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To: **Scrutiny Committee – 15 December 2021**

Subject: **Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Summary:**

The Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme is supporting children and young people across the County to reconnect to their pre-pandemic lives, by providing additional activities, opportunities and support.

This report provides an update on what Reconnect has delivered to date and outlines our plans and priorities for the future.

Reconnect delivered a hugely successful summer programme which included young person's bus passes, a leisure centre offer, additional learning opportunities, and local activities and events.

To inform the longer-term delivery of the programme a set of priorities have been agreed which form the criteria for grant funding and the basis for commissioning specifications.

We continue to work with colleagues across KCC, partner agencies, community groups, and the voluntary sector to make Reconnect a success and to support our children and young people.

**Recommendation(s):**

1. The Committee is asked to note the content of this report and make comments.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1. Since its formation in April 2021, The Reconnect Programme has successfully delivered a range of additional activities and support for children and young people.

1.2. Activities have included a successful summer programme, additional learning opportunities, local grant funded events, and mentoring and well-being support.

1.3. This paper outlines the successes of Reconnect so far and our ambitious plans for the future.

## **2. Summer successes and achievements so far**

- 2.1. We cannot do justice in this paper to the tremendous work of all the organisations and individuals who supported our children and young people over the summer, providing opportunities for them to try new things, have fun, meet friends, and helping them overcome some of the barriers they face moving forward. We would like to thank everyone who contributed.
- 2.2. One of the biggest offers over the summer was the Reconnect bus passes. Fourteen bus companies worked with KCC to provide more than 150,000 free bus passes for children aged 11-18 years, and 40,000 passes for families with young children who would otherwise struggle to access transport. Passes were distributed via schools, libraries, and children's centres.
- 2.3. Demand for these was high and stagecoach reported a high uptake of bus travel on its routes using the Reconnect passes. This offer has had a great impact on children, young people and families, as can be seen from the feedback received:
- *"It's like you've given me winning lottery tickets, we can do so much more over the summer now as even a bus journey is fun for kids!"*
  - *"This weekend the Guide "secret" Facebook page has been frenzied with activity as the girls are planning trips using their Stagecoach Bus Passes which they picked up in school last week. It is so lovely to see them excited and being normal teenagers again."*
- 2.4. Reconnect teamed up with 18 leisure centres across Kent to offer a reduced price 6-week leisure centre pass for £25, discounted by Reconnect to £10 for children eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Nearly 2,500 children bought passes, helping them to get active and socialise with friends and family. 54% were purchased at the discounted rate. The partnership also helped the centres recover from the pandemic, with one provider reporting Reconnect accounted for 25% of the summer footfall across their centres. Some great feedback about the offer was received, including from one parent who said: *"Thank you for organising the Reconnect programme, I'm sat watching my daughter and her friend having fun swimming for the first time in a very long time, which would not be happening without Reconnect."*
- 2.5. Reconnect offered a number of summer learning opportunities to support children and young people to re-engage with their education. Invicta National Academy offered live, online maths and English classes and ran 'Wellbeing Wednesday' sessions on a weekly basis. The lessons were well received, with one parent saying they were invaluable in helping her child return to

education after suffering from long Covid. Another parent contacted us to say that *"the lessons were great, really engaging and so little is free these days, well done to KCC and Invicta!"*. External evaluation reports children who participated made statistically significant improvement in pre and post participation tests scores.

