



Summons to and  
Agenda for a  
Meeting on  
**Thursday, 18th  
December, 2025**  
at **10.00 am**





DEMOCRATIC SERVICES  
SESSIONS HOUSE  
MAIDSTONE

Wednesday, 10 December 2025

To: All Members of the County Council

A meeting of the County Council will be held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ on Thursday, 18th December, 2025 at **10.00 am** to deal with the following business. **The meeting is scheduled to end by 4.30 pm.**

## **A G E N D A**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2025 and, if in order, **(Pages 1 - 10)** to be approved as a correct record
4. Corporate Parenting Panel - Minutes for noting **(Pages 11 - 16)**
5. Chairman's Announcements
6. County Council Questions
7. Report by Leader of the Council
8. Armed Forces Covenant - Annual Report **(Pages 17 - 48)**
9. Committees Review **(Pages 49 - 54)**
10. Proportionality and appointments to committees and other bodies  
(To follow pending Selection and Member Services Committee – 16 December)
11. Political Assistants **(Pages 55 - 56)**
12. Corporate Parenting - Annual Report **(Pages 57 - 92)**

- 13. Pension Pooling Arrangements  
(To follow pending Pension Fund Committee – 11 December)
- 14. Marine and Coastal Act - Delegations update **(Pages 93 - 94)**
- 15. Appointment of Standards Independent Persons **(Pages 95 - 96)**
- 16. Motion for Time Limited Debate **(Pages 97 - 100)**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Watts', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Benjamin Watts  
Deputy Chief Executive  
03000 416814

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

### COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 6 November 2025.

PRESENT: Mr J Baker, Mr B Barrett, Mr B Black, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr A Brady, Mr M Brice, Mr M Brown, Mr D Burns, Mr C Burwash, Mr A Cecil, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr J Defriend, Mr S Dixon, Mr M Ellis, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Eustace, Mr L Evans, Mr P Evans, Mr J Finch, Mr R Ford, Mrs B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mrs M Fothergill, Mr M Fraser Moat, Mr B Fryer, Mr M Harrison, Mr S Heaven, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Mr M A J Hood, Mr A J Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Mr S Jeffery, Ms L Kemkaran, Ms I Kemp, Mr A Kennedy, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Rich Lehmann, Mr M Logen, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Mr J Moreland, Miss D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr M Munday, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Mrs B Porter, Mr T Prater, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ricketts, Mrs S Roots, Ms C Russell, Mr G R Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr T L Shonk, Mr D Sian, Mr M J Sole, Mr P Stepto, Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE, Dr G Sturley, Mr D Taylor, Mr P Thomas, Mr A Thorp, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mr N Wibberley, Mr N Williams, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager) and Mr B Watts (Deputy Chief Executive)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

**23. Apologies for Absence**  
(Item 1)

The Democratic Services Manager reported apologies from Mrs Lawes, Ms Nolan and Miss Randall.

**24. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda**  
(Item 2)

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Monitoring Officer) explained, in relation to Item 9 on the agenda - *KCC's Strategic Business Case for Local Government Reorganisation in Kent and Medway* – that in accordance with Section 21.73 of the Council's Constitution, dispensation had been granted to allow all Members to freely take part in the debate. There was therefore no need for Members who were also elected to district and borough councils to declare their interest.

**25. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2025 and, if in order, to be approved as a correct record**  
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

**26. Corporate Parenting Panel - Minutes for noting**  
*(Item 4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 29 July 2025 be noted.

**27. Chairman's Announcements**  
*(Item 5)*

- 1) The Chairman expressed his gratitude to Sarah Nurden for her outstanding work in organising the recent media event at the end of September promoting Kent's international rail connectivity. Her professionalism and dedication were instrumental in its success.
- 2) The Chairman explained that throughout the day the Adult Social Care directorate were showcasing Technology Enabled Care. The Chairman encouraged Members to visit the stall and learn about this helpful service.
- 3) The Chairman said he was honoured to host the recent Kent Civic Launch of the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal which brought together the RBL and the Kent Armed Forces community in united support. Ahead of Remembrance Sunday, the Chairman encouraged Members to attend local ceremonies held across the county on behalf of the Council.
- 4) The Chairman highlighted that November was National Care Leavers Month. He said this was a valuable opportunity for Members, as corporate parents, to show support for young people leaving care. He also flagged the upcoming Corporate Parenting Care Leavers Christmas Appeal which would be delivered in partnership with the Young Lives Foundation.
- 5) Members were informed of the sad news of the death of Mr John Fox. Members heard that Mr Fox served the people of Kent with dedication and integrity during his time on the Council, making a lasting contribution to local government and the community he cared deeply about. Tributes were made by Mrs Dean, Mr Brady, Mr Hood, Ms Kemkaran, and Mr Rayner.
- 6) The Chairman proposed a motion of condolence to the family of Mr Fox and this was agreed unanimously. A one-minute silence was held in his memory.

**28. Questions**  
*(Item 6)*

In accordance with Sections 14.15 to 14.22 of the Constitution, 14 questions were submitted by the deadline and 14 questions were put to the Executive. 10 questions were asked and replies given. A record of all questions and answers is available [online](#) with the papers for this meeting.

**29. Report by Leader of the Council**  
*(Item 7)*

- 1) The Leader opened her report by highlighting significant concerns regarding the current local government finance system. She explained that councils nationally had overspent by over 5% on adult social care, over 14% on children's social care, and over 25% on home-to-school transport for children with special educational needs and disability (SEND). Ms Kemkaran said this was unsustainable and expressed frustration that councils had still not received confirmation of their funding settlement, explaining that the uncertainty made it difficult for councils to plan their budgets effectively. The Leader explained that KCC had not applied for exceptional financial support, unlike several other councils and referred to KCC's 1.8% overspend at the end of Quarter 1 compared to the overspend of other councils during the same period.
- 2) Regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the Leader referred to the recent meeting of the Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Committee where it was noted that KCC's Option 1A (a single unitary for Kent and Medway) remained the preferred option for Kent. KCC had produced its own business case, which highlighted the significant projected costs of LGR and demonstrated that Option 1A was the least likely to require an increase in council tax to cover the cost of disaggregating core services.
- 3) Turning to the Strategic Statement the Leader said the document reflected a clear focus on priorities for Kent. Key themes included promoting personal responsibility, supporting local businesses through a Kent-first approach, and placing greater emphasis on early years to help parents fulfil their responsibilities. Plans for elderly care included the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and preventative measures to maintain independence. Ms Kemkaran highlighted the progress made on highways since the election including over 22,000 potholes repaired, 250,000 square metres of roads patched, and 210,000 square metres resurfaced. Positive feedback had been received from residents regarding these improvements.
- 4) The Leader had recently visited Eurotunnel in Folkestone to look at the new Entry/Exit System (EES) and to discuss freight transport and motorway congestion. Two key barriers to rail freight through Kent were identified—overhead gantries and mismatched rail gauges—which could be resolved with investment. The Leader had written to the Department for Transport regarding this and would raise the issue at the upcoming Thames Estuary Fair Economic Growth All-Party Parliamentary Group.
- 5) The Leader confirmed KCC's role in supporting Virgin's bid for the international rail franchise, which included commitments to stop in Kent. A

September event at Ashford and Ebbsfleet stations brought together key stakeholders and Ms Kemkaran highlighted this as an example of successful cross-party cooperation.

- 6) The Leader referred to further engagement with the agricultural sector, including visits to Niab at East Malling and a roundtable event at Hull Park, Cranbrook which brought together landowners and farmers. She expressed concern about farm inheritance tax, which was damaging to Kent's farming industry. The Leader had written to the Chancellor urging reconsideration of this policy, noting Kent's importance as a major contributor to UK agriculture and soft fruit production.
- 7) Finally, the Leader reflected on the Administration's six-month anniversary and emphasised the resilience and strength of the current Administration, noting that while leaner in number, it was now more focused and prepared to deliver for Kent.
- 8) Mr Hook, Leader of the Opposition, acknowledged the period of remembrance ahead of Armistice Day and expressed gratitude to those who had served since the Great War and in subsequent conflicts. He highlighted concerns about homelessness among veterans and noted that an estimated 7,500 veterans were homeless in the UK, and stated that no veteran should be without housing, employment, or training opportunities.
- 9) Mr Hook addressed the significant challenges faced by the Council, including a budget crisis, a care crisis, and political instability. He expressed concern that, unlike previous years when a draft budget was published in November, there was currently no draft budget available and he invited the Leader to confirm when the draft budget would be published and to provide an indication of how the Administration intended to address the anticipated £80million reduction in revenue spending.
- 10) Whilst acknowledging Adult social care as the Council's most significant responsibility, Mr Hook expressed alarm at the removal of the Chair of the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee from her political group and her cabinet committee role. He urged the Leader to reinstate the Chair stressing that collaboration should take precedence over party politics. Mr Hook noted that Kent's over-65 population was projected to grow by almost 30% over the next decade, with the over-85 population increasing by 53%. He criticised past reductions in preventative services and called for imaginative, collegiate work on care.
- 11) Finally, Mr Hook commented on the Council's political situation, describing it as a crisis. He called for a leadership style that was professional and inclusive, urging councillors to model the behaviour expected of staff and avoid actions that damaged the Council's reputation. He concluded by emphasising the need for a serious and professional focus on the Council's responsibilities and opportunities to improve life for Kent residents.
- 12) Mr Hood, Leader of the Green Group, began by acknowledging the sacrifices made by those who had served in past conflicts. He commented on recent developments within the Reform Group including several



expulsions and expressed concern about the lack of clarity regarding the status of certain members. He highlighted the potential impact on the Kent and Medway Fire Authority, which may require new appointments to maintain stability.

- 13) Turning to transport, Mr Hood welcomed progress towards securing a new operator for cross-channel rail routes, with the possibility of future stops at Ashford and Ebbsfleet. He noted that Brexit-related checks had increased costs for passengers and expressed hope for improvements in international rail connectivity.
- 14) Mr Hood referred to the Energy Efficiency Plan, observing its similarity to the previous Climate Action Plan and criticised claims made by the Reform Group regarding savings from not purchasing electric vehicles. He expressed concern about the financial implications of maintaining County Hall and the missed opportunity to repurpose the building, warning that taxpayers would bear long-term costs. He also raised issues regarding street furniture, requesting the removal of flags to allow safe installation of Christmas lights.
- 15) Mr Hood reiterated the Green Group's support for measures to increase rail freight through the Channel Tunnel and for greater use of containerised freight via Thames Estuary ports, as a means to reduce lorry traffic on Kent's roads. Mr Hood said he opposed the Lower Thames Crossing, citing environmental concerns and the risk of worsening congestion, and suggested that future financial pressures on government may prevent the project from proceeding.
- 16) On Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), Mr Hood stated that the Administration's preferred option was the greatest obstacle to genuine devolution and confirmed that the Green Group rejected Option 1A, arguing that it offered no guarantee of constitutional stability and failed to deliver the financial benefits associated with mayoral regions.
- 17) Mr Rayner responded to the Leader's Report by reviewing the first six months of the Reform Administration and said he considered the Administration to be experiencing significant difficulties as a result of self-inflicted issues. He criticised claims of savings made by the Administration, describing them as unsubstantiated or exaggerated. Mr Rayner emphasised the importance of Cabinet Members understanding and fulfilling their responsibilities effectively and promptly.
- 18) Mr Rayner raised further concerns regarding the suspension and expulsion of Reform Members, which had led to vacancies on KCC and external committees, creating confusion and disruption. He urged the Administration to improve its conduct and to ensure Members attended committees, prepared adequately, participated in debate, and responded to correspondence from electors.
- 19) Mr Rayner addressed reports regarding a proposed local freight tax, clarifying that such a measure fell under the jurisdiction of HM Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

- 20) Mr Brady, Leader of the Labour Group, echoed earlier remarks regarding remembrance and the importance of honouring armed forces and veterans. He indicated that he would address Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the Strategic Statement during the relevant agenda items later in the meeting.
- 21) On international rail services, Mr Brady stated that Labour had led efforts to restore services to Ashford and Ebbsfleet, including lobbying ministers, supporting competition on the Channel Tunnel route, and backing new operators such as Virgin to challenge Eurostar's monopoly. He criticised claims by the Reform Group that they were responsible for progress on cross-channel travel.
- 22) Turning to agriculture, Mr Brady rejected suggestions that government support was lacking, referring to examples such as the extension of the Seasonal Worker Visa Scheme, commitments to source 50% of public sector food from British farms, £110 million investment in agriculture, increased stewardship payments, and a 25-year roadmap for farming, amounting to £14.4billion in support for British agriculture.
- 23) On finance, Mr Brady criticised the Administration for cancelling meetings in its early months and failing to publish a draft budget. He highlighted concerns about the 2026–27 budget, noting that while £73.9million of additional government funding was expected, this was outweighed by £113million of additional spending, creating a significant deficit. He stated that the Administration appeared to be considering the use of reserves and had not provided clarity on council tax plans. He further noted that the settlement timetable remained unchanged and suggested that the Administration was behind schedule compared to previous years.
- 24) Mr Brady raised concerns about transparency and the lack of clear plans to address the financial gap. He concluded by stating that the Administration's approach risked negatively impacting Kent residents.
- 25) The Leader responded to comments made by the Group Leaders. She argued that the Conservative Party had failed to deliver on key promises, including Brexit, and criticised its record on national debt and immigration.
- 26) On international rail, the Leader asserted that Reform UK had played a leading role in bringing stakeholders together to progress plans for services at Ashford and Ebbsfleet.
- 27) She raised concerns about farming and inheritance tax changes due to take effect in April 2026, stating that these posed serious risks to family farms, food security, and mental health within the agricultural sector.
- 28) Ms Kemkaran commented on homelessness among veterans and linked housing shortages to immigration levels.
- 29) She reiterated that the Administration was awaiting the outcome of the Fair Funding Review before publishing a draft budget.

- 30) The Leader concluded by stating that Reform UK's success at the polls demonstrated public support for its approach.
- 31) A point of order was raised by Mr Hook regarding the Nolan Principles and the need to maintain respectful conduct during debate. The Chairman agreed and asked all members to uphold the Code of Conduct.
- 32) RESOLVED that the Leader's Report be noted.

**30. Strategic Statement - Reforming Kent**  
(Item 8)

- 1) Ms Kemkaran proposed, and Mr Collins seconded the motion that:  
"County Council approves the Council Strategy, Reforming Kent 2025-28."
- 2) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion in paragraph 1 to the vote and the voting was as follows.

For (53)

Mr J Baker, Mr B Black, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr M Brown, Mr D Burns, Mr C Burwash, Mr A Cecil, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mr J Defriend, Mr S Dixon, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Eustace, Mr L Evans, Mr P Evans, Mr J Finch, Ms B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mrs M Fothergill, Mr M Fraser Moat, Mr B Fryer, Mr M Harrison, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Ms L Kemkaran, Miss I Kemp, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Mr M Logan, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Ms D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Ms B Porter, Ms S Roots, Mr T Shonk, Mr D Sian, Dr G Sturley, Mr D Taylor, Mr P Thomas, Mr A Thorpe, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mr N Wibberley, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble

Against (21)

Mr B Barrett, Mr M Brice, Mr M Ellis, Mr S Heaver, Mr M Hood, Mr A Hook, Mr S Jeffery, Mr A Kennedy, Mr R Lehmann, Mr J Moreland, Mr M Munday, Mr T Prater, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ricketts, Ms C Russell, Mr G Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr P Stepto, Mr R Streatfeild MBE, Mr M Sole and Mr N Williams

Abstain (3)

Mr A Brady, Mr R Ford and Mrs S Hudson

*Motion carried.*

- 3) RESOLVED that Council approves the Council Strategy, Reforming Kent 2025-28.

**31. KCC's Strategic Business Case for Local Government Reorganisation in Kent and Medway**

*(Item 9)*

- 1) Ms Kemkaran proposed, and Mr Collins seconded the motion that:  
  
“County Council considers and debates the proposal as part of ensuring all-Member input to inform the proposed Cabinet Decision to approve and submit the Strategic Business Case to Government.”
- 2) RESOLVED to note the proposal as part of ensuring all-Member input to inform the proposed Cabinet Decision to approve and submit the Strategic Business Case to Government.

## **32. External Audit Annual Report**

*(Item 10)*

*Mr Paul Dossett (External Auditor) Grant Thornton was in attendance for this item.*

- 1) Mr Brown proposed, and Mr Paul seconded the motion that:  
  
“County Council notes the External Audit Annual Report 2024-25.”
- 2) Mr Paul Dossett, external auditor from Grant Thornton, provided an overview of the role of public sector auditors within local government, their duties, and statutory powers. Mr Dossett provided an overall perspective of the Council’s current position in relation to financial sustainability, governance, and value for money.
- 3) The Chairman thanked Mr Dossett, his team, and Council staff involved, for their hard work.
- 4) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 1 to the vote and it was agreed unanimously.
- 5) RESOLVED that County Council notes the External Audit Annual Report 2024-25.

## **33. Motions for Time Limited Debate**

*(Item 11)*

- 1) Mr Streatfeild proposed, and Mr Hook seconded the motion that:  
  
“County Council resolves to:
  - Recommend that KCC works with relevant partners to form an independently chaired cross party Health and Social Care Kent improvement board to urgently address issues in the CQC inspection, the budget, and the departure of the DASS.

- Recommend that the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care should write to the Secretary of State to:
    - o Confirm this Council's support of joint working at both local and national levels, including through the KCC Health and Wellbeing Board, to establish a long-term agreement on funding and provision of social care.
    - o Call for the establishment of a national cross-party commission dedicated to forging a long-term agreement on a predictable and consistent funding model for free personal care, ensuring sustainability and accessibility for all.
    - o Support the introduction of an Emergency Health and Care Budget ahead of the Autumn Statement, prioritising the resolution of the national crisis and placing it at the forefront of the new government's agenda."
- 2) Mr Ricketts declared an interest that he was an elected governor of East Kent University Hospitals Foundation Trust.
- 3) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion in paragraph 1 to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (22)

Mr B Barrett, Mr M Brice, Mrs T Dean MBE, Mr M Ellis, Mr R Ford, Mr S Heaven, Mr M Hood, Mr A Hook, Mr S Jeffery, Miss I Kemp, Mr A Kennedy, Mr J Moreland, Mr M Munday, Mr T Prater, Mr A Ricketts, Ms C Russell, Mr G Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr P Stepto, Mr R Streatfeild MBE, Mr M Sole and Mr N Williams

Against (47)

Mr J Baker, Mr M Brown, Mr D Burns, Mr C Burwash, Mr A Cecil, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mr J Defriend, Mr S Dixon, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Eustace, Mr L Evans, Mr P Evans, Mr J Finch, Ms B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mr M Fraser Moat, Mr B Fryer, Mr M Harrison, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Ms L Kemkaran, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Ms D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Ms B Porter, Ms S Roots, Mr T Shonk, Mr D Sian, Dr G Sturley, Mr D Taylor, Mr A Thorpe, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mr N Wibberley, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble

Abstain (5)

Mr B Black, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr A Brady, Mrs S Hudson and Mr P Thomas

*Motion lost.*

4) Mr Stepto proposed, and Mr Hood seconded the motion that:

“This Council resolves to

1. Recommend that all future financial transactions/decisions in relation to Treasury Management which are above the value of £2 million are reported to the Governance & Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.
2. Recommend that all Member groups or boards responsible for monitoring and oversight of Treasury Management activity (e.g. the Treasury Management Group) are formalised within KCC governance with a requirement to include representation from all Political Groups.”

5) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion in paragraph 4 to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (25)

Mr B Barrett, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr A Brady, Mr M Brice, Mrs T Dean MBE, Mr M Ellis, Mr R Ford, Mr S Heaven, Mr M Hood, Mr A Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Mr S Jeffery, Miss I Kemp, Mr A Kennedy, Mr J Moreland, Mr M Munday, Mr T Prater, Mr A Ricketts, Ms C Russell, Mr G Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr P Stepto, Mr R Streatfeild MBE, Mr M Sole and Mr D Taylor

Against (44)

Mr J Baker, Mr M Brown, Mr D Burns, Mr A Cecil, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mr J Defriend, Mr S Dixon, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Eustace, Mr L Evans, Mr P Evans, Mr J Finch, Ms B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mr M Fraser Moat, Mr B Fryer, Mr M Harrison, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Ms L Kemkaran, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Ms D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Ms B Porter, Ms S Roots, Mr T Shonk, Mr D Sian, Dr G Sturley, Mr A Thorpe, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble

Abstain (3)

Mr B Black, Mr P Thomas and Mr N Wibberley

*Motion lost.*

## **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL – 21 October 2025**

### **MINUTES of the meeting held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.**

**PRESENT:** Pamela Williams (Chair), Martin Brice, Dan Bride, Stephen Gray, Christine McInnes, Stuart Heaver, Brian Horton, Isabella Kemp, Adrian Kibble, Kayleigh Leonard, Connie Nolan, Claudine Russell, Nancy Sayer, Tracy Scott, Martin Brice and Caroline Smith

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Chistine Palmer (Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services), Joanne Carpenter (Participation and Engagement Manager), Marian Smith (Deputy Headteacher – Virtual School Kent), Chris Nunn (Senior Management Information Officer), Maria Olsson (Service Manager – Regional Adoption Agency), Kevin Kasaven (Director of Children's Countywide Services), Christy Holden (Head of Children's Commissioning), Robin Cahill (Senior Commissioner), Alice Gleave (Assistant Director SEN Statutory Services), Connor Cruickshank (Apprentice Participation Worker), Ingrid Crisan (Director for Operational Integrated Children's Services) and Georgia Humphreys (Democratic Services Officer)

### **Election of Vice-Chair**

1. Mr Burns proposed, and Mr Kibble seconded that Miss Kemp be elected as Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
2. As there were no further nominations, the Chair declared Miss Kemp as Vice-Chair of the Panel.
3. **RESOLVED** that Miss Kemp be elected Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

### **Apologies and Substitutes**

Apologies had been received from Mr Chamberlain, Mr Sefton and Mr Doran for whom Ms Smith was present as substitute.

Ms Nolan and Ms Bride were in attendance virtually.

### **Chair's Announcements**

1. The Chair and the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services were working to get the poster provided by the Participation Team at the previous meeting framed and displayed in Sessions House.

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2025**

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

### **Participation Team update**

1. Ms Carpenter, Participation and Engagement Manager, CYPE, and her team introduced the report and provided the Panel with an overview of the various activities and events that had been held. Additionally, the successes of various young people were highlighted, as were the awards presented at the Virtual School Kent (VSK) Pre-16 Awards Ceremony 2025, at which the Chairman of the Council, KCC officers and members of the Panel were in attendance.
2. The Participation Team shared a video which highlighted the VSK Pre-16 Awards 2025.
3. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. Members of the Panel congratulated the Team for their hard work and achievements.

RESOLVED that the Participation Team update was noted.

### **Verbal Update by the Cabinet Member**

1. Mrs Palmer, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, gave a verbal update on the following:
  - a. The new Kent Fostering Film, 'The Run' was launched and played to the Panel. It was made in collaboration with local authorities across the county, the message emphasised the importance of foster carers, encouraging those who could to sign up.
  - b. On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October, in recognition of World Mental Health Day, over 170 young people from 20 secondary schools across Kent participated in the annual Big Mental Health Conversation. Organised by the KCC i-THRIVE and Participation Team, the event featured a series of interactive workshops aimed at promoting wellbeing and fostering open, supportive discussions around mental health.
  - c. The CYPE Children's Services Awards, held on 16 October, recognised the hard work of Children's Services and those who support them, across the county.
  - d. From August to October, Mrs Palmer visited the Young Lives Foundation with the Chairman of the Council, the Children's Short break Unit at Fairlawns in Ashford, St Peter's House in Broadstairs and Swanscombe Family Hub.

RESOLVED that the verbal updates were noted.



## **Kent CIC in the statutory school years with an EHCP - Access to Education**

1. Ms Smith, Deputy Headteacher – Virtual School Kent, presented the bi-annual report. She noted pupil numbers remained stable, with 33% of Key Stage 3 pupils holding an EHCP. It was highlighted the tracker used to monitor children in care not in suitable education had shown an increase. In response to this, collaborative work took place with colleagues in SEN and social care to identify and address barriers to education. It was recognised some cases proved difficult to resolve, requiring escalation at a county level, often due to a lack of provision. A Year 11 partnership meeting had been held to discuss onward destinations for Key Stage 4 pupils, alongside a Post-16 SEN partnership meeting.
2. Ms Gleave, Assistant Director of SEN Statutory Services, added that work in specific areas led to an increase in the percentage of children in care receiving EHCPs within the 20-week timeframe. Ongoing training was implemented to improve the quality of social care advice received by the service. Annual reviews were steadily improving, with updates to EHCPs for children in care progressing well. The role of the Designated Social Care Officer was highlighted, who used a tracker to monitor children in care and collaborated with SEN officers where challenges around placements or tuition had arisen.
3. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. When asked whether the number (58.9%) of children in care in Kent without an EHCP was due to insufficient places and delays in the construction of two new special schools. It was said Kent had a sufficiency plan in place, and while the two special schools were expected to come on board, the delays caused a knock-on effect for existing special schools. Additional work was being undertaken to support mainstream settings in equipping children appropriately and support services were available to assist both children and schools with transitions. Mr Kasaven confirmed there were ongoing discussions with the Department for Education regarding the two special schools and explained the strategy aimed to keep children in mainstream schools where possible, ensuring adequate provision and maintaining existing relationships.
  - b. Mr Kasaven explained the opening of the two special school would not fully address or resolve the overcrowding issues.
  - c. Ms Gleave was to come back to the Panel with figures related to the average time taken to secure suitable school placements after an EHCP was received. It was said a large proportion of children would remain at their pre-existing school placement after receiving an EHCP.
  - d. In order to provide support to those students that transfer schools after receiving an EHCP, support officers were in place to ensure there was

a proper goodbye from the first school and welcome and support from the new school. It was recognised schools were a safe space for children and young people, aids for the transition such a memory books were maintained to ensure they had memories. In some cases visits to the new school outside of school time could be arranged, additionally the presence of one designated adult, that the young person could go to, was said to ease the transition. Ms Gleave added SEN Inclusion Advisors supported schools with transition plans to ensure the transition was smooth and the school were appropriately equipped before the child started.

RESOLVED that the work of the Virtual School and SEND in supporting its young people was noted.

### **KCC's Sufficiency Strategy 2025 to 2028**

1. Ms Holden, Head of Children's Commissioning and Mr Cahill, Senior Commissioner, introduced the Sufficiency Strategy 2025-2028. It was explained the purpose of the strategy was to ensure KCC met its statutory responsibility to ensure every Child in Care, Child in Need and Care Leaver had access to safe and suitable accommodation. The six pillars of reform from the Government's 2023 'Stable Homes Built on Love' strategy were highlighted and explained, as the foundation of this strategy.

RESOLVED that the report and the Sufficiency Strategy 2025 to 2028 were noted and endorsed.

### **Adoption Partnership South East, Regional Adoption Agency**

1. Ms Smith, Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting and Ms Olsson, Service Manager – Regional Adoption Agency, introduced the report and gave an overview of the work of Adoption Partnership South East (APSE) between 2024 to 2025.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. Ms Olsson explained six sibling pairs came through with an adoption plan from 2024-25. Ms Smith shared the service had a list of adopters who were ready, assessed and approved, work was done with Medway and Bexley to increase the pool of adopters.
  - b. In terms of training to support adopters who would adopt sibling pairs, Ms Olsson explained the service offered training, additionally support was offered to staff to ensure they could recognise sibling pairs that had to remain together.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the report was noted.

### **Children in Care Scorecard 6 month update**

1. Mr Nunn, Senior Management Information Officer, introduced the report, providing the Panel with an overview of the purpose of the scorecard and how it was produced. Additionally, Mr Nunn explained that out of the 29 Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), ten were green, thirteen amber and six red, three of those indicators had significant changes from the last update. It was explained the six red indicators had additional commentary provided by the service.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. When asked about the length of time between children entering care and the court authority to place them for adoption. Mr Kasaven explained that when a child started their journey of being looked after, day one was the first court date, hearings could take up to two years to take place due to numerous factors, including court timings and the availability of a Judge. Additionally, the Coronavirus Pandemic was identified as a factor that impacted the timescales of the court cases.
  - b. The percentage of Initial Health Assessments completed within the 20 working day statutory timeframe was monitored monthly rather than on a rolling basis. Ms Sayer, Associate Director and Designated Consultant Nurse for Looked after Children and UASC (NHS Kent and Medway ICB), explained the high number of children placed in Kent by other local authorities contributed to increased demand, with responsibility falling on Kent to ensure these children were seen. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) were a significant factor in the level of demand, as processing their cases took time. Mr Kasaven highlighted the challenge of obtaining consent within five days, which could delay assessments. Kent was receiving around 3,000 children into care annually, with approximately 1,300 placed by other authorities. The cost of placements in Kent was high, and competition from other local authorities funding premium rates priced Kent out of the market. The number of children requiring assessments who did not belong to Kent contributed to delays.
  - c. When asked about the data for the average number of days between becoming looked after and placement order compared to the target. Mr Nunn explained the target of 250 days was challenging, it was highlighted the national average was 350 days, the service was looking to adjust the target to be more inline with the national average.
  - d. In response to the red indicator, of the percentage of children in care placed within 20 miles from home, Mr Kasaven was to provide data of placement distances at a later date, highlighting the aim was to keep children within 30 miles.

- e. When asked if the Local Authority raised concerns around funding and placing children further than needed with Central Government. Mr Kasaven explained the Association of Directors Children's Services (ADCS) collected views from all members and provided by way of formal letter the nationwide problem to the Department of Education (DfE). It was highlighted that due to the Sense of Belonging Regulations, smaller local authorities felt less pressure to develop or improve their own SEN provision, which added pressure on larger authorities, such as Kent, to deliver the services for other local authority children.
- f. Ms Smith recognised recent recruitment drives within the 18+ Care Leaving Service were unsuccessful. The staffing issues were due to reasons such as long term sickness and maternity leave. It was explained recruiting Personal Advisors was difficult due to a competitive market, with London boroughs offering higher salaries. Some vacancies were successfully filled and contingency measures were in place, including support from other specialists within the service to ensure continuity and prevent any negative impact from staffing gaps. Additionally, efforts were made to increase the number of apprenticeship and work experience opportunities. It was hoped these measures would help improve performance and return the service to a green rating.

RESOLVED that the proposed performance measures and targets were noted and agreed.

**From:** Linden Kemkaran – Leader of the Council  
Amanda Beer - Chief Executive

**To:** County Council - 18 December 2025

**Subject:** 2025 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:**

This report provides a briefing on Kent County Council's work to support Kent's Armed Forces community and summarises key achievements during 2025.

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**Recommendation:**

Members are asked to NOTE all that is being done to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent and to ENDORSE priorities going forward including promoting Kent County Council's status as the lead MoD Employers Recognition Gold Award Holder.

Members are requested to continue to support the Armed Forces Covenant across the county and to ENDORSE the Council's commitment to this work by engaging locally in Covenant efforts and Military related events.

---

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Armed Forces Covenant outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. At a local level, Kent County Council (KCC) was one of the first Authorities to sign a Covenant, back in September 2011. In October 2017, a new combined Armed Forces Covenant including KCC, Medway, 11 Infantry Brigade and RSME was re-signed at the Kent and Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board (KMCMPB).
- 1.2 The purpose of the Covenant is to encourage support for the armed forces community working and residing in Kent and to recognise, remember and honour the sacrifices they have made for us to keep Britain safe and free.
- 1.3 Parts of the Armed Forces Covenant were enshrined in law under the Armed Forces Act 2021. The measures in the Act came into force on 22 November 2022, meaning all Local Authorities and related public bodies are required to show 'due regard' when considering applications from the armed forces community (school places and transport), Healthcare (access to GPs and

hospital waiting lists) and Housing (homelessness and Disabled Facilities Grants) thereby ensuring that no one is disadvantaged by their service to the Nation. On 28 June 2025, the Prime Minister announced that legislation will be brought forward to bring the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law, placing the armed forces community at the heart of government decision-making.

1.4 In collaboration with our local partners, KCC continually revisits service processes and pathways to ensure they meet the needs of the armed forces community, and this is reinforced through regular awareness training for front line staff, senior officers and elected Members delivered by the Covenant Lead Officer. Additionally, the Civic Office and the Lieutenancy are well connected into the KMCMPB 's work.

1.5 The KMCMPB continues to oversee the implementation of the Covenant and meets twice a year under the chairmanship of the KCC Chairman with the Leader and Armed Forces Champion of Medway Council appointed as vice-chairman, supported by Task Groups covering the following themes:

- Employment and Skills
- Recognise and Remember
- Unit Welfare Officers – a Joint Task Group involving KCC and Medway Council Lead Officers

## **2. Highlights of Kent County Council's Activities to support the Armed Forces Community during 2025**

### **2.1 Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board**

2.1.1 In May 2025, we welcomed Cllr Richard Palmer as our new Chairman of KCC. Along with the Leader of KCC, Cllr Richard Palmer is a strong supporter of the Armed Forces. As Chairman of KCC, he automatically becomes Chairman of KMCMPB.

2.1.2 In October 2025, the KMCMPB welcomed Lt Col (Retd) Peter Conn MBE who took over the Chairmanship of the Employment and Skills Task Group following the retirement of Richard Lavender.

### **2.2 11th Kent and Medway Armed Forces Covenant Conference – Mid-Kent College, Maidstone**

2.2.1 The KMCMPB held its 11th Annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference sponsored (for the second year running) by Mid-Kent College, Maidstone in June 2025. Our Guest Speakers included the Vice Lord-Lieutenant – Sir Hugh Robertson; Cllr Linden Kemkaran – Leader KCC and Cllr Vince Maple - Leader Medway Council. Cllr Richard Palmer was announced there as the new Armed Forces Champion for KCC.

- 2.2.2 Claire Lilly Founder - The Forcer Protocol spoke movingly of on Suicide Prevention. The Forcer Protocol is a tool used by the Police to ensure key information is available to them when they are searching for serving and ex-service veterans who are lost or have gone missing or at risk. It is named after Alan Forcer who suffered with complex PTSD and debilitating depression following service in Northern Ireland and Kosovo during the height of the conflicts, subsequently taking his own life. Service veterans, their informal and professional carers, family members and friends can complete a form which records vital information in relation to the veteran in case they go missing. Kent Police signed up to it last November, with Ch Insp Gary Woodward speaking on Kent Police's complementary role in saving lives.
- 2.2.3 Cdre Tim Green ADC Naval Regional Commander – London and South East delivered a fascinating brief on the recently published Strategic Defence Review 2025. He warned of generational challenges with the UK under daily attack particularly from cyber-attacks. He called for the need to reconnect Defence with Civil Society. He concluded by saying that nothing happens without people.
- 2.2.4 Lt Col Tim Petrasky – SO1 HQ SE - Aldershot spoke on the Army commitments within Kent and how nearly 50,000 Ukrainian Recruits had been taught basic soldiering skills including weapon handling, marksmanship and self-defence in and around Kent under Op INTERFLEX and the MoD Covenant Team. Canon Peter Bruinvels spoke on the latest developments with the expansion of the Armed Forces Covenant and how well Kent was responding to them. The National Covenant Lead described KCC as an “exemplar” in just how well it delivered the Covenant.

## 2.3 MoD Employer Recognition Scheme

- 2.3.1 The Annual Gold Awards were held on 23 September at The Army Flying Museum Middle Wallop. The two Gold Kent recipients were, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.
- 2.3.2 One of the benefits of being an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder is that KCC were able to send six members of staff from the KCC Dynamic Support Service to the 2025 Army Leadership Challenge Day in October. Feedback received from the staff that attended was that it pushed them out of their comfort zones, built up their confidence, and strengthened their skills, all of which are transferable skills that they have brought back to the KCC workplace.

## 2.4 Welfare Support

- 2.4.1 KCC and the Armed Forces Champions continue to provide case work support for both service personnel and ex-service personnel and their families. Cases cover a range of topics such as obtaining a bus pass, school admissions, library fines whilst on active service, job introductions and housing provision.
- 2.4.2 The tri-Annual Unit Move between Shorncliffe and Brunei took place in August 2025 and involved 2RGR swapping with 1RGR who then returned to Sir John Moore Barracks, Folkestone, which included approximately 1500 people. KCC appointed a nominated officer to support the school admission process, and the switch went really well. Work to update a school's handbook was completed ahead of the full move.
- 2.4.3 During 2025, KCC's Financial Hardship Programme allocated £29,350 in food and/or energy vouchers to veteran homes via the government funded Household Support Fund. There were 315 awards given during the summer scheme which provided supermarket vouchers to support with food costs, and 100 awards provided during the winter scheme which allowed beneficiaries to select food or energy vouchers. 41 veterans were supported through the Kent Advice Hub and Money and Mental Health projects, delivered in partnership with Citizens Advice North West Kent.
- 2.5 The Full 2025 Annual Report - Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent.
- 2.5.1 The full 2025 Annual Report can be found as appendix 1 attached to this report.

### **3. Looking Ahead to 2026**

- 3.1 The Recognise & Remember Task Group will continue to publicise the military events calendar (including veterans' activities and their Hubs) in conjunction with the Lieutenancy Officer to celebrate Armed Forces Day 2026 as well as commemorating Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday 2026 and encourage KCC Members to support all the local events.
- 3.2 The Strategic Partnerships Team will analyse the results from the November 2025 KCC Member and Officer survey, to help understand how many people within KCC have an Armed Forces connection and what KCC may be able to do to connect or support them even better.
- 3.3 Armed Forces Awareness Training will continue throughout 2026 in person and online.
- 3.4 Ahead of KCC's revalidation of its Employers Recognition Gold Award in late 2026, the Strategic Partnerships Team will continue to review KCC policies to



ensure it maintains the Gold Award status.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

##### **Recommendation:**

Members are asked to NOTE all that is being done to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent and to ENDORSE priorities going forward including promoting Kent County Council's status as the lead MoD Employers Recognition Gold Award Holder.

Members are requested to continue to support the Armed Forces Covenant across the county and to ENDORSE the Council's commitment to this work by engaging locally in Covenant efforts and Military related events.

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## **2025 Annual Report**

### **Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent**



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**Report Date:** 18 December 2025

**Email:** [ArmedForces@kent.gov.uk](mailto:ArmedForces@kent.gov.uk)

# Chairman's Forward



## **Cllr Richard Palmer - Chairman of Kent and Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board**

As Chairman of Kent and Medway CMPB, I am really pleased and proud of all the successes that have been achieved across Kent. It has been a very eventful 8 months since I took over the Chair with so much happening!

I would highlight the really successful 11th Annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference which was held at Medway Campus, Mid-Kent College in Maidstone where we had over 140+ representatives attend. Guest Speakers included HM Vice Lord-Lieutenant - Sir Hugh

Robertson; Cllr Linden Kemkaran - Leader KCC and Cllr Vince Maple - Leader Medway Council. Claire Lilly Founder - The Forcer Protocol spoke movingly of on Suicide Prevention. A tool used by the Police to ensure key information is available to them when searching for serving and ex-service veterans who are lost or have gone missing. Cdre Tim Green ADC Naval Regional Commander - London and South East gave a fascinating brief on the Strategic Defence Review and how the next battles will be fought under the sea!! He warned of generational challenges with the UK under daily attack particularly from cyber-attacks. Lt Col Tim Petrinsky - SO1 HQ SE - Aldershot spoke on our Army commitments within Kent and how nearly 50,000 Ukrainian Recruits had been taught basic soldiering skills including weapon handling, marksmanship and self-defence in and around Kent under Op INTERFLEX.

