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To: Scrutiny Committee – January 2022

Subject: Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People - Evaluation of Programme

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: **Cabinet – 1 December 2022**

Future Pathway of report: **Scrutiny Committee - 25 January 2023**

Electoral Division: **All**

Summary: This report sets out the achievements of the Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme.

Recommendation(s): County Council is asked to note the report.

1. Introduction

1.1 In March 2021, Cabinet approved (21/00035) that work begin to deliver the Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme, as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members from all parties recognised that Kent's children and young people (C&YP) had all been affected by the pandemic. They agreed it was essential that C&YP be supported to re-engage with activities and opportunities that they had enjoyed before the pandemic, and to try something new.

1.2 Formal approval for Reconnect was provided in Key Decision 21/00042 by Cabinet in June 2021. This set out the parameters within which the programme would operate, key of which were:

- This would be a KCC led, community-based programme, which sought to engage the whole Kent community in supporting C&YP
- It aimed to reconnect C&YP to:
 - Learning missed
 - Health and happiness
 - Friends, family and community
 - Sports, activities and the outdoors
 - Economic wellbeing

- It was to be universal, with something for all C&YP aged 0-19 years (up to 25 for those with SEND)
- It would promote existing opportunities for C&YP to connect or reconnect to, fund and empower others to create additional opportunities
- It should focus on the future, not dwell on the negatives of the pandemic
- The voice of young people would be at the heart of the programme
- Funding should be spent equally against each theme if possible
- A quarter of the funding would be spent locally, via Local Children's Partnership Groups

1.3 This paper provides a summary of the evaluation of the programme. A full evaluation report is available at:
https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/141909/Reconnect-Evaluation-Report.pdf

1.4 The programme was always intended to be fixed-term, ending on 31st August 2022, to provide immediate support post pandemic. Following agreement by Cabinet in July 2022, most activity and the public brand closed as planned, but some further support has been commissioned to run until 31 March 2023. This report covers the activity to 31 August 2022 only.

2. Evaluation - Outcomes and Impact

2.1 It was recognised from the outset that the wide-ranging nature of activities and support which would be provided to C&YP would make it challenging to evidence impact, particularly trying to assign a direct causal link to the work of Reconnect; for example, demonstrating Reconnect has improved the achievement of pupils in maths, as opposed to this success being down to staff in schools, the support of parents and the hard work of the C&YP themselves.

2.2 The programme's evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations are drawn from semi-structured interviews, digital surveys, and data returns (i.e., case studies, quotations and other data providers have submitted). The data included in the findings is a minimum level of achievement. Participation numbers, for example, will be "at least" that reported, because in some cases providers could not count all the children participating (e.g. a family fun day), while in others the data provided by participants hides participation levels (to illustrate, one child minder registered to participate in the Big Summer Challenge, but all 12 of the children she looked after took part), and we have missing data returns.

2.3 It should also be noted that data was collected by providers in a variety of ways relevant to their events, for example, a festival compared to 1:1 counselling. Therefore, it has not been possible to collect detailed data, such as whether the participant has special educational needs, as the data collected must be proportionate and relevant for the provider to comply with

GDPR. We do know, however, that a wide variety of young people were engaged due to the specific nature of the provision funded, such as a youth club for YP aged 18+ who have EHCPs, and the Kickstart activity which engaged NEETs.

2.4 Reach of the Reconnect Programme

The programme has reached at least 725,532 C&YP, meaning on average every Kent child aged 0-19 years has engaged in two Reconnect activities. It is evidently not that simple. Clearly some C&YP will have engaged in more activity than others. Some activities will have been more than one session. For example, the reach for bus passes is determined as the number of bus passes issued, but we know in summer 2022 the two big bus operators recorded over 1 million Reconnect journeys between them. In addition, we know more C&YP have been supported indirectly through the programme's activities. For example, Reconnect funded early years and forest school training for leaders to help Kent Scouts accelerate the opening of "Squirrel Dreys", a new group for younger children. While the children joining the new Squirrel Dreys are included in the reach figure, many leaders have commented how the training has altered their practice in other fields, such as with an older age group, or in their profession as a teacher. The children in the older groups, or school classrooms are the "indirect reach" we are not able to count.