- 2.6. Over 200 students signed-up for the Reconnect Lyfta offer which gave children free access to the platform and enabled them to virtually travel the world and experience different cultures and perspectives. All of the children who completed the Lyfta lessons were entered into a prize draw to win a voucher. Daven Chan was the winner of the voucher and said *"Lyfta is an eye-opening experience for me and I never expected to learn about careers around the world! I would love to join Bob the beachcomber and search for treasures together."*
- 2.7. Audiopi, in partnership with Reconnect, offered all students in Kent free access to a library of more than 2,000 educational podcasts covering GCSE and A-Level subjects. The podcasts helped over 200 students to get ahead with their learning and we are grateful that Audiopi wants to continue working with Reconnect to make its platform free for Kent's students until Christmas.
- 2.8. Reconnect provided grants to a range of groups and organisations in Kent to fund local summer activities for children and young people. Over 150 grant recipients provided local activities, including photography workshops, theatre sessions, yoga classes, swim safety camps, taekwondo for children with autism, and arts projects. Some great feedback from providers and families was received:
- *"Children, young people and parents expressed how pleased they were that such a wide range of activities were offered for free. Especially post Covid"*.
  - *"X absolutely loved it. Seeing him engaged and earning genuine praise has been a complete joy to me. He is so happy he went!!!"*
  - *"Thank you, we would never have been able to afford to do all these lovely activities without your help"*
  - *"Families were extremely grateful for the opportunity that they would otherwise not be able to afford. Some families have said it was the best summer with the children being so occupied."*
  - *"Thank you so much for your wonderful week of activities, my children loved it! We are looking forward to the next ones. It was a very treasured time spent so thank you so much."*
- 2.9. Following delivery of the activities, grant funded providers were asked to share monitoring information to help inform the reach of the programme. The below table shows how many local sessions were delivered throughout the

summer, and how many children engaged with them.

	<b>Provision / Provider</b>	<b>No. Sessions</b>	<b>No. CYP</b>
<b>Ashford</b>	18	266	1469
<b>Canterbury</b>	17	427	2030
<b>Dartford</b>	13	80	2271
<b>Dover</b>	16	204	970
<b>Folkestone and Hythe</b>	13	190	567
<b>Gravesham</b>	6	24	235
<b>Maidstone</b>	8	54	922
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	6	26	224
<b>Swale</b>	14	134	1466
<b>Thanet</b>	10	191	937
<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>	12	62	372
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	10	95	635
	<b>143</b>	<b>1753</b>	<b>12098</b>

*N.b. the above table is correct as of 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021 but final figures will be slightly higher due to some activities and events being delayed.*

2.10. Our commissioned youth providers also offered a variety of activities and opportunities throughout the summer. Salus offered laser tag sessions, water fights, arts and crafts, and trips to Chessington. Pie Factory Music ran cinema nights, skating sessions, and street art workshops. Imago delivered 24 family fun days for families with both disabled children and young carers, with one family saying that they *“felt able to fully relax and participate in activities without feeling judged”*.

2.11. Open Access delivered a number of family fun days throughout the summer. Events were held in all districts with good attendance and engagement. The below table shows the number of events that were held and the number of attendees who participated.

<b>District</b>	<b>Number of Events</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>
Dartford	8	334
Gravesham	8	442
Swale	6	124
Canterbury	7	223
Thanet	8	295
Ashford	8	178
Folkestone and Hythe	8	401
Dover	8	550
Maidstone	9	416
Sevenoaks	8	529
Tonbridge and Malling	7	221

Tunbridge Wells	8	677
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>4390</b>

Some great feedback was received from families who attended the Open Access events:

- *“We have had a great day. Was great to get out and meet more families. Has also been amazing for me mentally.”*
- *“Everyone here was so nice and kind, got so much useful information and things for my children. Thank you for an amazing time.”*
- *“Really enjoyable for the boys to interact again with other children and see other people.”*

2.12. Between April and October, 124 Talents and Interest Grants were awarded, of which 7 were for children under the age of 10, 90 were for children aged 10-16, and 27 were for young people aged 17-19. Some examples of equipment and activities that the grants have funded are:

- A boxing bag for young people to be installed outside their sheltered accommodation for use by all residents.
- Keyboard lessons and equipment for a young person who was a school refuser and has now returned to school.
- A leisure centre has set up a group membership for all young people and families at a domestic abuse refuge to access.
- Lots of gym memberships, swimming memberships, four friends taking up cheerleading, archery equipment, skateboarding lessons, and art equipment.