It has been a year of commemorations with VE Day 80 and VJ Day 80 Flag Raising Events, as well as Armed Forces Day Flag-Raising; Armed Forces Day in Chatham, the Kent Official Poppy Launch and the Kent RBL Festival of Remembrance Concert in Rochester Cathedral, Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day. A time for silence and to remember with thanks those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. We will never forget them.

Here in Kent, we are most fortunate to enjoy excellent working relationships with 36 Royal Engineers and especially its Commanding Officer - Lt Col Ryan Castro; 1 Royal School of Mechanical Engineering and Lt Col John Newton - Commanding Officer and 1 Royal

Gurkha Regiment and its Commanding Officer - Lt Col Jon Jeffcoats and of course, Col David Kenny - Commander, HQ SE as well as with Lt Col (Retd) Rod Gray from SERFCA.

We also work closely with 3 Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and its Commanding Officer - Lt Col Nathan Horsman and with 579 Field Squadron (EOD) and Major Duncan Wood. These are excellent and fruitful partnerships which really underline the fact that Kent is very much a Military county, widely respected by the Ministry of Defence.

As Chairman of Kent County Council, I have been privileged to get out and about in the County and meet many people. One of the undoubted benefits of being Chairman is that I am automatically Chairman of Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board and I must say that it has been one of the most enjoyable parts of the role as I attend and participate in so many Military activities as an ex-serviceman and I am really getting to know and to understand the Military from a different perspective. It has made me even more 'armed forces aware' and increased my enthusiasm to represent them and their interests at the highest level of Government. I am also grateful for the trust that they have put in me and also for the advice that I receive from our officers here at County Hall

With four months left, I continue to be filled with pride and with all that has been achieved to date including Kent CC having its MoD Employers Recognition Gold Award revalidated. It is a privileged role that I have played in working closely with all our partners and now especially HMS Kent. Our partners like me, stand committed to ensure that no member of the armed forces community is disadvantaged because of their service. If anything, all our partners and our Board Members are now even more aware of the ultimate sacrifice that our armed forces are prepared to pay in these uncertain times to keep Britain and Kent in particular safe and free.

# The Armed Forces Act 2021 and Covenant Legislation

The Armed Forces Act 2021 and Covenant Legislation having had a smooth passage through both the House of Commons and the House of Lords resulted in new Statutory Guidelines being published. To remind Members of Kent County Council - as public bodies, Local Authorities now need to show 'due regard' when considering applications from Service Personnel seeking School Admissions, Housing Accommodation and Healthcare and thereby ensure that no one is disadvantaged because their Service to the Nation.



On 28 June 2025, the Prime Minister announced that new legislation will be brought forward to deliver the manifesto promise to bring the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law, placing the armed forces community at the heart of government decision-making. [Written Ministerial Statement](#) Find out what the Legal Duty extension means for you by using one of the Toolkits below:

- [What it means for the Armed Forces Community](#)
- [What it means for Bodies in scope](#)
- [What it means for Armed Forces Families](#)

KCC and Medway are well placed to handle such requests as they already do it as it is "the right thing to do" without the need for any new legislation. The plan was to 'tighten up' the Armed Forces Covenant having had it enshrined in law - by Statutory Guidelines with Employment, Naturalisation and Social Benefits next for consideration. One recommendation already coming through is that the armed forces community should also be trained along with frontline staff on what the Armed Forces Covenant does and does not do in support of them. 'Managing expectations' has become even more important with an increase in demand from regular and ex-service personnel seeking for example the best school or one of the best houses in their local area across Kent and Medway. Read more about the Kent and Medway [Armed Forces Community Covenant document \(PDF, 150.3 KB\)](#).



# Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership

## Board



In May 2025, we welcomed Cllr Richard Palmer as our new Chairman of Kent CC. Richard has been a Councillor for Swale for a number of years and a County Councillor since May 2025 is a Veteran himself. He has been a strong supporter of the Armed Forces. As Chairman of Kent CC, he automatically becomes Chairman of Kent &

Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board and Armed Forces Champion. Having already chaired his first Recognise & Remember Task Group, Richard has been attending a number of military related meetings across Kent and beyond.

In October 2025, the Kent & Medway CMPB welcomed Lt Col (Retd) Peter Conn MBE who took over the Chairmanship of the Employment and Skills Task Group following the retirement of Richard Lavender.

The Kent & Medway CMPB continues to oversee the implementation of the Covenant and meets twice a year and is supported by Task Groups covering the following themes:

- Recognise and Remember
- Employment and Skills
- Unit Welfare Officers - a Joint

Task Group involving KCC Departmental Lead Officers, Medway Lead Officers, District Council Housing, the NHS Armed Forces Community Support Lead and Regular and Reservist Unit Welfare Officers.





During 2025, the Kent & Medway CMPB wrote two separate letters to relevant Ministers:

1. Supporting a fast-track process for the Commonwealth Military requesting that due consideration should be given in the processes in both length of time it takes and the associated cost.
2. Outlining the difficulties that Military Spouses experience in obtaining employment because of the gaps in their CVs - brought about by their frequent moves across the UK and Overseas with their partners, every two years. The Kent & Medway CMPB urged Ministers and the Defence Select Committee to consider extending the Covenant to include Spousal Employment in the UK and Overseas as these Military Spouses are clearly being disadvantaged through their Partner's service and with potential employers knowing that they will move on within 2 years.
3. Both letters were well received by the Veteran's Minister, who offered his personal support for both the requests and concerns.

The Kent & Medway CMPB's Strategic Aims are:

- I. Increase visibility of the armed forces community to the civilian population
- II. Continue to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant plus the new legislation.
- III. Raise awareness amongst schools of the specific needs of service children and their families.
- IV. Support and promote recruitment of volunteers, Regulars and Reservists.

## MoD Employer Recognition Awards Scheme

KCC has been very much at the forefront in supporting and mentoring Councils and other bodies wishing to apply for MoD Employers Recognition Gold Awards in 2025 as a 'military friendly' employer of choice. There are now 263 organisations in Kent that have signed the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Silver Awards were held on 3 September at Admiralty House, HMNB Portsmouth. The Silver recipients in Kent were:

- Chatham Grammar School
- Charlie Charlie One Ltd
- Integrated Estate Management

- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
- Royal Engineers Vocational Education & Training Trust
- MDCV UK

The Gold Awards were held on 23 September at The Army Flying Museum, Middle Wallop. The Kent recipients were:

- Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust
- Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

One of the benefits of being an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder is that KCC were able to send six members of staff from the KCC Dynamic Support Service to the 2025 Army Leadership Challenge Day in October. Feedback received from the staff that attended was that it pushed them out of their comfort zones, built their confidence, and strengthened their skills, all of which are transferable skills they have brought back to the KCC workplace.

The table below lists current Kent Employer Recognition Scheme Gold and Silver Award Holders

Organisation	Date Awarded	Silver	Gold
Ashford Borough Council	2024		
Armoured Engineering Ltd	2023		
BJF Group	2022		
Canterbury City Council	2023		
Challenger Troop	R2023		
Chatham Grammar	2025		
Dover District Council	2020		
EC Safety Solutions Ltd	2024		
FM Conway Ltd	2023		
Folkestone and Hythe District Council	2021		
Forces Family Finance	2020		
Gravesham Borough Council	2021		
Henderson Facilities Management Ltd	2025		
Integrated Estate Management Ltd	2025		
InvictaK9	2021		
Joint Security Services Ltd	2023		
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust	2023		
Kent County Council	R2023		
Kent Fire and Rescue Service	2020		
Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Partnership Trust	2025		
Kent Police	2022		
Laing O'Rourke	R2022		

Organisation	Date Awarded	Silver	Gold
Lifesaver First Aid Services	2022		
Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust	2025		
MDCV UK	2025		
Medway Council	2020		
MKC Training Services Ltd	2023		
MTS Cleansing Services Limited	R2022		
NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board	2022		
NPC Tree Surgery	2021		
Pantera Group	2021		
Priority Freight	R2023		
RE CPD	2025		
Royal British Legion Industries Ltd	2020		
Royal Engineers Association	2024		
Royal Engineers Central Charitable Trust (RECCT)	2022		
Securitem Consultancy Ltd	2023		
Thanet District Council	2023		
The Education and Skills Partnership LTD	2021		
The Rift Group	2020		
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council	2025		
Vistry Group (formally Bovis Homes Ltd)	R2024		
<b>ERS Gold and Silver Award Totals in Kent</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>

ERS Breakdown by County in the South East	Bronze	SE Silver	SE Gold	AFC
Berkshire	73	14	14	170
Buckinghamshire	60	13	9	157
East Sussex	50	6	8	111
Hampshire	226	42	35	571
Isle of Wight	18	2	3	33
<b>Kent</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>263</b>
Oxfordshire	64	14	6	148
Surrey	77	20	17	167
West Sussex	51	10	8	118

# 2025 Events

## National Armed Forces Covenant Conference 2025

*‘Crown Copyright, MOD Covenant team’*



The 2025 Covenant Conference was held on the 2nd and 3rd of July at the Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow, marking a milestone in the evolution of Covenant delivery across the UK.

This year's event followed a [major announcement](#) by Prime Minister Keir Starmer that legislation will be brought

forward to bring the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law. The conference was the first opportunity to formally explain these changes and engage with stakeholders to help shape the proposals for the extended Covenant Legal Duty.

Plenary sessions focused on a wide range of topics, including:

- Armed Forces demographics and needs
- Delivery insights from Greater Manchester
- Developments in Service Children's services
- New findings from the Our Community, Our Covenant report
- Overviews of Op Valour and a new NHS Covenant training team
- An explanation of the current and extended Covenant Legal Duty.
- Day two featured three targeted breakout sessions aimed at gathering insights from those directly involved in Covenant delivery.



Alistair Carns OBE, MC, MP, Minister for Veterans and People, addressed the evening reception by sharing insights from his recent record-breaking ascent of Mount Everest. The Minister also led a plenary session, outlining his vision for the Covenant and the future of Defence, followed by an open Q&A with delegates.





## Kent Events



It has been a very busy time after Armed Forces Flag-Raising -Days at County Hall and across Kent and Medway. On Armed Forces Day, Cllr Vince Maple - Leader, Medway Council hosted a superb Armed Forces Day event in Chatham Docks which the Chairman of Kent CC and Kent & Medway CMPB - Cllr Richard Palmer attended. Next followed a Cocktail Party and Beating Retreat at Loros Barracks, Canterbury by 3PWRR - hosted by their CO - Lt Col Nathan Horsman. KCC held a very meaningful VJ Day 80 commemorating Service including Flag-Raising and special VJ Day 80 Prayers at County Hall, led by the KCC Chairman, fresh from a BBC Radio Kent live interview. The event attracted more than 100 people, including many Veterans, Gurkhas, Councillors and Staff. Kent County Council commemorated all those who lost their lives with the Kent Official Poppy Appeal launch taking place at County Hall in conjunction with the Royal British Legion on 24 October 2025.



The annual Kent Reserves and Cadets Day held on 25 February 2025, brought together representatives from reserve units and cadets across Kent and Medway, to highlight the multitude of benefits to the armed forces, employers and the individuals themselves who serve.





Major Tim Cook. Helps keep the county safe as a risk manager for the Kent Resilience Team. He also serves as a reservist in the British Army and has taken his skills to Nepal to plan and prepare for an earthquake response. Major Cook, who joined the army from school and retired from Kent Police as a

superintendent, said: “My current role is part of the UK Ops Assurance Team. We go around the UK and also abroad to make sure that the military headquarters around the country and elsewhere can support civil partners in an emergency. I write and deliver exercises. It’s really interesting and has been of real benefit to my role in KCC. We have looked at wildfires in Wales, flooding in Northern Ireland, the COP26 climate conference in Scotland and I have been to Nepal four times to assure the British Army capability to survive following a devastating disaster like an earthquake. “I get two weeks additional leave from KCC to complete my training commitments with the army and both sides are flexible which ensures I can fit in my family and other life commitments around work and service without having to use all my annual leave for it. The Armed Forces Covenant means we know if need be, we can support our country, and your job is still there when you come back so you don't have to worry about all that.”

Military children attended the 5-day summer Space Week 2025 event which took place at the University of Kent, Canterbury and was designed to ignite young people's passion for Space Science - A Royal Engineers Service Children’s Team were runners-up.





The SERFCA Lord-Lieutenant Awards were held on 12 November 2025 at Tonbridge School, celebrated the achievements of outstanding individuals across the county. Lady Colgrain congratulated all award-winners for their remarkable dedication and service, praising the volunteer ethos demonstrated by Reservists, Cadets, and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers alike. The Lord-Lieutenant highlighted the vital role of the Reserves in national security and the importance of community and employer support in enabling their service. She also emphasised the need to encourage more Adult Volunteers to support the Cadet Forces, ensuring more young people can benefit from the opportunities they offer.



# Kent & Medway Armed Forces Covenant Conference



Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board held its 11th Annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference at Mid-Kent College, Maidstone in June 2025. Our Guest Speakers included the Vice Lord-Lieutenant - Sir Hugh Robertson; Cllr Linden Kemkaran - Leader KCC and Cllr Vince Maple - Leader Medway Council. Cllr Richard Palmer was announced there as the new Armed Forces Champion for Kent CC.



Claire Lilly Founder - The Forcer Protocol spoke movingly of on Suicide Prevention. The Forcer Protocol is a tool used by the Police to ensure key information is available to them when they are searching for serving and ex-service veterans who are lost or have gone missing or at risk. It is named after Alan Forcer who suffered with complex PTSD and debilitating depression following service in Northern Ireland and Kosovo during the height of the conflicts, subsequently taking his own life. Service veterans, their informal and professional carers, family members and friends can complete a form which records vital information in relation to the veteran in case they go missing. Kent Police signed up to the Forcer Protocol in November 2024, with Ch Insp Gary Woodward speaking at the conference on Kent Police's complementary role in saving lives.





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Defence with Civil Society. He concluded by saying that nothing happens without people.

Lt Col Tim Petransky - SO1 HQ SE - Aldershot spoke on our Army commitments within Kent and how nearly 50,000 Ukrainian Recruits had been taught basic soldiering skills including weapon handling, marksmanship and self-defence in and around Kent under Op INTERFLEX and the MoD Covenant Team and Canon Peter Bruinvels spoke on the latest developments with the expansion of the Armed Forces Covenant and how well Kent was responding to them. The National Covenant Lead described KCC as an “exemplar” in just how well it delivered the Covenant.

We had over 140+ representatives attend with excellent speeches, and the 19 brilliant market stands, which provided excellent feedback and gave us all the priorities for the next 12 months.







Our thanks go to Mid-Kent College for sponsoring the event again and providing the excellent venue and staff support, where everything worked!



# Welfare Support

## KCC Support

The past 12 months have been busy for Canon Bruinvels, with a number of cases involving school admissions being raised, for example a new Military CO requested to register his child for a school before they moved into Kent. To enable this request KCC used the new HQ postal address that the Military CO will be based at, to support the school registration. KCC has received requests to speed up the SEND statements and push for their portability to or from another Local Authority without them losing their place in the Education Health and Care Plan queue for assessments.

KCC and the Armed Forces Champions continue to provide case work support for both service personnel and ex-service personnel and their families. In Kent there are currently 2170 serving personnel across Kent and Medway and the breakdown is 390 in Medway and 570 in Maidstone and 530 in Folkestone and Hythe, 150 in Dover. Therefore, it is not surprising that KCC receives on average one or two cases a week. Cases cover a range of topics such as obtaining a bus pass, school admissions, library fines whilst on active service, job introductions and housing requests which tends to be around Folkstone and Hythe, Maidstone, and Medway.

Other welfare cases are undertaken through the twice year Unit Welfare Officer Meetings which meet under Chatham rules under the chairmanship of Canon Bruinvels with all Regular and Reservist UWOs meeting with Education, Health, Adult Social Care and Housing practitioners.

## Financial Hardship Programme

During 2025, KCC's Financial Hardship Programme allocated £29,350 in food and/or energy vouchers to veteran homes via the government funded Household Support Fund. There were 315 awards given during the summer scheme which provided supermarket vouchers to support with food costs, and 100 awards provided during the winter scheme which allowed beneficiaries to select food or energy vouchers. 41 veterans were supported through the Kent Advice Hub and Money and Mental Health projects, delivered in partnership with Citizens Advice North and West Kent.

KCC's ReferKent system has been established to enable secure and effective referrals between professionals and support organisations, ensuring no one falls through the cracks



when needing help. ReferKent continues to register organisations that offer support to the Armed Forces. For example, registrations include CAP Enterprise CIC, Mental Health Matters, Canterbury Safe Haven, Angy Care, Kent Fire & Rescue and the RBLI Lifeworks. The Armed Forces Network is also registered and is a multi-organisational group which includes members from the NHS, MoD, Armed Forces Reservists, Mental and Physical Health Clinicians, the Royal British Legion, SSAFA and other interested charities and organisations.

In the Business Workstream, KCC engage with prospective applicants to consider the impact their projects can have on ex-service residents. By leveraging our networking efforts, we connect with businesses and organisations about the Armed Forces Covenant. These discussions have subsequently led to a complete change in a project proposal, transforming them into applications involving the armed forces. Separately, a recent conversation with the Kent Foundation highlighted the benefits of the Armed Forces Covenant, which resonated with their CEO (a service child) and ultimately led to them signing the Armed Forces Covenant.



The Financial Hardship Programme has also supported events targeted at assisting veterans and their families. The team continues to work closely with RBLI, providing support through their jobs fair and contributing to mock interview sessions via staff volunteering. These activities have helped veterans with a range of needs, including individuals preparing for release from prison and seeking to rebuild their lives.

In June 2025, the programme partnered with East Kent Mind to

take part in the Veteran Recognition Awards and Information Fair in Canterbury - this was an impactful event that enabled the KCC Team to engage with veterans directly and the opportunity to share with them information about our available services, particularly around

digital inclusion. The team is also scheduled to attend the Veteran Group drop-in event in Gravesham December 2025, further demonstrating its ongoing commitment to supporting the veteran community across Kent.

## Brunei Gurkha Unit Move

The tri-Annual Unit Move between Shorncliffe and Brunei took place in August 2025 and involved 2RGR swapping with 1RGR who then returned to Sir John Moore Barracks, Folkestone, which involved approximately 1500 people. Kent County Council appointed a nominated officer to support the school admission process, and the switch went really well, with only one child taking a while after



an appeal to get a SEND place in a Folkestone School. Work to update a school's handbook was completed ahead of the full move. The CO of 1RGR viewed the Unit Move to Folkestone as a great success, as was the partnership work between KCC, Dover District Council and Folkestone and Hythe District Council.

## KCC Member and Officer Armed Forces Survey

On 17 November 2025, KCC invited both Members and Officers to take part in a survey to help KCC understand how many people within KCC as Councillors and Staff have an Armed Forces connection and what KCC may be able to do to connect or support them better. The results will be analysed by the Strategic Partnerships Team and reported in 2026.

## Veteran Friendly Care Homes Initiative

The Veteran Friendly Care Homes initiative has recently been launched, and Grace Manor (part of Forest Health Care) was the first Care Home in Kent to be awarded the status in early February 2025.