2.5 The two tables below illustrate the reach of the programme, by age group and geography. Please note that we do not have age breakdowns from many providers. It is evident that the objective of providing a universal programme with something for all ages in all localities has been achieved, thanks to the tremendous efforts of the organisations and individuals who joined the Reconnect cause.

| Activity | Under 5 | 6 to 11 | 12 to 16 | Over 16 | SEND | NEET | Total CYP and adults |
|---|---------|---------|----------|---------|-------|------|----------------------|
| Reconnect Summer 2021 | 2,416 | 6,063 | 2,445 | 1,182 | n/a | n/a | 12,106 |
| County grants and Commissioned Activities | 3,780 | 15,063 | 2,955 | 19,186 | 937 | 319 | 252,358 |
| Locality Grants Round 2 | 2,297 | 6,757 | 4,529 | 2,040 | 1,211 | 148 | 17,531 |
| Locality Grants Round 3 | 3,044 | 10,364 | 4,920 | 4,298 | 1,627 | 438 | 34,209 |
| Leisure Centres | 462 | 1,162 | 861 | 839 | n/a | n/a | 6,271 |
| Open Access | 810 | 223 | 20 | 0 | n/a | n/a | 10,315 |
| Big Adventures | 178 | 2571 | 1349 | 177 | 780 | n/a | 4,275 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Bus Passes | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 399,992 |
| Curious Maths | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 581 |
| Total | 12,987 | 42,203 | 17,079 | 27,722 | 4,555 | 757 | 725,532 |

*The figure we have for the bus passes is the total number of bus passes (physical and digital) issued to CYP and families in Kent. The figure we have for Curious Maths is the number of subscriptions. It is highly likely that the programme has reached significantly more CYP, especially SEND and NEET CYP or CYP within these age ranges. These numbers are reflection of the data and feedback we have received from providers.

*The Reconnect Programme 2021 includes our leisure centre discount scheme (2,500 altogether, 54% FSMs), our open access activities including the Christmas programme (approximately 4-5000 altogether) and the Invicta summer programme (approximately 4,900 registered; 33,000 sessions attended by children residing in Kent).

| District | Just CYP | Under 5 | 5 to 11 | 12 to 16 | Over 16 | SEND | NEET | All |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| Ashford | 4,877 | 1,237 | 2,446 | 879 | 151 | 286 | 47 | 7,442 |
| Canterbury | 16,773 | 1,379 | 10,949 | 1,269 | 3,147 | 359 | 58 | 24,776 |
| Dartford | 2,712 | 203 | 1,714 | 614 | 468 | 226 | 51 | 3,412 |
| Dover | 1,971 | 906 | 804 | 192 | 980 | 135 | 5 | 2,057 |
| Folkestone and Hythe | 6,193 | 809 | 3,871 | 1,354 | 132 | 506 | 15 | 6,727 |
| Gravesham | 1,539 | 8 | 602 | 798 | 63 | 16 | 13 | 1,557 |
| Maidstone | 6,840 | 1,520 | 3,440 | 1,428 | 590 | 672 | 288 | 7,933 |
| Sevenoaks | 2,441 | 142 | 1,631 | 929 | 267 | 503 | 23 | 3,665 |
| Swale | 1,731 | 339 | 796 | 293 | 327 | 158 | 10 | 2,955 |
| Thanet | 4,333 | 469 | 1,249 | 2,382 | 251 | 482 | 130 | 4,930 |
| Tonbridge and Malling | 1,649 | 423 | 792 | 279 | 183 | 213 | 28 | 2,034 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 1,158 | 180 | 581 | 619 | 220 | 162 | 10 | 1,757 |
| Grand Total | 58,478 | 9,121 | 32,184 | 12,404 | 8,543 | 3,775 | 905 | 77,498 |

2.6 Engagement Level

Providers reported high levels of engagement from C&YP and families on the programme.