2.13. 293 children and young people have received additional intensive mentoring support, funded by Reconnect. The below table shows take up by age and district:

<b>District</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Under 10</b>	<b>10 – 16</b>	<b>16 – 18</b>
Ashford	7	0	7	0
Canterbury	4	0	4	0
Dartford	3	0	2	1
Dover	35	1	32	2
Folkestone & Hythe	14	0	11	3
Gravesham	21	0	19	2
Maidstone	65	0	64	1
Outside Kent	2	0	1	1
Sevenoaks	8	1	7	0
Swale	11	0	10	1
Thanet	19	0	14	5
Tonbridge & Malling	94	1	81	12
Tunbridge Wells	10	0	10	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>28</b>

### 3. Reconnect Priorities

3.1. In order to inform the longer-term delivery of Reconnect and focus what activities and support are offered, the five Theme Teams developed a set of priorities.

3.2. Reconnect's Young Person's Steering Group, Delivery Board, and Partnership Board were all consulted about the priorities before being presented to CYPE Directorate Management Team for approval. These were presented to the Local Children's Partnership Group (LCPG) Chairs and opposition Group leaders at a briefing on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

3.3. Some priorities are forming the basis for county-wide commissioning and others are criteria for the Reconnect Locality Grants.

3.4. The agreed priorities are:

Theme	Priority
Learning Missed	1. Address gaps in core learning - English, Maths and STEAM.
	2. Early years language development.
	3. Speech, language, communication and social skills to support success in education.
	4. Engage those who are struggling to return to school or not enjoying participation in learning.
Health and Happiness	1. Emotional wellbeing for children and young people and ensuring young people get early support.
	2. Promote the health and happiness of children and young people from identified communities whose emotional wellbeing has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic (including Black and Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, LGBTQ+ children with a social worker, children with special educational needs, and children affected by domestic abuse or bereavement).
	3. Elective Home Education due to anxiety and emotional wellbeing issues related to school.
Sport, Activities and the Outdoors	1. Promotion of opportunities and ensuring sustainability to enable continued participation.
	2. Family approach / focus to activities. ( <i>Link with Friends, Family &amp; Community theme</i> )
	3. Training / development opportunities for young people, including volunteering.
	4. Workforce development and training for sports, activities and outdoor providers. ( <i>Link with Friends, Family &amp; Community theme</i> )
Friends, Family and Community	1. Events for children and young people, both locally and county wide.
	2. Transport and accessibility, including localised offers and universal holiday offers.
	3. Early years.

	4. Inclusion: vulnerable and hard to reach cohorts of young people.
Economic Wellbeing	1. Generating more work related opportunities for young people (work experience, volunteering, part time jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships.) 2. Improve the delivery of careers and employability guidance in education, particularly by bringing together employers and education. 3. Supporting young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those at risk of NEET. 4. Supporting the transition of SEND students and children with a social worker into work. 5. Develop capacity in communities, and the voluntary and community sector, to support the employment prospects of young people.

#### 4. Locality Grants

4.1. The second round of Reconnect locality grants launched on 1<sup>st</sup> October and applications closed on 24<sup>th</sup> October. Community groups and organisations could apply for funding to deliver projects, activities and on-going support for children and young people between December 2021 and August 2022. A total of 609 applications were submitted. The breakdown of applications between districts was as follows:

District	Budget available for this and next grant round	Number of Applications Received	Total Value of Applications
Ashford	£167,565	62	£233,506
Canterbury	£168,191	58	£195,423
Dartford	£165,054	42	£178,423
Dover	£139,417	45	£213,553
Folkestone and Hythe	£116,784	45	£158,610
Gravesham	£168,276	48	£171,126
Maidstone	£224,892	49	£169,569
Sevenoaks	£143,959	37	£136,248
Swale	£212,756	53	£235,160
Thanet	£202,210	76	£288,892
Tonbridge and Malling	£158,103	56	£204,772
Tunbridge Wells	£133,903	38	£147,933
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,001,110</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>£2,333,215</b>

- 4.2. District funding panels will meet between 1<sup>st</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> November to review the bids and agree funding allocations. The funding recommendations will then be presented to Delivery Board on 29<sup>th</sup> November, and indicative letters and grant agreements will be sent to applicants in early December.
- 4.3. The final Reconnect Locality Grant round will be launched in the new year. This round will be specifically to fund provision for the 2022 summer programme.
- 4.4. A Reconnect County Grant round is also being finalised.