## Forces Connect APP



This free resource is going from strength to strength with over 46,500 downloads across the UK 24/7 - 'download now and do promote as appropriate!' Special thanks to Lt-Gen David Eastman - Deputy Chief of the General Staff, the British Army who has made it now available on MODNet and the Defence

Gateway. Not only is it now in Nepali, but it has recently been translated into Welsh.  
[www.ForcesConnect.co.uk](http://www.ForcesConnect.co.uk).

## Armed Forces Awareness Training Renewal and Refresher Sessions



These popular 1-hour in-person and online interactive Awareness Training sessions continue to be run throughout the year by Canon Bruinvels.

To date, over 16,500 have been trained across the UK from

Inverness to Plymouth including just over 5,000 in Kent. Recent in-house sessions included Tonbridge & Malling BC (55); Medway Council (61) involving their Leader, their Cabinet, their Chief Executive and all their Senior Leadership Team and 51 in two online sessions for our KCC Staff. But the icing on the cake was the recent online session with KCC's GET service where no less than 125 Staff members joined online!

The Armed Forces Covenant has been enshrined in law and there is now a legal requirement for local authorities such as Kent CC to ensure 'due regard' for the armed forces community in the provision of certain key services. They are Education, Housing and Health. This training is designed to increase / refresh Councillors' and Officers' understanding of:

- What is the Armed Forces Covenant and the new legislation for 2026/27
- Who are the armed forces community?
- What challenges are they likely to face? - are they on a war footing!?
- How can we understand their needs? - moving house every 2 years
- Where are the Military in your area? - not just at Maidstone and Chatham

## Armed Forces Champions

The table below lists the Elected Member Armed Forces Champions across Kent and Medway

Kent County Council	Cllr Richard Palmer	<a href="mailto:Richard.Palmer@kent.gov.uk">Richard.Palmer@kent.gov.uk</a>
Medway Council - Lead AFC	Cllr Vince Maple	<a href="mailto:vince.maple@medway.gov.uk">vince.maple@medway.gov.uk</a>
Medway Council	Cllr Chrissy Stamp	<a href="mailto:chrissy.stamp@medway.gov.uk">chrissy.stamp@medway.gov.uk</a>
Ashford	Cllr Peter Feacey	<a href="mailto:Peter.feacey@ashford.gov.uk">Peter.feacey@ashford.gov.uk</a> ;
Canterbury	Cllr Jean Butcher	<a href="mailto:jean.butcher@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk">jean.butcher@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk</a>
Dartford	Cllr Peter Whapshott	<a href="mailto:Peter.whapshott@dartford.gov.uk">Peter.whapshott@dartford.gov.uk</a>
Dover	Cllr Gordon Cowan	<a href="mailto:cllr-gordon.cowan@doover.gov.uk">cllr-gordon.cowan@doover.gov.uk</a>
Folkestone & Hythe	Cllr Jim Martin	<a href="mailto:Jim.martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk">Jim.martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk</a>
Gravesham	Cllr Peter Scollard	<a href="mailto:Peter.scollard@gravesham.gov.uk">Peter.scollard@gravesham.gov.uk</a>
Maidstone	Cllr David Naghi	<a href="mailto:DavidNaghi@maidstone.gov.uk">DavidNaghi@maidstone.gov.uk</a>
Sevenoaks	Cllr Larry Abraham	<a href="mailto:Cllr.abraham@sevenoaks.gov.uk">Cllr.abraham@sevenoaks.gov.uk</a>
Swale	Cllr Richard Palmer	<a href="mailto:richardpalmer@swale.gov.uk">richardpalmer@swale.gov.uk</a>
Thanet	Cllr Helen Whitehead	<a href="mailto:Cllr-helen.whitehead@thanet.gov.uk">Cllr-helen.whitehead@thanet.gov.uk</a>
Tonbridge & Malling - Joint AFC	Cllr Steve Hammond	<a href="mailto:Steve.hammond@tmhc.gov.uk">Steve.hammond@tmhc.gov.uk</a>
Tonbridge & Malling - Joint AFC	Cllr Dave Davis	<a href="mailto:Dave.davis@tmhc.gov.uk">Dave.davis@tmhc.gov.uk</a>
Tunbridge Wells	Cllr Beverley Palmer	<a href="mailto:Beverley.Palmer@tunbridgewells.gov.uk">Beverley.Palmer@tunbridgewells.gov.uk</a>

## Armed Forces Veterans Hubs

During the past 12 months, an increasing need for new Veterans Hubs and Drop-in centres has been identified with many Ex-Service and Veterans experiencing loneliness and depression. Veterans Hubs in Kent and Medway are based in:

- Ramsgate
- Sittingbourne
- Sheerness
- Faversham
- Canterbury
- Chatham
- Gillingham
- Ashford
- Tonbridge
- Dartford
- Romney Marsh

- Folkestone Sports Centre
- Shorncliffe Barracks
- The Nepalese Community Centre exclusively in Cheriton, Shorncliffe, is especially important because KCC played a part in supporting the local Nepalese Community taking on a lease from KCC to open and run the Community Centre, which is part of Cheriton Library. This Nepalese Community Centre is also supported by Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

## Data

### Healthwatch Kent

On 13 August 2025, Kent Healthwatch published a report on Kent and Medway veterans' experience of health and social care since their discharge from the Armed Forces. The project was undertaken following a 2024 update by Kent County Council Public Health to its Armed Forces Needs Assessment, which highlighted how previous engagement to understand veterans' experiences of health and social care had been limited. 115 UK Armed Forces Veterans that live in Kent and Medway completed our research survey. Reflections and learnings from the survey results are:

- **Physical Health** - The most frequently mentioned issue - difficulty in getting an appointment or seeing their GP - is a common experience within the wider population. However, by understanding that many veterans have a previous experience of healthcare access being fast and exclusive, a combination of signposting and reframing expectations would improve veteran experiences.
- **Mental Health** - Within the veteran community that we spoke to, there is an understanding that there is a set of unique needs, particularly in regard to mental health, whereby specially trained staff or staff with their own experience of the Armed Forces could help achieve better health outcomes.
- **Wider Social Issues** - Some Veterans link employment as an important part of their health and wellbeing, with a lack of support received around post discharge employment. Consideration of integrating employment support into signposting provided around general veteran health and wellbeing could be considered to address this.
- **Armed Forces Covenant and Veteran Friendly Accreditation** - There is an awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and Veteran Friendly accreditation, but with differing ideas of what accessing a 'Veteran Friendly' GP Practice or other health service is like for a veteran. Better communication from the surgery to its



veteran patients on how they benefit from the Veteran Friendly accreditation in the care they receive would help alleviate the difference in expectations.

[From Service to Civilian - A report on how support for veterans evolves after discharge | Healthwatch Kent](#)

## KCC 2024 Needs Assessment

In 2024 KCC published [The Armed Forces and Veteran Community Needs Assessment](#) and [technical report](#) which focuses on the needs of armed forces and veterans living in Kent which found, a veteran population of over 52,000, with 58% over 65 and concentrated in coastal areas.

## 2021 Census figures

Following the publication of the 2021 Census figures, we now know that there were 1,853,112 people in England and Wales reporting that they had previously served in the UK Armed Forces (3.8% of usual residents aged 16 years and over).

- Medway: 8,529
- Thanet: 5,765
- Dover: 5,710
- Maidstone: 5,664
- Canterbury: 5,217
- Dartford: 2,328

**Table 1: Residents who have previously served in the UK armed forces**

	Usual residents aged 16+	Number previously served in UK armed forces	Percentage previously served in UK armed forces
<b>2021 Census: UK Armed forces veterans</b>			
England & Wales	48,566,373	1,853,112	3.8%
South East	7,554,580	317,082	4.2%
<b>Kent</b>	<b>1,276,567</b>	<b>52,545</b>	<b>4.1%</b>
Ashford	106,771	4,962	4.6%
Canterbury	132,774	5,217	3.9%
Dartford	90,698	2,328	2.6%
Dover	96,131	5,710	5.9%
Folkestone & Hythe	91,555	5,211	5.7%
Gravesham	84,555	2,351	2.8%
Maidstone	142,136	5,664	4.0%
Sevenoaks	96,603	3,344	3.5%
Swale	121,998	4,773	3.9%
Thanet	115,414	5,765	5.0%
Tonbridge & Malling	105,526	4,023	3.8%
Tunbridge Wells	92,403	3,194	3.5%
Medway Unitary Authority	222,757	8,529	3.8%

2021 Census - TS071 - Previously served in the UK armed forces

The Office for National Statistics (ONS), Table presented by Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

A full report is available on the Kent County Council website [2021 Census - Veterans \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

# Looking to 2026

## Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board's Strategic Aims:

Promoting, publicising and co-ordinating events that increase the visibility of the armed forces community to the civilian population:

- Hold twice-yearly meetings with Task Force Commanders, Armed Forces Champions and Covenant Lead Officers.
- Recognise & Remember Task Group: publicise the military events calendar (including veterans' activities) in conjunction with the Lieutenancy Officer to celebrate Armed Forces Day 2026; the Kent Reservists and Cadets and as well as commemorating Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday 2026 and encourage KCC Members to support all the local events.
- Support Space Week 2026.

Continue to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant amongst public sector staff, and making it easier for the armed forces community to access information, advice and support:

- Continue to build on the legacy of Forces Connect SE, ensuring the work is embedded and built upon through regular in-person training and e-learning.
- Encourage the wider use of the Forces Connect App.
- Encourage Unit Welfare Officers to be more proactive in ensuring the armed forces community understand what the Covenant is (and what it is not) and how they are being supported across Kent.

Raising awareness amongst schools of the specific needs of service children and their families, including the Gurkha families:

- Work with Headteachers across Kent & Medway with the largest number of service children.
- Extend an invitation to a Headteacher representative to the Unit Welfare Officer meetings.

Maintaining a focus on how the most vulnerable within the armed forces community can be supported to access what they need to thrive in their future civilian life:

- Improve identification of those veterans who have greatest needs, via networking across public services and the voluntary sector and improving signposting to support vulnerable people.
- Increase signposting and support for financial and debt management services - and again, Kent Together and Refer Kent provides a basis for this.

Maintaining a strong focus on Recruitment, Staffing and Training on ex-service personnel:

- Support and promote the benefits of recruiting of Armed Forces Reservists and Military Spouses.
- Continue to monitor Kent County Council's HR Policy to ensure that KCC remains 'Military friendly' and continues to offer guaranteed interviews to appropriately qualified ex-service personnel, Reservists and Veterans, as well as offering mentoring.
- Consider giving paid time off for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers who are employed by Kent County Council.
- Ensure that Kent County Council continues to offer Armed Forces Awareness Training, especially to Adult Social Care Staff and other key front-line staff and their Managers.
- Develop a proposal for a Kent-wide campaign to encourage more Adult Volunteers for the Cadets, and case workers for the military charities (including targeting retired veterans).
- The Employment & Skills Task Group to take a lead in promoting the benefits of employing Reservists to the Private Sector and Cadets as Apprentices in conjunction with SERFCA.
- Encourage the appointment of an appropriately qualified service child to be appointed a Lord-Lieutenant Cadet.
- Plan and promote Kent Reserves and Cadet Day 2026.
- Make the most of the benefits of being an MoD Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder by sending KCC staff on the Sandhurst / Longmoor Leadership Challenge training.
- Work closely with local partners and the Military to ensure bids for Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund remain of the highest quality, maximising income into the County.

**End**

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By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager

To: County Council – 18 December 2025

Subject: Committees Review – Covering Report

Classification: Unrestricted

## Summary

This covering report sets out the approach being undertaken to present proposed changes to the Committee arrangements, subject to any recommendations from the Selection and Member Services Committee.

The detailed final proposals for decision by Council (if any) will be published following Selection and Member Services Committee on 16 December 2025.

## Introduction

1. Proposals for moving various Committee functions to deliver a more efficient approach to formal meetings have been developed and are currently published for consideration by the Selection and Member Services (SMS) Committee on 16 December. The published report is appended to this paper for information at this stage.
2. As set out in the Selection and Member Services Committee report, the proposals involve the ‘merging’ of some of the Ordinary Committees of the Council and the disbanding a sub-committee. This would, if approved by Council, be achieved by one committee in each merger absorbing the functions of the other and continuing with a broader remit. This would not require the formal establishment of entirely new committees and instead involve amendments to the relevant terms of reference and the disbanding of those committees no longer required following the transfer of functions.
3. The proposals which will be for decision by County Council, pending formal recommendations, are summarised below:
  - Planning Applications Committee to absorb and take on all functions from the Regulation Committee, including the transfer of sub-committees and Panels.
  - Selection and Member Services Committee to absorb and take on all functions from the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee.
  - Deletion of the Member Development Sub-Committee
4. Other proposals for changes to Cabinet Committees referenced in the Selection and Member Services Committee are for decision by the Leader and not County Council. The proposed change is:

- Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee to absorb and take on all functions from the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.
  - 5. Council is advised that any decisions regarding the changing of the number of Ordinary Committees has a direct impact on the Proportionality calculations. Consequently, the outcome of Selection and Member Services consideration on 16 December is also material to that item and it is therefore not possible to provide definitive recommendations on the Committees Review or Proportionality items until after that meeting.
  - 6. No recommendation is included in this covering report. Further papers for the Committees Review and Proportionality arrangements, including the detailed recommendations for decision, will be published after Selection and Member Services Committee has met.
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## **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – [Report to Selection and Member Services Committee 16 December \(provided for information\)](#)

## **Report Author:**

Joel Cook  
Democratic Services Manager  
03000 416892  
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By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager

To: Selection and Member Services Committee – 16 December 2025

Subject: Committees Review

Classification: Unrestricted

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## **Summary**

This report sets out proposals for consideration in relation to changing the number of Committees, adjusting relevant terms of reference and confirming the arrangements for managing transition of required activity.

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## **Introduction**

1. This report sets out proposals for delivering the work of the Council Committees in a more efficient way and reduces the number of Committees and meetings while still meeting statutory and Constitutional requirements.
2. The Council is required to establish and operate a number of Statutory Committees and in many cases, the Council is required to undertake specific functions. There is some flexibility as to how the Council seeks to manage these and the report explores options to deliver the same functions via fewer Committees.
3. Alongside the review of the non-Executive Committees, the Leader has undertaken a review of Cabinet Committee arrangements and proposals for change are shared in this paper for information.
4. Options and recommendations for review are set out below in the relevant sections.

## **Ordinary Committees**

5. The Council operates the following main non-Executive Committees:
  - Scrutiny Committee
  - Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
  - Governance & Audit Committee
  - Electoral and Boundary Review Committee
  - Personnel Committee
  - Planning Applications Committee
  - Regulation Committee
  - Selection and Member Services Committee
  - Pension Fund Committee
  - Kent Flood Risk Management Committee
  - Standards Committee

In some cases, the above are supported by a range of sub-committees exercising specific functions.

6. The Committees which must remain due to their specific functions and requirements are:
  - Scrutiny Committee
  - Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
  - Governance & Audit Committee
  - Pension Fund Committee
7. The Committees which could be amended but it is recommended they continue unchanged at this time are:
  - Personnel Committee
  - Flood Risk and Water Management Committee
  - Standards Committee

**Proposed changes:**

8. Ordinary Committees which may be merged (while still maintaining all required activity and functions):
  - Selection and Member Services Committee & Electoral and Boundary Review Committee
  - Planning Committee & Regulation Committee
9. The functions currently undertaken separately by the Selection and Member Services and Electoral and Boundary Review are distinct but have a reasonable connection to arrangements relating to Members. A single Electoral and Member Arrangements Committee could be established to undertake all the functions – including making appointments (or agreeing arrangements for the appointments) to outside bodies, reviewing and recommending changes to the Constitution, monitoring Member Grants, determining Election arrangements and responding to Boundary Reviews where these are relevant to the County Council.
10. Selection and Member Services Committee includes a payable SRA to the Chair – this would continue under the proposals, pending any future Member Remuneration Panel review.
11. The proposed changes to the Selection and Members Services functions also include relevant reviews to update the Terms of Reference to better reflect the practical management of some of the elements still referenced in the Constitution.
12. In addition to updating the SMS functions, it is recommended that the Member Development Sub-Committee (a sub-committee of Selection and Member Services) be discontinued. The sub-committee played an important role in reviewing Member Development arrangements in 2023/24 and assisted in the



preparation of an effective Member Induction Programme which continues to run following the May 2025 election. The requirement for formal Committee consideration of these plans has now passed and any required working group activity can be monitored as necessary by the main Committee.

13. The Council has legal requirements to manage Planning Application matters for relevant strategic issues via a non-Executive process. This is achieved either through formal Planning Committee meetings or via delegated Officer decisions. KCC already operates an effective level of delegation in accordance with national Planning regulations and guidance.
14. The Regulation Committee has an important formal responsibility as it exercises functions in relation to enforcement of the control of development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and related statutory instruments. However, the majority of these decision-making functions are, in practice, exercised via Officer delegation or through ad hoc sub-committees rather than the main parent Committee. The sub-committees determine matters such as School Transport Appeals, Public Rights of Way issues and Village Green Applications.
15. Given the lack of substantive business requiring regular consideration or decision by the main Regulation Committee, it is recommended the Planning and Regulation Committees functions be merged into one overarching Committee.
16. It is recommended in the first instance that the current required sub-committee / panel arrangements for Regulation and Planning Committees are established under the new merged committee.

### **Cabinet Committees**

17. The number of Cabinet Committees, their terms of reference and membership are all determined by the Leader of the Council. They are not subject to formal Proportionality Rules. This allows significant flexibility in how they are managed and the Executive can and should review them to ensure they provide an effective tool to assist Cabinet Members in policy development and in making well informed decisions.
18. The Executive is proposing to consolidate all Growth, Environment and Transport (GET) related Cabinet Committee activity within a single GET Cabinet Committee – this is achieved by the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee absorbing the GEDC activity and the disbanding of the GEDC Cabinet Committee.
19. The Committee is asked to note the proposed changes to Cabinet Committee arrangements.

## **Meeting arrangement implications**

20. The proposals would result in a reduction (business need depending) of at least 15 meetings per annum. KCC holds, at present, an average of between 120 and 150 meetings per year so this is a material reduction.
21. A reduction in committee support requirements and expenses alongside operational efficiency activity, making the best use of technology and the proposed reduction in SRAs provides a saving of approx. £75k per annum.

## **Recommendation:**

- 1) Recommend to County Council that the proposed changes to the Ordinary Committees (including relevant updates to Terms of Reference and associated Constitutional changes) as detailed in the report be adopted.
- 2) Note the proposed changes to Cabinet Committees.
- 3) Note that detailed Committee membership will be determined via the Proportionality Arrangements via Full Council.
- 4) Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Political Group Leaders to progress detailed Terms of Reference updates for the affected Committees.

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## **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Revised Terms of Reference for Electoral and Member Arrangements Committee

Appendix 2 – Revised Terms of Reference for Planning and Regulation Committee

## **Report Author:**

Joel Cook  
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From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council  
Amanda Beer, Chief Executive

To: County Council, 18 December 2025

Subject: Appointment of Political Assistants

Status: Unrestricted

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## 1. Introduction

- a) Section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides that the Council may appoint a maximum of three persons to provide assistance to members of Political Groups. Posts must be for a fixed term and run until the Council's Annual Meeting following the next Council elections.
- b) The pay of Political Assistants is subject to a ceiling set by the Secretary of State. The Local Government (Assistants for Political Groups) (Remuneration) (England) Order 2021 provides that the maximum amount which can be paid to a Political Assistant is spinal column point 38 of the salary scales for local government officers incorporated in the National Joint Council's Scheme. This is currently £49,282 (FTE). This excludes on-costs of NI and pension contributions.
- c) Sections 9(6) and (7) of the Act provide that each of the three largest Political Groups on a relevant authority is entitled to have one Political Assistant, provided that they have at least 10% of the members of the authority. In Kent County Council's case, the Reform UK and Liberal Democrat Groups would currently qualify for a Political Assistant.