The online survey feedback reveals that 86.3% of C&YP and families reported to have had a very positive experience with the activities they engaged in on the Reconnect Programme, and 15.8% had a positive experience. Our understanding of 'positive experience' covers several key themes identified in the evaluation analysis: a positive experience denotes fun, excitement, experiences they would have never done otherwise, spending quality time with family members, socialising with peers, a positive change i.e., being

outside and not stuck inside, gained something from the activity like skills acquisition or a job, improvements in mental wellbeing or learning, etc. From this understanding of a positive experience, it would seem that many C&YP and families on the Reconnect Programme have engaged very well with the Reconnect activities and this engagement has contributed to improvements in their mental health and wellbeing (as they are able to go out, be active, socialise with others – all of which are factors which research suggests can greatly influence mental health and wellbeing), learn and improve their academic engagement levels, etc.

95% of 100 interview respondents said that the activities they delivered went well (i.e., gave a rating of 7 and higher out of 10), and that they met their initial aims (aims which were in line with the Reconnect Programme's own aims). High levels of engagement across the board is suggested by repeated reference to words like 'engaged,' 'fun,' 'learning,' and the desire expressed by attending/participating C&YP to 'do it again.' Most survey respondents reported that C&YP would engage in the same or similar activities in the future – which suggests sustained engagement with the activities (e.g., physical activity, sports, and learning). 100% of interview respondents revealed that they would either continue delivering these activities, go on to deliver additional activities, or look for additional funding to continue delivery which suggests sustainability of the impact they have had.

2.7 Theme-specific Impact – in line with the logic model (programme aims, output(s), and medium-term outcomes) – based on survey responses and interviews

Health and Happiness: Interview and returned data indicates 90% of C&YP and families reported that they were 'happy,' had 'had fun' and were 'engaged.' 65% of survey respondents reported that they saw improvements in the mental health and wellbeing of C&YP involved in their activities (thanks to the Reconnect funding they received). Reasons commonly given for this include being able to socialise with others and make new friends, learn new things, and have new experiences they would not have otherwise had. 95% of children and family services and support groups were able to reach sustainable engagement with the C&YP and families in their communities. 186 activities delivered altogether by 158 providers.

Economic wellbeing: Over 21 businesses and partner agencies were able to work together to support young people to engage with future employment opportunities. The programme was able to co-ordinate and promote a range of approximately 32 activities and opportunities for children and young people relating to economic wellbeing. As a result, through these activities YP aged over 16 on the programme were given a better chance of securing work in the future through their involvement in key Reconnect economic wellbeing activities.

Learning Missed: We were able to support C&YP to re-engage in education following the pandemic by sourcing and promoting a number of educational activities and opportunities for children and young people. 146 activities were

delivered by 125 providers. For example, 4,184 C&YP were able to re-engage with learning and gain cultural capital instrumental to the education experience through Big Adventures. 85% of providers reported that the CYP had learned or 'caught up' with their learning. As a result, C&YP on the programme were able to catch up with learning missed and are engaged in education.

Sports, Activities, and the Outdoors: C&YP were able to live healthier lifestyles and engage in sport and physical activity. For example, 6,271 CYP engaged in leisure centres offers this summer alone. We were able to coordinate and promote a range of around 230 activities and opportunities for CYP relating to sports, activities, and the outdoors through around 204 providers. As a result, more C&YP are engaged in healthier activity. Interview and data returns indicate 76% of C&YP and families were able to engage in activities that they were able to 'go out' and be 'active' following the pandemic.

Family, Friends, and Communities: Over 192 multiagency partners, business, community organisations and groups worked together, and this led to an increase in the number of local activities and opportunities available to C&YP in Kent (218 activities). 56% of providers reported that they were able to enhance local networks for community assets. The programme was able to reduce the accessibility gap for some disadvantaged C&YP: 50% of respondents reported that the Reconnect funding enabled them to provide activities or run events that were free (therefore, more accessible for lower income groups from deprived areas) and that had not previously been available in their area. The programme was also able to support connections between C&YP and responsible adults from older generations, as some interview respondents revealed.