## 5. Budget Position and Spending Plans

- 5.1. Reconnect has a budget of £10m, consisting of £7.5m from KCC Covid reserves and £2.5m from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).
- 5.2. The COMF monies, which are governed by separate key decisions, enabled the Reconnect programme to move forward following the Cabinet decision to establish a programme (March 2021), and the allocation of its budget (Cabinet June 2021). As per the COMF funding arrangements, Reconnect applied for funding as follows:

Programme Team staffing costs	£300,000
Leisure centre activities	£500,000
Local commissioning via LCPGs (round 1 – summer 2021)	£600,000
Road Safety and Bikeability	£30,000
Kickstart employee scheme	£100,000
Online education support	£120,000
Commissioning mentoring and counselling support	£500,000
County-wide 'Playground' project	£200,000
Participation – financial support (Duke of Edinburgh and Talents and Interest Grants)	£100,000
Family fun days	£50,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£2,500,000</b>

- 5.3. The Programme Team provides a monthly COMF return to the Public Health Commissioning Team, covering updates on spend to date.
- 5.4. As can be seen in the table in section 4.1, there is high demand for locality grant funding. Initially, £2.5m of Reconnect's £10m was committed to local commissioning through LCPGs. In light of the number of applications to round two of the Locality Grants, and the cumulative values of these, an application for an additional £1m of COMF funding was submitted to increase the funding available for Locality Grants. Unfortunately, because the national conditions of grant associated with COMF monies stipulates that the activities



funded by the grant have to be delivered by 31 March 2022, that application has been declined.

5.5. The programme's funding is allocated across seven broad areas; programme costs, the five themes, and Locality Grants. The below table shows spend to date, commitments, estimated costs for planned activities and the remaining budget as of 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Details of spend by theme is set out in Section 6 below.

	Budget	Billed	Committed	Estimated Costs	Remaining Forecast (Budget - Total Forecast) (Red = overspend)
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>RECONNECT:</b>					
Programme Costs	1,000,000	127,311	551,795	0	320,895
Economic Wellbeing	1,300,000	36,468	462,500	805,000	-3,968
Friends & Families	1,300,000	185,059	4,466	71,602	1,038,873
Health & Happiness	1,300,000	460,394	13,607	476,820	349,179
Learning Missed	1,300,000	73,819	240,800	1,314,180	-328,799
Outdoor Act. & Sport	1,300,000	50,000	537,255	480,000	232,745
LCPG	2,500,000	490,521	2,017,369	0	-7,890
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,000,000</b>	<b>1,423,571</b>	<b>3,827,792</b>	<b>3,147,602</b>	<b>1,601,035</b>

5.6. £5.3m of Holiday, Activities and Food Programme funding also sits under Reconnect. The below table shows spend and commitments as of 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

	a	b	c	d	e
	Budget	Billed	Committed	Estimated Costs	Remaining Forecast (a-(b+c+d) (Red = overspend)
	£	£	£	£	£
Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)	5,275,860	2,254,194	236,665	0	2,785,001
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,275,860</b>	<b>2,254,194</b>	<b>236,665</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,785,001</b>

## 6. Commissioned Services

6.1. Based on the approved priorities, the Reconnect Theme Teams have been developing commissioning specifications to deliver specific areas of support.

6.2. The Health and Happiness Theme Team is finalising the commissioning of:

- a) Evidence based intensive mentoring (FRIENDS)<sup>1</sup> and volunteer mentoring for young people. The two services will be county wide and reach young people aged 8-18 years who will be supported to develop

<sup>1</sup> **FRIENDS for Life** is a social skills and resilience curriculum, that has been recognised by the World Health Organisation as an effective tool set to prevent anxiety for children. It is proven to reduce anxiety and provide participants with strategies to rise to life's challenges.

and improve their emotional wellbeing and resilience. The services will run from January – August 2022.