## 2. The Role of Political Assistants

- a) The role of Political Assistants is to undertake research and provide support to members of Political Groups in the discharge of any of their functions as elected members of the Council. They are 'politically restricted' posts. However, as set out in government guidance<sup>1</sup>:
  - I. "Political advisers are, however, permitted to speak to the public with the intention of affecting support for a political party, but their actions must not give the impression that they are acting as the representative of the political party."
  - II. "Political advisers are also able to publish or cause to be published written work or other material intended to affect public support for a political party, but they must not give the impression that the publication is authorised by the political party."

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<sup>1</sup> [Local authority political assistants guidance - GOV.UK](#)

- b) Section 9(1) of the Act provides that unlike other Council employees, regard may also be had to their political affiliations and political activities prior to their appointment and this can be taken into account as part of the recruitment process.

### **3. Other Considerations**

- a) Delegated powers and decision making (whether Executive or Non-Executive) cannot be conferred on Political Assistants and no other officer of the council can be required to work under the direction of a person holding a Political Assistant post, unless they are providing them with secretarial or clerical services.
- b) Each post will be filled from time to time in accordance with the wishes of the Political Group entitled to appoint the Political Assistant.
- c) The legislation requires that certain provisions relating to Political Assistants are included in the Standing Orders of the Council. It is proposed in the recommendations to delegate to the Monitoring Officer the authority to make the necessary consequential amendments to the Constitution.
- d) In addition to constitutional changes, additional operational governance will need to be developed including the job description, the involvement of Political Groups in any recruitment, attendance at council meetings, management arrangements and a protocol for how political assistants would work with other Officers. Given her accountabilities under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is recommended that responsibility for carrying out this exercise is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups entitled to appoint a Political Assistant.

### **4. Recommendation**

County Council is asked to:

- a. APPROVE the establishment of Political Assistant posts for qualifying Political Groups in accordance with section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
- b. DELEGATE authority to the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary consequential amendments to the Constitution;
- c. AUTHORISE the Chief Executive to appoint Political Assistants in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance and for her to develop and agree a local protocol in relation to Political Assistants, incorporating a job description and salary for the role, in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups who qualify for appointment of a Political Assistant; and
- d. AUTHORISE the Corporate Director for Finance to identify the options for funding the roles for 2025/26 and to agree the most appropriate funding source, in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups who qualify for appointment of a Political Assistant.

**From:** Christine Palmer - Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

Christine McInnes - Interim Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

**To:** County Council – 18 December 2025

**Subject:** Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:**

This is the Corporate Parenting Annual Report for 2025. The report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 9 December, where it was noted and endorsed.

The report is presented to County Council for consideration and noting by all Members.

**Recommendation(s):**

County Council is asked to:

- (a) **NOTE** the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025.
  - (b) **NOTE** the responsibilities as Corporate Parents, to be a champion for our children and care experienced adults.
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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Corporate Parenting Annual Report was first requested in 2018 by the Corporate Parenting Panel, to be written annually for the elected members, to detail the work of the services and the support Kent County Council provide to our children and young people in care.
- 1.2 The report details the corporate parenting responsibilities for Kent County Council staff, elected members and partner agencies and is a summary of the work undertaken during the full year period for 2025.
- 1.3 Our annual report provides an overview of the role and work of our key Corporate Parenting services:
  - Kent Fostering including the Kinship Service
  - Adoption Partnership *Southeast*
  - Participation and Engagement Team
  - 18+ Care Leavers Service including the Supported Accommodation Service, Kent Supported Homes
  - Total Placement Service

## 2. Legal implications

- 2.1 Corporate Parenting is a statutory responsibility as defined under The Children and Social Work Act (2017). Kent County Council are ambitious for our children and young people and committed to providing them the best possible opportunities to thrive and reach their full potential whilst they are in our care.

## 3. Conclusions

- 3.1 Being a corporate parent is a joint responsibility for all Kent County Council staff, elected members and partner agencies and we welcome support from the Corporate Parenting Panel to achieve this. All elected members are encouraged to show their support as a corporate parent by championing for our children and young people and meeting them directly through attending our participation events throughout the year.

### Recommendation(s):

County Council is asked to:

- (a) **NOTE** the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025.
- (b) **NOTE** the responsibilities as Corporate Parents, to be a champion for our children and care experienced adults.

## 5. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025.

## 6. Contact details

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# FOSTER FOR KENT

Adoption  
Partnership  
South East



## Corporate Parenting Annual Report



2025



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## Message from the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services: Christine Palmer



Welcome to the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025 which highlights the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and our services to children in care and care experienced adults.

As the new Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, I strongly support and endorse the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel. Officers, elected members and partner agencies play an important role, in providing the best possible care and safeguarding all children and young people who are looked after by Kent County Council.

In June 2025, newly elected members received an induction on Corporate Parenting Services and what it means to be a good corporate parent. As the lead member I have enjoyed meeting the children in care and our care leavers, at a variety of activity days and celebrating their achievements at the Virtual School Kent Award Ceremonies. Many of the children and young people in our care have faced challenges in their early life and all members of the Corporate Parenting Panel share the ambition that they get the best possible support to go on to live happy, successful and independent lives. I am proud of all our young people, and it is a privilege to work with them. I would like to thank the Officers, Members and especially our young people for their outstanding contribution to the work of the Panel.

## Message from the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting: Caroline Smith



It is with great pleasure I introduce our 2025 Annual Report for the corporate parenting services at Kent County Council. I am very proud of the 1,966 children and young people in our care and the 2,039 young adults who are care experienced. Over the last year, it has been an absolute privilege to join the services to celebrate children, young people and our staff's achievements at a variety of activity days, award ceremonies, conferences and service days. We continue to be aspirational for our children and young people and support them in every way we can, to be the best corporate parents we can be.

The Local Government Reform will see national changes to the way children in care and care experienced adults are supported. Kent County Council joined other Local Authorities to work together to address the national shortage of foster carers and other types of local care provision for children in care. In 2025, Kent County Council successfully opened both small residential children's homes and supported accommodation for our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children through the Reception and Safe Care Services. The 18+ Care Leavers Service developed and registered with Ofsted the Kent Supported Homes, our in-house service offering supported accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds in a family environment. The Kent Fostering Service embedded the Kinship Service, developed to assess and support kinship arrangements to ensure children can be cared for within their birth family or local community wherever it is safe to do so.

# About Us

The role of the Corporate Parenting panel is to lead on, and ensure, the corporate parenting roles and responsibilities of the council are being met. A county councillor cabinet member chairs the panel, this position is currently held by Pamela Williams. It is the responsibility of all members, not just the lead members for children's services, to be a corporate parent by ensuring our children receive the right support to enable them to reach their full potential. At Kent County Council, we take our moral duty as well as our statutory responsibilities to our children and young people seriously. We will continue to strive to improve our services so that our children and young people can experience independent and fulfilling lives by providing safe and nurturing care. Good corporate parents, just like all good parents, need to understand and know what is happening to their children and young people. In Kent, this means continuing our improvement journey in ensuring the information that all agencies collect about children in care and care leavers is used to the best advantage, sharing information with each other appropriately. Performance data for children in care and care leavers are reported to the corporate parenting panel for scrutiny, oversight and future work planning to help ensure improved management of performance and outcomes delivered by our services as well as ensuring our children are not disadvantaged by their characteristics or background.

Kent County Council (KCC) works to be the best corporate parent to our children and young people by following these key principles:

- To act in the best interest and promote the physical, mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people to gain access to, and make the best use of, the services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people.
- To ensure those children and young people are safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships, education, and workplace.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Our corporate parenting panel and corporate parenting services are overseen by the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting, Caroline Smith, and comprise of four key services: Kent Fostering including the Kinship Service, Adoption Partnership Southeast (APSE), Total Placement Service (TPS) and 18+ Care Leavers Service which includes our in house supported accommodation service Kent Supported Homes.

The services form part of the overall countywide services for children and young people, reporting to the Director for Children's Countywide Services, Kevin Kasaven. Corporate parenting works closely with Virtual School Kent (VSK), children's early help and social work teams, health, education, youth justice and our key partners including the Young Lives Foundation (YLF) and Kent Association of Foster Carers (KAFC).

Our services report into the corporate parenting panel who meet six times per year and, alongside elected members and staff officers, the panel has a wide range of independent members including foster carers, the designated nurse for children in care, Chair of Kent Housing Group and YLF.

Following a previous challenge children and young people wanted to attend panel without having to miss out on their education, we ensure some panel dates are planned around school holidays to facilitate this. In June 2025, Corporate Parenting completed an induction to the services, for the newly elected members, with a new Chair, Pamela Williams, being elected in July 2025.

Members of the panel are invited to attend celebration events, award ceremonies and activity days to meet the children and young people for whom they are a corporate parent. In 2025, we held a wide variety of events to celebrate. Our children and young people's corporate parenting panel includes a cabinet member update.

## Performance Scorecard

The scorecard is presented regularly to enable the panel to monitor key targets and statutory requirements. For 2025, targets were in the majority maintained within an amber or green rating across the key performance indicators. However, the increased numbers of new arrivals of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children significantly impacted upon three areas, where performance is within the red, below the required target.

- **% of Initial Health Assessment competed within 20 working days of child entering care.**  
The health target for completion of the Initial Health Assessment within the statutory timescale is below the required target due to the demand in numbers of newly arrived unaccompanied children. Performance for this target is monitored monthly with health colleagues and there should start to be an improvement over the winter months, as demand decreases.
- **Placements within 20 miles of child's home address.**  
The increased numbers of new arrivals of unaccompanied children under the age of 16, needing to be placed with foster carers has impacted upon availability for local children to be placed with foster carers within 20 miles of their local community. However, this target started to improve as the new children's homes and supported accommodation for unaccompanied children opened during 2025. The target is also impacted upon by children placed in residential homes outside of the county, particularly for disabled children needing a specialist provision. The large numbers of other Local Authority children being placed into Kent based residential homes and Independent Fostering Agencies impacts upon the local market and Kents ability to place local children within their local community.
- **% of Care Leavers in employment, education or training (aged 18-21 years)**  
The increase in unaccompanied asylum young adults transferring into the 18+ Care Leavers service without confirmed immigration status has impacted on our performance of young adults within education, training or employment (ETE). Without status, young unaccompanied adults are unable to legally work. During 2025, the availability of ESOL education courses reduced meaning performance in this area is impacted. The service have two specialist ETE workers who are focusing on improvement in this area alongside working closely with the Home Office to address the back log of asylum applications for care leavers. The performance has shown some improvement and is now within the amber rating and continues to be above the national average for ETE.



# Virtual School Kent's Participation and Engagement Team

We continued to work to provide engaging and enriching opportunities for children and young people who are in receipt of services from Children's Social Care. Our team works to help empower these children and young people, to have their views and opinions heard and acted upon both within their individual care planning, and to help make positive changes to service design and delivery. We worked to ensure there is a wide range of participatory opportunities available to children and young people who come under the umbrella of corporate parenting.

Our team currently includes six apprentices, all of whom have lived experience of being in care, fostering or adoption. They are working towards level two and three qualifications and are supported to be successful by a small team of participation officers. In the last year, we promoted care experienced members of the team who originally joined the team as level two apprentices, these team members successfully completed qualifications and worked hard to attain permanent progression roles in the team.

## About Our Councils

Our children and young people's council groups continue to have strong memberships with attendance from a wide range of children and young people who live throughout the county.

We continue to focus on making our council groups as accessible as possible, as we recognise not everyone is able or wanting to travel to attend our main meetings in person. We feel that to appeal to as wide a range of our children and young people as possible, it is important to offer different ways for children and young people to feel included and share their views, opinions and experiences.

All our councils now offer a range of opportunities for young people to engage if they cannot attend the main meetings and we embedded a 'we will come to you in a way that suits you' approach to our engagement work. In addition to running our main meetings, children and young people can meet with members of the team on an individual or small group basis, both in person and virtually. This approach was received positively by children, young people and by their parents and foster carers and we can evidence we have a wider network of young people who are now engaging with us.

## Our Councils

- The Young Adult Council (YAC) is for care experienced young people aged 16-25-years-old.
- The Young Adult Council Extra (YACE) for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people aged 16-25-years-old.
- Our Children and Young People's Council (OCYPC) is for young people in care aged 11-16-years-old.
- Our Children and Young Peoples Council Extra (OCYPCE) is an outreach group for care experienced young people aged 7-16-years-old who are unable to make the main meetings.
- The Super Council is for Children in Care aged 7-11-years-old.
- The Adoptables is for adopted young people aged 11-18-years-old.
- The Young Persons Reference Group (YPRC) is for adopted young people aged 16+.
- Children Who Care (CWC) for the sons and daughters of foster carers aged 7+.
- Our Children and Young Peoples Council making a great and important change (OCYPC MAGIC) is for young people with special educational needs (SEND) and disabilities (adopted, in care or with a social worker) aged 11-18-years-old.

## The Young Adult Council and Young Adult Council Extra



This year, our YAC continued to grow, welcoming new members. The group meets monthly in Maidstone and Ashford; engages in a wide range of discussions and activities designed to empower young people and amplify their voices. A variety of topics are discussed such as:



- Members sharing practical advice on saving money, including the use of loyalty schemes and cost-cutting strategies for entertainment, travel, takeaways and food shopping. Their insights were turned into social media posts to help others make informed decisions.
- Our group explored how to extend corporate parenting by increasing job opportunities, offering skill days, providing training for professionals and tackling stigmas.
- Members compared branded products with supermarket essentials, discovering which items offered the best value without compromising on quality. The activity helped them make smarter shopping decisions.
- Our group reviewed the participation strategy, celebrating its strengths while offering constructive feedback to improve accessibility and inclusivity.
- They contributed to a consultation with John Lewis, sharing ideas on how to better support care leavers entering employment. Their input was captured in a graphic and shared with the company to inform recruitment strategies.
- A short first-aid course was taken part in, learning essential skills such as treating burns, allergic reactions, cuts, CPR, the recovery position and responding to choking incidents.
- Mental health was also explored and the support available to young people, while identifying community events and access to leisure facilities as key drivers of positive wellbeing.

YACE saw increased engagement through regular coffee mornings. These informal drop-in sessions helped build stronger relationships between the team and unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

Throughout the year, both groups had the opportunity to take part in a range of social events including a Christmas party, escape room challenges, international cooking experience and a summer BBQ. These events help create opportunities for connections, celebration and fun.

## Super Council, Our Children and Young Peoples Council and Our Children and Young Peoples Council Extra

It was another exciting year for the Super Council, OCYPC and OCYPCE, as they welcomed both established members and new faces to the groups. In previous years, we continued to involve young people who cannot attend the main meetings by running additional individual meetings. These are either virtual or in person to ensure as many young people as possible can share their views and opinions about being in care in Kent.

This year also marked the inaugural Regional Children in Care Council with other Children in Care Councils from across the Southeast. Groups from Medway, Bracknell, Windsor and Maidenhead, Reading and West Sussex joined our OCYPC in Maidstone to celebrate the power of young people sharing their voices. We were also joined by Become who worked with the young people on their *#GoneTooFarCampaign*, and the care leaders who led a session called *Power to Lead*, which looked at resilience, overcoming barriers and how to share messages positively and authentically. This year, the three groups discussed several topics including:

- **Young person's participation strategy:** Young people made suggestions about what this strategy should contain and how it should be presented.
- **Re-launching the Kent Pledge:** Members evaluated the current pledge cards and made suggestions about how to update and improve them. They also suggested ways to ensure more young people and workers are aware of the Kent pledge and a promise Kent County Council makes to its children and young people in care. These suggestions included more training for

workers and creating a film. The latter of which is currently been worked on, whilst Kent County Council's communications team are redesigning the pledge cards. This forms the basis of a new challenge issued by the Children in Care Councils.

- **Children and young people's feedback:** Our members met with Kent County Council's practice development and analytics teams to evaluate some new qualitative feedback questions which has been devised for children and young people to answer. Their advice was used to improve the guide that sits alongside the questions, with a particular focus on language and how to make children feel comfortable when speaking about their experiences.
- **A new survey for children in care:** Our young people discussed the possibility of a new annual survey to ascertain young people in care's feelings around the support they receive.
- **Direct work with children:** Council members produced a document detailing their advice for social workers undertaking direct work with children. They spoke about how staff could engage and support young people as well as how the environment can impact this work. Their views were brought together and added to Kent Procedures Online. It will also form part of social workers' inductions in North Kent.
- Some members of our council groups also joined us for a focus group to help Coram Voice write a letter to the then Children and Families Minister. They made suggestions for what she and her department should prioritise for children in care and care leavers, which included mental health support and improved preparation for adulthood.

## Children Who Care

Our CWC council is a group for the children of Kent County Council's foster carers aged 7-15-years-old. We have a well-established group of regular members who actively share their views and help shape improvements to fostering services across the county.

- In October, members helped to develop the young person's participation strategy, making suggestions on the content and the importance of this document for children of foster carers. During this meeting, they also worked together to design thank you cards for the fostering review team. These cards are shared with other children whose families foster, as a gesture of appreciation.
- In previous sessions, members expressed they sometimes feel less supported than other members of their household. In response, the February meeting focused on creating a guide for fostering teams, outlining what children of foster carers need from their fostering social workers. The group worked thoughtfully on both the content and design of this guide.
- During foster care fortnight, members explored the theme: the power of relationships. They discussed qualities of being a good friend and how they can apply their ideas with the children who their parents look after. They also designed digital flyers including their ideas from the meeting, to be shared on social media to promote foster care fortnight.
- They fed back on the annual feedback forms for the children of foster carers. They suggested ideas on how these can be improved and highlighted barriers to increase uptake in the completion of these forms.



## The Adoptables

Our adoptables group has a well-established cohort of young people, most of whom attended regularly and consistently throughout the year. We also welcomed some new members. Back in October, the young people made a short film about the group, why young people attend and the sort of agenda items discussed. The film was shown at the Adoption England Annual Conference in Leeds. The film was shown to professionals, young people and parents to promote our young people's group.

During their October meeting, members reviewed the young person's participation strategy. We looked at if the current content needed updating. The young people also reviewed what our

participation team's goals and priorities should be, along with feedback from our other children and young people's councils, this helped shaped our new, updated young person's participation strategy.

Our young people expressed their views on wanting to have some of the adoptable meetings to focus on independence and preparing for adulthood. Over the February, April and May meetings, we concentrated on aspects of independence and well-being that may help them in the future.

Several young people spoke about their experiences of bullying in school. We invited KOOTH, a young people's mental health support charity, to talk to our adoptables members. KOOTH spoke about relationships with peers and provided signposting to other advice and support.

The independence programme continued in May when our young people got together to make a three-course meal. Our young people made the meal from scratch, with supervision, and then all ate together. The day gave the chance for young people to show off their cooking skills, social skills and a chance to taste all their hard work.

## Our Children and Young People's Council MAGIC

OCYPC MAGIC is our newest council group and is successfully running for two years now. It is open to young people aged 11–18-years-old, who are in care, adopted, have a social worker or those living with special educational needs and disabilities. This year, the young people were involved in helping shape the new revised version of the young people's participation strategy. They were particularly keen to share their views on this topic.

They had the opportunity to share their views on what a safe space looks like and what makes a good worker. Their valuable feedback helped the commissioning of the new therapeutic support service and their feedback was gratefully received, being included in the specification for the new service.

They also focussed on becoming independent and developing life skills. We asked our young people what challenges they face as they grow and mature. They shared what they would like to become more independent. We listened to their views very carefully and tailored our future meetings to meet their needs.

