

Results in this report show either quarterly data or Year to Date (YTD) values.

GREEN	Target has been achieved
AMBER	Floor Standard* achieved but Target has not been met
RED	Floor Standard* has not been achieved

\*Floor Standards are the minimum performance expected and if not achieved must result in management action

### Activity Indicators

Activity Indicators representing demand levels are also included in the report. They are not given a RAG rating; instead, they are compared with previous year or tracked within an expected range represented by Upper and Lower Thresholds. The Alert provided for Activity Indicators is whether they are in expected range or not. Results can either be in expected range (**In Line**) or they could be **Above** or **Below**.



## Key Performance Indicators Summary

Economy	RAG
EC05: Number of homes brought back to market through No Use Empty	GREEN
EC10: Businesses assisted via Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract	GREEN
EC11: Businesses assisted through intensive support provided via the Growth Hub contract	GREEN
EC12: Number of visitor economy businesses supported*	AMBER
EC13: Number of inward investment projects secured*	GREEN
EC14: Number of jobs created or safeguarded*	GREEN

\* Through the visitor economy and inward investment contract

Libraries, Registrations and Archives (LRA)	RAG
LRA06: Customer satisfaction with Registration Services	GREEN
LRA15: Total number of customers attending events in Libraries and Archives	GREEN
LRA17: Number of volunteer hours adding extra value to the LRA service	GREEN
LRA12: Customer satisfaction with libraries	GREEN
LRA13: Customer satisfaction with archives	GREEN

Community Protection	RAG
CST01: Percentage of local actions from completed Domestic Homicide Reviews implemented by target date.	AMBER
CST02: % of Lessons Learnt Domestic Homicide Review attendees rating the event as good or better	GREEN
CST03: Percentage of service users who report feeling safer due to warden support	GREEN
KSS02: Percentage of priority 1 food, feed and consumer products sample tests reported to clients within 5 working	GREEN
KSS03: Percentage of independent proficiency tests rated as "good" or "satisfactory"	GREEN
TS04: Percentage of businesses rating Trading Standards advice (Primary Authority and Pay as You Go) as Very Good or Excellent	GREEN

Innovation & Business Intelligence	RAG
CP01: Percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub supported by Public Protection	GREEN
CP02: Percentage of trader applications to the 'Trading Standards Checked' scheme processed within 10 working days	GREEN

Planning Applications	RAG
PAG01: Percentage of planning applications determined to meet DLUHC performance standards	GREEN
PAG02: Percentage of statutory planning consultee responses submitted to the local planning authority within 21 days (Minerals & Waste)	AMBER

Strategic Development and Place	RAG
DC08: Developer contributions secured against total contributions sought (section 106)	AMBER
PROW14: Percentage of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) faults reported online	AMBER
PROW16: Median number of days to resolve priority faults on public rights of way network (rolling 12-months)	GREEN

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities - Economy	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Paul King

Ref	Performance Indicators	Mar-24 (Q4)	Jun-24 (Q1)	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	RAG	Target	Floor
EC05	Number of homes brought back to market through No Use Empty (rolling 12 months)	474	567	493	422	449	GREEN	400	360
EC10	Businesses assisted via Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract (Year to Date)	1,059	251	419	574	797	GREEN	684	600
EC11	Businesses assisted through intensive support provided via the Growth Hub contract (Year to Date)	154	11	32	42	79	GREEN	30	25
EC12	Number of visitor economy businesses supported*	New Indicators	**			390	AMBER	400	360
EC13	Number of inward investment projects secured*					10	GREEN	10	8
EC14	Number of jobs created or safeguarded*					379	GREEN	375	300

\* Through visitor economy and inward investment contract

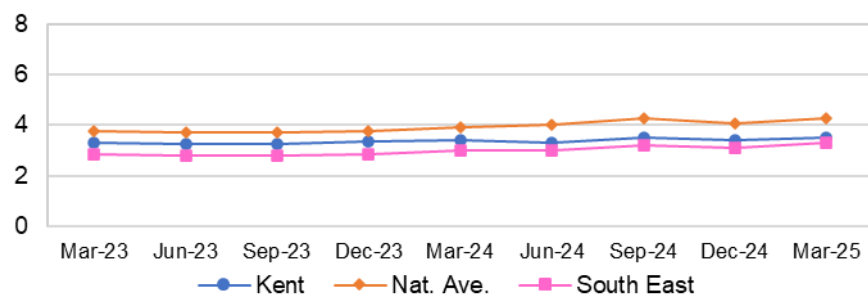
\*\* It was not possible to report on these indicators until Quarter 4, due to delays in agreeing funding.

EC12 – Due to the planned procurement process for inward investment and visitor economy services not resulting in the selection of a supplier, there were delays in getting the contract in place with Visit Kent which led to a small underachievement in the number of businesses supported during 24-25.

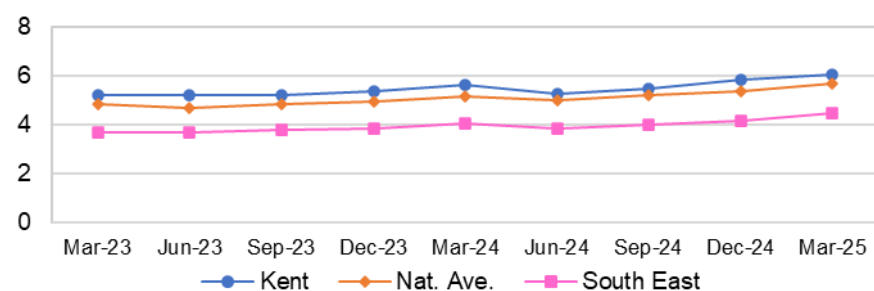
Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities - Economy	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Paul King

### Context indicators

Percentage of 16 to 64 year-olds claiming Job Seekers Allowance / Universal Credit



Percentage of 18 to 24 year-olds claiming Universal Credit



Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities – Libraries, Registrations and Archives	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Paul Webb

Quarterly KPIs

Ref	Performance Indicators	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	RAG	Target	Floor
LRA06	Customer satisfaction with Registration Services	94%	97%	96%	96%	96%	GREEN	96%	91%
LRA15	Total number of customers attending events in Libraries and Archives	48,194	49,439	53,281	48,772	60,907	GREEN	53,200	48,100
LRA17	Number of volunteer hours adding extra value to the LRA service	New indicator in 2024/25	7,696	7,626	8,099	7,992	GREEN	7,800	7,000

Mar-25 (Q4): LRA06 – 1,204 customers were surveyed, 1,161 were satisfied.

## Annual KPIs

Ref	Performance Indicators	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	RAG	Target 2024/25	Floor 2024/25
LRA12	Customer satisfaction with libraries	83%	94%	94%	95%	95%	GREEN	94%	89%
LRA13	Customer satisfaction with archives	No Survey	97%	98%	100%	98%	GREEN	98%	93%

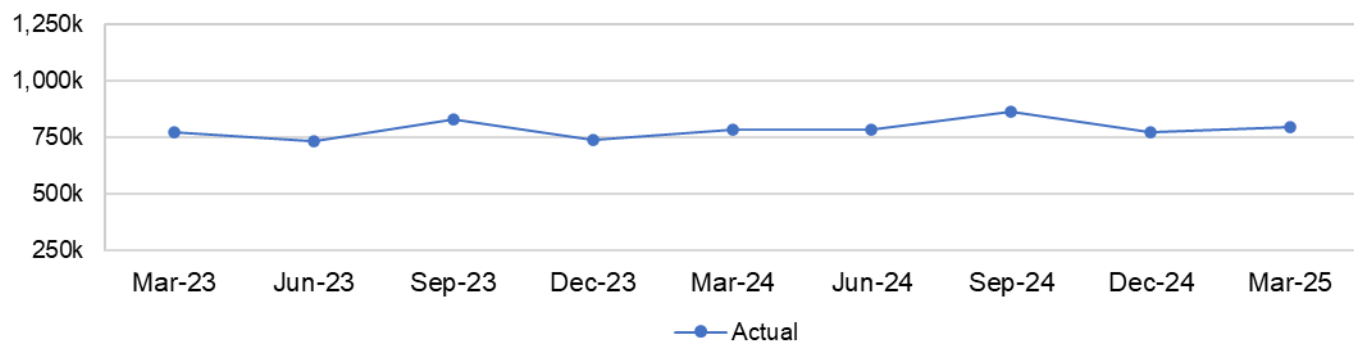
2024/25: LRA12 – 8,613 surveyed, 8,183 satisfied; LRA13 – 117 surveyed, 115 satisfied.

## Activity indicators

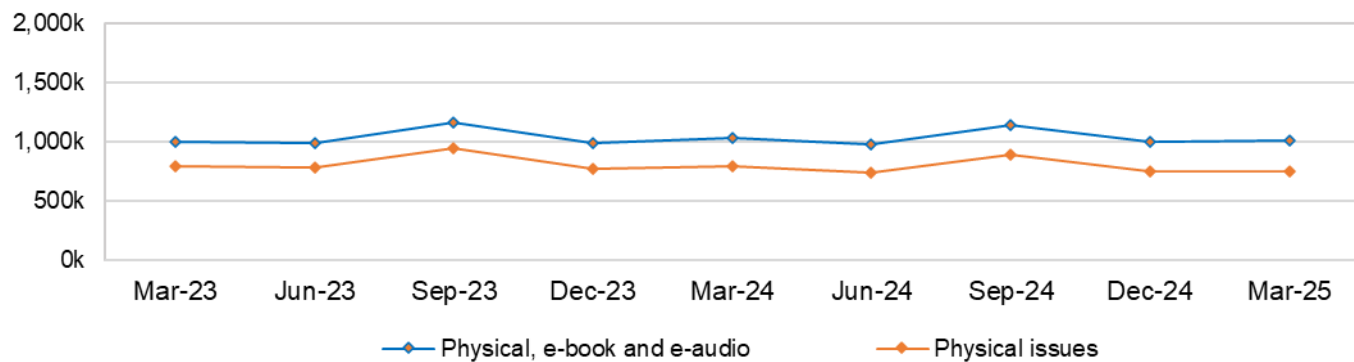
Ref	Activity Indicators (Quarterly totals)	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Value vs Expected	<u>Expected Activity</u>	
								Upper	Lower
LRA01	Number of visits to libraries (including mobiles) (000s)	787	781	862	772	797	In line	867	784
LRA02b	Physical, e-book and e-audio	1,032	983	1,144	998	1,009	In line	1,109	1,003
LRA04	Number of wedding, civil partnership and citizenship ceremonies carried out by KCC Officers	New Indicator in 2024/25	2,199	2,983	1,469	915	In line	1,000	900

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities</b> – Libraries, Registrations and Archives	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Paul Webb</b>

**Total number of physical visits to Kent libraries**



**Total number of book issues from Kent libraries**



Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities</b> – Community Protection	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Paul Webb</b>

Ref	Performance Indicators	Mar-24 (Q4)	Jun-24 (Q1)	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	YTD 24/25	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
CST01	Percentage of local actions from completed Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) implemented by target date.	90%	80%	51%	89%	25%	<b>69%</b>	AMBER	75%	68%
CST02	Percentage of Lessons Learnt Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Seminar attendees rating the event as Good or better.	*	100%	*	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>	GREEN	90%	81%
CST03	Percentage of service users who report feeling safer due to warden support	74%	70%	74%	71%	76%	<b>73%</b>	GREEN	70%	65%

\* No seminars were held.

2024/25: CST01 – 87actions, 60 completed by target date; CST02 – 167 reviews, 32 were very good or excellent; CST03 – 364 surveys were returned, 264 responses indicated the service user felt safer.

CST01 - Updates for all actions being monitored by the DHR Steering Group are sought from partners each quarter. Recent efforts to escalate older outstanding actions have been successful and enabled a number of these to be closed. As a consequence, this led to a drop in performance in Quarter 4, with three of the four actions closed being older actions. The vast majority of actions now being monitored by the Steering Group are from much more recent cases.



Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities</b> – Community Protection	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Paul Webb</b>

Ref	Performance Indicators	Mar-24 (Q4)	Jun-24 (Q1)	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	YTD 24/25	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
KSS02	Percentage of priority 1 food, feed and consumer products sample tests reported to clients within 5 working days	New indicator	93%	95%	96%	96%	<b>95%</b>	GREEN	93%	88%
KSS03	Percentage of external independent proficiency tests rated as “good” or “satisfactory” with a statistical Z score of 2 or less.	New Indicator	90%	82%	74%	79%	<b>79%</b>	GREEN	75%	67%
TS04	Percentage of businesses rating Trading Standards advice (Primary Authority and Pay as You Go) as Very Good or Excellent	100%	100%	*	*	100%	<b>100%</b>	GREEN	90%	82%

2024/25: KSS02 – 2,087 samples tested, 1,983 reported within 5 working days; KSS03 – 233 tests rated, 185 rated as good or satisfactory; TS04 – 5 out of 5 businesses have rated trading standards advice as very good or excellent since the start of the year.

\* No ratings received

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities –</b> Innovation & Business Intelligence	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Paul Webb</b>

Ref	Performance Indicators	Mar-24 (Q4)	Jun-24 (Q1)	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	YTD 24/25	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
CP01	Percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub supported by Community Protection	100%	100%	100%	*	*	<b>100%</b>	GREEN	90%	80%
CP02	Percentage of trader applications to Community Protection's 'Trading Standards Checked' scheme processed within 10 working days.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>	GREEN	100%	90%

\* No additional victims recorded

2024/25: CP01 – 47 people supported. CP02 – 278 trader applications processed.

CP01 - When Kent Trading Standards began supporting victims there was a significant backlog, which has subsequently been cleared. The decrease in referrals was anticipated; however, the drop observed in Quarters 3 and 4 was influenced by additional factors. The ever-changing nature of scams, and the tactics used by criminals, pose a constant challenge. Scammers persistently adapt to avoid detection, making it difficult for the National Scams Team to consistently gather intelligence, which can lead to fewer victims being identified.

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities</b> – Planning Applications	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Paul King</b>

Ref	Performance Indicators	Mar-24 (Q4)	Jun-24 (Q1)	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	YTD 24/25	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
PAG01	Percentage of planning applications determined to meet DLUHC performance standards	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	100%	90%
PAG02	Percentage of statutory planning consultee responses submitted to the local planning authority within 21 days (Minerals & Waste)	New Indicator	100%	89%	84%	84%	<b>89%</b>	<b>AMBER</b>	90%	80%

2024/25: PAG01 – 159 planning applications, all of which met DLUHC performance standard; PAG02 – 323 responses, 289 of which were within 21 days.

PAG02 – The service has no control over when consultations are received from District councils for a response, and sometimes several can arrive on a single day. Other work also sometimes needs to be prioritised, such as work on a Public Enquiry which was the case in Quarter 4. Despite this the target was only missed by one percentage point for the year overall, and on several occasions, the 21-day target has only been missed by a day or two.

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities –</b> Strategic Development & Place	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Paul King (DC08)</b> <b>Paul Webb (PROW14, PROW16)</b>

Ref	Performance Indicators	Mar-24 (Q4)	Jun-24 (Q1)	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	YTD 24/25	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
DC08	Developer contributions secured against total contributions sought (section 106)	97.9%	99.6%	93.2%	80.9%	95.3%	<b>86.1%</b>	AMBER	98%	85%
PROW14	Percentage of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) faults reported online	87%	87%	87%	88%	88%	<b>87%</b>	AMBER	92%	84%
PROW16	Median number of days to resolve priority faults on public rights of way network (rolling 12-month figure)	9	9	8	8	<b>8</b>	*	GREEN	15	24

\* No Year-to-Date figure as this is a Rolling 12-month indicator

2024/25: DC08 - £35m secured; PROW14 – 7,240 faults reported, 6,329 were online; PROW16 – 268 priority faults resolved.

DC08 – We are seeing an increasing number of applications with viability assessments, as financial pressures on the market increase. The target each quarter can be missed by an issue at just one site, such as at Possingham Farm, Ashford in Quarter 3 which went to appeal where KCC officers managed to defend some contribution requests but not all. Viability was also an issue at one site in Quarter 4, namely a brownfield development site at Grenham Lodge, Manston Road East, in Ramsgate, which was also subject to viability issues.

PROW14 – As has been described previously, when an issue is perceived as urgent (such as those relating to flooding, winter storms and tree damage) there is a greater likelihood of this being reported through a phone call, perhaps due to the reassurance of talking to a person. Where an individual has not previously registered on the fault reporting system there is a tendency for those individuals to also use the Contact Centre. We have completed a small project to provide further information on the website to assist those reporting issues for the first time. However, the target remains a deliberately challenging one.

## G&C Proposed KPIs and Activity indicators for 2025/2026

### Growth and Communities

#### Key Performance Indicators

#### Economy

Ref	Indicator description	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Floor	2024/25 Q4	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Floor
EC05	Number of homes brought back to market through No Use Empty (Rolling 12 months)	400	360	449	400	360
EC10	Businesses assisted via Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract (light and medium touch)	684	600	797	236 (Apr- Jul)*	200 (Apr- Jul)*
EC11	Businesses assisted through intensive support provided via Growth Hub contract (high intensity)	30	25	79	12 (Apr- Jul)*	10 (Apr- Jul)*
EC12	Number of visitor economy businesses supported through visitor economy and inward investment contract	400	360	390	400	360
EC13	Number of inward investment projects secured through visitor economy and inward investment contract	10	10	10	10	8
EC14	Number of jobs created or safeguarded through visitor economy and inward investment contract	375	300	379	375	300
EC15 (NEW)	Amount of loan funding awarded to local SMEs by the Kent & Medway Business Fund	N/a			£3m	£2m
EC16 (NEW)	Number of people supported to access employment by the Connect to Work programme	N/a			1,290	900
EC17 (NEW)	Number of people supported with upskilling through a Skills Bootcamp programme	N/a			500	350
EC18 (NEW)	Number of new people receiving entrepreneurship mentoring support from Kent Foundation	N/a			60	50

\* A new contract is planned to start in August (subject to agreement with the Department for Business & Trade) and targets will be refreshed when this is confirmed

### Indicators removed

Ref	Indicator description	Reason
N/a	Percentage of population aged 16 to 64 in employment	The current indicators are a proxy measure of economic health, but are not directly relevant to the work undertaken by the service so are proposed for removal
N/a	Percentage of population aged 16 to 64 claiming JSA	

### LRA KPIs

Ref	Indicator description	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Floor	2024/25	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Floor
LRA06	Customer satisfaction with Registration services	96%	91%	96%	96%	91%
LRA12	Customer satisfaction with Libraries	94%	89%	TBC	94%	90%
LRA13	Customer satisfaction with Archives	98%	93%	98%	96%	91%
LRA15	Total number of customers attending physical and virtual Libraries and Archives events	210,200	190,100	213,690	204,500	183,900
LRA17	Number of volunteer hours adding extra value to the service	31,100	27,900	31,513	31,700	28,700

### LRA Activity indicators:

Ref	Indicator description	Threshold	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2025/26 Total
LRA01	Number of visits to libraries (including mobiles) (000s)	Upper	789	870	779	799	3237
		Lower	750	827	740	759	3076
LRA02	Number of items issued (including in prisons and all e-items)	Upper	1004	1194	988	1056	4242
		Lower	954	1134	938	1003	4029
LRA04a (NEW)	Number of wedding, civil partnership and citizenship ceremonies carried out by KCC Officers in Kent	Upper	2200	3000	1500	1000	7700
		Lower	2100	2900	1400	900	7300
LRA25 (NEW)	Number of archive enquiries answered	Upper	2100	2100	1700	1900	7800
		Lower	2000	2000	1600	1800	7400

## Community Protection

Ref	Indicator description	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Floor	2024/25 YTD	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Floor
CST02	Percentage of Lessons Learnt Domestic Abuse Related Death Review Seminar attendees rating the event as Good, Very Good or Excellent.	90%	81%	100%	90%	81%
CST03	Percentage of service users who report feeling safer due to warden support.	70%	65%	73%	70%	65%
COR02 (NEW)	Coroners' inquests held within 12 months of the date on which the coroner is notified of the death	N/a			75%	65%
KSS02	Percentages of priority 1 food, feed and consumer products samples reported to clients within 5 working days	93%	88%	95%	93%	88%
KSS03	Percentage of external independent proficiency tests rated as "good" or "satisfactory" with a statistical Z score of 2 or less.	75%	67%	79%	75%	67%
TS05 (NEW)	Number of residents attending safeguarding from financial abuse presentation meetings	N/a			1,500	1,320
TS06 (NEW)	Completed visits carried out by Trading Standards to higher-risk premises	N/a			180	120
TS07 (NEW)	Number of engagements with businesses and partners aimed at preventing age restricted sales and reducing youth harm	N/a			480	420

### Indicators removed

Ref	Indicator description	Reason
CST01	Percentage of local actions from completed Domestic Homicide Reviews implemented within six months of publication date.	KCC Community Safety have no control, or means to influence, the way in which partners prioritise and complete the actions identified during a Domestic Homicide Review (now Domestic Abuse Related Death Review). This means that this KPI is not a measure of KCC performance and there is no possibility of introducing management action to improve performance.
TS04	Percentage of businesses providing feedback after receiving business advice by Trading Standards and rating it as Very Good or Excellent.	Only received five responses giving feedback last year, and although all rated advice as Very Good or Excellent, this level of response does not work well as a KPI. Three new KPIs for Trading Standards have been added which better measure performance of the service.

### Innovation & Business Intelligence

Ref	Indicator description	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Floor	2024/25 YTD	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Floor
CP01	Percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub visited and supported by Community Protection.	90%	80%	100%	90%	80%
CP02	Percentage of trader applications to Community Protection's 'Trading Standards Checked' scheme processed within 10 working days.	100%	90%	100%	100%	90%

### Planning Applications

Ref	Indicator description	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Floor	2024/25 YTD	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Floor
PAG01	Percentage of planning applications determined to meet DLUHC performance standards	100%	90%	100%	100%	90%
PAG02	Percentage of statutory planning consultee responses submitted to the local planning authority within 21 days (Minerals & Waste)	90%	80%	89%	90%	80%



Strategic Development & Place

Ref	Indicator description	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Floor	2024/25 YTD	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Floor
DC08	S106 Developer contributions secured against total contributions sought	98%	85%	86%	98%	85%
PROW14	Percentage of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) faults reported online	92%	84%	87%	92%	86%
PROW16	Median number of days to resolve priority faults on public rights of way network (rolling 12-month figure)	15	24	8	10	15

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From: **Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration**

**Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate**

To: **Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025**

Subject: **25/00043 - Old Rectory Business Centre Management Contract**

Key decision **Required as gross income from site in excess of £1m**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of report:** [24/00083 - Old Rectory Business Centre Management Contract](#) 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Future Pathway of report:** For Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:**

- Matthew Fraser Moat, Northfleet & Gravesend West
- Sharon Roots, Northfleet & Gravesend West

**Summary:**

The Old Rectory Business Centre in Northfleet is a KCC-owned facility that has offered high quality office space to local businesses since 2009. In September 2024 the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee agreed that the necessary steps be taken to dispose of the property as a going concern. The Committee also approved an extension to the current management contract for a period of nine months (expires at end of August 2025) to allow time to undertake disposal. Whilst good progress has been made in preparation for the disposal, further extension of 15 months to contractual arrangements is now required to continue the process.