- b) Mentoring, curriculum enrichment days, and a year 5/6 transition project for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller young people to help improve their wellbeing and engagement with education.
- c) LGBTQ+ wellbeing work in schools to develop peer groups, family activities extending on October holiday activities, and LGBT regular swimming sessions.
- d) Anxiety-based school avoidance project in partnership with the Wellbeing Education Training activities and open access group work to support improved attendance.
- e) Reducing the referral to treatment time for the Children's and Young Person's Counselling Service from 12 weeks to 6 weeks.
- f) Talents and Interests grants will continue to be available across the county for 5-18 years olds.
- g) In partnership with HeadStart Kent the resilience toolkit, training, wellbeing sessions and grants are available to community organisations.

6.3. The Economic Wellbeing Theme Team is commissioning:

- a) 100 places on the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card training for 16-19 year olds, bridging the current paucity of funded provision until places funded by the ESFA come online.
- b) Additional capacity to engage Electively Home Educated (EHE) students who may become NEET. This recognises the very significant increase in EHE pupil numbers, many of whom were Years 10/11, following the reopening of schools in the last academic year.
- c) Support to increase and improve work experience for young people.

6.4. The Learning Missed Theme Team is looking into commissioning:

- a) Independent learning support for children in key stages 2-4. A short pilot has commenced with a small number of schools to test and refine the model prior to commissioning a service.
- b) Culture camps so that children can engage with a range of creative activities with professions in that field.
- c) A Tour of Britain programme where young people from deprived backgrounds can access fun and education experiences and trips.
- d) Competitions – possibly in conjunction with Rotary International which operates a range of competitions such as young chef, musician, artist, writer, debater, photographer, together with technology and science competitions.
- e) The delivery of the Families Supporting Families (FSF) Pathway to families living in Kent. This has been delivered as a pilot in Margate with good outcomes.

6.5. The Friends, Family and Community Theme Team is putting together a range of Christmas activities, such as mobile ice rinks in each district, pantomime performances for children with ASD, and commissioning large scale events for next summer, such as festivals. This Theme Team is also leading on transport arrangements, with colleagues from Passenger Transport, particularly access to bus travel for young people and families.

6.6. Following the summer programme the Sport, Activities and the Outdoors Theme Team has been working with the Leisure Centres to agree what the next offer will be. The current proposal is to issue grant agreements to leisure centres to provide an ongoing range of opportunities for C&YP. This will utilise the remaining £480k available within the COMF funding awarded to Reconnect to work with Leisure Centres. Training is being organised for leisure centre staff, sports and activity providers, to help them better understand and support the needs for all children and young people, including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma informed practice training.

## 7. Communications

7.1. We have a comprehensive communications strategy to ensure that young people and families can find out about the wide variety of activities, offers, support and programme news on the most appropriate channels of communication. It also includes communications with community organisations that run clubs, events and activities, early years settings, schools, colleges and local businesses. We have created strong branding for Reconnect that is used on all material we issue. It has bright and engaging colours and imagery that convey the aspirations of the programme and that helps with building brand awareness.

7.2. We use a variety of communication channels to get messages out to different audiences, based on evidence and knowledge about people's communications preferences, as the table below illustrates. Conversations with young people have shown that they rely on friends, peers, parents/carers and professionals (teachers and youth workers, for example) to learn about activities, events and support available so this has formed our communications strategy.

<b>Parents and carers:</b> Those with children aged 0-18 living at home and those with SEN children up to aged 24.	<b>Young people</b>	<b>Community organisations</b> that run clubs, events and activities for young people	<b>Businesses</b>	<b>Schools, early years settings and colleges</b>
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Facebook Twitter Website Email Newsletter Schools	Instagram Website Via parents and schools Via practitioners	Facebook Twitter LinkedIn Email newsletter Website	Linked In Website Facebook	Email Website
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### 7.3. Reconnect Facebook page:

7.3.1. We established a Reconnect Facebook page to enable the programme to share news quickly. It gives us the ability to reach a wide audience, predominantly parents/carers and community organisations, as well as providing useful insights that enable us to measure the effectiveness of communications.

7.3.2. Since its creation in June 2021, the page has received 1,801 likes. While we do not have a direct comparison, our experience of setting up other campaign Facebook pages has shown that this is a higher number than we would usually expect to see given that it has not been running for very long.