Our young people participated in a cooking workshop, being given support to choose the appropriate food for a recipe and practise following instructions, creating a delicious three course meal. They undertook a driving lesson at Young Drivers to help them follow road signs, directions and become confident enough to move on to their own future driving lessons, and we all travelled to London by train to visit the London aquarium. We spoke about how to travel safely and money management.



**Council Memberships** for our  
children and young people  **THE ADOPTABLES**

Super  
council

16

OCYPC

37

YAC

26

YACE

30

Adoptables and  
reference  
group

14

CWC

15

OCYPC MAGIC

18

**Total = 156**



Activity days for our children and young people remain our main way to introduce ourselves and get to know them. By engaging with them in fun and interactive sessions, we also get lots of informal opportunities to speak with them allowing them to be open about their own experiences, both positive and negative. Many of our council members are recruited through meeting them at activity days.

Days remain varied and are led by suggestions from children and young people. The last year included visits to Dover, Hever and Leeds Castles, the Marlowe Theatre pantomime, escape rooms and to the Big Cat Sanctuary. Plus a range of outdoor pursuits, art activities, wildlife parks and horse riding. We look to provide opportunities to children and young people to try things they have never had the opportunity to do before.

## Engagement Work

**Children in care councils' countywide event:** At the end of 2024, all three of the children in care councils come together for a countywide meeting. Several of their corporate parents attended, including Kevin Kasaven, Caroline Smith, and Stephen Gray on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Agenda items included devising the content of the young person's participation strategy, the group discussed what is important to them and what support they would like from their corporate parents to have or achieve these things. Young people identified lots of different things important to them with several themes standing out. These included:

- Seeing family.
- Opportunities to express themselves and be heard.
- Good foster carers.
- Social workers who stay.
- Their education.
- Understanding their own lives and what is happening in them.
- Having technology, including phones.
- Their pets.

They then thought about how their corporate parents could support them, whether this was their own social workers or more senior staff like directors. They told us corporate parents should:

- Arrange family time promptly.
- Help with their education and believe in them.
- Listen to them and allow them to express their views.
- Trust them and include them in decisions that are made about their lives, allowing them to explore options and supporting their choices.
- Social workers should stay longer and explain why they are leaving if they do go.
- Support them to get the things they think they need to have happy, healthy and positive lives.
- Treat them like you would treat your own child.
- Celebrate them more so they feel people believe in them.
- Support them to be able to have private conversations with their social workers.

**Young people attending the Corporate Parenting Panel:** In February 2025, our team were pleased to support five young people to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel. These young people shared their views about being in care in Kent with panel members and what they felt the panel should prioritise and focus on to ensure care is a positive experience for children. The wide range of suggestions for their corporate parents included:

- Additional support for children coming into and leaving care.

- More support around identity and culture.
- Improved mental health support.

All five of the young people committed their time to preparing for the panel and spoke eloquently and articulately with panel members, generously sharing their lived experience. We were incredibly proud of them.

**Young reviewers:** Our team are working with practice development officers for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people. They are creating a young reviewers programme, to support the quality assurance framework and inspection readiness for the local authority's children's homes and supported accommodation. This will include children's homes and supported accommodation utilised to accommodate unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people, Kent Supported Homes and overnight short breaks homes.

We are working with our care experienced team members to co-design how young reviewers, often called young inspectors, can support quality assurance practice inquiry. This involves reviewing and evaluating the quality of support provided by Kent County Council supported accommodation and children's home providers, to understand the experiences of the children living within each setting and ensuring compliance with statutory regulations. Young reviewers will form part of a review team which includes colleagues from the safeguarding, professional standards and quality assurance unit. Research shows young reviewers bring value to a local authority and individual services:

- Ensures services are listening to children and young people when they make decisions that affect their lives, contributing to their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Services better meet the needs of children and young people.
- Ofsted inspectors value meaningful young reviewers.
- Improved communication with services.
- Young reviewers' activity is a source of valuable evidence.
- Young reviewers have new opportunities to develop widely applicable skills.

We are initially developing this work by training and supporting our apprentices to carry out this work. In the long term, we aim to broaden the scope of young reviewers to include other care experienced young people.

**Listen up training sessions:** Following the successful launch of Listen Up! by members of our children in care councils at Corporate Parenting Panel's takeover day in July 2024, the training session was rolled out throughout the Children, Young People and Education directorate. This was delivered by our apprentice team on behalf of the young people, it continues to reinforce the difference active listening and positive participation in decision making can make to children and young people.

It was delivered to services, such as Virtual School Kent, safeguarding, professional standards and quality assurance, Maidstone children and family's team and the front door service, whilst a shortened version formed part of the practice framework roadshows.

## Feedback from staff, foster carers and parents

*"My little one had a great time in and outside. He tried to engage with the other children who were all very accommodating. The staff were all friendly and chatty and helpful." "We had a lovely time and will definitely be booking on to more in the future. Thank you to everyone that made it possible." "The amazing Participation Team and the sense of safety that our daughter has every time she has contact with them. It's really precious. Also the opportunity to meet with friends from the adoption community and to see our APSE mentor again! Thank you so much Amy and the whole team. You are truly remarkable and precious."*

*"Can I say another big thank you to all the staff that work so hard at the Christmas party again. All our children love going and you do so much and really think of their individual needs."*

*"Thank you all so much for being brave and sharing your personal experiences - it is very difficult. The sharing of our own stories however to help others is so very important and impactful. We can change the lives of others through our difficult experiences, so again, thank you. I genuinely want to say that this is the best presentation and learning I have attended."*

# Corporate Parenting Events organised by our participation and engagement team

## Summer Picnic

In June, our participation team, in collaboration with Adoption Partnership Southeast, facilitated the much-loved annual summer picnic at the Malling School in East Malling. This event is designed for adopted children and their families to come together in a relaxed, fun-filled environment to connect with each other and with professionals from Adoption Partnership Southeast and our participation team and have fun.

This year's theme was *Once Upon a Picnic*, bringing a magical fairy tale twist to the day. Families enjoyed a wide range of themed activities, including fairy garden making, magic wand crafting, tie-dye creations, plus other arts and crafts. The families were also entertained by a magician throughout the day. Sensory play stations and a quiet indoor area were also available. We were thrilled to welcome 49 families from across the region with 164 attendees. It was a truly magical day, filled with laughter, creativity and community spirit.

## Christmas Parties

We facilitated two Christmas parties this year, one for adopted children and their families and one for children in care and their foster families. At both parties, there were opportunities for children to take part in festive arts and crafts, play a range of festive games, and take part in some sensory activities, as well as meet Santa Claus himself in his grotto and receive a small gift. The parties were a great opportunity for parents, carers and young people to connect, share stories and create memories.

## Awards Celebrations

In July, Virtual School Kent held their annual awards celebration to commend, recognise and celebrate the achievements of our young people in care who are 16 years old and above.

This year, we received a record number of nominations with over 350 young people being recognised for their achievements and 13 top award winners chosen by our judging panel. YAC members were also celebrated for their continued hard work and contributions.

Young people attended the awards celebration at Marleybrook House near Canterbury, accompanied by their foster carers, personal advisers or social workers. Everyone had a chance to receive their award, as well as enjoying a vintage funfair and food.

Later in the year in September, it was time for our second annual awards celebration at the PGL Grosvenor Hall Centre. This celebration recognises the great achievements and efforts of our children in care aged up to 16.

386 children who had been nominated for an award were invited to our celebration, along with their foster carer, support worker or social worker. 65 members of our children in care councils and members from our council for the children of foster carers were also celebrated and received an award to thank them for their contribution to our councils.

Both award events were supported by Richard Palmer, Chairman of Kent County Council, and members of the Corporate Parenting Panel including Christine Palmer and Pamela Williams.



# Photography

## Activity days





Council meetings



## 18+ Care Leavers Service

As of November 2025, we support 1,868 care experienced young people aged 18 up to 25 years old, along with 171 care experienced adults currently being supported by Adult Services. An additional 1,106 adults who are aged 21 up to 24 years old, have opted out from the extended personal advisor support after their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. This cohort of young people are entitled to opt-in or out for the extended personal advisor support up until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. We have a legal obligation to keep in touch at least once a year, but they can opt back in to access support at any time through our duty service.

Over the summer the service participated with a Children's Outcome Analysis (COA). This is a deep dive practice enquiry into the service. The subsequent report outlined several areas of strength and some areas for development, resulting in both heads of service and service managers pulling together an Action Plan for service improvement. This includes developing a bespoke Local Offer to care experienced young parents, to consider how we better support them.

## The Voice of Our Young People

During last year's annual care leavers week, we launched our 2024 care leavers survey, with the result from that being published in January 2025. The survey saw another increase in the number of care leavers responding and participating in the survey. With a total sample size of 852 young people returning their surveys, there was a majority of 67% rating their experience of the service with either four or five stars. For 2025, the month of November is dedicated nationally to "Care Leavers Month". There will be a range of participation and activity events to celebrate.

## Kent Supported Homes

Kent Supported Homes is our in-house Ofsted registered Supported Accommodation in a family environment. Hosts provide a home for young people aged 16-21 years, with support in their transition to independence and adulthood. The Quality Assurance Team supported the service with a Practice Enquiry over the summer as part of its preparation for its Ofsted inspection visit. The service developed an Action Plan in collaboration with the professional standards and quality assurance team. The delivery of which will ensure the service is Ofsted compliant in terms of the Supported Accommodation Regulations (2023).

## Developments and Initiatives

In July 2025, the service held a Summer Activity Day in collaboration with the University of Kent. The day was packed with a wide range of activities and sports and was supported by partner agencies and stakeholders which included the Young Lives Foundation, Kent Police, Kent Cricket, The Rees Foundation, the Local Family Hubs and many others.

**Care Leavers Joint Housing Protocol:** In July 2025, the service held a housing conference with colleagues from the 12 Local District Councils which focused on staff training and homelessness prevention. It launched the new Joint Protocol for care leavers agreed between Kent County Council and all 12 district councils.

**Christmas dinner:** Following on the previous years of a successful Christmas dinner for our young people in both South and East Kent, the project expanded to North and West Kent. This is to ensure no care experienced young adult is left alone on Christmas Day.

**Safeguarding training:** As a part of the learning programme, a service wide training on adult safeguarding was delivered with the support of the practice development team.

**Multi-agency working:** Training was delivered to staff, in collaboration with the Front Door Service, to ensure a holistic and robust multi-agency support gets provided by the professional involved, such as Social Workers and Personal Advisors, to parents who have a child in need of protection.

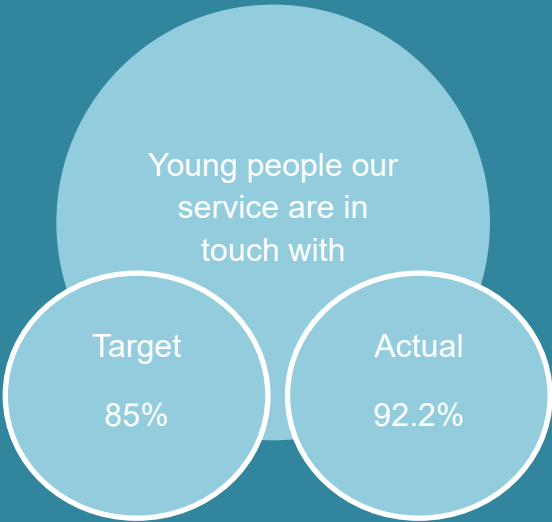
**Apprenticeships:** Our Care Leaver apprentice completed his qualification, receiving a merit. We wish him well in his future endeavours and now recruited two new apprentices for the service.

**Food banks:** Our food bank project was recognised at the National Leaving Care Bench Marking Forum annual awards and won the category Team of the Year 2024.

**Local Offer to care experienced parents:** We are in the process of developing a bespoke local offer for care experienced young people who are parents, to think about how, as a local authority, we can support them.

# Performance for those young people our service is in touch with

As of September 2025, according to the last corporate parenting score card published on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025





# Kent Fostering Service

The service has two Heads of Fostering, with one having an overall responsibility for the Kinship Service and the other leads on fostering for children in all other foster homes. Both are Agency Decision Makers for our fostering panels, alongside the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting.

As of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025, 650 children were looked after in 510 mainstream fostering households and a further 106 children were cared for in 81 kinship fostering households.

## Performance for 2025

Kent Fostering and Kinship Service achieved:

- A range of fostering families able to care for a diverse range of children including those with disabilities, parent/s and child(ren), children requiring care in an emergency, sibling groups and long term placed unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- 40 fostering beds for newly arrived unaccompanied asylum-seeking children requiring emergency care prior to their transfer under the national transfer scheme. Whereas this did have some impact on our ability to place non-unaccompanied asylum-seeking children requiring a foster family within 20 miles of their local community, the opening of Kent's children's homes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and the regular review of capacity and demand for foster carers for this cohort of children, allowed for a reduction in the number of retained beds and allowed more of our foster carers to be considered for children whose families live in Kent.
- Step Across to fostering achieved for seven children and young people who were ready to move from residential care back into a family home, achieving a budget saving of **£1,505,680.47**.
- Support for young people to remain with their foster family under a Staying Put arrangement.
- A permanent and stable workforce of skilled and experienced team managers, fostering social workers and social work assistants able to provide reflective and thought-provoking supervision and specialist support with behaviour management and trauma informed reparenting.
- Direct intervention and support to children in care where their named social worker was unavailable or the children's teams were experiencing staffing capacity challenges, for example: moving children between foster families, exploring concerns or complaints raised by children, direct and individual work with children in care.
- Access to therapeutic fostering support through a specialist team including therapists to support provision of trauma informed care and promote placement stability.
- The skills to foster preparatory training, including interviews with potential applicants by our Virtual School Kent apprentices.
- A variety of support groups including those for carers looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children under five years old, with complex needs, disabilities, and adolescents. This included evening support groups to encourage the second and linked foster carers who often work full time outside of their fostering role to attend.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion groups to encourage conversation to promote a fair and inclusive fostering service where all carers and children feel a valued part of our community.
- Fostering service mornings, one of which focussed on the needs of disabled children and how those needs can be met through quality foster care.
- Training, support and development standard workshops to support new carers in their first year of fostering to complete this regulatory requirement and annual review workshops to support all foster carers to understand and complete their evidence of continued capacity and capability to foster.
- Fostering family events which included easter eggs hunts, summer and Christmas parties and pantomimes to help develop the fostering community, create a sense of belonging and build networks around carers and children.
- Wellbeing walks to promote positive mental health for foster carers and increase their resilience in caring for children who have experienced trauma.
- The race equalities matters tea break trailblazer logo continues to feature on our website following the award going to our service in 2024. This continues to support our reputation as an

inclusive fostering service where people can have confidence we listen and respond to the voice and feelings of carers about race equality and continually take steps to tackle this.

We represented at eleven community events throughout 2024 and 2025, including the Kent Police staff and family open days and pride, which generated 25% of all enquiries. Although most of this number already signed up for a virtual information event via advertising on our website and social media.

New roller banners with up to date and diverse imagery continued to be used at these events and towards the end of the reporting year new merchandise including Foster for Kent bunting, t-shirts, pens and trolley tokens were produced, to help increase our visibility and create mementos for people to take away and think “*Kent fostering first*” if considering becoming a foster carer.



We advertised and promoted specific campaigns to care for disabled children and children needing to move from residential care to a family environment in community magazines such as Kelsi, for education professionals, a special educational needs magazine and parish magazines.

A total of 664 schools were e-mailed requesting information about our service was included in their parent mail. Although schools did not always confirm whether they had done so, 13 enquiries were made from people who referenced the school flyer as their reason for making contact, with three of those enquiries resulting in an application.

Our **Refer a Friend** scheme continues to operate, enabling current foster carers to receive a financial incentive if they recommended applicants to our service and went on to be fully approved. In 2024-2025, a record number of 33 refer a friend forms were received, with fourteen of these, 42%, during July, August, and September when payments for successful referrals increased from £500 to £1,000. Of the thirty-three recommendations, twenty-four were sent applications and twenty-one of these were returned, giving a conversion rate of 88%.

Achieving a culturally matched foster home for children remains a priority, as the number of children in care from black backgrounds increased in 2024 to 2025 by nearly 2%, now at 7.8% of the child in care population. However, carer representation from black and mixed backgrounds remains low at 6% of our foster carer community.



We will continue to land key campaigns throughout the year focused on this demographic, such as black history month, and will continue to adopt an always on approach when landing content. This includes co-creating campaigns with our Black, Asian and global majority foster carers ensuring their voices and lived experiences shape storytelling content across the year.

We will connect with local churches and community centres in Dartford, Gravesham and other diverse areas where there is a significant representation of communities from the global majority. Inclusive messaging will continue to be embedded throughout the year, beyond heritage campaigns, and reflected across all touchpoints, including information events, digital ads and printed materials. Focus will be on targeting and building strategic partnerships with cultural organisations, community influencers and ethnic faith leaders to extend our visibility and trust within diverse communities.

## Recruiting and Marketing

Our recruitment strategy continued to prioritise the use of digital platforms to advertise our service because this remained the most effective way in which to increase our visibility. Facebook generated 28k followers, LinkedIn 40k, Twitter 86k and Instagram 8.5k. Despite an increase in our social media reach and specifically Facebook to 665.4k people and a total of 27.5k link clicks on content, enquiries to become a foster carer via social media accounted for 4% of all enquiries.

Whereas this was an increase of 2% on the previous year, this informed a decision to increase the number of in person events that were attended, to try to engage at a more local level with those communities who might have people who wish to foster.

By the end of the reporting year, 794 people subscribed to receive communications from us using the new e-shot platform, which was an increase of seventy-nine from last year's usual e-mail marketing streams. The platform allowed us to target our messaging and communications with enquirers to our service and opted in to hear from us, and could unsubscribe, but who were not necessarily ready to make an application, maintaining their engagement and reducing the likelihood of them making an enquiry or application to foster with an independent fostering agency.

**TV, radio and film:** We continued our partnership with the council advertising network to collaborate and commission a film about Fostering called *Everything* which was then featured on our website and Facebook page.

**Information events:** Following analysis of previous years information event feedback forms from attendees, this year saw the introduction of a new presentation format with enhanced content through the addition of videos highlighting the foster carer award ceremony and the council advertising network fostering film *Everything*. In collaboration with the Virtual School Kent's participation team, the voice of children in care through letters and pictures about their experiences of fostering and what makes a good foster carer, were added to the presentation. Questions and answers for foster carers and staff continued to be an integral part of the events.

This was the fifth year of holding information events virtually, with approximately one event per month, the majority of which took place in the evening and some at a weekend. Across the year, 308 people signed up to an event and 144 attended, resulting in a conversion rate of 47% and only 1% lower than last year. Of those who signed up, 105 were sent applications and 68 of these were returned with a conversion rate of 65% and of those who attended, 69 were sent applications and 53 were returned with a conversion rate of 77%. The conversion being applications sent vs applications returned, the average overall for this period being 43%. We continued to see a higher number of applications returned where enquiries had attended an information event.

**Enquiries:** We saw a 4% increase in people contacting us to express their interest in becoming a foster carer compared to the previous year, from 736 enquiries to 764 despite the national downward trend, and therefore involvement in Local Authority Fostering Southeast does appear to have boosted enquiry numbers. However, a reduction of 4% (315) in the number of initial enquiry forms completed, a decrease of 4% (305) in the number of application packs sent and a decrease of 10% (135) for applications received in comparison to last year, indicates the quality of enquiry was poorer than in previous reporting years.

## Learning and Development

We successfully held our annual foster carer conference, aligning with our 2024-2025 objective to provide new insights into working with and caring for children inclusively and encourage discussion about the impact of prejudice and discrimination.