**Recommendation:**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration to:

1. **APPROVE** the extension of current contractual arrangements for three months from (1 September 2025) to (30 November 2025) and undertake a procurement process to secure management services for a further 12 months with extension clauses to 30 November 2026 to allow time to undertake the disposal and ensure that any new owner has the option of an existing management company in place.
2. **CONFIRM** the decision to dispose of the Old Rectory Business Centre in Northfleet as a going concern as detailed in decision 24/00083.

3. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth and Communities, working with the Director for Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Coastal Communities to exercise relevant contract extensions and oversight of a procurement process and enter into relevant contracts or legal agreements.

4. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision to extend and reprocur management services; as shown at Appendix A.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 As explained in greater detail in the [report presented to the KCC Growth, Economic Development & Communities Cabinet Committee](#) in September 2024, the [Old Rectory, Northfleet](#) is a KCC-owned facility, managed by an external service provider which has offered high quality office space to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) since 2009. In September 2015 the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (GEDCC) approved the procurement of management services at the centre, to test the market to ensure value for money. Following a Public Contract Regulations-compliant procurement process, a seven-year contract was awarded to “Basepoint Centres Ltd” in December 2015 with provision for up to four years of extensions if required. Following a recommendation from GEDCCC and a decision from the Cabinet Member for Economic Development in May 2023, the original contract was extended for one year to allow the centre to continue to provide premises and business support services to local firms and enable the KCC to undertake a review of options for its future.

1.2 In September 2024 the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development was asked to approve and delegate to the Director of Growth and Communities working with the Director of Infrastructure the authority to extend the current contract for a period of nine months to allow time to undertake the disposal of the Old Rectory Business Centre as a going concern. The centre currently generates income for KCC but the rationale for the decision was to reduce KCC’s resourcing liabilities while ensuring that the centre continues to meet a need for serviced office space in Kent and retaining the economic benefits for the county but under the control of an external owner.

1.3 Since the September 2024 decision a Legal firm was commissioned in October 2024 to produce a Report on Title, to conduct extensive searches and investigations of the property. The Report, which was completed in January 2025 serves as a legal summary, highlighting any potential concerns, limitations, or rights that are related to the property. Following on from this an external Chartered Surveyor was appointed in February 2025 to produce a comprehensive property valuation ahead of the proposed sale, and this was completed in April 2025. There is a level of complexity around the valuation

due to outstanding leases on the site and any values would be subject to market interest.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Old Rectory is a KCC owned property, managed as business centre and currently offers 28 furnished offices providing a minimum of 100 workstations. There is a general lack of workspace available for businesses in the county and the Old Rectory meets an established need for local SMEs in the Gravesham borough.
- 2.2 Presently the Old Rectory is almost at full occupancy (96%), with a wide variety of businesses operating from the centre, working within areas of energy efficiency, construction, care support, IT, software, lighting, waste management, recruitment, counselling and surveying services. Some 25 businesses are currently based there, employing around 100 people, with many more employees located outside of the centre. Small businesses benefit significantly from the facilities available at the Old Rectory which provides a dynamic, flexible environment in which to grow and benefit from networking and peer-to-peer support on site.
- 2.3 The current service provider is required to undertake the following tasks:
  - To promote and market the business centre space, manage the sales process, and negotiate licenses. Collect and hold deposits, invoice, and recover monthly Licence fees and consumables
  - To provide cost effective property management services to the whole building, including telecoms, IT, reception, cleaning, security (including the wider site), repair & maintenance, utilities, waste, health & safety/compliance, and landscaping (note that the buildings insurance is covered under a KCC bulk policy)
  - To provide proactive business centre management services to both the business centre customers, including telecoms, support and guidance where needed, deliveries, post, etc.
  - Provide a range of support and development measures for the new businesses
  - To manage the reception area providing welcome services, visitor management, information and ensure legislative requirements such as those for health and safety, DDA and equalities issues are properly addressed
- 2.4 In addition to the above, the provider is responsible for:
  - All running costs, including utilities and marketing
  - Procuring and managing the core property management services, providing centre staff, and delivery of all services to the building and its occupiers
  - The licensee agreements
  - Reporting to KCC on a quarterly basis (on-site meetings)
  - Providing KCC with monthly accounts detailing the previous month's income and expenditure
- 2.5 KCC's Growth and Communities division is responsible for both the contract management and approving maintenance/improvement works at the centre,

as well the financial monitoring of the Old Rectory which includes invoicing for the reimbursement of profit to KCC on an annual basis. KCC's Infrastructure division maintains responsibility for property level compliance, including asbestos management, water hygiene, electrical certificates, fire risk assessment, gas safety and lift policies.

- 2.6 KCC has recently heard that a number of tenant businesses on the site have ideas about potential improvements that could be made to enhance the facilities and service offer. While KCC remains the owner of the site during the disposal process, the options below include provision for tenant feedback to be considered in the short term to retain and boost occupancy rates while ensuring that any handover arrangements to a new owner include the possibility of avoiding a change in management company to minimise disruption to businesses and employees on the site.

### **3. Options**

- 3.1 Option 1 – Preferred option. Extend the current management contract for a duration of three months to the end of November 2025 and undertake a procurement process for management services for an additional 12 months with extension clauses that could be made use of to complete the property disposal process and ensure smooth handover of control while considering views from business tenants on the site and ensuring best value. The Director of Growth and Communities will have delegated authority to enter into a short-term contract extension with the current management company and sign off the subsequent re-procurement exercise. The existing contract will continue as per the current terms and conditions for three months to the end of November 2025. The service provider has indicated that they would agree to a contract extension. The proposed three-month contract extension is permissible in line with Clause 2.2 of the current contract document.
- 3.2 Option 2 – Extend the current management contract for a duration of 15 months to the end of November 2026 to complete the property disposal process and ensure smooth handover of control. The Director of Growth and Communities will have delegated authority to enter into the contract extension. The contract will continue as per the current terms and conditions for three months but would not enable KCC to test the market to ensure best value or to seek the views of current tenants regarding the current service provision and any enhancements that could be made. The service provider has indicated that they would agree to a contract extension. The proposed contract extension is permissible in line with Clause 2.2 of the current contract document.
- 3.3 Option 3 – Do nothing and allow the management contract to end on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025. This is not a preferred option, as this could lead to the closure of the centre which would be highly detrimental to businesses located at the centre and damaging to the local economy and local residents employed at the centre. Gravesham borough has a shortage of office space for SMEs, as detailed in the previous GEDCCC report.

### **4. Alignment to KCC Strategies:**

- 4.1 The GEDCCC decision to dispose of the property as a going concern, to ensure the Old Rectory continues to operate as a business centre, aligns with the following KCC strategies:
- 4.2 **Framing Kent's Future 2022-2026** by boosting economic growth and support Small and Medium-sized businesses.
- 4.3 **Securing Kent's Future - Budget Recovery Strategy** by securing a one-off capital receipt to invest in KCC's priority projects and programmes whilst also streamlining KCC's property portfolio, achieving financial and efficiency benefits.
- 4.4 **Kent & Medway Economic Framework** by supporting the conditions for growth through ensuring the ongoing availability of high-quality workspace for local businesses under a transfer of management responsibilities to an external buyer.

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The centre returns c. £50k-£60k in income to KCC annually and is used towards funding property improvements and maintenance costs (approximately £20K per annum), as well reimbursing KCC officer time spent (approx. £7K) on the project leaving a profit of around £20K after KCC's overheads are considered. With the disposal of the property KCC will no longer receive this income, but as we are looking for a buyer who will continue to run it as a business centre, the economic benefits to Gravesham and the boost/support to local small & medium sized businesses will remain. The disposal of the centre as a going concern could achieve a one-off capital receipt for KCC.

## 6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The proposed contract extension would be taken in line with Clause 2.2 of the Contract document. Challenge of a short contract extension on these grounds is deemed to be low risk, particularly as work will be underway to dispose of this asset as a going concern. Re-procuring the management of the centre on a short-term basis (an additional 12 months) would ensure a fair process is followed to select a supplier while KCC owns the site and works towards disposal as a going concern.

## 7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment for this proposal was published in 2024, with low/no negative impact on Protected Characteristics. Some sections of the Grade II\* listed section of the centre are less accessible to those with a physical disability, or age-related disability. KCC and Basepoint have made reasonable adjustments to this section of the property (without breaching the law protecting listed buildings) to minimise any negative impacts for customers or employees with limited mobility. The assessment also identifies positive impacts on Protected Characteristics given the provision of high quality, accessible work space for employees of local firms. The EqIA was recently reviewed and remains fit for purpose.

## 8. Other Corporate Implications

- 8.1 The sale of the property will generate a one-off capital receipt back for KCC to reinvest in other strategic priorities or improve the County's financial position.

## 9. Governance

- 9.1 The Director of Growth and Communities will have delegated authority to enter into a short-term contract extension with the current management company and sign off a procurement process.

## 10. Conclusions

- 10.1 The **Old Rectory, Northfleet** is a KCC-owned facility, managed by an external service provider and has offered high quality office space to SMEs since 2009 offering 28 furnished offices providing a minimum of 100 workstations.
- 10.2 Presently the centre is almost at full occupancy (96%), with a wide variety of businesses operating from the centre.
- 10.3 In September 2024 the decision was made to dispose of the property as going concern. A nine-month extension was given to undertake disposal. The current management contracts ends on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025.
- 10.4 An additional period of 15 months (to 30 November 2026) is required to market the property, complete disposal and carry out smooth handover to the new owners and ensure that the site continues to operate as a managed work space facility.

## 11. Recommendations:

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration to:

1. **APPROVE** the extension of current contractual arrangements for three months from (1 September 2025) to (30 November 2025) and undertake a procurement process to secure management services for a further 12 months with extension clauses to 30 November 2026 to allow time to undertake the disposal and ensure that any new owner has the option of an existing management company in place.
2. **CONFIRM** the decision to dispose of the Old Rectory Business Centre in Northfleet as a going concern as detailed in decision 24/00083.
3. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth and Communities, working with the Director for Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Coastal Communities to exercise relevant contract extensions and oversight of a procurement process and enter into relevant contracts or legal agreements.
4. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision to extend and reprocur management services; as shown at Appendix A.



## **12. Background Documents**

- Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B – EqlA

## **13. Contact details**

Report Author:

Mark Reeves

Project Manager

03000 417160

[mark.reeves@kent.gov.uk](mailto:mark.reeves@kent.gov.uk)

Relevant Director:

Stephanie Holt-Castle

Director for Growth and Communities

03000 417076

[stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk](mailto:stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk)

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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:**

Paul King  
Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal  
Regeneration

**DECISION NO:**

25/00043

**For publication****Key decision: YES****Subject Matter / Title of Decision** Old Rectory Business Centre Management Contract**Decision:**

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration is asked to:

1. **APPROVE** the extension of current contractual arrangements for three months from (1 September 2025) to (30 November 2025) and undertake a procurement process to secure management services for a further 12 months with extension clauses to 30 November 2026 to allow time to undertake the disposal and ensure that any new owner has the option of an existing management company in place.
2. **CONFIRM** the decision to dispose of the Old Rectory Business Centre in Northfleet as a going concern as detailed in decision 24/00083.
3. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth and Communities, working with the Director for Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Coastal Communities to exercise relevant contract extensions and oversight of a procurement process and enter into relevant contracts or legal agreements.
4. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision to extend and reprocur management services.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

The Old Rectory Business Centre in Northfleet is a KCC-owned facility that has offered high quality office space to local businesses since 2009. In September 2024 the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee agreed that the necessary steps be taken to dispose of the property as a going concern. The Committee also approved an extension to the current management contract for a period of nine months (expires at end of August 2025) to allow time to undertake disposal. Whilst good progress has been made in preparation for the disposal, further extension of 15 months to contractual arrangements is now required to continue the process.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The proposed decision is being considered by Members of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 1 July 2025.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

- **Extend the current management contract for a duration of 15 months to the end of November 2026** to complete the property disposal process and ensure smooth handover of control. The Director of Growth and Communities will have delegated authority to enter into the contract extension. The contract will continue as per the current terms and conditions for three months but would not enable KCC to test the market to ensure best value or to seek the views of current tenants regarding the current service provision and any enhancements that

could be made. The service provider has indicated that they would agree to a contract extension. The proposed contract extension is permissible in line with Clause 2.2 of the current contract document.

- **Do nothing** and allow the management contract to end on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025. This is not a preferred option, as this could lead to the closure of the centre which would be highly detrimental to businesses located at the centre and damaging to the local economy and local residents employed at the centre. Gravesham borough has a shortage of office space for SMEs, as detailed in the previous GEDCCC report.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

.....  
signed

.....  
date

## EQIA Submission – ID Number

### Section A

#### EQIA Title

Disposal of The Old Rectory Northfleet as an going concern

#### Responsible Officer

Mark Reeves - GT GC

#### Approved by (Note: approval of this EqlA must be completed within the EqlA App)

Steve Samson - GT GC

### Type of Activity

#### Service Change

No

#### Service Redesign

No

#### Project/Programme

No

#### Commissioning/Procurement

No

#### Strategy/Policy

No

#### Details of other Service Activity

Seeking authority to dispose of surplus property and transferring its functions as a going concern

### Accountability and Responsibility

#### Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

#### Responsible Service

Economy

#### Responsible Head of Service

Steve Samson - GT GC

#### Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

### Aims and Objectives

Context - The Old Rectory, Northfleet is a KCC-owned facility, managed by an external service supplier and has offered high quality office space to SMEs since 2009. In September 2015 the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee approved the procurement of management services at the Centre, to test the market to ensure value for money. Following a Public Contract Regulations-compliant procurement process a seven-year contract was awarded to “Basepoint Centres Ltd” in December 2015 with provision for a extension of up to four years. Following a recommendation from GEDCCC and a Cabinet Member for Economic Development decision, the original contract was extended for one year to allow the centre to continue to provide business support services to local firms and enable the KCC to undertake a review of options for its future.

As of September 2024, following the review of options, the county council is seeking a cabinet decision to dispose of the The Old Rectory and transferring its functions (as a business centre) as a going concern.

In terms of the day to day operations of the site, an EqlA was published in 2023, with low/no negative impact on Protected Groups. Some sections of the Grade II\* listed section of the centre are less accessible to those with a physical disability. KCC and Basepoint have made reasonable adjustments to this section of the property (without breaching the law protecting listed buildings) to minimise any negative impacts for

disabled customers or employees. The assessment also identifies positive impacts on Protected Groups. The previous assessment was in 2019.

The business centre is marketed using a variety of media through relevant support organisations to ensure information about the centre and the service it provides reaches the widest variety of people. Access to physical space at the centre is offered on “first come, first served” basis. When the centre is 100% occupied, the business centre operates a waiting list, and space is offered to the business placed first on the list. The decision to issue a licence to a business is based on financial and business information submitted by the applicant to the business centre. The centre does not discriminate against any Protected Group, and is actively providing a safe and secure, managed environment to all Licensees.

The centre maintains a strict policy for Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour (including discrimination or harassment when related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010). This policy forms part of the licensee handbook and all licensees are required to comply with the Act.

As part of the procurement process in 2015, Basepoint was required to complete a diversity questionnaire as part of the tender process, where the potential supplier is assessed on equalities issues. In addition, Basepoint by contract is required to provide services consistent with the Kent County Council’s Equality and Diversity Statement.

Aims and objectives - the aim and objective of this EqIA is to ensure that the disposal of the site as a going concern will not lead to any disadvantages for groups with protected characteristics.

Summary of equality impact - This EqIA has been carried out to consider any impact that the disposal of the The Old Rectory site as a going concern will have on Protected Groups. It is deemed that property disposal process will have low or no negative impact as its functions as the business centre will be transferred to the new owner as a going concern and so will continue operating as usual.

However, some internal actions could be taken, to establish the terms and conditions any buyer would need to adhere to, to ensure that the centre continues to provide services that do not discriminate against any Protected Group, and is actively providing a safe and secure, managed business environment to all Licensees.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

Yes

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

Yes

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

We are required to consult with the local division Member as per the Council's constitution. Both Members for Northfleet and West Gravesham have been notified of Council's intention to consider options for the future of The Old Rectory.

As part of the Key Decision process, other members of the authority are made aware of the decision to be taken and are able to raise queries in respect of the proposed decision.

It is our current intention that formal Member consultation will take place at the next Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee on 11th September 2024

The service provider has been notified of the Council's intention to consider options for the future of The Old Rectory.

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

Yes

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

**Section C – Impact**

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

Service users/clients

**Staff**

Staff/Volunteers

**Residents/Communities/Citizens**

No

**Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?**

Yes

**Details of Positive Impacts**

The Old Rectory Business Centre has a positive impact on the local community, increasing access to affordable office space and good quality business support for small and new businesses in the Gravesham area. The centre provides support for businesses to grow and expand, creating opportunities for job creation in the local area. The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all licensees.

The property is compliant with the Equalities ACT 2010 and provides a safe and secure environment for all licensees.

The centre is marketed using a variety of media and relevant support organisations to ensure information about the centre and the service it provides reaches the widest variety of people. Basepoint/Old Rectory involves a wide range of partners in providing a business service that benefits all. The Centre also offers “virtual office” facilities, allowing licensees (particularly those with disabilities) to work from home (or at an alternative work space) and benefit from the wide range of business services that the Old Rectory provides without having to travel/and or visit the centre.

Age - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. For older people, according to the ONS, nationwide there has been an increase in first-time entrepreneurs over the age of 50, and the availability of flexible business units/business services, such as is provided by The Old Rectory, is beneficial to this group.

Disability - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. The property is DDA compliant, and most of the centre is accessible to wheelchair users. Units are flexible spaces and can be adapted to benefit the user. Licensees provide their own furniture/equipment including any specialised ICT equipment and adapted furniture if required. The Centre offers “virtual office” facilities, allowing licensees (including those with disabilities) to work from home (or an alternative work space) and benefit from the wide range of business services that the Old Rectory provides (including a business address and telephone number, mailbox packages, telephone answering service, access to meeting rooms and drop in lounges, etc).

**Gender** - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. Basepoint organises events that are free and open to all kinds of business, offering them the opportunity to meet new people, to build on existing business relationships and to generate new leads. Professional Women in Business Networking is one such event that provides an effective platform for both women in business and professions within Gravesham and wider Kent, to meet, share ideas and experiences and to learn, as well as the opportunity to do business together.

**Race** - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. In terms of providing business support to people from all backgrounds and communities the centre maintains contacts with translation services and race business support organisations. Basepoint also advises businesses to make checks to ensure that a business name does not have any unfortunate meanings in other languages.

**Carer's Responsibilities and Pregnancy and Maternity** - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. Offering equal opportunities for all. The Centre also offers "virtual office" facilities, allowing licensees (including those with carer's responsibilities) to work from home and benefit from the wide range of business services that the Old Rectory provides (including a business address and telephone number, mailbox packages, telephone answering service, access to meeting rooms and drop in lounges, etc).

## **Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions**

### **19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age**

#### **Are there negative impacts for age?**

Yes

#### **Details of negative impacts for Age**

For young people, to start a business legally in the UK you must be at least 16 years of age (and 18 years of age to sign some legal documents).

#### **Mitigating Actions for Age**

There is potential to develop programmes with local schools. One business owner located at the Old Rectory regularly visits local schools to engage with young people to inspire them into entrepreneurship.

#### **Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age**

Mark Reeves

### **20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability**

#### **Are there negative impacts for Disability?**

Yes

#### **Details of Negative Impacts for Disability**

The Old Rectory, Northfleet is a Grade II\* listed property with a 20th Century annex. The building is DDA compliant, with access to all floors via a fully maintained lift, and most of the building is accessible to wheelchair users. Some sections of the Grade II\* listed section of the centre are less accessible to wheelchair users and to those with a physical disability which prevents them from using stairs.

#### **Mitigating actions for Disability**

KCC and the service provider have made reasonable adjustments to this section of the property (without breaching the law protecting listed buildings) to minimise any negative impacts for disabled customers or employees. Units are flexible spaces and can be adapted to benefit the user. Licensees provide their own furniture/equipment including any specialised ICT equipment and adapted furniture if required. The Centre offers "virtual office" facilities, allowing licensees (including those with disabilities) to work from home (or an alternative work space) and benefit from the wide range of business services.

#### **Responsible Officer for Disability**

Mark Reeves

### **21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex**

#### **Are there negative impacts for Sex**



No
<b>Details of negative impacts for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Yes
<b>Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
The centre provides separate men's and women's toilet facilities, as well as a gender-neutral accessible toilet.
<b>Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
No known negative impact. However, staff training could include awareness-raising regarding gender identity.
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Mark Reeves
<b>23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Race</b>
Yes
<b>Negative impacts for Race</b>
Northfleet has a significant Asian population - approximately 15% (over 10% for Gravesham). In Northfleet approximately 7% of the language spoken is Asian. At this stage, it is not known if the centre is fully representative of Gravesham's ethnically diverse community or whether any licensees from this Protected group (and specifically from the local Asian population) as the service provider does not currently collect this data.
There is no known negative impact relating to this group. However, the Centre is designed for use by all the community. Signage at the centre is solely in English, as is the text on the website - this may have a low adverse effect on certain race groups.
<b>Mitigating actions for Race</b>
Request that the service provider collect equalities data from licensees. A review of equality data should tell us if a more targeted approach to promoting the centre/services to particular race groups is required, if it is shown that a particular group is underrepresented at the centre.
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race</b>
Mark Reeves
<b>24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>

Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable

**From:** Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration

Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (GEDCCC) 1 July 2025

**Subject:** 25/00046 - Get Kent & Medway Working Plan

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** N/A

**Future pathway of project:** For Cabinet Member decision

**Electoral Division:** All KCC electoral divisions

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**Summary:** This report provides details about the **Get Kent & Medway Working Plan** which is currently under development and aims to provide a comprehensive overview of challenges and opportunities related to health, economic inactivity, and skills.