7.3.3. The average number of people we usually reach in a single Facebook post is around 500 people. Reach is determined by Facebook as the number of times someone sees a Facebook post which means they read it or watch a video without clicking on the post itself.

7.3.4. The level of engagement (determined by Facebook as opening a post fully to view it, clicking on a link, sharing the page with others or making a comment on a post) is around 5% - although this increased to 8% with the popular bus pass and leisure centre offers.

7.3.5. While the summer activities proved popular with our Facebook audience, so too have posts linked to children's counselling services, free school meals during school holidays and the Kent Together financial hardship page.

7.3.6. We also use KCC's main social media channels to widen and strengthen the reach to Kent's residents.

### 7.4. Reconnect website:

7.4.1. The Reconnect website plays a vital role as it is home to information about the offers, a what's on guide of activities and events, and a signpost to support available from KCC and from our community partners. It has a section aimed at parents and young people, and a section aimed at community organisations and businesses, as well as a space to promote the latest programme offers or news. It can be found here: [www.kent.gov.uk/reconnect](http://www.kent.gov.uk/reconnect).

7.4.2. We promote the Reconnect website in all of our communications, encouraging people to find out what else is available.

7.4.3. Below is a breakdown of visitors to the Reconnect website, up until 30<sup>th</sup> September:

- 1,447 in June
- 75,375 in July
- 16,813 in August
- 1,520 in September
- 92,362 in total.

We currently do not have figures beyond 30<sup>th</sup> September because Digital Services had to temporarily remove Google Analytics in order to test and implement a new cookie control.

7.4.4. The most visited webpages on the Reconnect website are as follows:

Webpage	Visits
Summer bus travel offer	56,877
Summer leisure centre offer	35,534
Reconnect homepage	34,481
Activities and events page	31,571
Educational opportunities	4,573

7.5. We have a Reconnect email newsletter that people can subscribe to. Monthly emails are sent out to subscribers to keep them informed about the latest offers, activities and programme news, such as funding opportunities. The newsletter currently has 1,519 subscribers. People can sign up to the newsletter via our website or our Facebook page.

7.6. We have provided schools participating in the Invicta National Academy's online homework pilot project with posters. We will also be creating a poster, with a QR code, to promote the programme to community centres, GP surgeries and local shops and libraries in the new year to continue to create awareness of Reconnect.

7.7. We will also use other communication channels to promote specific campaigns, activities or offers, and these are determined on an individual basis and dependent on audience and objectives.

7.8. In order to promote the summer successes of Reconnect and encourage organisations and individuals to get involved with the programme, the Participation Unit has created a new Reconnect [video](#). This will be shared on the Reconnect website and Facebook page.

7.9. Regular communications have been shared with schools to keep them informed of Reconnect campaigns and activities. This has included updates issued as part of the KELSI bulletin and direct letters to schools for specific campaigns that require action, such as vouchers for free school meals

children.

- 7.10. The Reconnect Programme Team has held a number of briefings to update colleagues on the progress of Reconnect. This has included briefings for district colleagues, Reconnect Network Champions, and LCPG Chairs.

## **8. Kickstart**

- 8.1. Special Educational Needs (SEN) Schools were first approached in Spring 2021 to see if they wanted to offer Learning Support Assistant (LSA) placements through the Kickstart Scheme. Mainstream schools have more recently been approached and the offer has been opened up to also include Business Administration and Caretaking roles, with a request in with DWP to further expand this to include Catering Assistant roles.
- 8.2. The first intake, in September 2021, was all SEN LSAs – these young people were recruited via Sector Based Academies, run in conjunction with Runway training, and were matched with host schools. We have now reviewed the recruitment process and we now interview referrals made by DWP Work Coaches at Jobcentres around the County and, if they meet the selection criteria, introduce them to schools who then ask for a MS Teams or face-to-face meeting so they can agree suitability.
- 8.3. To date, we have had a total of 30 Kickstart placements commence with schools, with another 20 offers in progress. Further interviews are booked around the county in Jobcentres in November and December, with a view to recruit further Kickstarters for January and February 2022. Participants are funded for 25 hours per week by DWP and receive 3 hours per week of off-job learning, which is commissioned by KCC and delivered by Runway Training. Originally 70 places were agreed with DWP for schools, but we are now looking to secure an additional 70 places due to demand.
- 8.4. The original deadline for new starts on the Kickstart scheme was 31 December 2021, however DWP has now extended this until 31 March 2021. New job roles and additional places must still be approved by 17 December 2021.
- 8.5. Data as of 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021:

<b>Place type</b>	<b>Places available</b>	<b>Places filled</b>
SEN LSA	50	33
Mainstream LSA	37	6
Business Admin	19	6
Caretaker	16	5

## **9. Holiday, Activities and Food Programme**

- 9.1. The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme offers free holiday club places to young people eligible for benefits-related free school meals. The programme offers one week of provision at Easter, four weeks in the summer and one week at Christmas. Participants enjoy fun activities that will enable them to develop new skills, take part in creative and physical activities, learn about food and cooking and enjoy free nutritious meals each day. Local authorities are asked to offer free holiday club provision to all young people receiving benefits-related free school meals in their area. They are not all expected to attend as the provision is voluntary. The provision can also be extended to other children through paid for places.
- 9.2. £220m was made available nationally for the HAF programme, with Kent being awarded a ringfenced amount of £5.3m for 2020-22 delivery.
- 9.3. For delivery at Easter 2021, we were working within the national and local Covid-19 restrictions and this significantly impacted on the planning and delivery of the HAF Programme. For Easter we provided 2,252 places for eligible children and young people through 26 programme partners.
- 9.4. For the summer 2021 delivery, we saw a significant increase in the number of programme partners wanting to deliver the HAF Programme and made available 4,186 places across 88 programme partners. In the lead up to planning for the summer, we were still experiencing some restrictions relating to Covid-19, which impacted on some partners decisions to apply and deliver the programme.
- 9.5. We worked with two district councils who co-ordinated a number of programmes in their areas and submitted collaborative applications. This gave a co-ordinated approach in these districts and allowed families to benefit from consistent information and support within their district. Particular benefits of this model were the shared catering facilities for the food element, community workers visiting programmes to meet with families and share information about local services and referral systems, and shared activities that rotated around programmes making them more cost effective.
- 9.6. We have been fortunate enough to welcome a range of programme partners into the Kent HAF Programme, ranging from those offering horse riding to multi sports, outdoor water sports, yoga, cookery sessions, dance, drama and forest school activities. Children and young people had access to a range of activities and experiences and while some were dependant on location, each district in Kent had some form of HAF provision.
- 9.7. Parental/ partner feedback from Summer 2021

- One mother explained that her son had stopped eating through family stress and lockdown and through the work I did with him at camp, he had started eating again.
- Changed my child's way of thinking, and much more helpful at home.
- Parent A said - "you do not know what you have done for me this summer, it's been such a challenge during covid and this has been a real experience for the children and given me some much needed support and time to myself, thank you so much !!"
- Parent Feedback: "My daughter came to the camp a little worried as she feels she is overweight but has enjoyed finding new activities which she enjoyed and feels that will help her with her weight and knowing about food more"
- One family said that it was a relief for them to have care as their new premature baby was in hospital and only the parent was allowed to visit.
- One child said they were going to get mummy to help them make chilli like they had at Playscheme

9.8. Currently we have applications to offer 3,310 places in Kent at Christmas through 69 Programme partners. In addition, we are able to fund more enrichment activities through day trips, events, sports coaches and creative experiences. We are also enhancing our support for children with an identified SEND, to support them in accessing a place on the HAF Programme

9.9. In November 2021 the Government spending review announced over £200 million a year for the continuation of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, providing enriching activities and healthy meals for disadvantaged children during school holidays.

## **10. Programme Monitoring and Research**

10.1. A Monitoring and Research Framework has been approved by the Reconnect Partnership Board and CYPE's Directorate Management Team. The success of Reconnect will be measured in four ways:

- 10.1.1. Evidence the extent to which Reconnect is reaching and engaging with its target population;
- 10.1.2. Understand the level and extent of awareness of Reconnect;
- 10.1.3. Describe the effect Reconnect has on children and young people;
- 10.1.4. Describe whether, and in what ways, Reconnect is facilitating system change in community approaches to children and young people's outcomes.