The conference, titled *Fostering Inclusivity*, was led by Meera Spillett, a former Director of Children's Services, with 40 years of experience in the social care and health sectors, and had been in the care of Kent County Council herself as a child. A total of 164 foster carers and staff attended the conference where they engaged in sessions on intersectionality, labels, systemic racism, cultural competence and responding to discrimination. The feedback on the conference was positive, particularly regarding the course content, delivery and learning outcomes.



In line with our other learning and development objectives, we delivered a comprehensive foster carer training program, also available to our staff, and encouraged good and consistent practice. This continued to be informed by regular consultation with carers and staff through the county advisory board and ambassador group, as well as feedback from foster carer annual reviews and as a result new training courses for the reporting year were introduced as follows:

- Gaming and gambling awareness workshop.
- Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty (DOLs).
- Speech and language.
- Helping children understand how their body and brain respond to stress.
- ADHD and associated cognitive theories.
- Autistic masking and trauma response.
- Autism and anxiety.
- Meltdowns and shutdowns.
- Sensory processing disorder.
- Autism awareness difference not deficit.
- UEA moving to adoption model.
- Teens and social media webinar.
- Siblings in care.
- Transitions and healthy endings.



Another objective was for us to continue to ensure our training program included mandatory learning for all linked carers. This was achieved through providing all linked carers with the opportunity to attend safer care training, understanding trauma and safeguarding against radicalisation the prevent duty.

We endeavoured to facilitate maximum uptake by holding evening courses as well as daytime, as many linked carers work full time outside of their fostering role. During the reporting period, Safe care training evening sessions were conducted four times, with attendance ranging from 79% of those who had booked to attend (95% of the available spaces booked) in April to 93% in September (75% of the available spaces booked). Other evening training sessions introduced were:

- Autism awareness training - difference not deficit.
- Sensory processing disorder training.
- Meltdown and shutdowns.
- Autism and anxiety training.
- Autistic masking - a trauma response.
- ADHD and associated cognitive theories.
- Helping children understand how their body and brains respond to stress.

In December 2024, a new e-learning provider was commissioned, moving from a pay per licence program to a subscription program, which not only brought cost savings, but access to a wider range of training courses and a more user-friendly platform for carers to complete their learning. This was introduced in partnership with foster carers and staff who tested the new platform and some of the courses with excellent feedback being given. The platform also allowed the introduction of different e-learning for Kent Supported Homes hosts and the requirement to complete this is their period of assessment; namely:

- Adult safeguarding.
- Child sexual exploitation.
- Extremism radicalisation and terrorism.
- Safeguarding and safer care.

The year two core training for Kent Supported Homes hosts also changed in the reporting year. Based on feedback from hosts and accommodation officers to include *The Incredible Adolescent*

*Brain*, which replaced *Contextual Safeguarding*, this was moved to be part of the safeguarding and safe care e-learning module pre-approval.

## Local Authority Fostering Southeast

On the 1st of July 2024, the Local Authority Fostering Southeast virtual recruitment hub was launched and saw us partner with nineteen other local authorities in the Southeast and led by Bracknell Forest Council to deliver a centralised platform for fostering enquiries.



In this reporting year the hub received a total of 2,915 enquiries, 550 of which were for Kent (19%) and 823 of those enquiries were accepted (application sent), 215 of which were for Kent (26%). Since the middle of November 2024, potential carers were offered the opportunity to speak to a Local Authority Fostering Southeast ambassador, who are Kent foster carers interviewed, appointed and paid for their time through the hub. In just four months, fifty-four households took up the offer, with twenty-five going on to return an application and giving a conversion rate of 46%.



## Kent Association of Foster Carers

We continue to work closely with Kent Association of Foster Carers and its significance in attracting and retaining people to foster for Kent. The social committees in each foster support team area were well established with a clear hierarchy and accountability to fundraise for various local and countywide events for fostering families. The committees started to give thought to accessibility to the events for our disabled children and their foster carers. Two large 'summerfest' events were also held at Dreamland in Margate and Kent Life Maidstone, for which the charity reported overwhelming positive feedback.

## Mockingbird Programme

As part of the Department of Education's commitment to the recruitment and retention of foster carers and the services involvement with Local Authority Fostering Southeast, £160k was allocated to Kent to develop the Fostering Network's mockingbird programme in 2024-2025.

This program is an evidence-based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides, nurturing the relationships between children, young people and foster families and supporting them to build a resilient and caring community. Led by a hub home carer and liaison worker, the constellation community offers vital peer support and guidance alongside social activities, planned and emergency sleepovers and learning and development opportunities to strengthen relationships and permanence.

In September 2024, the service seconded an experienced fostering Social Work Assistant into the role of the Mockingbird Liaison worker, who throughout November 2024 to March 2026 will develop and



support three constellations in the South, East and West Kent fostering areas, where a total of 46 children living in 24 fostering households were supported. Early feedback from foster carers is the scheme making a significant difference to the children's overall stability within the foster home. Foster carers report feeling more supported, a greater sense of a fostering community and being able to call on a few other carers, alongside the main hub carer, at times of difficulty. The analytics team are supporting the service undertake an impact evaluation of the Mockingbird scheme, including surveys to foster carers and children participating in the programme. Results from the evaluation will be published in December 2025.

## Foster Carers 2025 Award Ceremony

Our annual awards took place on 14th November 2025 and included awards for Foster Carers, Kent Supported Homes hosts, Kinship carers and social care staff. A record 332 nominations were received across a wide range of categories with each winner receiving a certificate and hamper.

The event was attended by:

- The Leader of Kent County Council Linden Kemkaran
- Chairman of Kent County Council Richard Palmer
- Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services Christine Palmer
- Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel Pamela Williams
- Interim Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education Christinne McInnes



*Kent Fostering Award winners 2025*

# Kinship Service

Extensive work on the development of our new service began in the spring of 2023, following the Government's agenda outlined in their document *Stable Homes Built on Love*. As a Local Authority, the aim was for our service to support a reduction in the number of children becoming looked after, thus reducing the need for expensive care provisions and ensuring an ethos of children being cared for within their local network first, without the need for a home with a mainstream foster carer.

## Our Teams

We have three assessment teams consisting of three team managers and 18 social workers. These teams cover the whole of Kent as well as undertaking any assessments which are out of county. To provide support to our Kinship carers, we have a support team which is made up of one team manager, one senior practitioner and three fostering social workers. For family support for special guardians, we have the Special Guardianship and Therapeutic Support Team which includes a team of six social worker assistants to support special guardians as well as a team of four therapists who can offer therapeutic support to all carers as well as those on a Special Guardianship Order.

Our assessment teams' main function is the completion of viability assessments and full assessments for:

- Kinship foster carers, Connected Persons Regulations 24 and 25.
- Special Guardianship Orders.
- Child Arrangement Orders.

The support team provides supervision and support to kinship foster carers in line with the Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards. The role of the special guardian and therapeutic support team includes:

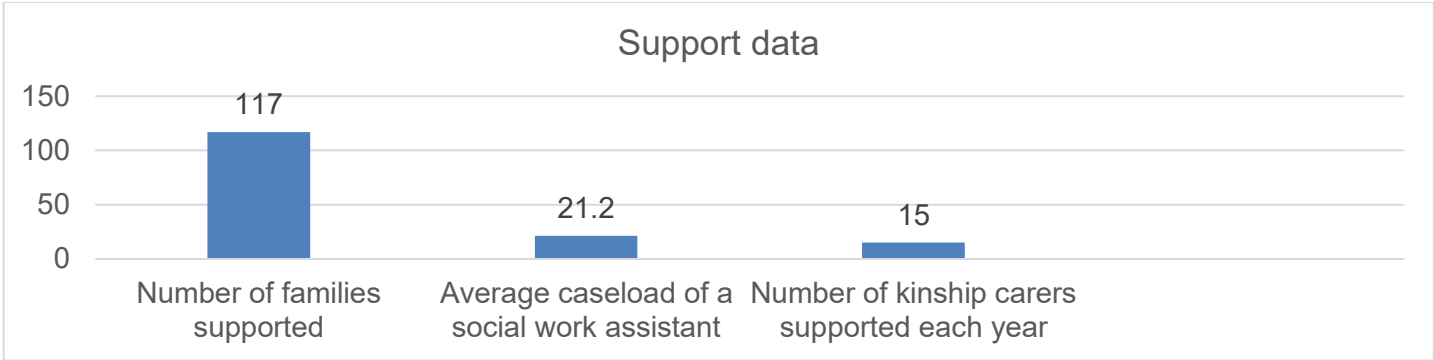
- Taking direct referrals from the Front Door Service, special guardians and professionals relating to children who are on a Special Guardianship Order.
- Offer support identified within existing Special Guardianship Order support plans.
- Taking kinship cases from early help teams where there is an active involvement of support to special guardians.
- Working with families who have an open referral to the adoption and special guardianship support fund.
- Working with the childrens allowance review team in supporting families with Special Guardianship Order allowances.
- Budget responsibility of this has moved to the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting with line management of childrens allowance review team moving to business support staff.
- The kinship support team manager making and overseeing applications to the adoption and special guardianship support fund.
- Special guardian support and therapeutic fostering team.

To offer support to families, a current Special Guardianship Order must be in place with the children the order relates to, still in residence. Support is given to families where the Special Guardianship Order was granted in Kent or was granted in another local authority but over three years ago and the family continue to live in Kent. The family must also feel they would benefit from any support offered and support is given with consent only. The support offered includes:

- A Social Work Assistant assessment of need.
- Support in negotiating educational needs including advice and guidance from Virtual School Kent.
- Training in relation to trauma and attachment.
- Training in relation to caring for teenagers.
- Access to a therapy service via the adoption and special guardianship support fund if the child was previously in care.
- Peer group support and coffee mornings.



The number of families being supported at any one time within the team increased from 55 at the beginning of April 2024 to 117 as of the 31st of March 2025, with over 190 families being supported overall. They have given additional support to kinship foster carers where possible to help stabilise family relationships and support carers to meet the National Minimum Standards.



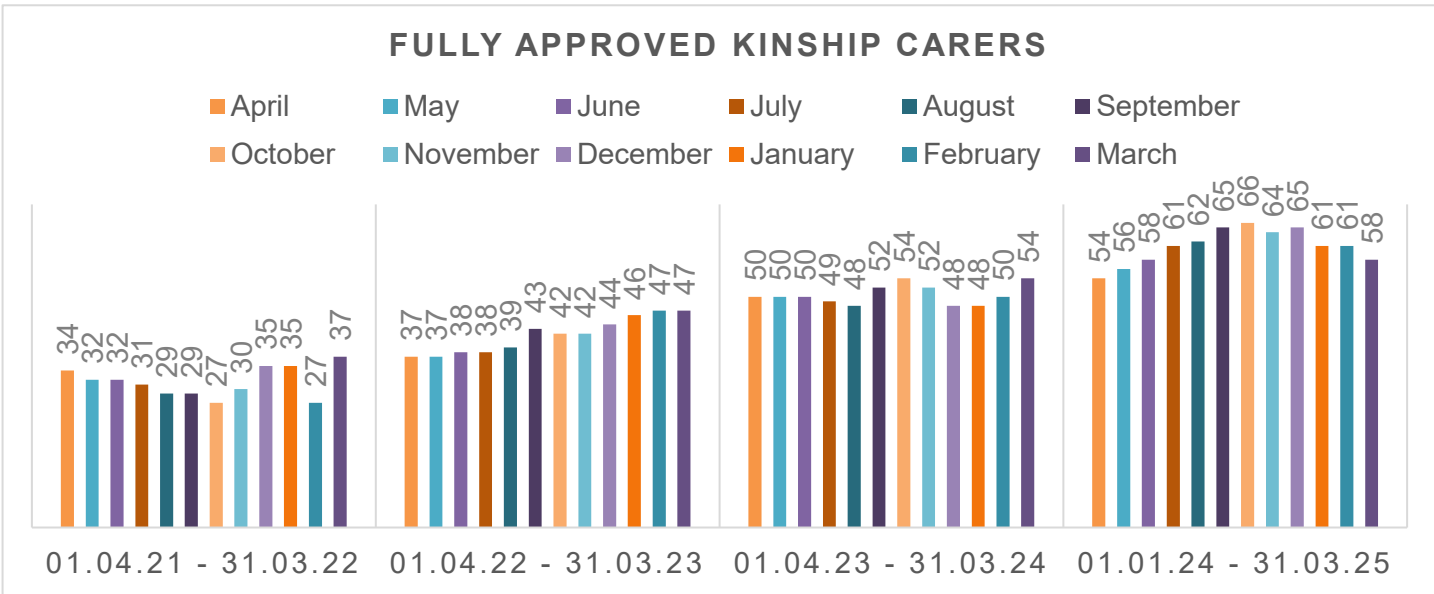
Our team are receiving referrals from professionals at a much earlier stage than crisis point which was the previous criteria. This is now affording the therapists the opportunity to offer a preventative service to foster carers and professionals rather than focussing on crisis intervention and becoming involved earlier, to achieve placement stability.

Kinship Foster Carers

There are currently 81 fully approved and temporarily approved kinship carer fostering households. The team facilitates face to face and virtual support groups for kinship carers, as well as a virtual support group for those who are still in the assessment process.

We observed a steady increase in the numbers of kinship foster carers over the past five years. This slow increase contrasts with the number of approvals overall per year which is significant. However, this is explained largely by the number of orders granted throughout the year and children returning home. Currently the percentage of temporarily approved and fully approved kinship foster carers to all foster carers in Kent fostering is 13.6%.

We introduced a new welcome information leaflet for new kinship carers which replaced the previous welcome letter sent following panel and it has lots of basic information and links such as how to claim mileage, out of hours information and contact details for the team. They collated information in collaboration with kinship carers about where you can access free legal advice and feedback from carers regarding what they have found helpful in their fostering journey which can now be shared with others.



There is close working with the Special Guardianship Order support team who joined several support groups to talk about the help and advice available in them to support carers who may be considering taking out an order on the children they are caring for.

In addition, there were several guest speakers at support groups including Foster Talk and Virtual School Kent. There is now a termly Kinship Fostering Newsletter which goes out to carers showing dates for future support groups and training, as well as information about events and resources. These go out two weeks prior to each school holiday to encourage carers to utilise the activities on offer through the holidays from both the Kent Association for Foster Carers, VSK and the area mainstream fostering support teams.

They continue to offer face to face support groups for South and West Kent in Ashford and North Kent near to Bluewater, and virtual groups in the daytime and evenings for all kinship carers. An additional face to face support group for East Kent in Thanet is being promoted to build local attendance. The **Kinship Local Offer** was published in October 2025.

### **Special Guardian Support and Virtual School Kent Promotion**

For kinship carer week the team held two joint webinars which highlighted the support both the Special Guardianship Order support and the therapeutic teams can offer, how to access this support and the importance of support to kinship carers.

Leaflets were designed for all parts of our service including information about the assessment process for kinship foster carer applicants, the support offered by the special guardianship support team and what families attending family group conferences can expect from these meetings.

### **Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund**

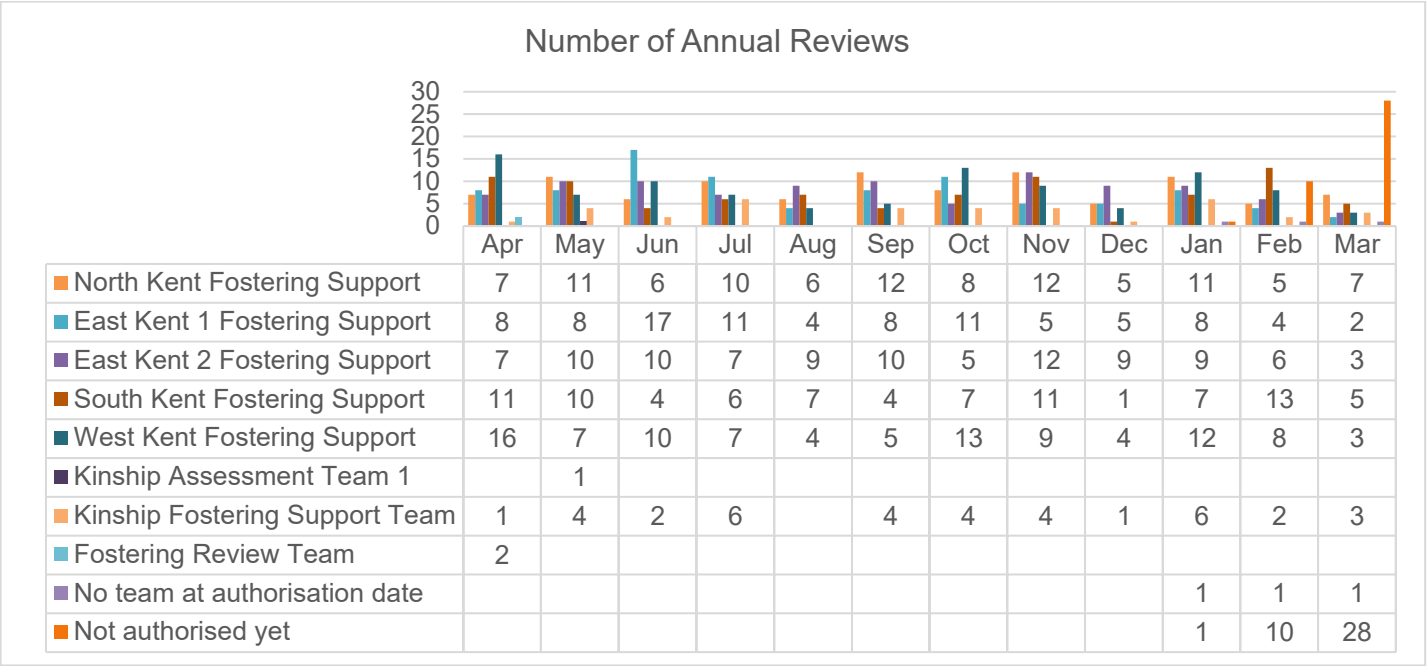
We apply to the adoption and special guardianship support fund directly when therapeutic services are identified to be beneficial to a special guardianship family. This is overseen by the team manager. When an application is successful, the adoption and special guardianship support fund agree funding to Kent County Council which the team uses to commission and pay agreed providers of therapeutic services. This ensures the right support for families at the right time. The total amount of funding successfully agreed for the year 2024-2025 totalled £107,102.36. This is a 564% increase from the previous year which totalled approximately £19,000.

### **Annual Review Statistics**

The annual review of foster carers is managed and conducted by the Fostering Review Team who provide an independent assessment of foster carers' suitability to continue to foster, a quality assurance function and opportunities for reflection, learning and development for foster carers and wider service. Alongside Annual Reviews, the team complete six-month follow-up calls for newly approved carers including Kinship foster carers, with 52 completed over the last year.