**Recommendation:**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration to:

**APPROVE** and **ADOPT** the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan on behalf of Kent County Council. Other partner organisations (Medway Council, the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board and Jobcentre Plus) will also be taking the Plan through their own approval processes.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Director for Public Health; Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education; Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration; Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health; and Cabinet Member for Education & Skills to sign off the final plan.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Director for Public Health; Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education; the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration; Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health; and Cabinet Member for Education & Skills to refresh and/or make revisions to the Plan as appropriate during the lifetime of the plan.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director Growth & Communities in consultation with the Director for Public Health, and Corporate Director for Children, Young People &

Education to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Economic inactivity has increased significantly in recent years<sup>1</sup> which has a negative impact on the economy, reducing productivity, exacerbating skills gaps in the labour market and reducing the quality of life of the population. The government's [Get Britain Working White Paper](#) (November 2024) confirmed that 2.8 million people are currently out of work in the UK due to long-term sickness, one in eight young people are currently not in education, employment or training (NEET) and nine million adults lack the basic skills they need to access and succeed in work.
- 1.2 In Kent<sup>2</sup> 21% of the working age population aged 16-64, or 204,000 people are currently economically inactive. 27% of these people (55,000) are currently out of work due to long term health conditions., 1,672 16–18-year-olds in Kent are classified as NEET (4.3%) and 7.2% of the Kent working age population has no qualifications.
- 1.3 In the Get Britain Working White Paper, the government made a commitment to support all areas to develop **local Get Britain Working Plans** and to convene local partners to work together to deliver these. Plans are intended to set out an analysis of the economic inactivity challenge in each local area and highlight the actions that could be taken to improve outcomes for the local population and local employers.
- 1.4 The Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) wrote to Kent County Council (KCC) on 28 February requiring the Council to lead the development of the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan (GKMWP). The requirement is for the plan to be produced by July 2025 and formally signed off by KCC, Medway Council, the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board and Jobcentre Plus with endorsement from wider partners and stakeholders.

## 2. About the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan:

- 2.1 In broad terms, the plan should encompass an analysis of local labour market challenges, an overview of the current landscape of support and a clear plan of action.
- 2.2 The DWP recognises that considerable work is already underway in local areas so the new plan should align with and encompass relevant local programmes and strategies to avoid duplication of effort.

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<sup>1</sup> Contributing factors include long-term sickness and disability, low levels of educational attainment, caring responsibilities, access to secure, well-paid, skilled roles and high-quality work and a mismatch between vacancies and suitably skilled individuals.

<sup>2</sup> The combined figure for Kent & Medway is 235,000 people who are currently economically inactive.

- 2.3 The GKMWP should also support the transition of Jobcentre Plus into a new jobs & careers service and inform future commissioning, activity, and support on a 'whole system' basis in Kent & Medway.
- 2.4 Guidance was issued by DWP in April 2025 which outlined the required structure for local plans which will cover:

### **1. Labour market analysis**

- An analysis of the key challenges faced in the Kent & Medway labour market across both labour market participation (employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity) and progression at work (earnings and job quality).
- An assessment of which groups are most disadvantaged and how and details of geographical areas within Kent & Medway where there are particular challenges
- A data analysis approach and making use of local intelligence from frontline public services.
- Information about economic inactivity levels and barriers faced by disabled people, people with a health condition, disadvantaged young people and older people, and people who face multiple disadvantages (for example homelessness, ex-offenders, and care experience).
- An analysis of employment demand within Kent & Medway and vacancies and skills gaps in key industry sectors.

### **2. Drivers and Causes of Economic Inactivity (and wider supply and demand side labour market issues)**

- Conduct a thorough analysis and document the primary drivers and causes of economic inactivity within the region including issues related to education, skills, and health, as well as factors that may limit people's ability to access work such as transport, housing, caring, and the availability and accessibility of jobs.

### **3. Current System and Offer**

- Details of existing systems and support mechanisms available for the key groups and areas identified across organisations including through the health service, local government, and Jobcentre Plus.
- An overview of services to support economically inactive individuals with health conditions, and those who face other barriers
- An assessment of current services and gaps
- How the current system looks from a citizen's perspective
- Whether there is clarity on the currently available support offer
- The degree to which there is a coherent participant journey for economically inactive individuals who face differing barriers to the labour market.

### **4. Working with partners**

- The plan will outline the levers that different stakeholders can apply in addressing the challenges identified, and outline how stakeholders can collaborate to increase engagement with support, ensure provision is aligned to improve outcomes.

- The plan will consider what mechanisms need to be in place to ensure local partners can work collectively to address issues and determine how these mechanisms will be instituted, potentially utilising any future investment or changes to existing funding streams.

## **5. Systemic changes**

- Outline the changes which are required to local systems to improve outcomes and enhance the effectiveness of the system as a whole including an assessment of current capacity and capability challenges of different stakeholders.

## **6. Priority Actions and Longer-Term Goals**

- An outline of ambitious yet achievable priorities for the next 12-24 months, which partners will work through collectively to achieve, and how these will be monitored and reported against at a local level, including through outcome indicators such as the local employment rate.
- A longer-term vision for the next 10 years.
- Ensuring alignment with key local priorities, such as in Local Growth Plans, Local Skills Improvement Plans, and Integrated Care Board strategies. This alignment will help areas demonstrate how their local plans support broader ambitions to grow the local economy at both national and local levels. Where the relevant strategies set out shared priorities of health, skills, or inactivity this will be set out clearly in the plan.

## **7. Governance, local engagement, and future iterations**

- Detail the governance arrangements in place locally which will maintain oversight of plan, and which will ensure alignment with future initiatives and strategies across relevant stakeholders.

## **3. Developing the Plan:**

- 3.1 DWP funding was provided to KCC to cover the costs of producing the plan. In agreement with Medway Council, the Integrated Care Board and Jobcentre Plus, KCC procured the services of 'Shared Intelligence' working with 'Cambridge Econometrics' to lead the development of the plan from 1 May 2025 following the publication of the DWP guidance.
- 3.2 The development of the plan is following several stages:
  - Data gathering and analysis (on skills, employment, and related health factors)
  - Mapping current provision in the health, work, and skills arenas
  - Stakeholder consultation and engagement including questionnaires, interviews, and workshops
  - Alignment to existing strategies
  - Identifying good practice and case studies
  - Developing recommendations and proposed actions
  - Endorsement from key partners and stakeholders
- 3.3 A wider range of stakeholders, groups and partners have been consulted as part of the development of the plan including the Strategic Partnership for

Health & Economy; the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership; the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Partnership; local skills, education and training providers; the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector; local Jobcentres; business representative organisations; employers; and, through linked work on the Kent & Medway Work & Health Strategy, people with lived experience.

- 3.4 In addition to being signed off by KCC, the plan will be presented to Medway Council, the Integrated Care Board and senior leadership within Jobcentre Plus for formal sign off.
- 3.5 The plan itself will set out a series of asks of government to support the area's direction of travel for tackling the causes of economic inactivity, supporting people in training and employment and boosting the local economy.
- 3.6 Given the very short timetable for the development of the plan, the most up to date version of the plan showing progress to date can be found in **appendix 1** with a final plan due to be produced by 31 July 2025 for sharing with DWP and initial publication with a final designed version to follow as soon as possible afterwards.

#### **4. Local Strategic Alignment**

- 4.1 The development of the GKMWP and its future implementation supports the following local priorities and strategies:

##### **Kent & Medway Economic Framework:**

- Action Area 2: Focusing support to business on measures that will increase long-term productivity and resilience.
- Action Area 6: Investing in Kent and Medway's skills infrastructure
- Action Area 7: Retaining and developing talent
- Action Area 13: Ensuring that everyone who wants a job can find work

##### **Framing Kent's Future: Priority 1: Levelling Up Kent**

- To support the Kent economy to be resilient and successfully adapt to the challenges and opportunities it faces over the coming years.
- To work with partners to develop a skills system for Kent that delivers skills that are resilient to changing workforce needs and opportunities and supports people to higher level skills.
- To see significant improvements in the economy, connectivity, educational attainment, skills and employment rates and public health outcomes in deprived communities in coastal areas so that they improve faster than the rest of Kent to reduce the gaps.
- To work with our partners to hardwire a preventative approach into improving the health of Kent's population and narrowing health inequalities.

##### **Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy:**

- Shared Outcome 2 - Tackle the wider determinants of health to prevent ill health
- Shared Outcome 4 - Empower people to best manage their health conditions
- Shared Outcome 6 - Support and Grow our Workforce

**The Kent & Medway Integrated Strategy for Health & Work** which includes four aspirations to:

- Build Employer Confidence
- Develop Skills & Training
- Deliver a person-centred approach
- Support a healthy, thriving workforce

4.2 The plan aligns with the recent commitment to create a **Marmot Coastal Region in Kent** with that commitment's aim of reducing health inequalities in the boroughs of Swale, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, and Ashford.

4.3 **Securing Kent's Future:** The strategy is being developed using external funding secured for this purpose and it does not in itself commit KCC to further spend. The strategy aims to make a positive contribution to key health determinants (employment and income specifically) without which, individuals are more likely to require ongoing support from public health and social care services.

## **5. Other options considered but discarded**

5.1 Do nothing: (discounted). It is a government commitment to have a Get Britain Working Plan and therefore the Department for Work & Pensions wrote to Kent County Council (KCC) on 28 February requiring the Council to lead the development of the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan.

## **6. Financial Implications**

6.1 The development of the strategy is being funded by a DWP grant of £125,000 which is covering KCC staff time, the consultancy work to develop the plan, design and publication of the plan and associated online resources and the costs of hosting stakeholder workshops. The future implementation of the strategy's action plan has no current funding allocation from KCC or its partners, but it is anticipated that future funding for government programmes will support delivery activity based on the evidence base, and actions detailed in the plan. External partners, KCC and Medway Council may wish to align current and future funded activity with actions outlined in the plan where this achieves benefits for local businesses and residents.

## **7. Legal implications**

7.1 There are no legal implications for KCC, or its partners associated with the development of the GKMWP.

## **8. Equalities implications**

8.1 A high-level Equalities Impact Assessment was prepared for the development of the plan and more detailed EqlAs will be produced to support the programmes and initiatives that will be put in place to support the implementation of the strategy. It is anticipated that these programmes will



have a positive effect on groups with protected characteristics who find themselves excluded from the labour market due to health-related issues.

## **9. Data Protection Implications**

- 9.1 There are no data protection implications for KCC, or its partners associated with the development of the GKMWP. All data used to inform the development of the plan is either publicly available or has been anonymised. Data Protection Impact Assessments will be developed as required to support the implementation of the strategy.

## **10. Other corporate implications**

- 10.1 The development of the strategy was led by KCC's Economy group with support from other services including Public Health, Education and Social Care. Different elements of the plan will be delivered by the most appropriate partner organisation(s) in future, subject to resource.

## **11. Governance**

- 11.1 A similar paper to this one will be taken to Medway Council and the Integrated Care Board October at the first available opportunity.
- 11.2 Any decisions and delegations needed to support the implementation phase of the strategy will be taken by the relevant partner organisations in line with their governance policies.

## **12. Conclusions**

- 12.1 Given the level of economic inactivity due to ill health, the numbers of young people classified as NEET and the skills gaps faced by employers nationally and in Kent & Medway, the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan will play an important role to tackling related challenges and provide opportunities to support the local workforce and employers which will in turn, benefit the local economy.

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### **Recommendation:**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration to:

**APPROVE** and **ADOPT** the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan on behalf of Kent County Council. Other partner organisations (Medway Council, the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board and Jobcentre Plus) will also be taking the Plan through their own approval processes.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Director for Public Health; Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education; Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration;

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health; and Cabinet Member for Education & Skills to sign off the final plan.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Director for Public Health; Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education; the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration; Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health; and Cabinet Member for Education & Skills to refresh and/or make revisions to the Plan as appropriate during the lifetime of the plan.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director Growth & Communities in consultation with the Director for Public Health, and Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A.

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### **13 Background Documents**

Equality Impact Assessment

### **14. Appendices**

- Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix 1: First draft of the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan

### **15. Contact details:**

Report Author: Steve Samson Job title: Head of Economy Telephone number: 03000 417167 Email address: <a href="mailto:steve.samson@kent.gov.uk">steve.samson@kent.gov.uk</a>	Director: Stephanie Holt-Castle Job title: Director of Growth & Communities Telephone number: 03000 412064 Email address: <a href="mailto:stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk">stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk</a>
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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:**

Paul King  
Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal  
Regeneration

**DECISION NO:**

25/00046

**For publication****Key decision: YES****Subject Matter / Title of Decision** Get Kent and Medway Working Plan**Decision:**

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration is asked to:

APPROVE and ADOPT the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan on behalf of Kent County Council. Other partner organisations (Medway Council, the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board and Jobcentre Plus) will also be taking the Plan through their own approval processes.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Director for Public Health; Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education; Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration; Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health; and Cabinet Member for Education & Skills to sign off the final plan.

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DELEGATE authority to the Director Growth & Communities in consultation with the Director for Public Health, and Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

The Get Kent & Medway Working Plan will play an important role to tackling the level of economic inactivity due to ill health, the numbers of young people classified as NEET and the skills gaps faced by employers nationally and in Kent & Medway and related challenges and provide opportunities to support the local workforce and employers which will in turn, benefit the local economy.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The proposed decision is being considered by Members of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 1 July 2025.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

Do nothing: (discounted). It is a government commitment to have a Get Brittan Working Plan and therefore the Department for Work & Pensions wrote to Kent County Council (KCC) on 28 February requiring the Council to lead the development of the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

.....  
signed

.....  
date

## EQIA Submission – ID Number

### Section A

#### EQIA Title

Get Kent and Medway Working Plan

#### Responsible Officer

Emma Watson - GT GC

#### Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Steve Samson - GT GC

### Type of Activity

#### Service Change

No

#### Service Redesign

No

#### Project/Programme

No

#### Commissioning/Procurement

No

#### Strategy/Policy

Strategy/Policy

#### Details of other Service Activity

No

### Accountability and Responsibility

#### Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

#### Responsible Service

Economy

#### Responsible Head of Service

Steve Samson - GT GC

#### Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

### Aims and Objectives

The Get Kent & Medway Working Plan (GKMWP) is a strategic response to the rising levels of economic inactivity across the region, particularly among individuals with long-term health conditions, disabilities, and other barriers to employment. The development of the plan has been funded by the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) and aims to align with the national Get Britain Working Plan by developing a localised, evidence-based approach that supports people to start, stay, and succeed in work and to develop a series of whole system responses to tackling gaps and challenges in the skills, employment and health area. It is designed to address the root causes of inactivity, including health, education, transport, housing, and caring responsibilities, while also improving job quality, training and progression opportunities. The GKMWP sets out to create a shared action plan for the next 12–24 months, with a longer-term 10-year vision. It will be formally signed off by Kent County Council, Medway Council, the Integrated Care Board, Jobcentre Plus, and supported by a wider range of stakeholders—to co-design and deliver integrated support systems. These systems will be mapped and assessed to identify service gaps and ensure a coherent participant journey for individuals facing multiple disadvantages. The plan also supports the transformation of Jobcentre Plus into a new jobs and careers service and informs future commissioning and investment decisions.

From an equalities & diversity perspective, the GKMWP aims to reduce disparities in access to training and

employment for Kent & Medway's residents with a particular focus on vulnerable groups. It recognises that people with disabilities, young people not in education or training (NEET), older adults, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds often face compounded barriers. The plan includes mechanisms to engage these groups meaningfully, using trusted routes and community-based approaches. It also aligns with broader strategies such as the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy, the Kent & Medway Integrated Strategy for Work & Health and the Marmot Coastal Region commitment, which aim to reduce health inequalities and support a thriving, inclusive workforce.

In summary, the GKMWP is both a strategic and operational framework that seeks to improve employment outcomes, reduce health-related exclusion, and build a more equitable and resilient local economy. The recommendations embedded within the plan will seek to ensure that the needs of Kent's diverse communities and people with protected characteristics are considered in both the design of plan and its future delivery.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

Yes

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

Yes

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

- Kent County Council (KCC)
- Economy
- Public Health
- Adult Social Care
- Community Learning & Skills
- Childrens Young People & Education
- Medway Council
- Economic Development
- Public Health
- Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board
- Jobcentre Plus
- Strategic Partnership for Health & Economy
- Kent & Medway Economic Partnership
- Kent & Medway Integrated Care Partnership
- Local skills, education and training providers
- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector
- Local Jobcentres (The Department for Work & Pensions)
- Business representative organisations
- Employers
- People with lived experience – engaged through linked work on the Kent & Medway Work & Health Strategy

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

No

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?
<b>Service Users/clients</b> Service users/clients
<b>Staff</b> Staff/Volunteers
<b>Residents/Communities/Citizens</b> Residents/communities/citizens
<b>Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?</b>
Yes
<b>Details of Positive Impacts</b>
<p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The plan specifically targets young people (e.g. those classified as NEET) and older people of working age (up to 64) who are economically inactive, aiming to improve their access to employment and training opportunities</li> <li>It supports long-term goals to reduce inactivity and improve skills across all age groups, contributing to better life outcomes and economic participation</li> <li>The plan will also encompass pre-employment activities aiming to review aspirations around career development and access to learning and training for young people (under 16)</li> </ul> <p>Disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A key focus is on individuals with long-term health conditions (including mental health and Musculo-skeletal conditions) and disabilities, who represent a significant portion of the economically inactive population.</li> <li>The plan aims to enhance support systems and reduce barriers to employment for disabled people, aligning with health and care strategies</li> </ul> <p>Sex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While not explicitly broken down by sex, the plan's inclusive approach to tackling economic inactivity and improving access to skills and employment is likely to benefit both men and women, particularly in sectors where gender disparities exist</li> </ul> <p>Gender Identity / Transgender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The commitment to inclusive stakeholder engagement and during the development of the plan suggests that future programmes and outcomes will consider and address the needs of this group</li> </ul> <p>Race</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The plan's emphasis on tackling multiple disadvantages (e.g. health, housing, education) and improving access to services in deprived communities implies a positive impact on racially minoritised groups who may be disproportionately affected by these issues</li> </ul> <p>Religion or Belief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The inclusive and systemic approach to reducing barriers to employment may indirectly support individuals from diverse religious backgrounds by promoting equitable access. However, religion or belief could cause people to be reticent to come forward through the usual designated channels. Care will be taken to reach out to some specific community groups through trusted routes.</li> </ul> <p>Sexual Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As with other characteristics, the inclusive design of the plan suggest that impacts on this group will be considered during implementation</li> </ul>

#### Pregnancy & Maternity

- Improvements in access to flexible employment and support services could benefit individuals during or after pregnancy, especially where caring responsibilities are a barrier to work

#### Marriage & Civil Partnerships

- The plan's focus on systemic improvements and inclusive service design may support individuals in various family and partnership arrangements

#### Carer's Responsibilities

- The plan explicitly acknowledges caring responsibilities as a barrier to employment and aims to address this through highlighting potential improved support systems and service alignment

### Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

#### 19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

##### Are there negative impacts for age?

No

##### Details of negative impacts for Age

Not Applicable

##### Mitigating Actions for Age

Not Applicable

##### Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Not Applicable

#### 20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

##### Are there negative impacts for Disability?

No

##### Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Not Applicable

##### Mitigating actions for Disability

Not Applicable

##### Responsible Officer for Disability

Not Applicable

#### 21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

##### Are there negative impacts for Sex

No

##### Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not Applicable

##### Mitigating actions for Sex

Not Applicable

##### Responsible Officer for Sex

Not Applicable

#### 22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

##### Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

No

##### Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

##### Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

##### Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable



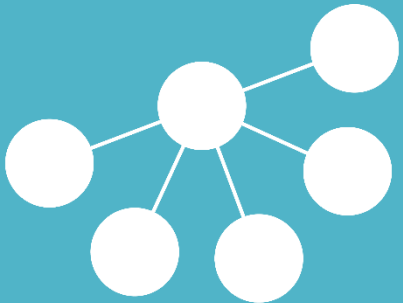
<b>23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Race</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable

<b>Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable

# Kent and Medway Get Britain Working Plan

Page 79

Emerging findings update – mid June 2025

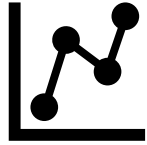


SHARED INTELLIGENCE

# Timeline and activities to develop plan



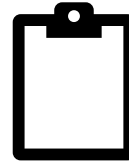
Page 28  
Review of  
related strategy  
and plan  
documents.



Data review and  
labour market  
analysis.



Stakeholder  
interviews and  
workshops.



Survey of  
support  
providers.



Lived  
experience of  
system users.



Levers of change  
workshop.



Plan development  
and iteration.