- 10.2. Monitoring success and progress of the programme consists of three rounds of data gathering and synthesis. Round one will capture baseline information, with the two following rounds used as interval points to demonstrate and track any changes, as well as describing and promoting the experiences of individuals engaging with the programme and activities associated with the programme.
- 10.3. The timeframes for delivering each round of the evaluation are:
- 10.3.1. Round one – September 2021 to November 2021
  - 10.3.2. Round two – March 2022 to June 2022
  - 10.3.3. Round three – July 2022 to October 2022
  - 10.3.4. Final report – October 2022.
- 10.4. A Monitoring Officer is being recruited to coordinate qualitative research and manage the collation and analysis of monitoring information. This Officer will be in post until the end of October 2022.
- 10.5. The Monitoring and Research Subgroup will design and co-ordinate the delivery of monitoring and research activities. It is the responsibility of the subgroup to ensure that the analysis and interpretation of information captured is collaborative and uses well-disciplined approaches and techniques to ensure a high level of fidelity over the findings. The group will report findings to the Programme Team, Delivery Board and Partnership Board.
- 10.6. It has been agreed that, for the programme to be a success, people first need to be aware of Reconnect and its associated activities for children and young people. Lake Research has been commissioned in round one to conduct market research and engage with a wide and representative range of people across all districts in Kent. Throughout the end of October and beginning of November, face-to-face interviews were conducted in high streets in all districts. Early indications from Lake Research suggest that 25% of those interviewed were able to identify and recognise Reconnect which is a positive response rate for a programme at Reconnect's current stage of maturity.
- 10.7. Round one market research is completed, and the data has been transferred to the KCC Analytics Team for review and analysis. Findings from round one monitoring and research will be published in early December.
- 10.8. Designing round two monitoring and research activities has begun and a plan for delivering against this will be shared with Reconnect Partnership Board and CYPE Directorate Management Team early in 2022.

## **11. Proposals for Summer Programme 2022**

- 11.1. Following on from the success of the 2021 summer programme, Reconnect has ambitious plans for summer 2022. The aim is to have activities for children and young people running every day throughout the summer holidays as part of a “40 days, 40 themes” campaign.
- 11.2. The summer programme will also feature Reconnect festival events for children and young people. Colleagues from the Culture and Creative Economy Team are supporting with the delivery of this and it has been agreed that Reconnect will link into existing festivals and events and look at where additionality can be provided.
- 11.3. The intention is to, again, have some big-ticket summer items for all children and young people, including Reconnect bus passes. This was the most high-profile and successful element of the 2021 summer programme so the intention is to run this offer again, if possible.
- 11.4. The Reconnect Partnership Board has endorsed the concept of a Reconnect awards event next summer, to celebrate the successes of the programme. The event could include awards for organisations and individuals who have gone above and beyond to support children and young people to reconnect to their pre-pandemic lives. To highlight the achievements of Reconnect, videos of activities and events that took place could be shown and children and young people could share stories about their experiences of Reconnect.

## **12. Conclusions**

- 12.1. The Reconnect Programme has successfully supported Kent’s children and young people to start to reconnect to things they missed during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 12.2. Agreed priorities are being used to drive the programme and inform commissioning for county-wide support. Commissioning includes universal and targeted provision, based on the needs of children and young people locally.
- 12.3. Locality grants are providing funding to local community groups and organisations, in order to enable them to deliver additional projects and activities to support children and young people. The final Locality grant round will be launched in the new year and will specifically fund provision for summer 2022.

12.4. The first round of evaluation and monitoring activity is being completed, and two further rounds will be conducted before the end of the programme. The final evaluation report will be issued in October 2022.

12.5. Reconnect is committed to supporting Kent's children and young people to re-engage with their pre-pandemic lives and a range of exciting activities and opportunities will be delivered before the end of August 2022.

### **13. Recommendations**

13.1. The Committee is asked to note the content of this report and make comments.

### **14. Contact Details**

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