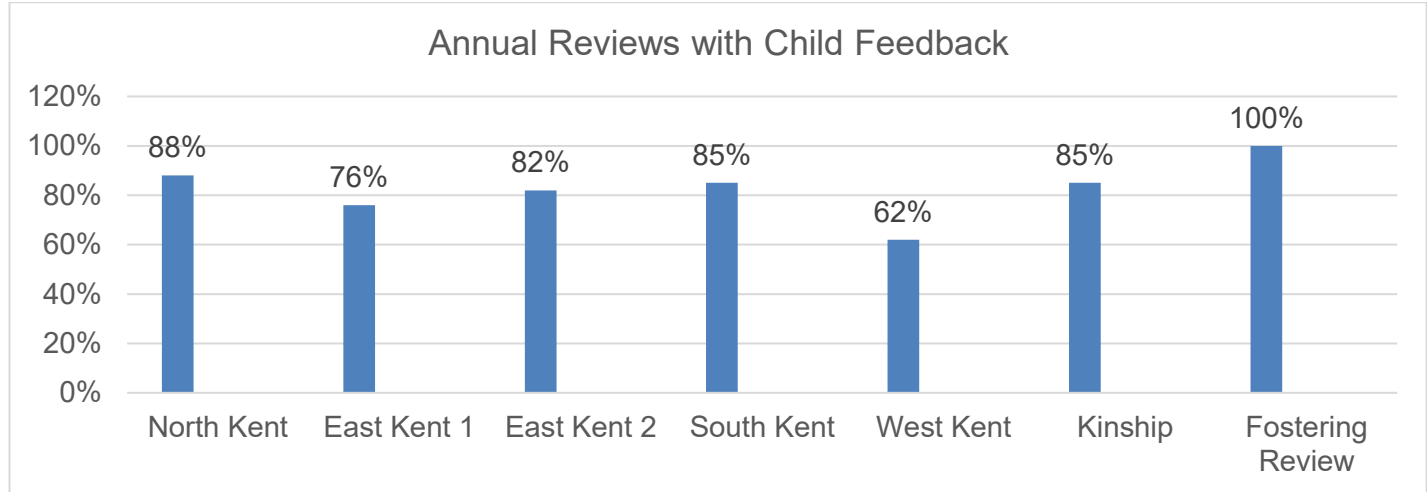
These calls provide us with valuable feedback on the assessment process, foster carer progress and development, as well as highlighting any areas for improvement. They were also involved in other work to support the wider service including viability assessments, supervising kinship carers during the re-alignment and completing allegations and standards of care investigations.

There were 554 reviews which took place over the last year, and these are detailed below.



Feedback

**Children in care:** The fostering social worker is now responsible for gathering the feedback from the children in care for foster carer reviews. Significant efforts were put into this important area and the feedback = increased to 79% from 47% in 2024.



**Children’s social worker feedback:** Children in care social workers are responsible for providing feedback on the care of their children for foster carers reviews. This feedback is vital in triangulating evidence. A total of 495 social workers completed the feedback form, which is 64% of all children’s social workers.

**Feedback from foster carers:** Foster carers reported feeling well supported and listened to by our service and feedback regarding support from fostering social workers is overwhelmingly positive. It is also positive for education and health workers. The involvement of the therapeutic fostering team, previously known as Sense of Belonging, continues to be highly regarded by foster carers when this was in place. Feedback from foster carers about payments is an area of significant dissatisfaction, following a new payments system going live in August 2025. Significant work is being undertaken to resolve initial early problems with the new system, whilst staff learnt new processes. Collaboration between the service and finance colleagues meant problems being resolved more quickly and seen an improvement in this area.

# Adoption Partnership Southeast

We are a collaborative Regional Adoption Agency delivering comprehensive adoption services across Kent, Bexley, and Medway to provide:

- Recruitment and assessment of adopters.
- Matching and placement of children.
- Post-adoption support including therapeutic interventions.
- Advisory services for professionals and families.
- Panel coordination for adoption decisions.
- Access to external commissioned services for extended support, including support for birth families and staying in contact through CAFIS Barnardos.

The service is designed to ensure children in care find permanent, loving homes efficiently and adoptive families receive the support they need throughout their journey.

Our service is led by a Head of Service, supported by the Adoption Support Service Manager, Pre-Order Service Manager and Adoption Advisory Officer comprising of the following teams:

**Advisory team:** Handles initial enquiries, peer support, and enquires about support for families.

**Panel team:** Supports decision-making and panel processes for child matches and adopter approvals.

**Early permanence and assessment team:** Identifies children suitable for adoption early and supports adoption care planning. Recruits and support adopters for the early permanence scheme.

**Recruitment and assessment teams (one and two):** Focus on recruiting and assessing adopters and support prospective adopters.

**Family finding team:** Family finds and matches children with suitable adopters, working collaboratively with children's social workers.

**Adoption support teams (one, two and three):** Provide therapeutic and social work support to adoptive families.

## Service Delivery

Adoption Partnership Southeast is working collaboratively with Bexley, Kent and Medway children's teams to ensure children's plan for adoption are progressed and families receive adoption support when it is needed.

A Placement Order is the legal order granted when a court agrees adoption should be the care plan for a child. 67 Placement Orders were granted in 2024-2025, an increase on the 57 from 2023 and 2024. 43 Kent children were matched with adopters during 2024 and 2025. We completed adopter assessments for 63 households during 2024-2025.

Adoption support provided 105 support and advice line calls to families in 2024-2025 and 160 support assessments for families. In 2024 and 2025, a total of 497 adoption and special guardianship support fund applications, including pre-order, were made for parents in the region.

## Highlights

In 2025, there was a significant amount of innovation taking place within the service in collaboration with Bexley, Kent, and Medway to strengthen the adoption work to ensure children are at the centre of all our work. Innovative projects funded by the Department for Education to ensure service developments and positive outcomes for children and their families:

- **Early permanence wraparound support:** Enhanced support for carers and birth parents, with positive feedback.
- **Enhanced matching for siblings:** Focused recruitment, training, and support for sibling adopters; 43 households approved for sibling groups.
- **Multi-disciplinary adoption support:** Expanded internal therapy offer, improved multi-agency collaboration, and positive feedback.
- Adopter recruitment and achieving permanency for children.
- **Early permanence:** 28% of children placed through early permanence, exceeding the 20% target.
- **Adopter sufficiency:** 63 households approved, with 61 of 62 children placed with in-house adopters.
- Timescale for children being matched with adopters is significantly lower than the national average.
- Stage two assessments completed faster than national average.
- Participation events taking place across the region with 288 attendees, including fundays, pantomimes and biannual family events.
- **Peer support scheme:** 42 peer volunteers supporting nearly 200 families.
- **Adopter-led community groups:** 10 active groups and a growing online community.
- **Voice and influence groups:** Youth, adoptive parent and birth parent reference groups influencing service delivery and policy.

Adoption support services saw 850 support interventions delivered in 2024-2025 which is up from 512 the previous year. There was a wide range of therapeutic and parenting support programmes and timely response to family's access to support.

We joined Adoption England's *Becoming a Family* approach, launched in 2024, this enhances support for adoptive families during the first 12–18 months post-placement. This period is vital for building attachment, confidence in parenting and long-term stability. Key aims include:

- Supporting therapeutic parenting and early bonding.
- Building resilience through peer and social networks.
- Providing tailored, multi-agency support.
- Ensuring consistent support across regions.
- Adoption social workers play a central role in preparing families to feel confident, connected and equipped to meet their child's needs by the time the adoption order is granted.

## Learning, Development and Support

A range of opportunities for parents to access training are provided by our adoption support teams, which include:

- Incredible years training, (12-week course).
- Non-violent resistance course (10-week course).



- Sensory integration (6-week course).
- Therapeutic parenting - understanding developmental trauma (12-week course).
- Life story workshops (2-day course).
- Monthly social work lead support group meetings.

## Training and Practice Development for Professionals

- **Dyadic developmental practice:** Embedded across our service, with 15 social workers trained to Level 2.
- **Professional training events:** High attendance and positive feedback from regional webinars and workshops.

## Conference

We held an online conference for adoptive parents and professionals on 22nd October 2024. The theme of the conference was *Working Together to Develop Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Adoption Support*. Sarah Naish, CEO and Founder of the Centre for Excellence in Child Trauma spoke on *My Journey Through Therapeutic Parenting* and our short film *Adoption Community* was premiered. The conference was a huge success with over 200 attendees and over 300 further views of the recording.

## Feedback and Continuous Improvement

- High satisfaction in pre and post order surveys.
- Three complaints received, down from 7 in 2024, with clear learning actions taken.
- Catch-up calls initiative launched to maintain long-term engagement with adoptive families.



# Total Placement Service

We are a one stop shop designed to find homes for all our children in care and care experienced young people. Most recently the service incorporated procuring care and support in the home packages for those children and young people with disabilities. There are several different types of homes for our children and young people:

- **Foster Homes:** We have access to both our in house foster carers and Independent Fostering Agency homes for those up to 18 years old. These are procured via a framework and spot purchasing. Some children continue to live with their carers up to 21 years old in what is called a Staying Put arrangement.
- **Residential childrens homes:** These are for children aged up to 18 years old, generally homes will be for between one and six children. These homes are spot purchased and we are to try and find homes within Kent for our children although this is not always possible due to the number of children from other local authorities being placed in Kent, which is on average 1,250 children.
- **Secure accommodation** is a secure environment where children and young people live to mitigate significant risk and to safeguard them, a court order is required to access this provision.
- **Supported accommodation:** These homes are for young people aged 16 to 21 years old to support them during their transition to independence. There are several types: low, medium and high needs which are determined by the number of support hours a young person will receive within a shared accommodation model via a block contract. Our own Kent Supported Homes and Shared Lives schemes offer a home with a host in the hosts own home with varying degrees of support according to need. Supported accommodation and semi-independent is spot purchased providing shared living in a house with staff available to provide varying levels of support.
- **Parents and their child(ren)** can be placed in specialist foster and residential homes for the purpose of assessment and to teach parenting skills. Generally, these placements are directed by the court when the authority is in proceedings regarding the child(ren).
- From time to time, exceptionally, when we cannot find a home for a child or young person we may have to use an **unregulated care arrangement**. This is unlawful and can only be considered with Director authorisation. There was significant progress in reducing the number of unregulated care arrangements with increased oversight and focus on this area of work. All other homes are regulated by Ofsted or the Care Quality Commission.

The key elements that support positive outcomes and stable homes for our children and young people are:

- High quality placement plan referrals that garner interest from carers and providers and encourage them to offer homes.
- Effective and considered matching of carers and children and young people to ensure children and young people's needs can be understood and met.
- Clarity, commitment and delivery of the child or young persons agreed care plan or pathway plan by everyone involved.

Placement finding can take a long time and be difficult for some children due to several factors:

- Number of other local authority children placement in Kent which is on average 1,250 children.
- The local, regional and national reduction in the number of foster carers and placements.
- Matching children to the right carer(s) and alongside other children.
- The lack of specialist placements to provide care for children with complex needs.
- The lack of solo placements.
- The lack of secure accommodation.
- The opening of home office funded provision of two children's homes with a further home due to open, and six reception centres for newly arrived children and young people, has eased the burden of needing to find placements at very short notice. Placement finding for these children and young people is now far more effective and efficient.



We contribute to three corporate parenting performance indicators:

- Three or more placement moves for a child in the last 12 months, in July 2025 this was 10.4%, .4% achieving below the desired target.
- Placement stability for last 2 years, in July 2025 this was 73.7%, 3.7% greater than the desired target.
- The number of children placed with 20 miles of home, in July this was 65.9%, 14.1% below the desired target.

Our service is currently undergoing a restructure to ensure it is efficient, effective and agile to changing need and demand. This includes automation of processes, improved oversight of costs leading to potential savings through the development and use of a benchmarking tool and revision of job descriptions to ensure the focus is on the service continuing to deliver a first-class placement finding service to our children and young people.



## How Our Elected Members Can Get Involved

Our services welcome visits from elected members especially at our activity and celebration events when there is an opportunity to meet the children and young people in our care, for whom we are acting as their corporate parent. The Corporate Parenting Panel receive regular performance updates and we welcome questions from members to support their understanding of the role of a corporate parent. Kent Fostering Service would appreciate any support members can provide in promoting the recruitment of foster carers for KCC within their local constituency.

### Christmas Campaign

Our Christmas campaign is now a yearly event. In December 2024, the campaign raised more than our £20k target, raising **£32k** by changing our campaign to broaden it out to both local and national businesses. This meant on Christmas Day every one of our Care Leavers received a Christmas card from their Corporate Parents with either a £10 gift voucher for them to treat themselves or a gift to the value of £10. These were well received by our care experienced adults, who said it made them feel very special to receive this in the post. In 2024, exceeding the target, enabled the service to put on Christmas Day dinner for 50 young adults who would otherwise have been alone.

This year's campaign will again focus on asking local businesses to support with financial donations. Due to the current financial pressures society is facing, we recognise we need to be sensitive about asking our Kent County Council staff for financial donations, whilst still giving those who can donate the opportunity to do this. Our target for 2025 is £25,000, with £5,000 of this will be used to give 100 young adult care leavers a Christmas Day to remember. Those that would otherwise be on their own will be invited for Christmas Day dinner with transport, gifts and entertainment provided.

**To find out how you can donate, please click the below banner.**



*This banner will direct you to: <https://ylf.org.uk/christmas/>*

From: Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport.

To: County Council – 18 December 2025

Subject: Marine and Coastal Act 2009 – Delegations to Officers

Classification: Unrestricted

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## **1. Introduction**

- a. The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 gives the County Council a range of powers. Of relevance to the current paper are the following set out in Schedule 20 of the Act:
1. Power to enter agreement with an owner or occupier for the carrying out of works for the purpose of assisting Natural England to discharge the coastal access duty.
  2. Power to establish or maintain the England Coast Path in the absence of agreement including the service of notice.
  3. Power to erect notices and signs where delegated by Natural England.
  4. Power to remove notices or signs.
  5. Power to enter land to determine whether works are required and the carrying out of the work and inspection for the purposes of the Act.

## **2. Delegations to Officers**

- a. Having a clear framework of delegations to Officers means that Members, Officers, and people external to the Council can see that any actions undertaken are done so by people with the proper authority. The Appendix to the Constitution sets out functions delegated to specific Officers.
- b. The Marine and Coastal Act is closely connected to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. While the delegated functions for the latter Act are set out in the Appendix, the specific functions for the Marine and Coastal Act are not.
- c. For clarity, it is proposed to add a specific delegation for the functions set out in the Marine and Coastal Act 2009 to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport. This will enable robust schemes of sub-delegation to be put in place by the Corporate Director.

### **3. Recommendation**

County Council is asked to:

- a. Agree to update the Appendix to the Constitution delegating the Council's functions set out in Schedule 20, sections 2, 3, 6(5), 8(1)(b), and 9(2) of the Marine and Coastal Act 2009 to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport; and
- b. Ask the Monitoring Officer to update the Appendix to the Constitution accordingly.

### **4. Background Documents**

None.

### **5. Report Author and Relevant Director**

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From: Petra Der Man, Monitoring Officer

To: County Council – 18 December 2025

Subject: Independent Person (Standards) Appointment

Classification: Unrestricted

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## **1. Introduction**

- a. The Localism Act 2011 requires that the County Council appoint an Independent Person from whom the Monitoring Officer can seek advice when they are in receipt of an alleged breach of the Kent Member Code of Conduct.
- b. As reported to the Selection and Member Services Committee on 4 September 2025, Mr Michael George has held this position since October 2012. A recruitment exercise was begun to recruit a second Independent Person to add resilience to the ethical framework of the Council.
- c. Mr Michael George has decided to step down from the role and so the recruitment exercise has been able to take this into consideration and look at the possibility of recruiting two Independent Persons at the same time.

## **2. The Role of the Independent Person**

- a. In sum, the role of the Independent Person is as follows:
  - i. To advise KCC on any allegation of breaches of the Member Code of Conduct by elected or co-opted Members that it has decided to investigate.
  - ii. If required, to be consulted by either authority in respect of allegations in other circumstances.
  - iii. If required, to be consulted by any elected or co-opted Member of either authority who is the subject of an allegation.
- b. The remuneration for this post is a £500 annual retainer (payable over 12 months) plus a daily rate of £100 (pro rata for part of a day) when required to undertake any duties, and travel expenses at the same rate as for elected Members (currently 45p per mile). This may be reviewed by the Member Remuneration Panel as part of their current review of the Members' Allowances Scheme.

## **3. Recruitment of the Independent Person**

- a. The Selection and Member Services Committee delegated responsibility for the recruitment process to the Monitoring Officer. However, it is a County Council responsibility to formally appoint any Independent Person. Appointments are usually to a four year term.



- b. As a result of the recent recruitment exercise, as Monitoring Officer, I am recommending that County Council appoint the following as Independent Person(s) for Standards:
  - a. David Mercier.
  - b. Michael Turner.
- c. A summary of the CV of the above is available for Members on request from Tristan Godfrey and Katy Reynolds. See below for contact details.
- d. Because of the nature of the role, appropriate background checks will be carried out and no appointment will be made until these have been carried out satisfactorily. Due to Mr George stepping down from the role, and the statutory requirement for the Council to have at least one Independent Person, it has not been possible to complete these checks ahead of this meeting.

#### **4. Recommendation**

County Council is asked to:

- a. Thank Mr George for his work as Independent Person; and
- b. Appoint David Mercier and Michael Turner to four-year terms as Independent Persons for Standards for Kent County Council, subject to satisfactory completion of the relevant background checks overseen by the Monitoring Officer.

#### **5. Background Documents**

None.

#### **6. Report Author and Relevant Director**

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By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager

To: County Council – 18 December 2025

Subject: Motion for Time Limited Debate

Classification: Unrestricted

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### **Summary**

County Council may consider and resolve Motions for Time Limited Debate submitted by Political Groups, in accordance with section 14.32 of the KCC Constitution.

One Motion for Time Limited Debate is included in the agenda for the 18 December 2025 meeting of the Full Council.

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1. In advance of each ordinary meeting of the Full Council, each Political Group may submit one Motion for Time Limited Debate for debate and decision. Motions are placed on the agenda in the order they are received by Democratic Services.
  2. A maximum of 45 minutes will be allowed for the debate. The Motion must meet the general requirements of Motions as set out in the constitution and the debate is conducted in accordance with normal procedure rules along with any relevant directions given by the Chairman of the Council.
  3. The submitted Motion for Time Limited Debate is appended to this covering report.
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### **Recommendation:**

The County Council is asked to consider and determine the submitted Motion for Time Limited Debate

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### **Appendices:**

MTLD – Liberal Democrat – Failure of Water Supply in Tunbridge Wells

### **Report Author:**

Joel Cook

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## **Motion on Failure of Water Supply in Tunbridge Wells**

**Proposer:** Mr Antony Hook

**Seconded:** Mr Richard Streatfeild, MBE

### **Background Information provided by the Liberal Democrat Group:**

1. On 29<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 24,000 households in and around Tunbridge Wells began to experience either no water supply or significantly reduced water pressure. This disruption has continued through to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025 (the time of writing), leaving many homes without water for a fifth consecutive day.
2. South East Water, the company responsible for the water supply to the affected areas, has advised residents that, even after the water supply is restored, they should boil any water intended for consumption for a period of 10 days.
3. The cessation of water supply has not only affected families but has also had a significant impact on businesses, schools, care homes, and a wide range of social infrastructure across this part of Kent.
4. Many residents have been forced to collect rationed bottled water to meet their basic needs.
5. The ongoing shortage of water presents clear and serious risks to public health.
6. There was a previous water crisis in Tunbridge Wells in December 2022, as well as other incidents in different parts of Kent in recent years. These repeated events raise serious concerns that key lessons have not been learned and that the region's water system lacks sufficient resilience to prevent such crises in the future.

Kent County Council should recognise that access to water is a fundamental necessity for life and wellbeing.

### **Motion**

The Council expresses:

1. Its formal thanks to KCC Staff who have worked to support help local people during this major incident.
2. Its deep concern about the approach of South East Water and its failures to deliver a vital service to Kent Residents.
3. Support for any formal investigations or inquiries into the failures.

The Council calls for:

4. The establishment of a Short-Focussed Inquiry by the Scrutiny Committee.

This inquiry should seek:

- to identify what lessons were learned but not enacted between 2022 and 2025.
- what can be learned from the recent water outage in Tunbridge Wells, including steps required to prevent recurrence of similar incidents and measures to build greater resilience, particularly for care homes, schools and other KCC services.
- How KCC can best contribute to effective support and relief efforts in the event of similar incidents in the future.

5. Officers from the Chief Executive's Department to draw the Council's resolution to the attention of the relevant Minister.