*Analysis and review of current system and outcomes*

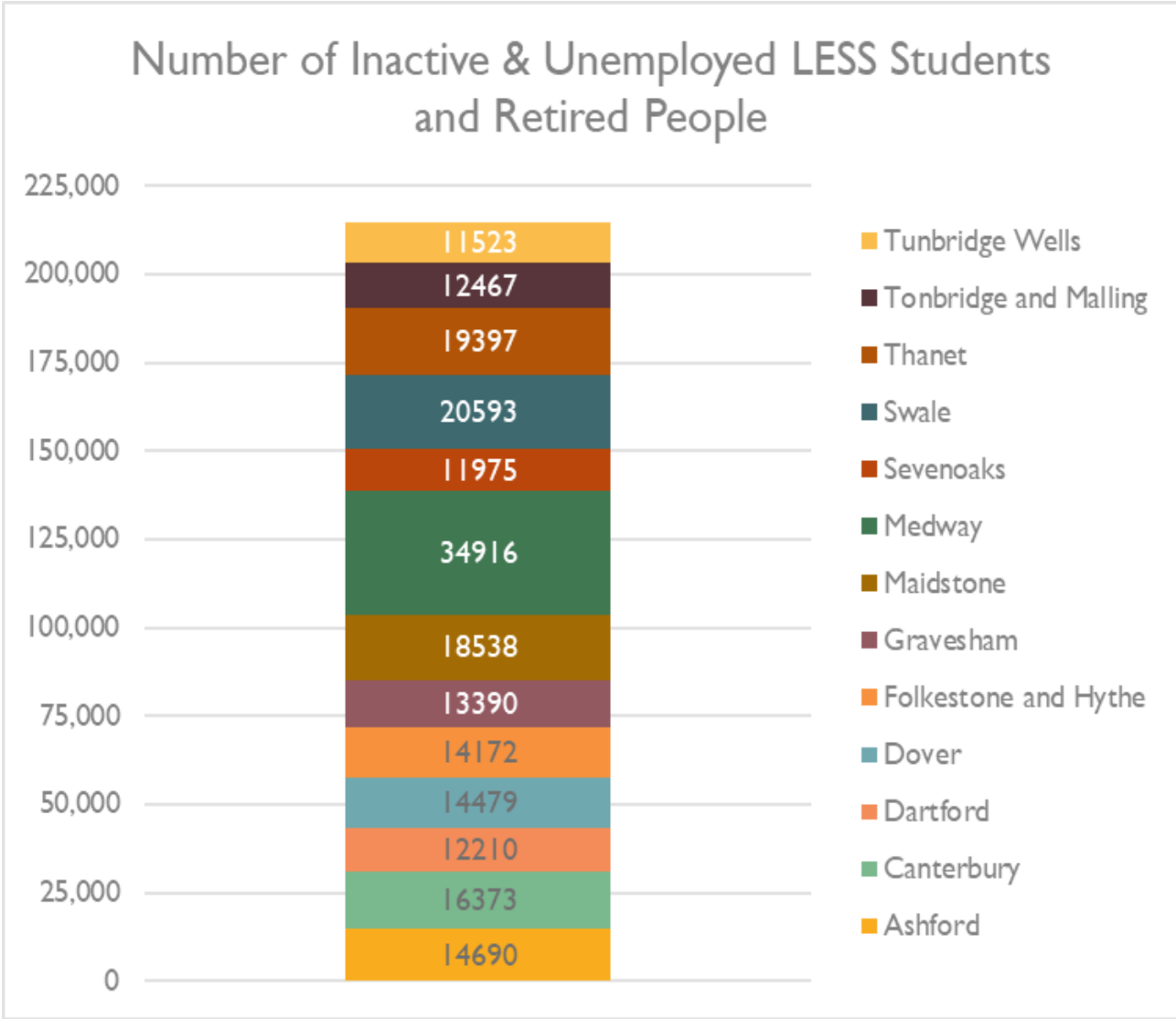
Early May to mid June

*Development of vision, actions, longer-term goals and future governance*

mid June to end July

# Demographic summary

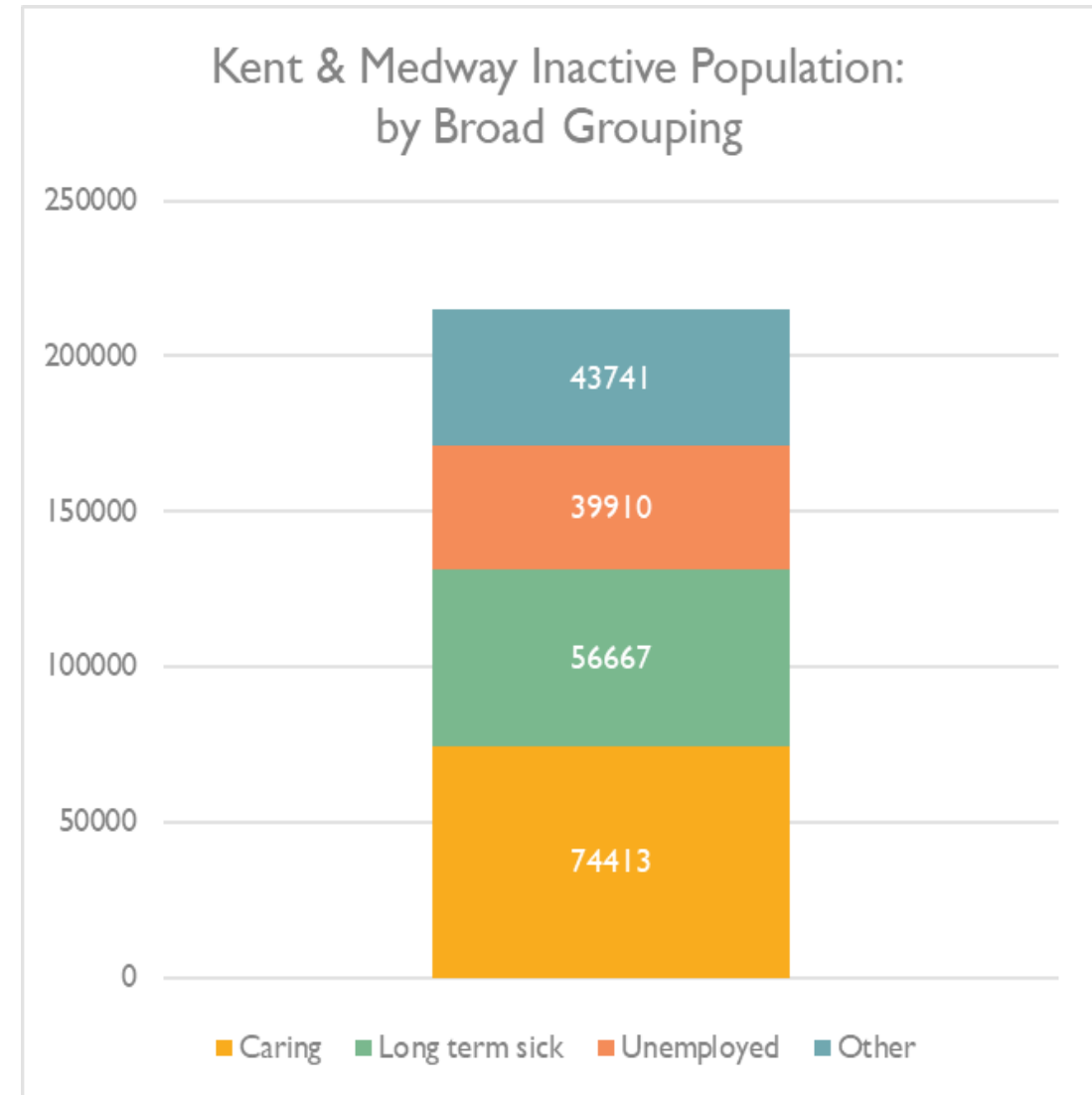
- Page 81
1. Kent and Medway population = ~ 1.9 million people. Comparable to some metro areas (e.g. North East - 1.99m, West Yorkshire - 2.35m).
  2. Data indicates more than three quarters (78%) of Kent's working-age population works and 80% of Medway's (due to younger population).
  3. In 2021, the inactive and unemployed population over 16 in Kent and Medway amounted to around 630,000.
  4. To understand what proportion of these can be targeted by the Get Britain Working Plan, discount retired population and students.
  5. Produces a “*target*” population of 215,000.
  6. But does not mean all this group able to work.



# Which are the main inactive groups?

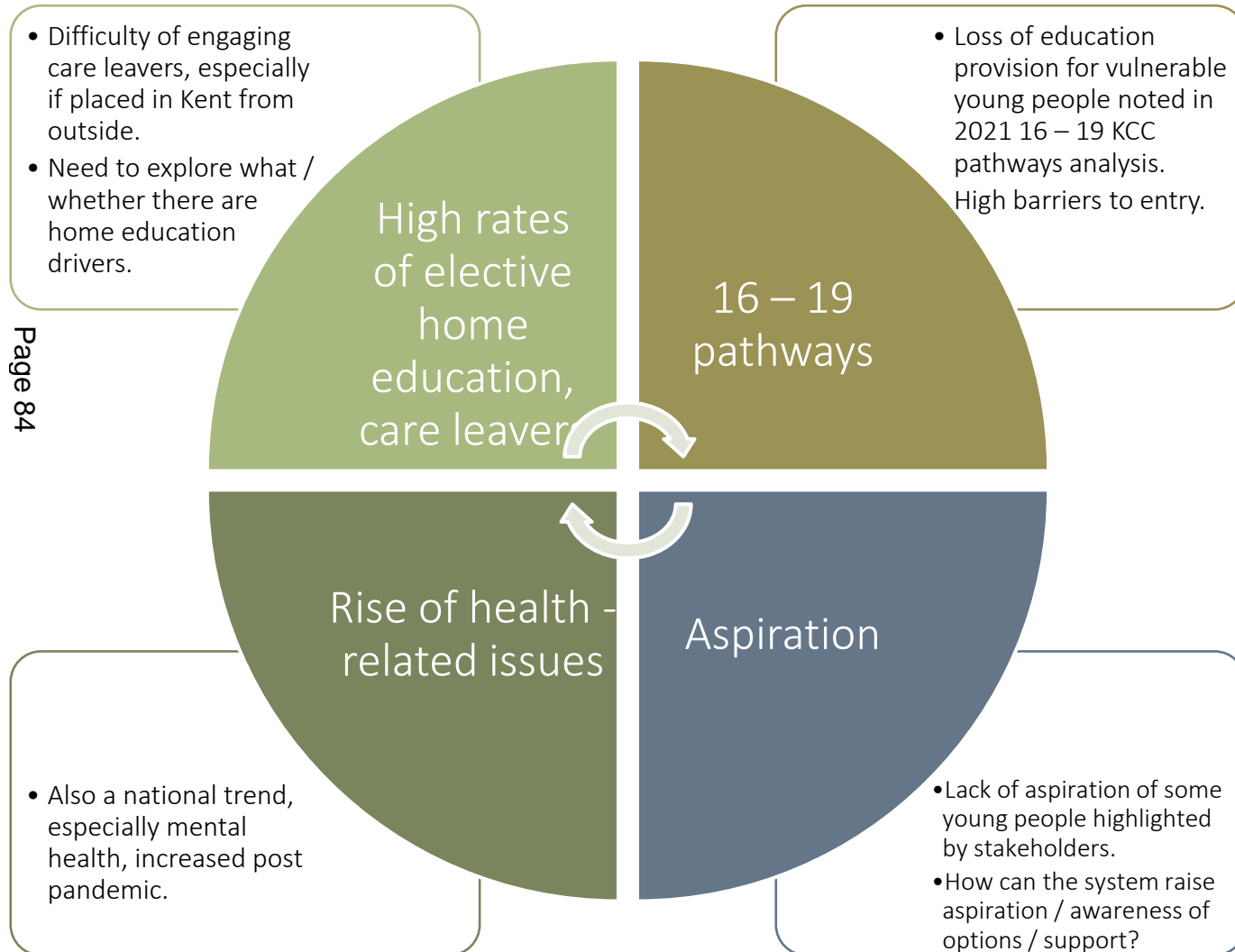
1. As previous graph shows, target population is spread evenly across the districts...
2. ...and, as shown here, across broad cohorts of:
  - *Caring*
  - *Long-Term Sick/Disabled*
  - *Unemployed*
  - *Other*
3. Largest cohorts being long-term sick (26%) and carers (36%)...
4. ... but also significant totals of *unemployed* and *other* inactive e.g. short-term sick, early retired.

Page 82



# Supply and demand side labour market issues

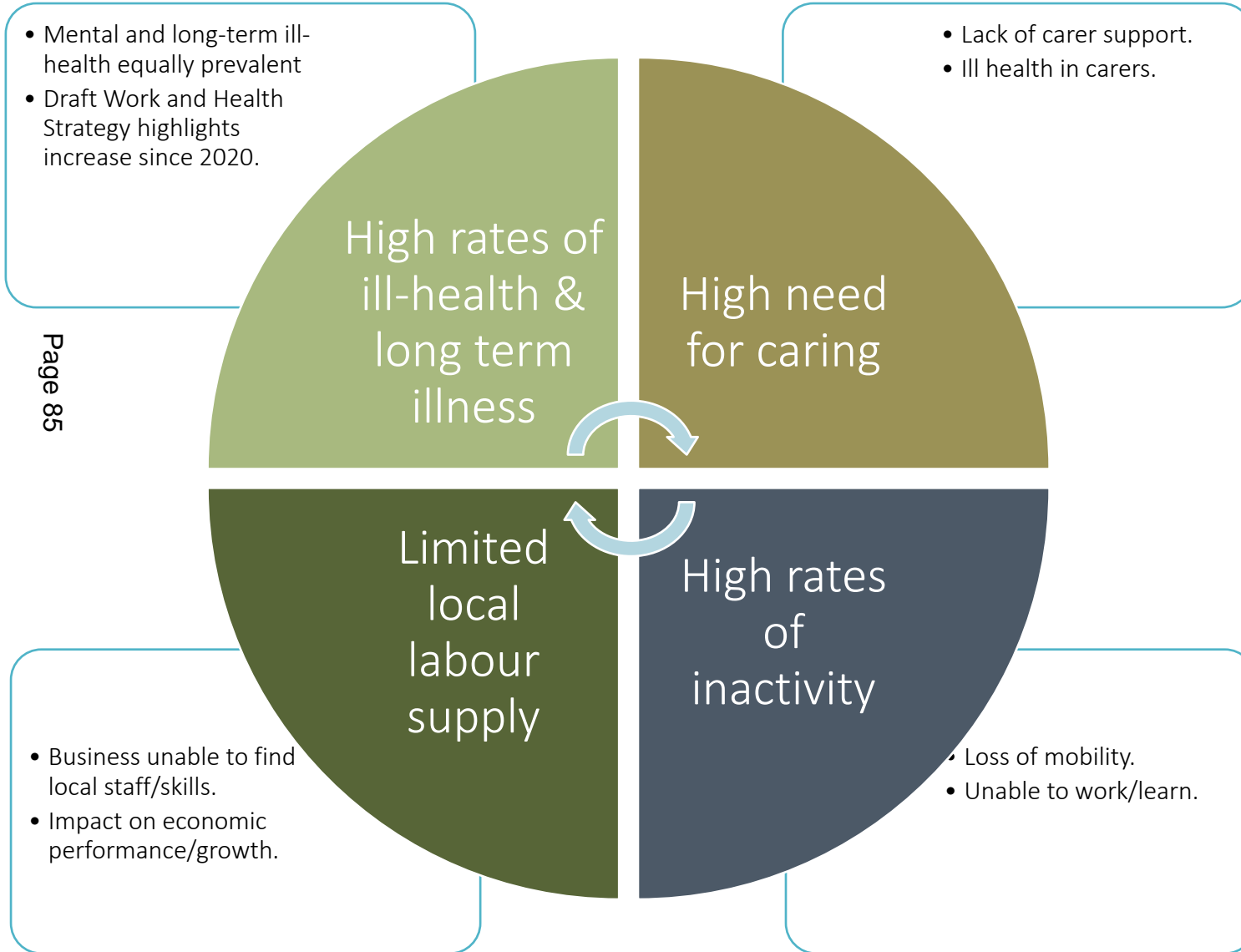
# Young people and inactivity



- 1,373 NEET in Kent in April 2024.
- Highest Kent NEET districts Thanet, Swale, Dover, Gravesham, Maidstone.
- High growth in NEETs in Medway.
- Kent has highest number of home educated of any LA area - increased by 50% in last 3 years.
- As demand rises, provision is falling...
- between 2018/19 and 2023/24, number of alternative providers has fallen from 42 to 18.



# Health and inactivity



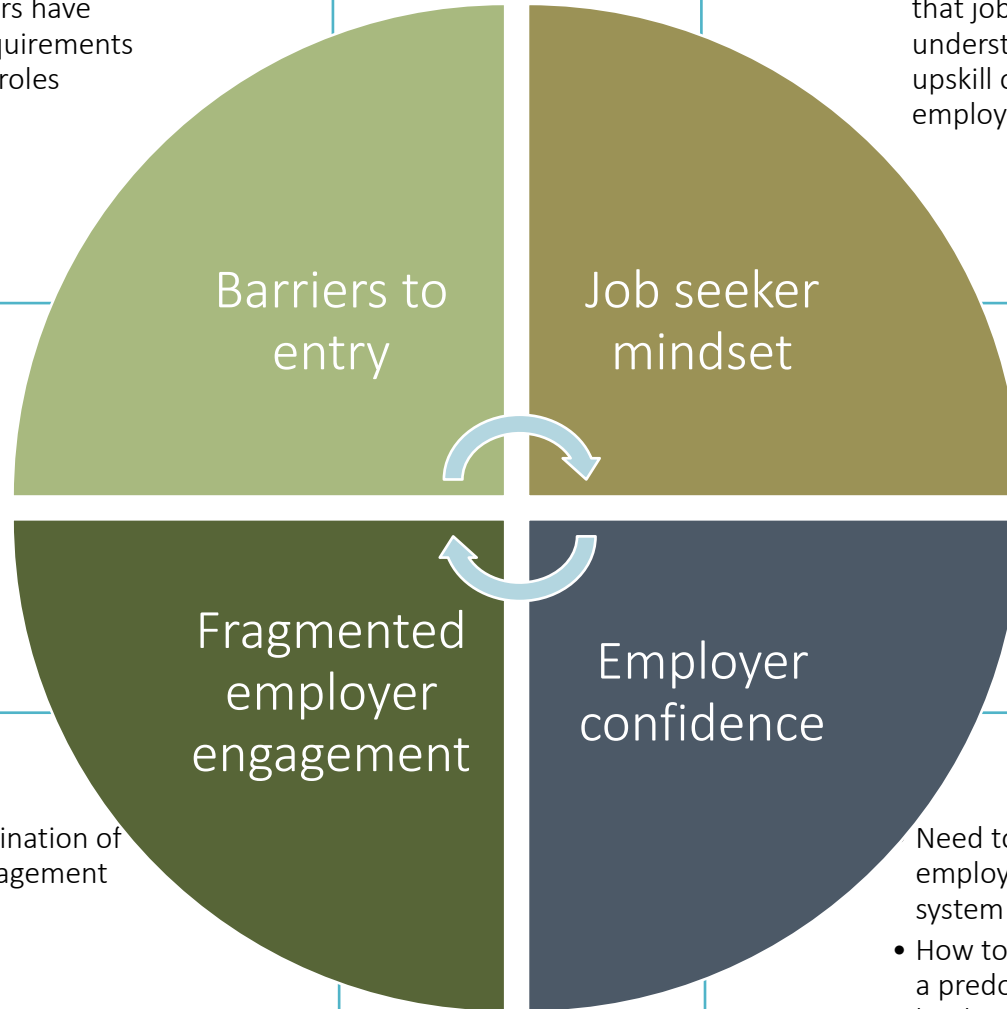
- Thanet, Dover, Folkestone, Swale highest rates of poor health.
- Thanet, Swale, Canterbury highest rates of long-term illness.
- Mental ill-health very widespread.
- While older retired population isn't counted in the target cohort, older populations may be more vulnerable to illness...
- ...meaning greater care needs.
- Emphasising the importance of high-quality health services.
- High numbers of unpaid carers in the community affects the economic vitality of the area...
- ...as well as the life opportunities for carers themselves.

# Employer – potential employee gap

- Stakeholder views that some employers have overly high requirements for entry level roles

- Some stakeholders report that job seekers do not understand need to upskill or present as employable.

- Some of those we have interviewed have talked about how to help employers help people into work.



- Lack of co-ordination of employer engagement

- Need to demystify employment support system for employers.
- How to make this work in a predominantly SME landscape?

# Wider determinants

- Wider determinants is a familiar concept in public health.
- By affecting health, they affect employment prospects. But some determinants directly affect ability to work as well.
- Examples include:



Housing. Social housing supply and private sector rent. Anxiety about housing affects ability to focus on employment.



Transport. Lack of transport options consistently cited as a barrier to getting to work, accepting work with anti-social shifts and for access to skills training.



Access to healthcare. Waiting lists and delays in getting GP appointments exacerbate the health economic inactivity driver.

# Summary labour market analysis

- Even with high employment rate, demographic size of Kent and Medway presents a challenge simply in terms of numbers needing support, while in many cases, resources and support structures are shrinking.
- Clear link between districts with best labour market profile and best socio-economic outcomes e.g. Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells.
- Serious health issues stand out in coastal areas which suffer across all domains. Exacerbated by lower quality employment opportunities, very low skilled workforce.
- Indicative of 'spiral' of entrenched poverty where poor health limits ability to work, demands more care, limits social and physical mobility of cared for and carers, leading to social and physical isolation.
- Even in districts with the best socio-economic outcomes, there are hotspots of need – we understand this can be at a finer level than the ward data, so may be masked in statistics. This makes the support offer difficult when it is a localised issue without critical mass.
- Where labour market opportunities are poor, leads to brain drain, older population, more vulnerable to ill health.
- Within coastal group, Thanet stands out for ill-health (mental and general), low skills and low-quality employment.

# The employment and skills system

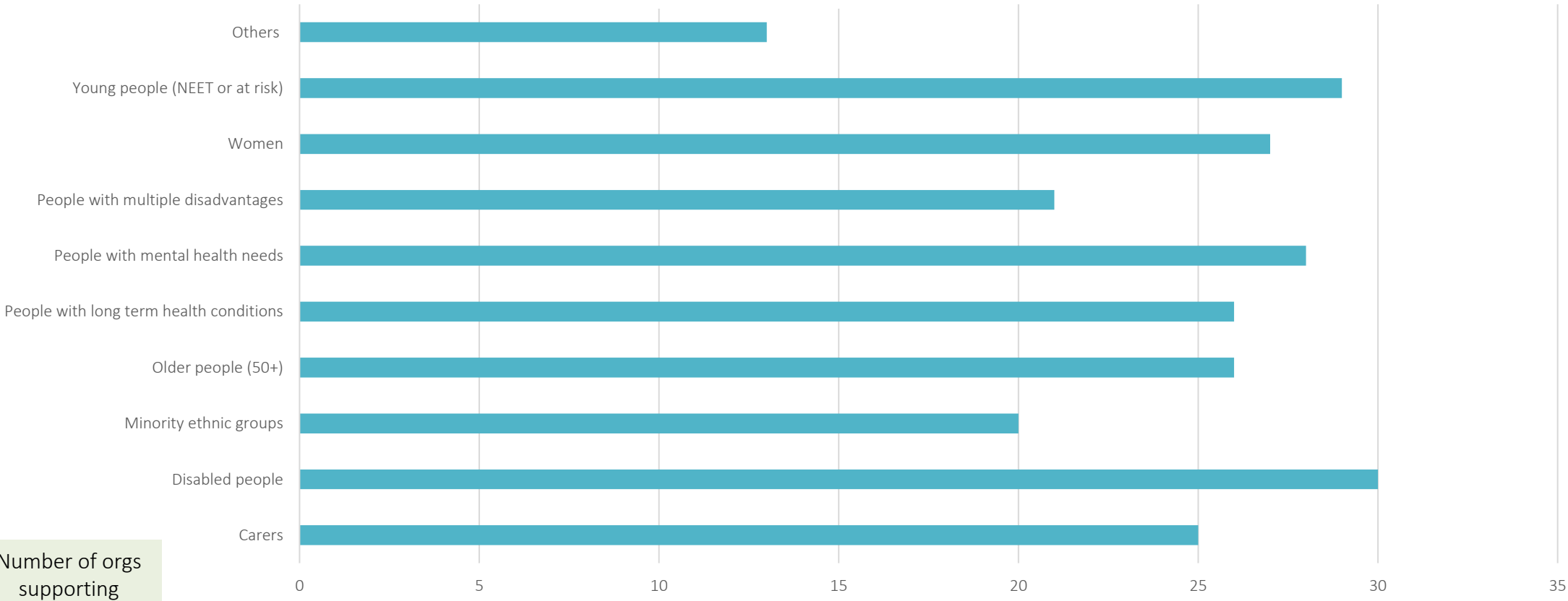
# Cohorts supported

- Questionnaire issued to key Kent and Medway stakeholders.
- 45 responses describing the support the organisations provide and views on the gaps and challenges in the current system.

Page 90

Cohort supported

Number of orgs supporting



# Gaps in the system?

- There is a wide range of support from a lot of organisations.
- Discussion has identified some gaps:
  - E.g. lead carer with children aged 1 – 12.
  - E.g. short-term funding for much provision, with associated cliff-edges and challenges of delivering results quickly.
  - E.g. examples of interesting practice, but in pockets.
- But the key “gap” is how the system works together. This is not just about the constraints of rigid and time-limited funding – it is about, as a system, building and acting on knowledge of what the aggregate offer is.

# Next steps – develop levers for change

Once the analysis has been refined, we will consider, with stakeholders, the levers for change. Areas to consider could include:

## Local change – partners can influence now

- Link employment support to other local public service touchpoints (GP, housing).
- More co-location.
- Co-ordinated face to employers.
- Role of anchor institutions.

## Longer term local policy shift

- “Good work” – economic growth plan?
- Raising aspiration – softer interventions?
- Commissioning as a system?

## Change that needs investment

- tbc – but challenge partners to identify where extra focus can make a difference.

## Other asks of government

- Building the employment and skills devolution ambition.



# District inactivity overview

District	% Employment Rate (LFS)	Size of Inactive Target Group	% Size of <i>target group</i> relative to inactive total
Canterbury	67.9	16,373	25.4
Dartford	70.0	12,210	38.8
Thanet	71.2	19,397	34.8
Dover	71.3	14,479	32.3
Gravesham	71.6	13,390	39.0
Ashford	77.1	14,690	34.4
Swale	77.7	20,593	39.3
Tunbridge Wells	79.5	11,523	31.8
Medway	79.6	34,916	39.3
Sevenoaks	79.7	11,975	30.0
Maidstone	79.9	18,538	33.6
Folkestone & Hythe	80.5	14,172	32.7
Tonbridge & Malling	85.9	12,467	30.6

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**From: Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration**

**Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport**

**To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (GEDCCC) 1 July 2025**

**Subject: Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway**

**Key decision: 25/00005**

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** [GEDCCC November 2024](#)

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** All KCC electoral divisions

**Summary:** This report provides an update on the development of an Integrated Health and Work Strategy for Kent & Medway which aims to tackle the issues linked to economic inactivity related to long-term health conditions.

**Recommendation:**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration to:

**APPROVE** and **ADOPT** the Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy on behalf of Kent County Council. Other partner organisations (Medway Council, the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board) will also be taking the Plan through their own approval processes.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Director of Growth and Communities, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health and Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration, to sign off the final plan, refresh and/or make revisions to the Plan as appropriate during the lifetime of the plan.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Director of Growth & Communities, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on the **Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway 2025-2030** (included at Appendix 1) which has been developed over the last year using funding from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)

and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). The strategy aims to enable key organisations in Kent & Medway to better understand the challenges that employers face with regard to supporting new and existing employees with long term health conditions and the issues that prevent people with health conditions from accessing employment opportunities and sustaining work.

- 1.2 The plan has been developed by several teams within Kent County Council (KCC) (Economy; Public Health; and Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance), Medway Council and the NHS Kent & Medway.
- 1.3 A final plan is now ready for formal endorsement by KCC's Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (GEDCCC); KCC's Health Reform & Public Health Cabinet Committee; the Medway Council Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee; the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB); and the Kent & Medway Strategic Partnership for Health & Economy (SPHE)<sup>1</sup> which reports to both the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) and the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP)<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.4 A paper was presented to [GEDCCC in November 2024](#) which provided an overview of:
  - The background to and purpose of the strategy;
  - Strategic alignment to KCC and wider Kent & Medway strategies and programmes;
  - Information and statistics about the levels of economic inactivity linked to long term health conditions nationally and in Kent & Medway and the impacts on local employers and residents;
  - How tackling economic inactivity linked to ill-health would benefit Kent & Medway's population and employers including helping to fill skills gaps in key industry sectors;
  - Details of the planned development phases of the strategy including a public consultation process;
  - Emerging priorities based on early feedback from local stakeholders.
- 1.5 The details outlined in the November paper ([available to view here](#)) have intentionally not been repeated in this paper. It should be noted, however, that local businesses are negatively impacted by the prevalence of long-term health conditions which are linked to labour market shortages and lower productivity while individuals are hindered from accessing and retaining employment opportunities.

## **2. Developing the Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway:**

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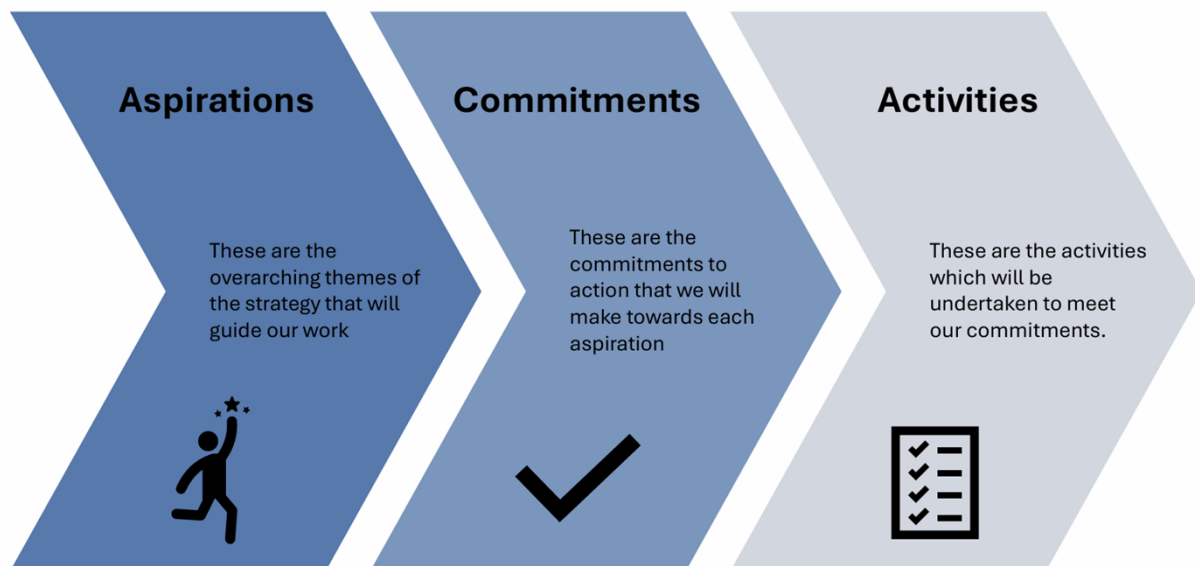
<sup>1</sup> The SPHE includes representatives from local government including economic development, public health and social care, the NHS, businesses and business representative organisations, skills providers, voluntary groups, and the Department for Work & Pensions.

<sup>2</sup> The Kent & Medway Integrated Care Partnership includes Kent County Council, Medway Council, the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board, the four Kent & Medway Health & Care Partnerships and District Councils along with support from Kent Healthwatch, Medway Healthwatch and Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise.

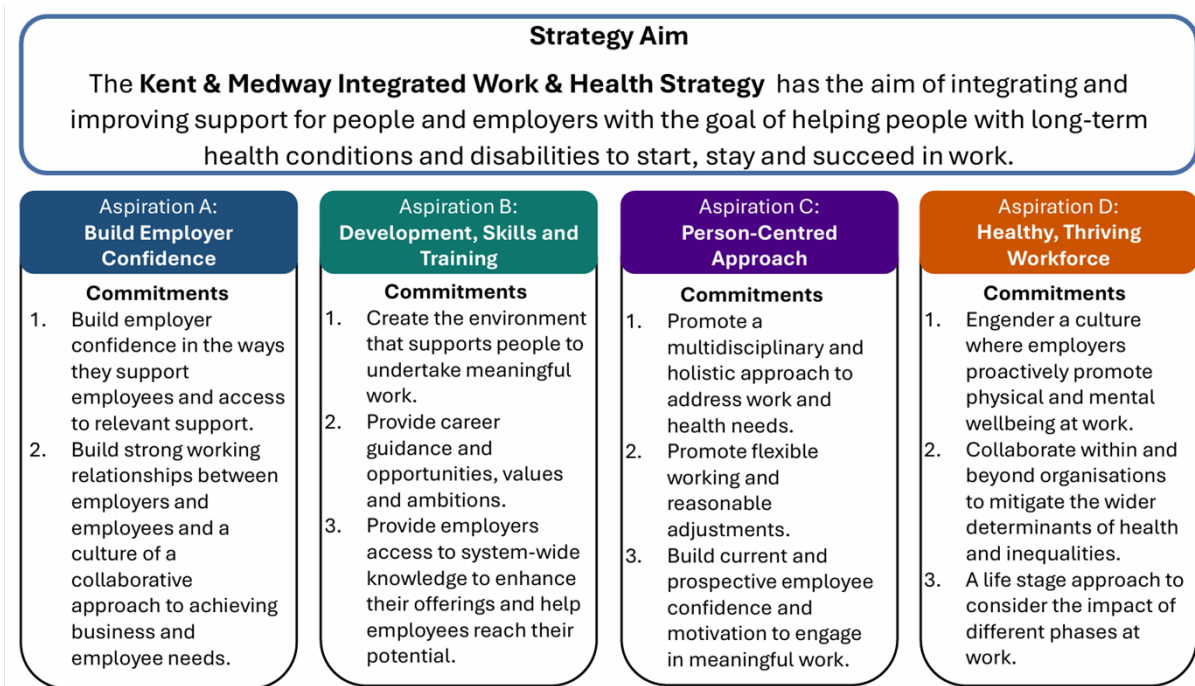
- 2.1 The development of the strategy started in April 2024 with an ICP workshop focused on work and health. This workshop brought together stakeholders including Kent & Medway Employment Taskforce, KMEP, the K&M Business Advisory Board, NHS Kent and Medway ICB, Local Authorities and DWP. Themes explored included Skills Development, Employer Perspectives, Mental Health, Community Support, In-Work Support for People & Employers (businesses and public sector).
- 2.2 The Intelligence Gathering Phase followed between May and September 2024 where over 115 stakeholders (employers and employees) were engaged in interviews or focus groups to provide views and intelligence. National, regional, and local policies, strategies and programmes were reviewed, and this continues as an ongoing process. Health, economy, and employment data is being brought together from the perspective of supporting people with long-term health conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work. See **appendix 4** for broad categories of stakeholders consulted.
- 2.4 The first draft of the strategy was compiled in December 2024 and a number of key partnerships were informed about progress and emerging themes. Groups included the SPHE, KMEP, the Employment Task Force and Business Advisory Board.
- 2.5 A public consultation took place from January to March 2025 via an online survey and 336 responses were received. A final piece of work took place in early June 2025 to seek the views of people with lived experience to inform the final strategy.
- 2.6 Development of the final strategy was started in April 2025, based on a 'You said, we did' approach using the analysis of workshop outcomes, input from strategic partnerships and strategic partners, survey data and feedback from the lived experience engagement sessions.
- 2.7 Throughout the development of the strategy, it was important to ensure that the views of local businesses were taken into account and this was done via the main business representative bodies (Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, The Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors who are members of BAB and KMEP) and individual companies. From an employer perspective there was strong feedback about helping local firms to better understand how to maintain a strong and healthy workforce, understand legislation and support to help employees with health conditions and to make use of the strategy to help tackle skills gaps.
- 2.8 It should be noted that since work began on drafting the strategy, the government published the [Get Britain Working White Paper](#) in November 2024. This included a commitment to produce Local Get Britain Working Plans by July 2025. KCC was asked in February 2025 to lead the 'Get Kent & Medway Working Plan' (GKMWP) on behalf of KCC, Medway Council, Jobcentre Plus and the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board. The plan will encompass the Work & Health strategy and is not intended to duplicate efforts but to build on the Health & Work Strategy, Local Skills Improvement Plan, Kent & Medway Economic Framework, and the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy. The GKMWP is the subject of another GEDCCC paper.

### **3. The Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway:**

- 3.1 The strategy is built on the following structure:



- 3.2 The strategy is based on four aspirations which are the overarching themes that will guide the work of the strategy. Each aspiration comprises two or three commitments to action.



- 3.3 Concerns expressed by employers about how best to support people with long-term health conditions and disabilities in the workplace are addressed in **Aspiration A**. Employers would welcome support in fully understanding and applying legislation and in sharing practice through case studies and examples. This aspiration is particularly important given the nature of Kent & Medway economic make-up with over 90% of firms employing fewer than nine people. Support for small enterprises is particularly important given that they often lack resource and capacity, to ensure that they can engage in the health and work agenda without compromising their ability to operate commercially and thrive.
- 3.4 **Aspiration B** responds to the strong case that was made during engagement for quality training and development opportunities to enhance employment opportunities

and provide meaningful work both for those currently out of work and for the existing labour force across a number of aspects. Training and development in appropriate areas also provides opportunity for employers to fill known skills gaps in Kent & Medway's key industry sectors. This Aspiration also seeks opportunity for people with long-term health conditions and disabilities to access guidance for career change where exacerbations of their long-term health conditions or disabilities prevent continuation with current career or employment.

- 3.5 **Aspiration C** responds to feedback about the multiple factors that can make the management of long-term health conditions and disabilities difficult whilst engaging in meaningful work. There are a range of wider factors which can influence the ability of a person with a long-term health condition or disability to start, stay or succeed in work including transport and housing.
- 3.6 **Aspiration D** aims to ensure that workplaces are conducive to good physical and mental health and wellbeing for employees which in turn leads to increased productivity for local firms. This aspiration encompasses leadership and management practices, flexibility to achieve a good work life balance and recognising the need for additional support for employees at different of their life and career to ensure that employees are supported to remain productive.
- 3.7 Partners are confident that the strategy responds to challenges in Kent & Medway and the local context given the feedback from the public consultation:
- Aspiration A was supported with a total of 69.9% respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing.
  - For Aspiration B, 71.1% of respondents selected strongly agree with a further 22% selecting agree.
  - Aspiration C received a strongly agree from 72% of respondents with an additional 18.8% of respondents selecting agree.
  - For Aspiration D, 70.2% of respondents selected strongly agree with a further 21.4% of respondents answering agree.
- 3.8 **Appendix 3** includes a 'you said, we did' report that demonstrates how feedback from stakeholders was addressed in the strategy and **Appendix 5** is the Consultation Results Report.

#### 4. Implementing the Strategy

- 4.1 In order to take the strategy forward, an action plan is currently being developed which comprises short- and medium-term actions and those that can be developed for the longer term. The draft action plan, which will remain a live document, can be seen in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.2 The implementation of the strategy will be led by teams from KCC, Medway Council and the Integrated Care System and overseen by the SPHE.

#### 5. Other options considered

- 5.1 Do nothing. This was rejected as there is a national expectation and strong local support for the development of an Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent and Medway.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The development of the strategy was funded by a DWP/DHSC grant which covered a post based within Medway Council. KCC (Economy; Public Health; and Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance) and additional Medway Council officers and NHS colleagues also contributed support in the form of staff time given the links to wider KCC priorities. KCC staff involved in developing the strategy are funded by core budget, but their respective roles include activity to support strategies and initiatives that boost the local economy and improve health outcomes.
- 6.2 The strategy itself is not a funded strategy but there are a number of 'quick wins' which can be implemented within existing resource.
- 6.3 The strategy will be an integral pillar of the forthcoming GKMWP which will set out a number of asks of government so it is anticipated that with evidence of need highlighted in the strategy, there may be possibilities to access future government funding to support the delivery of the action plan. The future implementation of the strategy should support economic growth through supporting people into work, tackling skills gaps and reducing workforce absence due to sickness enabling businesses to operate more productively.

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 There are no legal implications for KCC, or its partners associated with the development of the Work & Health Strategy.

## **8. Equalities implications**

- 8.1 A high-level Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was prepared for the development of the strategy phase and more detailed EqIAs will be produced to support the programmes and initiatives that will be put in place to support the implementation of the strategy. It is anticipated that these action plan will have a positive effect on groups with protected characteristics who find themselves excluded from the labour market due to health-related issues.

## **9. Data Protection Implications**

- 9.1 There are no data protection implications for KCC, or its partners associated with the Work & Health Strategy itself. Data Protection Impact Assessments will be developed to support the programmes and activities delivered under the action plan.

## **10. Other corporate implications**

- 10.1 The development of the strategy was led by the K&M Integrated Care System with oversight from several KCC services: Economy; Public Health; and Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance. Different elements of the strategy will be delivered by the most appropriate KCC services and partner organisation(s) in future, subject to resource being identified.

## **11. Governance**



- 11.1 A similar paper is being taken to KCC's Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee in July; the August Medway Council Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and the September K&M Integrated Care Board meeting for endorsement.
- 11.2 Any decisions and delegations needed to support the implementation of the strategy's action plan will be taken by the relevant partner organisations in line with their governance policies.

## 12. Conclusions

- 12.1 Given the level of economic inactivity both nationally and within Kent & Medway and the negative impacts that this has on individuals and the local economy, the development of the Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway and its subsequent implementation is an important area of work for KCC and its partners. The **Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway** and the support it has from key local stakeholders will enable Kent & Medway to support local businesses and residents by tackling barriers to employment and helping individuals to access and succeed in work while tackling skills gaps faced by key industry sectors.

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### Recommendation:

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration to:

**APPROVE** and **ADOPT** the Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy on behalf of Kent County Council. Other partner organisations (Medway Council, the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board) will also be taking the Plan through their own approval processes.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Director of Growth and Communities, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health and Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration, to sign off the final plan, refresh and/or make revisions to the Plan as appropriate during the lifetime of the plan.

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Director of Growth & Communities, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

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## 13. Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment

## 14. Appendices

- Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix 1: The Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway

- Appendix 2: Draft Action Plan for the strategy
- Appendix 3: 'You Said, We Did' Report
- Appendix 4: Summary of Stakeholder Engagement Broad Categories
- Appendix 5: Consultation Results Report

## 15. Contact details:

Report Author: Steve Samson Job title: Head of Economy Telephone number: 03000 417167 Email address: <a href="mailto:steve.samson@kent.gov.uk">steve.samson@kent.gov.uk</a>	Director: Stephanie Holt-Castle Job title: Director of Growth & Communities Telephone number: 03000 412064 Email address: <a href="mailto:stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk">stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk</a>
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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:**

Paul King  
Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal  
Regeneration

**DECISION NO:**

25/00005

**For publication****Key decision: YES****Subject Matter / Title of Decision** Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway**Decision:**

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration is asked to:

APPROVE and ADOPT the Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy on behalf of Kent County Council. Other partner organisations (Medway Council, the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board) will also be taking the Plan through their own approval processes.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Director of Growth and Communities, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health and Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration, to sign off the final plan, refresh and/or make revisions to the Plan as appropriate during the lifetime of the plan.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Director of Growth & Communities, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

The development of the Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway and its subsequent implementation is an important area of work for KCC and its partners to tackle the level of economic inactivity both nationally and within Kent & Medway and the negative impacts that this has on individuals and the local economy. The Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway and the support it has from key local stakeholders will enable Kent & Medway to support local businesses and residents by tackling barriers to employment and helping individuals to access and succeed in work while tackling skills gaps faced by key industry sectors.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The proposed decision is being considered by Members of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 1 July 2025.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

Do nothing. This was rejected as there is a national expectation and strong local support for the development of an Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent and Medway.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

.....  
signed

.....  
date

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## EQIA Submission – ID Number

### Section A

#### EQIA Title

Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy

#### Responsible Officer

Emma Watson - GT GC

#### Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Steve Samson - GT GC

### Type of Activity

#### Service Change

No

#### Service Redesign

No

#### Project/Programme

No

#### Commissioning/Procurement

No

#### Strategy/Policy

Strategy/Policy

#### Details of other Service Activity

No

### Accountability and Responsibility

#### Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

#### Responsible Service

Economy (with Public Health and SPRCA)

#### Responsible Head of Service

Steve Samson - GT GC

#### Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

### Aims and Objectives

The UK faces significant challenges with Economic Inactivity which are at the highest level since 2008 with some 2.6m people being out of the labour market for health-related reasons.

A Kent & Medway Integrated Work & Health Strategy is to be produced with the aim of integrating and improving support for people and employers to enable more people with health conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work. The strategy will be overseen by the Kent & Medway Strategic Partnership for Health & Economy and 'owned' by the Integrated Care Partnership and Kent & Medway Economic Partnership.

It is intended that the strategy and its future implementation will enable people with long term health conditions and disabilities to benefit by being able to start stay and succeed in meaningful work. This is based on the evidence that there is a synergistic relationship between meaningful work and good health. Employers from all industry sectors are also set to benefit from the strategy through increased access to untapped workforce potential, retention and diverse and inclusive workforce.

The following outcomes are hoped to be achieved by the strategy and these will be refreshed as the

strategy is developed and implemented.

Through integrating work and health:

- To increase the number of people with long term conditions and disabilities who are able to engage in meaningful work
- To take a person-centred, multidisciplinary approach to referral and provision to support people with long term health conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work.
- To build employee and employer confidence to support employees to start, stay and succeed in work and to build employee confidence in their capability and confidence to engage in work.
- To create an environment in which people are able to engage in relevant development training and skills to support them to start, stay and succeed in work.
- To engender a culture of a healthy, thriving workforce across Kent and Medway.

Unemployment can affect people with protected characteristics disproportionately including people with disabilities and health issues (physical and mental) or those with caring responsibilities. The development of the strategy and its future implementation is anticipated to have a positive impact upon various sections of the local population.

This EqIA is intended to give an early high level view of equalities, diversity and inclusion issues with further EqIAs to be developed as the strategy moves into its implementation phase through supporting programmes and initiatives during 2025.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

No

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

Yes

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

As part of the intelligence gathering phase of the development of the strategy, 115 stakeholders have been engaged through 70 interviews including:

- NHS Trust leaders
- Representatives of employers and business support/membership organisations
- Education, training and skills leads
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Leaders of mental health organisations
- VCSE
- Housing representatives
- Economy representatives
- Public Health
- SEND and neurodiversity leaders
- Health and Care Partnerships
- Adult Education

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kent and Medway ICB</li> <li>• Primary Care</li> <li>• Service users – from health perspective, organization employee perspective, DWP perspective</li> <li>• Community leaders</li> </ul>
<b>Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?</b>
No
<b>Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?</b>
Yes
<b>Section C – Impact</b>
<b>Who may be impacted by the activity?</b>
<b>Service Users/clients</b> Service users/clients
<b>Staff</b> Staff/Volunteers
<b>Residents/Communities/Citizens</b> Residents/communities/citizens
<b>Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?</b>
Yes
<b>Details of Positive Impacts</b>
<p>The intended purpose of the Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy is to support people with long term health conditions or disabilities to start stay and succeed in work. To that end it would be intended that there would be a positive differential impact on those people experiencing disability</p> <p><b>Age:</b> Further evidence will be explored for this but there is likely to be a positive differential for age. As people age it is more likely that they will develop a long term health condition which may also result in a disability. Therefore by developing the strategy it is likely that there will be a positive differential impact for this factor.</p> <p>There is also potential to impact positively on younger age groups given work limiting conditions have risen fastest in the younger age groups. The rate of work limiting conditions among younger workers has doubled in the last decade. The number of workers aged 16 – 34 who report that their mental health limits the type or amount of work they can do has quadrupled in the last decade.</p> <p><b>Disability:</b> The programmes and initiatives that emerge from the strategy are likely to impact positively upon people with a disability who have previously been excluded from the labour market.</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> There is potentially a positive differential impact for women where factors such as menopause and pregnancy will be taken into consideration. Alongside this, the negative or positive impact of specific health conditions relating to men need to be considered.</p> <p>22% of working age women report having a work limiting condition compared with 17% of men (<a href="https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/what-we-know-about-the-uk-s-working-age-health-challenge">https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/what-we-know-about-the-uk-s-working-age-health-challenge</a>.)</p> <p><b>Gender Identity/transgender:</b></p>

Relevant data relating to gender identity and employment alongside long term health conditions and disability needs to be explored further to determine its impact.

#### RACE:

This factor will be explored further to establish particularly whether there is likely negative differential impact when taking into consideration the additional risk factors for people of minority ethnic groups for some health conditions such as diabetes.

Risk factors for this group could include wider determinants such as occupations and other factors related to culture. People in these groups may be reticent to come forward for support other than to trusted contacts and therefore care will need to be taken to reach out to these communities in a way that engages them most appropriately.

Working age people of Bangladeshi ethnicity are most likely to have a work limiting condition, followed by those of white and Pakistani ethnicity. (<https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/what-we-know-about-the-uk-s-working-age-health-challenge>.)

#### Religion or belief:

Further evidence will be sought for this factor (religion) but care does need to be taken in implementation that there is not a negative differential impact for this factor. Religion or belief may cause people to be reticent to come forward through the usual designated channels. Care must be taken to reach out to some specific community groups through trusted routes.

#### Sexual Orientation:

Relevant data relating to sexual orientation and employment alongside long term health conditions and disability needs to be explored further to determine the impact of sexual orientation.

#### Pregnancy & Maternity:

Evidence needs to be reviewed for this factor to determine conclusively but it is likely that there will be a positive differential impact where associated conditions relating to pregnancy and maternity create circumstances where it becomes difficult to engage in work including due to caring responsibilities.

#### Marriage & Civil Partnerships:

Relevant data relating to gender identity and employment alongside long term health conditions and disability needs to be explored further to determine its impact.

#### Carer's Responsibilities:

The programmes and initiatives that emerge from the strategy are likely to impact positively upon people with carer's responsibilities as people receiving care due to long term health conditions are more likely to be supported into the labour market.

## Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

### 19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

#### Are there negative impacts for age?

No

#### Details of negative impacts for Age

Not Applicable

#### Mitigating Actions for Age

Not Applicable

#### Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age



Not Applicable
<b>20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Disability?</b>
No
<b>Details of Negative Impacts for Disability</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Disability</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Disability</b>
Not Applicable
<b>21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sex</b>
No
<b>Details of negative impacts for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Race</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>

Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable

# **Provisional Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy (Draft) 2025 – 2030**



# Introduction to the Strategy

The **Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy** has been developed through a collaborative effort between the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP). This joint initiative reflects a shared commitment to improving the health and productivity of our workforce, benefiting businesses and organisations and the local community.

This strategy is designed to support employers in creating healthier workplaces and to support people with all long-term health conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work. The audience for this strategy document is primarily professionals working in services that aim to support people, businesses and organisations. Communication about the strategy will be tailored to other audiences.

Recognising that Kent's and Medway's communities are diverse, with unique needs, opportunities, and strengths, this strategy will be implemented to ensure that local needs are met. This strategy is our overarching high-level ambition, which will be supported by targeted action plans in our local communities.

As major employers and anchor institutions, we understand our own critical role in this initiative. We are committed to lead by example by creating a healthy work environment for all our employees.

## Strategy Aim

The **Kent & Medway Integrated Work & Health Strategy** has the aim of integrating and improving support for people and employers with the goal of helping people with long-term health conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work.

### Aspiration A: Build Employer Confidence

#### Commitments

1. Build employer confidence in the ways they support employees and access to relevant support.
2. Build strong working relationships between employers and employees and a culture of a collaborative approach to achieving business and employee needs.

### Aspiration B: Development, Skills and Training

#### Commitments

1. Create the environment that supports people to undertake meaningful work.
2. Provide career guidance and opportunities, values and ambitions.
3. Provide employers access to system-wide knowledge to enhance their offerings and help employees reach their potential.

### Aspiration C: Person-Centred Approach

#### Commitments

1. Promote a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to address work and health needs.
2. Promote flexible working and reasonable adjustments.
3. Build current and prospective employee confidence and motivation to engage in meaningful work.

### Aspiration D: Healthy, Thriving Workforce

#### Commitments

1. Engender a culture where employers proactively promote physical and mental wellbeing at work.
2. Collaborate within and beyond organisations to mitigate the wider determinants of health and inequalities.
3. A life stage approach to consider the impact of different phases at work.

## Implementation Plan

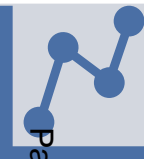
There will be targeted action plans with the activities which will be undertaken to meet our commitments.

# Intelligence and Evidence Base:

## How We Gathered Intelligence



We reviewed existing national, regional and local policy, strategies and planning and will continue to incorporate new information as it is published.



We brought together data on health, employment and the economy and analysed this from the perspective of supporting people with long-term conditions or disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work.



We talked to over 115 stakeholders in interviews and focus groups and gained their views from an employer and employee perspective on the challenges of engaging with meaningful work for people with long-term health conditions and disabilities. We also asked about what is already in place and what change they would like to see.



We explored and mapped the provision which is available in different geographical areas of Kent and Medway to see how well the provision meets the needs in each area.



We reviewed a range of academic literature relating to research on the subject of work and health.

# Policy Context:

## National Picture

In response to the growing number of people out of work, the UK government introduced the Back to Work Plan<sup>1</sup> in 2023 to support those facing long-term health conditions, disabilities, or long-term unemployment. Following a change in government in July 2024, the mission to grow the economy has maintained a strong focus on advancing the work and health agenda.

In November 2024, building on the previous governments Back to Work Plan, the government produced the Get Britain Working White Paper<sup>2</sup> as part of a new three-pillar approach. This paper sets out initiatives to reduce economic inactivity and achieve an 80% employment rate. Emerging policies from this paper will be tailored to ensure that national initiatives deliver real benefits for people, businesses and organisations in Kent and Medway.

As part of this third pillar, the government has also introduced the Skills England Bill<sup>3</sup> and the Employment Rights Bill<sup>4</sup>, aiming to boost the nations skills and reform workers' rights. Further pillars include a new modern Industrial Strategy and Local Growth Plans and to improve the quality of work through the Plan to Make Work Pay.

In March 2025, the government published a Green Paper<sup>5</sup> on Reforming Benefits, proposing changes to the welfare system, improving employment support and reducing barriers to work.

## Get Britain Working White Paper – Summary of Initiatives

£115 million for local areas to deliver Connect to Work, a new supported employment programme



Bring Jobcentre Plus and National Careers Service together to provide a national jobs and careers service



Support all areas in England to develop local Get Britain Working Plans



Expand access to NHS Talking Therapies, Employment Advisors and Individual Placement Support (IPS)



Establish a new youth guarantee to offer training, an apprenticeship, or help to find work for all young people 18 to 21



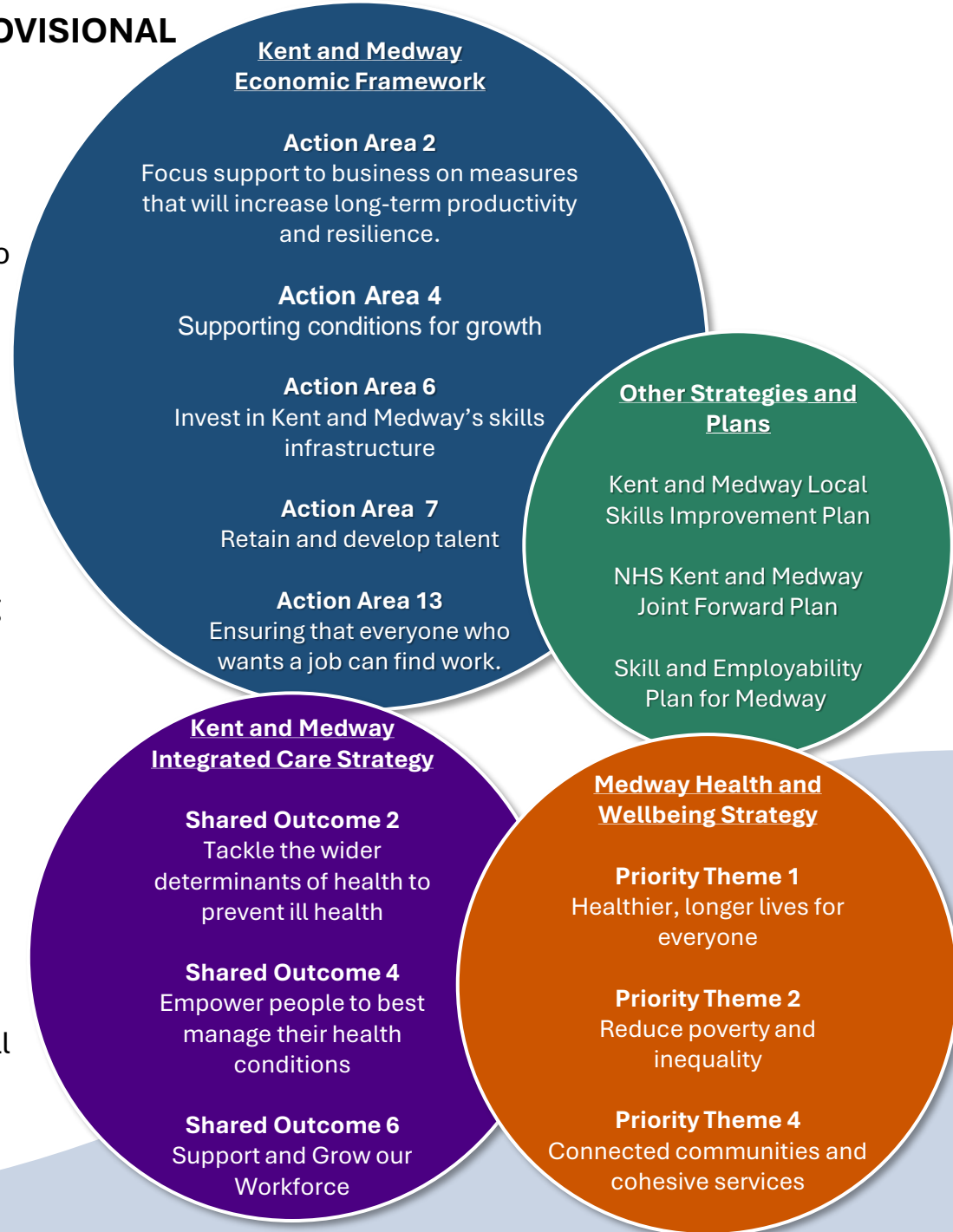
# Policy Context:

## Local Picture

The Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy, which also serves as Kent's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the Kent and Medway Economic Framework both recognise the strong connection between economic prosperity and the health and wellbeing of the population. Both strategies look to address the economic determinants that enable healthy lives, including access to stable employment. Similarly, Medway's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy highlights the importance of improving access to steady, secure employment as a critical factor in improving wellbeing.

Many other organisations across Kent and Medway have also developed local strategies that align with this shared vision of health and work. Each highlight the impact this has on the economy, service providers, and population health and wellbeing.

These shared priorities offer a strong foundation, and by building on these existing local strategies, this strategy will be a cohesive and impactful plan that supports the prosperity of both people and businesses in Kent and Medway.





# Why We Need a Strategy:

## Relationship Between Work and Health

Within the past year there have been several national reports on the relationship between work and health, citing the impact of the rising number of people out of work is having on the economy. The Health Foundations report, Towards a Healthier Workforce<sup>6</sup> revealed:

- More than 8 million people now report health conditions that restrict the type or amount of work they can do, up from 6 million in 2013.
- A record 4 million people are not participating in the labour market due to a work-limiting condition, with 2.6 million citing long-term sickness or disability as their main reason for being out of the workforce.
- In 2023, there were 3.9 million workers aged 16 to 64 years with a work-limiting health condition, up by 1.5 million, or 64%, from a decade ago

It further empathises how ‘employment can bring with it better incomes, financial stability, security and greater sense of purpose, which in turn can lead to healthier diets and exercise, higher living standards, and better mental health.’<sup>7</sup>

This is also supported by Lord Darzi’s report into the NHS which explains there is a ‘virtuous circle if the NHS can help more people back into work’ and that ‘improving access to care is a crucial contribution the NHS can make to national prosperity.’<sup>8</sup>



# Why We Need a Strategy:

## People Perspective

There is a mutually beneficial relationship between work and health.

People who are unemployed:

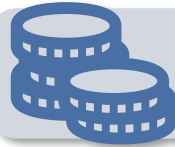


Are five times more likely to report poor health than employees.<sup>9</sup>



Are more likely to experience a detrimental impact on mental health.<sup>10</sup>

Page 118



Experience a detrimental economic impact.<sup>11</sup>

People who have never worked or are long-term unemployed:



Are more likely to be obese than the England average.<sup>12</sup>



Are less likely to be physically active.<sup>13</sup>



Are more likely to smoke than the England average.<sup>14</sup>

# Why We Need a Strategy:

## Economic Perspective

There is an economic impact on the country and employers. Long-term sickness can lead to increased costs for businesses including funding sick leave and hiring temporary employees. Indirect costs may include lowered productivity and the potential loss of business, especially in time critical industries.

### Employers need skilled staff



- 48% of Kent & Medway employers surveyed in 2023 experienced problems recruiting the staff they needed.
- Of this total, 19.7% said that staff recruitment is a major problem for them.<sup>15</sup>

### Cost to businesses



UNEMPLOYMENT

- Annual hidden cost of employee sickness has risen by £30 billion since 2018.
- Most of this increased cost (£25 billion) to businesses is from lower productivity among people working through sickness, with just £5 billion down to rising sick days.<sup>16</sup>

### Long-term absence limits productivity



SICK LEAVE

- People with work limiting health conditions are 3 times less likely to return to work within a year than those without health conditions.<sup>17</sup>

### Tax receipts and benefits bill



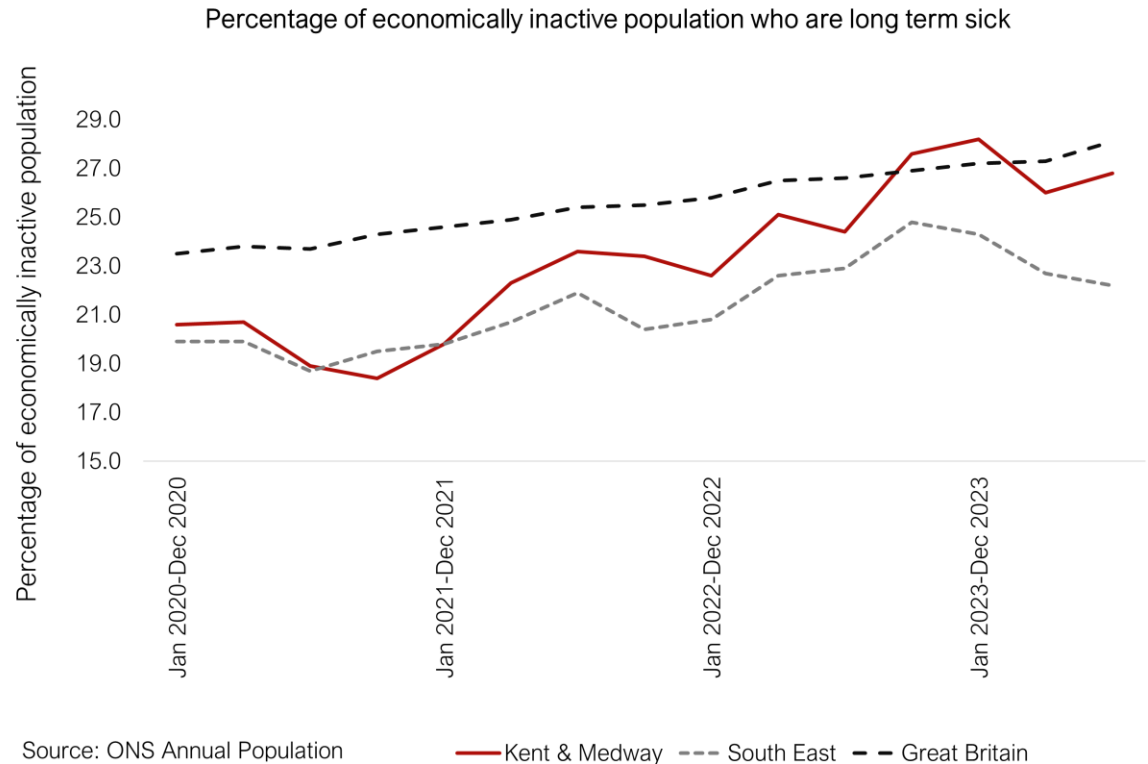
- Fewer employees reduces the UK tax receipts & increases the benefit bill, reducing investment in the economy and necessary infrastructure.
- The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates that the cost of sickness and disability benefits will increase by £30 Billion over the next 5 years across the UK.<sup>18</sup>

# Why We Need a Strategy:

## Economic inactivity perspective

In late 2020, 209,000 people were economically inactive in Kent and Medway, of which 18.4% was due to long-term ill health. By June 2024, this had increased to 26.8%, higher than the South East average.<sup>19</sup> While this reflects the national trend the rate of change is more pronounced in Kent and Medway as Figure 1 shows.

Nationally, a particularly concerning trend is the number of young workers aged 16-34 experiencing work limiting conditions. This has doubled in the last 10 years. Mental health, including anxiety and depression, are believed to be key factors.<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 1: Percentage of economically inactive population who are long-term sick  
January 2020 – June 2024**

# Why We Need a Strategy:

## Fit Note Perspective

Figure 2 shows the top 5 diagnoses for which fit notes have been issued in Kent and Medway between 2019 and 2024. Mental health and behavioural disorders (MH) and musculoskeletal conditions (MSK) are the leading diagnoses for fit note episodes.

Table 1 shows that the number of fit notes being issued for mental health and MSK across Kent and Medway increased between June 2022/23 and June 2023/24. This was by 9.5% and 13.6% respectively.

As well as designating a patient as 'not fit for work' a fit note can designate a patient as 'may be fit for work with reasonable adjustments.' Nationally, in 2022/23 this option was used in 5.9% of cases.

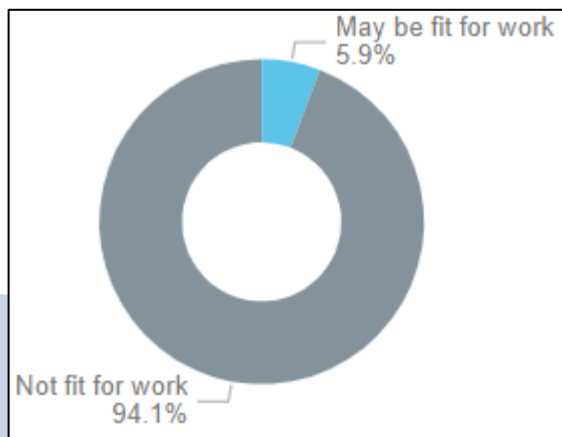
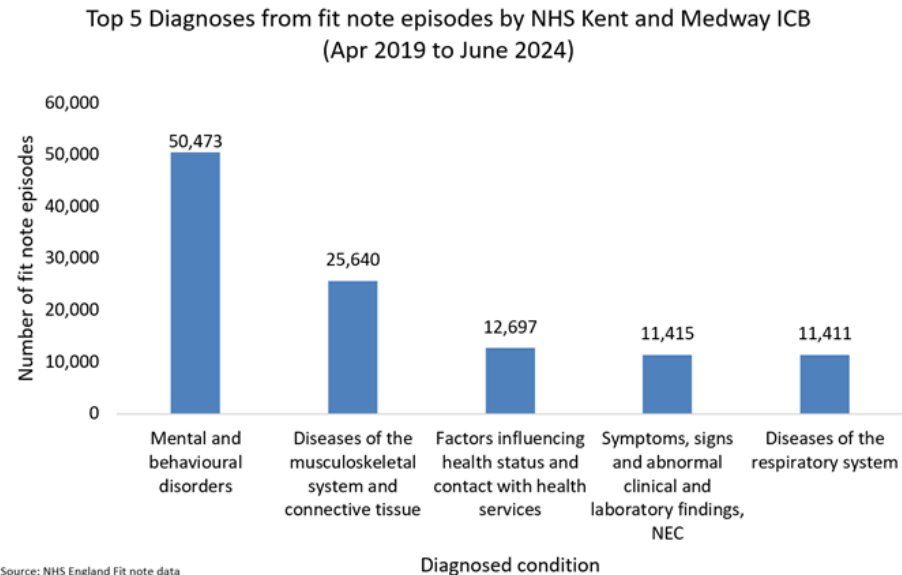


Figure 3 : Proportion of fit notes noting fitness for work with reasonable adjustments 2022/23 <sup>21</sup>



Source: NHS England Fit note data  
Medway public health intelligence team, Medway Council(AC), 2024-10-29

Figure 2 : Kent and Medway top 5 diagnoses from fit note episodes 2019 -2024

Table 1 : Change in fit note numbers for Kent and Medway relating to MSK and mental health <sup>22</sup>

Fit Notes Kent and Medway	June 22/23	June 23/24	% Increase
Mental Health	2357	2581	9.5
Musculo-skeletal	1166	1325	13.6

# Why We Need a Strategy:

## Stakeholder Feedback

We talked to over 115 stakeholders in interviews and focus groups and gained their views from an employer and employee perspective on the challenges of engaging with meaningful work for people with long-term health conditions and disabilities. We also asked about what is already in place and what change they would like to see.

### Employer Feedback

Concerns about doing things wrong when trying to support people with long-term health conditions and disabilities.



Access to the right support for employers, for example, employer and manager training, a toolkit, signposting to resources, becoming Disability Confident and access to funding.



Wellbeing training was articulated to know how to help employees stay physically and mentally well e.g. physical active.



Importance of working together including listening to people, collaboration between organisations and engagement of organisations and employers in developing and implementing the strategy.

### Employee Feedback

Importance of a person-centred approach and establishing best practice for supporting people to start, stay, and succeed in work.



In terms of job roles education and training was raised as a barrier to gaining meaningful employment, particularly reading and writing skills.



Inclusive recruitment practices, taking a creative approach to recruitment to facilitate success for those with long-term health conditions and disabilities who have the skills and capabilities to succeed in the role.



A range of support was put forward that would help employees to start, stay and succeed in work. This included occupational health, flexible working, access to the necessary equipment and a coherent support offer.

# The Development and Structure of the Draft Strategy

This document now sets out each of the four aspirations, each of which has a number of underpinning commitments. The activities to deliver these will be captured in a live delivery plan and are not included in this strategy.

## Aspirations

These are the overarching themes of the strategy that will guide our work



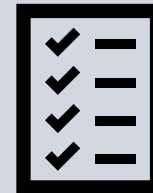
## Commitments

These are the commitments to action that we will make towards each aspiration



## Activities

These are the activities which will be undertaken to meet our commitments.





# Aspiration A: Building Employer Confidence



The aspiration aims to build confidence amongst employers by engaging with people with long-term health conditions and disabilities and supporting them to gain and retain meaningful work.

Navigating legislation related to long-term health conditions and disability in the workplace is challenging so there needs to be easy access to information and guidance, which is particularly important for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and self-employed people.

For small and micro-SMEs, which are in the majority in Kent and Medway, recruiting the right person for the right role is particularly important in reducing costly and disruptive staff turnover and growing the success of the business.

We want to raise awareness among employers about the benefits of a diverse workforce, to minimise hesitancy to employing people with long-term health conditions and disabilities and to build an inclusive workforce culture. This could help tackle known skills shortages, with employers serving as ambassadors who can lead by example.

Courage and confidence to take on a new role can be quickly dissipated. It is hard to regain if the role is not successful. It is important employers can support people in the right way, at the right time and in the right role.

To underpin this aspiration, a strong, trusted, working relationship is important between employer and employee, facilitating a collaborative, open and honest dialogue which is responsive to the needs of both parties.







# Aspiration A:

## Building Employer Confidence

### Commitment 1

Build employer confidence in supporting employees with long-term health conditions and disabilities and improve access to relevant support.

We heard employers' concerns about doing the right thing for their employees with long-term health conditions or disabilities. This included legislative requirements and practical implementation within their organisation or business, and managing potential sickness absence and impact on their productivity.

In response we will **signpost and make information easily accessible to employers, including training where appropriate, and improve access to occupational health advice. This can also include workforce training such as sign language, assistive technology and autism awareness courses.** We will also draw attention to the impact of trauma and raise awareness of trauma informed approaches.

**The Disability Confident Scheme<sup>23</sup> will be promoted as a way of building employer and organisation confidence,** which helps provides a staged approach for an organisation to ensure that disabled people have the right opportunities to fulfil their potential.

In the recruitment process it is important that people can fully demonstrate their skills and capabilities for the role ensuring a good match between applicant, role, and organisation e.g. job carving. This commitment proposes that **more creative and alternative approaches to recruitment and onboarding practices are explored and implemented.** This also includes **reasonable adjustments** and use of the **Access to Work scheme<sup>24</sup> where appropriate.**



# Aspiration A:

## Building Employer Confidence

### Commitment 2

Build strong working relationships between employers and employees and a culture of a collaborative approach to achieving business and employee needs.



Page 126

Stakeholders told us about the need for good communication and open and honest dialogue. A focus on a collaborative approach and nurturing good understanding between employer and employee is required.

The aim is to work towards mutually beneficial arrangements resulting in good outcomes for employees and organisations/business. **Collaboration between organisations and businesses will facilitate the sharing of best practice, knowledge, resources, and information.** In turn this will build employer confidence in effecting change.

Where possible, opportunities to aggregate and share services will be taken, such as occupational health. **Anchor institutions can pilot and share innovative approaches,** to inspire people with long-term health conditions and disabilities into meaningful work. The aim is to **develop and embed innovative approaches,** with anchor institutions **considering how this could be included as part of social value in our procurement practices.**

Organisations **will be encouraged to engage in the strategy and its implementation,** especially through the Strategic Partnership for Health and the Economy (SPHE).

# Aspiration A: Building Employer Confidence



Case Study -

# Aspiration B:

## Development, Training and Skills



The aspiration aims to ensure appropriate development, training and skills for people with long-term health conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work. This will also respond to demand from key industry sectors to tackle skills shortages.

People may not have the required skills to start their career, change their occupation or succeed in an existing role, this could be reading, writing and mathematical skills or very specific, specialist training. It is also important to educate, inform and inspire people of all ages and stages of their career about the benefits and opportunities of work.

For some, the impact of their long-term health condition or disability may require transition to a new occupation or role type. Quality independent advice and guidance is key to a successful transition.

For those engaged in work who have low level skills, development training and upskilling provides a vital opportunity to move onto higher paid roles. This helps in reducing the tension between work and benefits.

An ethos of appropriate development, training and upskilling based on good communication between employer and employee should be fundamental to people, organisations and businesses and will be encouraged along with ease of access, in a timely way, to relevant opportunities from across the system.



# Aspiration B:

## Development, Training and Skills



### Commitment 1

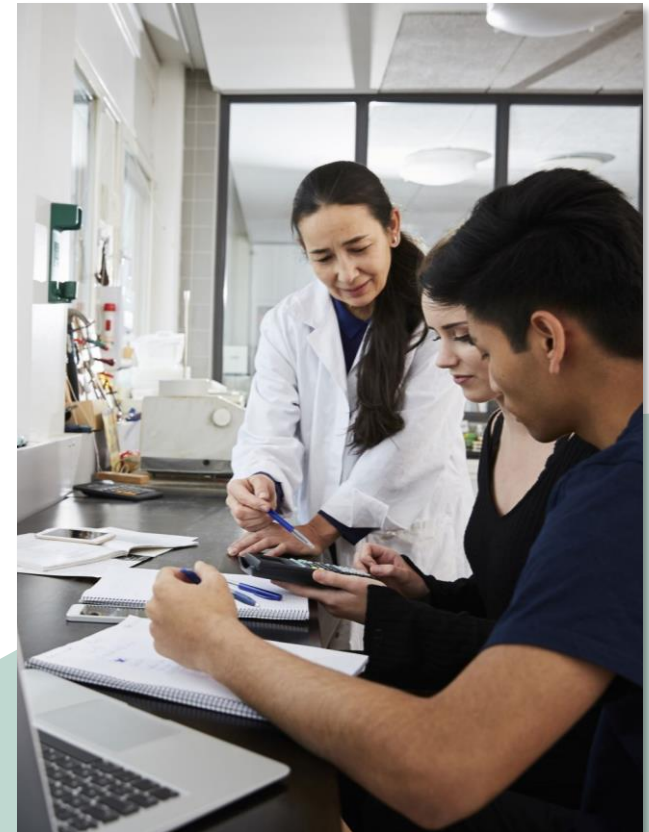
Create the environment in which people are supported and inspired to undertake development, training and skills to facilitate their engagement with meaningful work.

This commitment **engenders a workplace culture of education and training provision that facilitates and inspires people with long-term conditions and disabilities to undertake professional development** to help them to start, stay and succeed in work.

This could be, for example, development offered as part of recruitment into a new role, opportunity for promotion or to upskill and transition into a new role that might allow a person to more easily manage their long-term health condition or disability.

This commitment **promotes availability of relevant training provision in accessible formats and provision of the time, space and opportunity for people to undertake training and development** that will be mutually beneficial for people businesses and organisations.

This provides opportunities to support employers to fill skills gaps and develop staff to have greater skills and capabilities to be able to contribute to organisational and business objectives.





# Aspiration B:

## Development, Training and Skills



### Commitment 2

Provide opportunities for people to receive appropriate careers guidance and take part in development, training, and skills support to begin their career or seek new roles which align with their circumstances, values and career ambitions.

Long-term health conditions and disabilities may mean that over time a person is no longer able to continue in their current role. This may be because of the type of work or the environment in which that work takes place.

**Independent advice and guidance alongside training and development can help people enter the workforce or transition to a new role.** This includes raising aspirations for those in education, their parents and educators by **providing career advice, work experience and exposure to work along with building closer links between education and employers to prepare young people for the workplace.**

The aim is, where appropriate, for **opportunities to be provided for employees with a long-term health condition or disability to explore new opportunities to engage in meaningful work that aligns with the management of their long-term health condition or disability.**

Retraining or upskilling may be particularly important at different life stages or as technological developments impact upon traditional roles. Consideration should be given to career pathways or changes within a certain industry, across different sectors, remote working or self-employed roles.



# Aspiration B:

## Development, Training and Skills



### Commitment 3

Provide employers with access to knowledge about development, training and skills opportunities across the system which can enhance their own offer to facilitate people reaching their potential.

Appropriate development, training and skills helps people take on roles that align with management of their condition. It helps people seek higher paid posts to avoid risk of the work/benefit tension and poverty gap. Along with a sense of achievement for that person, employers benefit through inclusive teams, succession planning, workforce retention and reducing skills gaps.

The aim of this commitment **is to widely disseminate the range of opportunities for training and development so that people of all ages who wish to engage can do so easily.**

The **provision of these services across Kent and Medway is being reviewed and gaps in type or geographical availability of provision identified**, the aim is to move towards equity of provision.

Conversely, there is **existing provision which is currently underutilised. Signposting and communication of opportunities** will be improved so that those who would benefit can access the best support.

# Aspiration B:

## Development, Training and Skills



Case Study -





# Aspiration C:

## Person Centred Approach

This aspiration seeks to ensure the needs of people are at the heart of the integration of work and health. This will be considered from a range of perspectives including the person's health and other needs and the type of work they do.

Open and honest dialogue is key to ensuring that the business needs of the organisation are balanced alongside people's needs to create an inclusive work culture.

A multidisciplinary approach will be promoted to help people to start, stay and succeed in work, bringing together support across a wide range of health and work partners to tailor support to each person, aiming to meet all of their needs in an integrated way.

Programmes including the Connect to Work supported employment programme, work trials, and Individual Placement Support (IPS) set out in the Harm to Hope Strategy<sup>25</sup> will be aligned to the person-centred approach which is holistic and incorporates the wider determinants of health.

### **Connect to Work Supported Employment Programme**

Funded by a £34m Department of work and Pensions grant, this programme will support more than 9000 people until March 2030. It is designed to help individuals facing barriers to employment find and sustain meaningful work. The programme will offer personalised support through two nationally recognised models—Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and the Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF)—with a focus on people with disabilities, care leavers, veterans, and others who may need tailored assistance to enter or remain in the workforce.

The programme will be delivered through The Education People, and commissioned providers, and will work closely with local employers, health services, and community organisations. Participants will receive up to 12 months support if they are out of work, however it can also support employed individuals who are at risk of falling out of work due to the barrier they face. There is a strong emphasis on integration, quality, and outcomes, Connect to Work aims to reduce economic inactivity, improve wellbeing, and boost inclusive growth across the region.

# Aspiration C:

## Person Centred Approach



### Commitment 1

Promote a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to addressing the work and health needs of each person with a long-term health condition or disability, supporting them to start, stay and succeed in work.

We heard from stakeholders that there is support available to help people to start, stay and succeed in work. This includes health related support, for example physiotherapy and mental health support, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) programmes, training and development including careers guidance, and support provided by voluntary and community sector organisations.

Not everyone knows about all this support or how to access it. This commitment **aims to raise awareness of the full range of multidisciplinary support available for work/health professionals and employers, including signposting support available to employees and those seeking employment.**

We will also look to **improve the co-location of services, building on the current DWP initiative in Maidstone by locating job coaches in GP practices.**

In this way professionals can work with people in a multidisciplinary and holistic way to build the programme which meets their needs and supports them in the most appropriate way, coordinating a bespoke solution from the full range of support available.





# Aspiration C:

## Person Centred Approach

### Commitment 2

Promote flexible working options and reasonable adjustments which take account of the needs of people alongside business requirements.

This commitment focuses on **maximising the potential of flexible working opportunities within the bounds of organisational and the operational needs of businesses** to provide opportunity for those with long-term health conditions and disabilities. For example, this could be to attend appointments, undertake treatment or to take breaks as necessary while bearing in mind the operational needs of the employer.



Making reasonable adjustments to a person's work is a requirement for those in employment with a disability. **Reasonable adjustments and workspace accessibility should be used effectively to enable people with long-term conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work.** Including maximising potential from the Access to Work scheme.

The fit note has an option to record that a patient 'may be fit for work taking into account the following advice' and then offers the option of a 'phased return to work', 'altered hours', 'amended duties' or 'workplace adaptations'. **Broadening the use of this option has the potential to enable more people with long-term conditions and disabilities to stay in work.** We know that once people have left the workplace it becomes increasingly harder for them to return.



# Aspiration C:

## Person Centred Approach

### Commitment 3

Build current and prospective employee confidence in their capability and competence to engage in meaningful work that is appropriate to their circumstances and to be able to seek support when needed.

Taking the step to engage in work can be a significant one and a poor experience can have devastating consequences. This commitment seeks to ensure **that job descriptions reflect the expectations of the role accurately, giving applicants clear expectations of the role.**

We will facilitate success through programmes including **Connect to Work, work experience and work trials and IPS, set out in the Harm to Hope Strategy<sup>23</sup>.**

**Well-paced, tailored transition into work will be promoted and a focus on developing resilience to navigate challenges associated with the long-term health condition or disability. Advantages of peer support and mentoring opportunities will be incorporated as appropriate.**

**We will work with the voluntary sector to help encourage volunteering opportunities,** which can be a good precursor to paid work and provide valuable experience for CVs and applications.

**Anchor institutions must lead the way** in providing supported, safe environments for people with long-term health conditions and disabilities to gain experience in employment and build their confidence. **An inclusive culture will also be promoted** which mitigates against stigma and builds confidence of all employees.



# Aspiration C:

## Person Centred Approach



Case Study -



# Aspiration D:

## Healthy, Thriving Workforce



The aspiration takes a preventive approach to health and wellbeing, aiming to minimise deterioration of long-term health conditions and disabilities, and supporting the wider workforce to remain in good physical and mental health.

Presenteeism, where people attend work while not being productive due to illness or other factors has a greater impact on productivity than absenteeism<sup>26</sup>. This is a significant factor in reduced productivity for organisations and businesses.

To help employees stay fit and well, employers will be encouraged to promote healthy eating and physical activity and the management of stress to mitigate risks to mental health. We will promote access to support to stop smoking and maintain a healthy weight.

A collaborative approach across the system is proposed, this includes partnership working and connecting with expertise on healthy food, fuel poverty, housing and the cost-of-living crisis.

A life stage approach is proposed, acknowledging and making provision for key periods of a person's life which present new challenges, for example pregnancy, menopause and ageing within the workforce.



# Aspiration D:

## Healthy, Thriving Workforce



### Commitment 1

Engender a culture in which employer and employee take a proactive approach to promoting good physical and mental wellbeing at work.

Physical activity is key to good physical and mental health and wellbeing. Lives are becoming more sedentary, compounded by the increase in virtual working and a disproportionate amount of time sitting. This commitment promotes that **where business allows; employees should be allowed the flexibility to take breaks to move around, make use of adjustable desks and encouraged to use active means of travel.**

Overweight and obesity is a significant risk factor for conditions such as diabetes, musculoskeletal problems and cardiovascular disease. **Employees should be provided with opportunity to access healthy food, including in work-based food offers. Signposting and support to access healthy weight programmes and information should be available.**

There is still work to do to reduce smoking rates across Kent and Medway, particularly for those in routine and manual jobs. Smoking is a significant risk factor for cancers and cardiovascular disease. There are a range of high-quality **stop smoking services across Kent and Medway and these should be signposted and accessible to staff.**

Organisational and job design, leadership and workload if not managed well can all have a stressful impact on employees. **A focus on managing these well, for example moments to pause, will be taken to achieve a positive impact on employee mental wellbeing and work life balance. Simple solutions can often be effective including quiet spaces for wellbeing breaks and peer support networks.**

# Aspiration D:

## Healthy, Thriving Workforce



### Commitment 2

Collaborate within and beyond organisations to mitigate the impact of the wider determinants of health and inequalities, e.g. healthy food, fuel poverty, housing.

We know the combined impact of the wider determinants of health comprise 80% of the factors that impact on a person's overall health compared to 20% from clinical factors. This was further highlighted by stakeholders who mentioned housing, transport, and being able to work whilst waiting for treatment influences how a person can engage in meaningful work.



Image credit: Ebbsfleet Development Corporation

Recognising this strategy's scope, this commitment **seeks to ensure employees are signposted in a timely way to a range of appropriate support linked to the challenges of the cost of living and benefits.**

Poor living conditions can exacerbate existing long-term health conditions and disabilities or cause conditions to develop. It is important that **people know how to access support for fuel poverty aligned to the cost of living or more general housing queries** for example linked to properties with damp and mould.

We will also contribute to **transport consultations and looking creatively at how people can be supported with transport and travel and making the most of the Access to Work Scheme.**



# Aspiration D:

## Healthy, Thriving Workforce



### Commitment 3

A life stage approach which considers the impact of different life phases on people at work, e.g. menopause and an ageing workforce.

There are stages in a person's life which bring specific challenges. This commitment recognises those periods and seeks to support employers and employees to manage them whilst remaining engaged in the workforce.

We know that 1 in 10 women leave the workforce due to menopause<sup>27</sup>. There is opportunity **to make training and resources available so that employers and employees have greater understanding of the impact of menopause and adjustments to ease the impact.**

During and since the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a trend of people taking early retirement and leaving the workforce prior to their normal retirement date. This has impacted on the size, and experience of the overall workforce. **Accommodating the needs of the ageing workforce looking for a different work life balance can ensure that these skills and experience are retained.**



# Aspiration D:

## Healthy, Thriving Workforce



Case Study -

# Links to other Strategies, Plans and Frameworks



This Work and Health Strategy links to and supports a number of strategies, plans, and frameworks across Kent and Medway.

Education in Kent 2025-2030

From Harm to Hope – Kent’s Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2023 - 2028

Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2025 – 2030

Kent and Medway Learning Disability and Autism

Kent Environment Strategy 2024

Kent SEND Strategy 2025 - 2028

Local Transport Plan 5 – Striking the Balance - KCC

Medway Council Education Strategy

Medway Council Workforce Strategy

Medway Housing Strategy to 2030

NHS Kent and Medway People Strategy

Our People Strategy 2022-27 – KCC

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# Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>Access to Work Scheme</b>	Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support if you have a disability or physical or mental health condition.
<b>Anchor Institutions</b>	Refers to large, typically non-profit, public-sector organisations whose long-term sustainability is tied to the wellbeing of the populations they serve.
<b>Connect to Work</b>	Announced in the Autum 2024 budget, the new supported employment programme will be delivered by local authorities (KCC for Kent) working closely with the health service, offering up to 12 months intensive employment support to disabled people, those with health conditions and those with other non-health complex barriers to employment.
<b>Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)</b>	Is responsible for welfare, pensions and child maintenance policy. It administers the State Pension and a range of working age, disability and ill health benefits.
<b>Disability</b>	The law says someone is disabled if both of these apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they have a "physical or mental impairment"</li> <li>• the impairment "has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".</li> </ul>
<b>Disability Confident Scheme</b>	Disability Confident is creating a movement of change, encouraging employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people.
<b>Economic Inactivity</b>	People not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks.

# Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>Employee</b>	A person who has agreed to be employed to work for some form of payment under a contract of employment. In this strategy the term employee is also used to represent those who work in a voluntary capacity.
<b>Fit Notes</b>	Healthcare professionals' issue fit notes to people to provide evidence of the advice they have given about their fitness for work. They record details of the functional effects of their patient's condition so the patient and their employer can consider ways to help them return to work.
<b>Individual Placement Support (IPS)</b>	Employment support service integrated within community mental health teams for people who experience severe mental health conditions.
<b>Long-term Health Condition</b>	People that cannot, at present, be cured, but people living with these conditions can be supported to maintain a good quality of life.
<b>Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnership (ICP)</b>	A partnership of organisations that come together to plan and deliver joined up health and care services to improve the lives of people across Kent and Medway.
<b>Occupational Health</b>	Occupational health is an area of work in public health to promote and maintain highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations.
<b>Strategic Partnership for Health and Economy (SPHE)</b>	A multiagency group that brings together relevant partners across Kent and Medway to drive improvement in shared economic and health outcomes. Reports to the ICP and KMEP.
<b>Small and Mediums Size Businesses (SMEs)</b>	SME: Fewer than 250 employees and turnover lower then €50. Small SME: Fewer than 50 employees and a turnover lower than €10 million. Micro SME: Fewer than 10 employees and a turnover lower than €2 million.

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## Appendix 2: Draft Action Plan

Work and Health Strategy Reference	Action number	Confidence Building and sharing practice for employers
		<b>Section 1: Short- and Medium-Term Actions</b>
<b>A1.1, A2.1, C2.1</b>	<b>Action 1</b>	<p>Develop an easily accessible, online information space where employers can access resources for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Supporting and managing employees with long term health conditions and disabilities</li> <li>-Collaboration between organisations and businesses to share best practice, knowledge and resources</li> <li>-Collation and sharing of examples and case studies where flexible working and reasonable adjustments have been used to facilitate people with long term conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work.</li> </ul>
		<b>Recruitment</b>
<b>C3.1, A1.4, C3.4, D1.4</b>	<b>Action 2</b>	<p>Task and finish group to be set up to work with anchor institutions across Kent and Medway on the following areas. Outcomes and learning to be disseminated across Kent and Medway organisations and businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ensure job descriptions are an accurate representation of roles so that applicants are clear in expectations.</li> <li>- Develop and share creative and inclusive practices for recruitment and onboarding processes.</li> <li>-Improving job design, leadership and workload management to achieve a positive impact on wellbeing and work life balance.</li> </ul>
		<b>Engagement and retention</b>

<b>A2.2, A2.3, A2.4, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3, C3.5, C3.6</b>	<b>Action 3</b>	Use the social value element of procurement as a lever to encourage innovative approaches to supporting people with long term health conditions and disabilities to be supported in meaningful work.
	<b>Action 4</b>	Support and promote a range of programmes that facilitate access to work placements and employment for individuals with long term health conditions.
	<b>Action 5</b>	Anchor institutions to come together in leading the way in providing safe environments for people with long term health conditions and disabilities to gain experience in employment to build their confidence. The learning will be shared with other organisations and businesses to promote an inclusive culture across Kent and Medway.
		<b>Training and development for employees</b>
<b>B1.1, B1.2, B1.3, B3.1, B3.3</b>	<b>Action 7</b>	Promote the value of training and development by signposting and undertaking campaigns to raise profile of the value of training and development for both employers and employees, adapting messages accordingly. To include, for example, showcasing success stories, inspirational videos to share online and development of a talent website.
		<b>Career advice</b>
<b>B2.2, B2.2, B2.3</b>	<b>Action 8</b>	To ensure independent career advice and guidance is available to people with long term health conditions and disabilities to make meaningful career choices
	<b>Action 9</b>	To create greater links between employers and education alongside careers advice and guidance.
		<b>Mapping provision across work health and skills</b>
<b>B3.2, C1.1,</b>	<b>Action 10</b>	Review provision of training and development services across Kent and Medway with regard to geographical locations and types of training, identifying gaps in provision and duplication
	<b>Action 11</b>	To identify the range and location of multidisciplinary support available to support people with long term health conditions and disabilities that can be self-referred or via a health professional or employer. In the first instance to focus on mental health and musculo-skeletal disorders.
		<b>Healthy workplaces</b>

<b>D1.1, D1.2, D1.3, D1.5, D1.6</b>	<b>Action 12</b>	To increase the uptake of Healthy Workplace programmes by organisations and businesses.
	<b>Action 13</b>	To connect with Wellbeing Leads in organisations and businesses where these are in post, and to promote a healthy workplace campaign setting out the offers for healthy weight programmes, stop smoking services, workplace health checks and Connect 5 training and good practice regarding physical activity during the working day.
		<b>Wider determinants of health</b>
<b>D2.1, D2.2, D2.3</b>	<b>Action 14</b>	To use the 'Joy' platform for signposting and referral (including self-referral) to partner services including cost of living, benefits, and fuel poverty.
	<b>Action 15</b>	To actively seek out consultations across Kent and Medway for influence by the Strategic Partnership for Health and the Economy, for example transport and travel plans.
		<b>Life course</b>
<b>D3.1, D3.2</b>	<b>Action 16</b>	Promote a menopause champion in each organisation or business, making available a set of support resources.
	<b>Action 17</b>	Supporting ageing/work life balance – actions TBC
		<b>Section 2: Longer Term / Developmental Actions</b>
		<b>Employer support</b>
<b>A1.2, A1.3</b>	<b>Action 18</b>	To undertake an insight gathering process specifically with small and medium enterprises to understand how these organisations can be supported more effectively with occupational health advice.
	<b>Action 19</b>	To promote and encourage organisations and businesses to undertaken training and become Disability Confident.
		<b>Primary care</b>
<b>C2.2, C1.2</b>	<b>Action 20</b>	To engage with primary care leads to explore how they can engage best in the aims of the Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy, considering for example how they can be supported as employers, but also how the fit note process can be used most appropriately, how a multidisciplinary approach can be embedded and co-location of services such as DWP

		Population and community specific actions
<b>C1.4, C1.3</b>	<b>Action 21</b>	Undertake a rapid literature review to understand more about the relationship with work for those with long term health conditions and disabilities
	<b>Action 22</b>	Undertake analysis to determine target populations and working with partners and stakeholders take an evidenced based approach to how these groups can be best supported.
		<b>Data collection</b>
	<b>Action 23</b>	To explore fit note data and how this can be used to best effect identify type of need, geography of need and how individuals may be supported.
	<b>Action 24</b>	To explore how National Insurance and NHS data can be linked to achieve more granular information about target populations and their need and geography.
	<b>Action 25</b>	To enhance overall data collection by exploring ways to collect an increased level of intelligence. For example, for the private sector which could be via a baseline and annual survey.

# **Kent and Medway**

## **Integrated Work and Health Strategy 2025 – 2030:**

### **You Said, We did Report**



## You Said, We Did – Stakeholder Feedback

During the consultation period, we continued to get stakeholder feedback for the draft strategy. This included attending:

- Kent County Council All Member Briefing
- Better Mental Health Network

### Main overarching issues raised

You Said	We Did
Recruitment and application processes are not accessible or inclusive.	In Aspiration A, Commitment 1, we have included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘This commitment proposes that more creative and alternative approaches to recruitment and onboarding practices are explored and implemented’.</li> </ul>
Applicants lack qualifications, confidence in transferable skills, or awareness of opportunities.	
Access to training and skills development is inconsistent across the county.	The strategy does refer to this in Aspiration B, Commitment 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Ensure that the range of opportunities for training and development are widely disseminated</li> <li>• ‘The provision of these services across Kent and Medway is being reviewed and gaps in type or geographical availability of provision identified, the aim is to move towards equity of provision.’</li> </ul> <p>Mapping of Provision is also currently being undertaken as part the Connect to Work programme and the development of the Kent and Medway Working Plan, which will link into the strategy.</p> <p>We have also referenced this throughout Aspiration B, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Promote availability of relevant training provision’</li> <li>• ‘Ensure that the range of opportunities for training and development are widely disseminated’.</li> </ul>
Individuals need time, confidence, and support to re-enter work after health or life challenges, and understanding available help.	We have made this stronger in Aspiration C, Commitment 1, by adding in the line: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Including signposting support available to employees and those seeking employment’.</li> </ul> <p>There is also referenced in Aspiration C, Commitment 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Well-paced, tailored transition into work will be promoted and a focus on developing resilience to navigate challenges associated with the long-term health condition or disability’.</li> </ul>

You Said	We Did
	Programmes such as Connect to Work are referenced in Aspiration C, Commitment 3, will also aim to support people once employed into a workplace.
Cost of living and benefit loss are barriers to work.	<p>We have expressed this in Aspiration B, Commitment 3, noting that appropriate development, training and skills can help ‘people seek higher paid posts to avoid risk of the work/benefit tension and poverty gap.’</p> <p>In Aspiration D, Commitment 2, the cost of living is referenced by how we will also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Ensure employees are signposted in a timely way to a range of appropriate support linked to the challenges of the cost of living and benefits.’</li> </ul>
SMEs need support to employ and retain people with health conditions.	<p>We have mentioned that employers have concerns around legislative requirements in Aspiration A, Commitment 1, which is has been covered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘We will signpost and make information easily accessible to employers.’</li> </ul> <p>This has been referenced in Aspiration A, Commitment 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Collaboration between organisations and businesses will facilitate the sharing of best practice, knowledge, resources, and information’.</li> </ul>
Employers need access to training and support to meet employee needs.	<p>We have added the following line into Aspiration A, Commitment 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘This can also include workforce training such as sign language and autism awareness courses’</li> </ul> <p>This has been referenced in Aspiration A, Commitment 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Collaboration between organisations and businesses will facilitate the sharing of best practice, knowledge, resources, and information’.</li> </ul> <p>As part of the delivery of the strategy there will also be an action for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Organisations and businesses to collaborate to share best practice, knowledge and resources.’</li> </ul>
Employers need clearer guidance on legal obligations and how to support diverse workforces.	<p>This has been referenced in Aspiration A, Commitment 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘This included legislative requirements and practical implementation.... we will signpost and make information easily accessible to employers.’</li> </ul> <p>There will also be an action on opportunities to engage further with SMEs on how they can be best supported.</p>



## Main overarching issues raised

You Said	We Did
Employers need more training, tools, and support to feel confident in making reasonable adjustments and fostering inclusive workplaces.	<p>This has been referenced in Aspiration A, Commitment 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘... we will signpost and make information easily accessible to employers, including training where appropriate, and improve access to occupational health advice. This can also include workforce training such as sign language and autism awareness courses.’</li> </ul> <p>As part of Aspiration A, Commitment 1 it goes on to promote inclusion of the Disability Confident Scheme in this work.</p>
Flexible, accessible training formats – including online, in person, and hybrid – are needed to meet varied needs and conditions.	<p>We have enhanced Aspiration B, Commitment 1 by adding ‘accessible formats’ :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘...to promote availability of relevant training provision in accessible formats and provision of the time, space and opportunity for people to undertake training and development that will be mutually beneficial for people businesses and organisations.’</li> </ul>
A centralised, easy-to-navigate system for advice, guidance, and support would help both employers and individuals.	<p>This is referenced in Aspiration A, Commitment 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘... we will signpost and make information easily accessible to employers, including training where appropriate, and improve access to occupational health advice. This can also include workforce training such as sign language and autism awareness courses. We will also draw attention to the impact of trauma and raise awareness of trauma informed approaches.’</li> </ul> <p>This also incorporated into the action plan which supports the implementation of the strategy.</p>
More awareness is needed for peer support, mentoring and real-life case studies to build confidence and reduce stigma in both training and work settings.	<p>This is incorporated into Aspiration A, Commitment 2 which covers collaboration and sharing of innovative and best practice across organisations with anchor institutions taking a key role.</p> <p>Aspiration C, Commitment 3 has been strengthened and now incorporates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advantages of peer support and mentoring opportunities will be incorporated as appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>Aspiration C, Commitment 3 includes. ‘An inclusive culture will also be promoted which mitigates against stigma and builds confidence for all.’</p>
More visibility and promotion of inclusive schemes – too many people miss out due to poor communication and outreach.	<p>Aspiration A, Commitment 1 focuses on raising awareness of support for employers, Aspiration B, Commitment 1 focuses on raising awareness of training and development, so promotion is</p>

You Said	We Did
	incorporated into the existing strategy document. This is also reflected in the action plan which is being developed.
Create an ethos of open, honest communication without judgement and an inclusive culture which integrates good mental and physical wellbeing.	Aspiration A, Commitment 2 states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘... told us about the need for good communication and open and honest dialogue. A focus on a collaborative approach and nurturing good understanding between employer and employee is required. The aim is to work towards mutually beneficial arrangements resulting in good outcomes for employees and organisations/business.’</li> </ul>
Raising awareness to reduce stigma and unconscious bias.	Aspiration C, Commitment 3 states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘An inclusive culture will also be promoted which mitigates against stigma and builds confidence of all employees.’</li> </ul>
Access for employers to practical support, for example occupational health, support for adaptations and assistive technologies and guidance on legal responsibilities.	Aspiration A, Commitment 1 has been updated to include assistive technologies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘... signpost and make information easily accessible to employers, including training where appropriate, and improve access to occupational health advice. This can also include workforce training such as sign language, assistive technology and autism awareness courses.’</li> </ul>
Development for line managers to support employees and inclusive teams.	The aim of Aspiration B, Commitment 3 is to ‘Provide employers with access to knowledge about development, training and skills opportunities across the system which can enhance their own offer to facilitate people reaching their potential.’ Reference to inclusive teams has been included in this commitment to strengthen it.
Incorporate simple solutions for example quiet spaces for wellbeing breaks, line manager ‘check ins’ and peer support networks.	Aspiration D, Commitment 1 has been strengthened to highlight that simple solutions can often be effective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘Simple solutions can often be effective including quiet spaces for wellbeing breaks and peer support networks.’</li> </ul>
Incorporate reasonable adjustments and accessible workspaces.	Aspiration C, Commitment 2 has been strengthened to incorporate accessible workspaces as well as reasonable adjustments: <p>‘Reasonable adjustments and workspace accessibility should be used effectively to enable people with long-term conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work.’</p>

## Lived Experience Interviews and Focus Groups Feedback

You Said	We Did
<p>Ensure mental health conditions are explicitly and consistently addressed as a distinct area of need across all four aspiration areas and embedded throughout the overall strategy – going beyond general references to wellbeing.</p>	<p>Aspiration C, Commitment 1 specifically mentions mental health support and also ‘...aims to raise awareness of the full range of multidisciplinary support available for work/health professionals and employers, including signposting support available to employees and those seeking employment.’</p>
<p>Place communication at the heart of the strategy by embedding it as a key element across all four Aspiration areas, recognising its central role in shaping relationships, delivering support, and promoting positive working environments as well as wellbeing in the workplace.</p>	<p>Aspiration A: ‘To underpin this aspiration, a strong, trusted, working relationship is important between employer and employee, facilitating a collaborative, open and honest dialogue which is responsive to the needs of both parties.’</p> <p>Aspiration B has been strengthened with reference to communication in the final paragraph: ‘An ethos of appropriate development, training and upskilling based on good communication between employer and employee should be fundamental to people, organisations and businesses and will be encouraged along with ease of access, in a timely way, to relevant opportunities from across the system.’</p> <p>Aspiration C: ‘Open and honest dialogue is key to ensuring that the business needs of the organisation are balanced alongside people's needs to create an inclusive work culture.’</p> <p>Aspiration D: ‘A collaborative approach across the system is proposed, this includes partnership working and connecting with expertise on healthy food, fuel poverty, housing and the cost-of-living crisis’</p>
<p>Prioritise flexibility as a core principle of workplace support across the whole strategy – encouraging organisations to adopt empathetic, more adaptable approaches tailored to individual employee needs – especially during periods of challenge or transition.</p>	<p>Aspiration C, Commitment 1: ‘In this way professionals can work with people in a multidisciplinary and holistic way to build the programme which meets their needs and supports them in the most appropriate way, coordinating a bespoke solution from the full range of support available.’</p>

You Said, We Did Report

You Said	We Did
Encourage a culture of proactive, collaborative engagement that replaces assumption with informed, person-centred dialogue – ensuring support is tailored to individual needs and grounded in mutual understanding.	There are references to this throughout the strategy, but particularly in Aspiration C, Commitment 1: 'In this way professionals can work with people in a multidisciplinary and holistic way to build the programme which meets their needs and supports them in the most appropriate way, coordinating a bespoke solution from the full range of support available.'
Recognise and promote the value of small low-cost adjustments across all four Aspiration areas. Encourage organisations to embed a culture where small, everyday acts of empathy, flexibility and consideration are normalised – benefiting individuals with specific needs and the wider workforce.	There are references throughout the strategy, for example: Aspiration A: for example, autism awareness and sign language training Aspiration B: for example, development offered as part of a new role Aspiration C: for example, flexibility to attend appointments Aspiration D: for example flexibility to take breaks and move around during the working day.
Demonstrate importance of employees feeling that they are working <i>with</i> their employer where support evolves through shared learning.	Aspiration A, Commitment 1 states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'A focus on a collaborative approach and nurturing good understanding between employer and employee is required.'</li> </ul>
Recognise the importance of accessible training.	Aspiration B, Commitment 1 states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This commitment aims to promote availability of relevant training provision in accessible formats and provision of the time, space and opportunity for people to undertake training and development that will be mutually beneficial for people businesses and organisations.</li> </ul>
Training for employers to be aware of the range of support available.	Aspiration B, Commitment 1 states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This commitment aims to promote availability of relevant training provision in accessible formats and provision of the time, space and opportunity for people to undertake training and development that will be mutually beneficial for people businesses and organisations.</li> </ul>
Recognise the importance of employers getting to know the employee as an individual. Personal connection, individual understanding and confidence building as	Aspiration C, Commitment 1 states: 'In this way professionals can work with people in a multidisciplinary and holistic way to build the programme which meets their needs and supports them in the most appropriate way, coordinating a bespoke solution from the full range of support available.'

You Said, We Did Report

You Said	We Did
essential foundations to help people be supported and thrive in the workplace.	
Support for good mental wellbeing to be firmly placed in workplace culture.	<p>Aspiration D, Commitment 1 states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisational and job design, leadership and workload if not managed well can all have a stressful impact on employees. A focus on managing these well will be taken to achieve a positive impact on employee mental wellbeing and work life balance.'</li> </ul>
Importance of moments to pause and recharge.	<p>Aspiration D, Commitment 1 has been strengthened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>' A focus on managing these well, for example moments to pause, will be taken to achieve a positive impact on employee mental wellbeing and work life balance.'</li> </ul>

## Medway Children and Adults Directorate Management Team

You Said	We Did
Ensure an action focus to Aspiration B and its implementation.	A balanced view has been taken given that the programme is running from existing resources. However, more action focused wording has been incorporated and action focused work is being incorporated into the action plan.
Ensure a balanced approach to flexible working to facilitate business need.	The strategy has been reviewed to ensure that flexible working is set in the context of business or organisational need.
Recognise the significant role that stigma can have on individuals with disabilities and long term health conditions in the workplace and ensure there is scope to address this in the strategy.	Aspiration C, Commitment 3: 'An inclusive culture will also be promoted which mitigates against stigma and builds confidence of all employees.'

## **Appendix 4:**

### **Summary of Stakeholder Engagement Broad Categories (non-exhaustive list)**

#### **Business:**

**Business Membership/Representative Organisations**  
**Industry Sector Groups / Representatives**  
**Kent & Medway Economic Partnership**  
**Housing Sector**

#### **Education, Training & Skills:**

**Further Education Colleges**  
**Training commissioners**  
**Training providers**

#### **Workplace:**

**HR representatives (various sectors)**  
**Workplace wellbeing organisations**  
**Armed Forces**

#### **Government:**

**Department for Work & Pensions**

#### **Local Government:**

**Kent County Council (Economy, Financial Hardship, (Adult) Education)**  
**Medway Council (Skills, Employment, Adult Education)**  
**District Councils (Housing, Communities, Health & Wellbeing, etc.)**

#### **Health:**

**NHS Foundation Trusts**  
**Mental Health Support Providers**  
**Public Health**  
**SEND and Neurodiversity**  
**Health Care Partnerships**  
**Primary Care**

#### **Voluntary & Community Sector:**

**Wellbeing organisations**  
**Skills delivery organisations**  
**Social Enterprise Organisations**

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## **Appendix 5: Executive Summary of the Consultation Results Report**

The Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy 2025 – 2030 (the strategy) has been developed through a collaboration between the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP). This joint initiative reflects a shared commitment to improving the health and productivity of our workforce, benefiting businesses, organisations and the local community.

To inform the development of the strategy, a public engagement exercise was carried out, which included both an online consultation and lived experience interviews and focus groups, building on a strong intelligence gathering phase in Summer 2024 that attracted high levels of participation from a diverse range of stakeholders.

A total of 336 responses were received during the online consultation, with contributions from across both Kent and Medway. The feedback was coded and analysed, revealing strong overall support for the strategy's aspirations. Each aspiration received a "Strongly Agree" response rate of over 69% when respondents were asked whether it should be included in the strategy. Some comments included:

- Both employers and employees share responsibility for employability and wellbeing.
- Ongoing skills development is important, particularly for those changing careers or returning to work with a health condition.
- Flexible working can help people stay in employment while meeting their social and emotional needs.
- Maintaining a healthy work environment will help to support employee confidence in applying for work.
- 

Importantly, none of the aspirations received more disagreement than agreement. Aspiration D had the highest proportion of disagreement at just 4.5%, but the results still indicated a broadly positive reception to the draft proposals across all thematic areas.

There was also a range of cross cutting themes from the responses in the open text questions, which included:

- Inclusive Education, Awareness and Culture – consistent calls for better education and training, for employers, employees and training providers, to build awareness, reduce stigma and promote inclusion.
- Flexible Accessible and Supported Pathways – flexibility in training, employment, and adjustments (e.g. part time, remote, phased returns) are essential to enable meaningful participation.
- Shared Responsibility and Systemic Support – a joined-up approach is needed between employers, government services, and third sector organisations, recognising employers cannot hold all the solutions.

Involve Kent were also commissioned to undertake interviews and focus groups with people who have lived experience of long term health conditions and disabilities in

the context of the workplace. Involve Kent worked with 42 participants either in person, remotely or in written form according to the participant's preference.

Overall, there was strong support for the four Aspirations proposed for the strategy, with helpful suggestions for developments. Some comments included:

Aspiration A: "I think employers need to realise that supporting people with health conditions is a joined-up issue – they need to take the steps together. Managers aren't expected to know everything and it's OK not to know."

Aspiration B: "I have had training over the years but none of it has really been adapted to my health needs until now."

Aspiration C: "For me with autism, I think the thing they need to understand is that it is a complex thing and it's not like the movies and that's not how autism works in the real world. ... There needs to be lots more one to one conversations between the employee and employer so that they can really get to know someone."

Aspiration D: "The company looked after us, so we could look after ourselves and each other. And the staff did all look after each other. The company were really careful when recruiting to recruit the right personalities – to be part of the team and feed into this supportive environment."

Themes elicited from the online consultation and the interviews and focus groups with people with lived experience have fed into a *You said, we did* document which has in turn informed the development of the strategy.

**GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE  
WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026**

Item	Cabinet Committee to receive item
Work Programme	Standing item
Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corporate Director	Standing item
Final Draft Budget	November and January
Risk Register – Strategic Risk Register	Annually (March)
Performance Dashboard	Quarterly
Kent and Medway Business Fund Monitoring	Bi-annual reporting (6 monthly)
Key Decision Items	

11 SEPTEMBER 2025 at 10am		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Performance Dashboard	Quarterly
7	Kent and Medway Business Fund Monitoring	Bi-annual report
8	Prevention – Growth & Communities	
9	Protection	
10	Lower Thames Crossing – Economic Impact	
11	Kent Rural Partnership – Update of last 18 months of activity and priorities (including farming economy)	
12	KMEF – Ambition 3 - Secure resilient infrastructure for planned, sustainable growth	Deep Dive
13	Border Target Operating Model and Trading Standards/ KSS	
14	Sport England Place Funding	Information paper
15	Work Programme	Standing item
11 NOVEMBER 2025 at 10am		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item

6	Draft Budget	
7	Performance Dashboard	Quarterly
8	Kent Design Guide	
9	Otterpool Garden Town	
10	Folkestone Library Long Term Location	Key Decision
11	KMEF – Ambition 2 - Widen opportunities and unlock talent	Deep Dive
12	Mineral Sites Plan and Local Development Scheme	Key Decision
13	Employment Task Force	A general update on key activities to date, results and future focus and plans
14	Regional Energy Strategic Plan Update	Subject to national consultation timelines
15	Work Programme	Standing item
<b>15 JANUARY 2026 at 10am</b>		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Performance Dashboard	Quarterly
7	Final Draft Budget	
8	KMEF – Ambition 4 - Place economic opportunity at the centre of community wellbeing and prosperity	Deep Dive
9	Work Programme	Standing item
<b>12 MARCH 2026 at 10am</b>		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Kent & Medway Business Fund Monitoring	Bi-annual report
7	Strategic Risk Register	Annual item
8	KMEF – Ambition 1 - Enable innovative, productive and creative businesses	Deep Dive
9	Work Programme	Standing item
<b>7 MAY 2026 at 10am</b>		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item

2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Performance Dashboard	Quarterly
7	KMEF – Ambition 5 - Create diverse, distinctive and vibrant places	Deep Dive
8	Work Programme	Standing item
<b>8 JULY 2026 at 10am</b>		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Work Programme	Standing item

**Items for Consideration/Not yet allocated to a meeting**

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