As a result of investing in Kent communities we have created opportunities for communities to support C&YP and their families and fill gaps.

2.8 **Learning Missed**

The following are a few key projects and activities on the programme which sought to support the following Learning Missed objectives:

- To support children and young people to re-engage in education following the pandemic.
- To source and promote additional educational activities and opportunities for children and young people.

Invicta Home Study Support

These were virtual home study support sessions for Years 5&6 and Years 10&11 which ran twice weekly. Attendance levels were good, with 673 individual KS2 attendees (16.62% FSMs and 4.99% SEND). The sessions appealed particularly to students of Black and Asian ethnic backgrounds (c50%) and a greater number of girls (55%). 70% of the 217 individual KS4 attendees were female, a little over 60% were white, 8.5% FSM and 18% SEND. Attendance was evenly spread at all IDACI levels.

Feedback was mostly positive from students and parents:

KS2: Maths – 73.65% of reported that the sessions were ‘enjoyable and informative,’

KS4: Has this session been helpful to you? Yes - English 88.76%, maths 86.29%, science 95.16%.

GCSE revision sessions were also held in Easter 2022. 1014 individual students attended the 44 sessions with each attending on average two sessions. 8 subjects were covered with English and Maths having foundation and higher sessions to meet diverse needs, and study skills sessions were also delivered. 76% reported feeling they had progressed, with 21% feeling they had progressed somewhat.

Babble, Chatter, Talking Matters

Home-Start Dover delivered a project aimed at 0–5-year-olds on development and school readiness with a special focus on communication/Speech and Language. Over the course of the project, from February 2022 to August 2022, over 80 children were provided with 480 hours of support between them. 98% of the children supported have seen improvements. The project has been so successful that Home-Start Dover have sourced additional funding to keep the project running to March 2023.

Lessons in a Box - Visit Kent

125 boxes of high-quality teaching resources were quickly snapped up by Kent teachers in 107 schools in just 15 days from opening registrations. These were designed to bring to life six historic venues in Kent, which C&YP had been unable to visit during the pandemic. 8115 children took part in the Reconnect activities. “Our Year 5’s loved taking part in the Reconnect Lesson in a Box challenge in Term 6. The children loved having a real-world focus for their writing and were especially motivated to create advertisements for local attractions. They were able to practice some amazing work completed for the project. As a teacher, the PowerPoints and resources were engaging, easy to use and pitched to the right level for my class. The children are amazed that they won and cannot wait for their class trip to Historic Dockyard Chatham at the beginning of next term.” (KS2 Teacher)

Youth Summit

More than 650 YP attended the University of Kent campus, enjoying a choice of 25 distinct types of activity across a wide range of subjects and over three days. When asked if they would come to the Youth Summit again, 93% of the young people said “yes”. Words used to describe their experiences were: fun, gave me ideas, and valuable.

When asked 'how confident do you feel about sharing your opinions and ideas with others after taking in today's activities?' 70% of the attendees responded they were more confident after the event.

Attendees commented: "I think it was really good as we were all given a chance to participate in the interactive movie which was fun and an incredible

experience overall." "I think the Exploring Scientific Spaces workshop was probably most inspiring, as we talked about women in STEM and how anyone can do anything, lifting our spirits higher." "Amazing and very nicely interactive."

Lyfta

A real success of the Lyfta project was the engagement of students who accessed independently of their schools. Lyfta provided bespoke lesson plans, created for students aged 4 to 6, 7 to 11 and 12 plus. In total, there were 165 sign ups from parents, carers or students which equated to 198 children given access to the platform.

"My child spent the weekend completing these excellent tasks. I must say, we were both really impressed with them. The information, videos, facts etc about each person and their location and lifestyle was amazing. She found each lesson extremely engaging and each one opened up a different conversation between us and discussions around the countries, cultures, feelings etc. Each lesson was completely different too, it was wonderful to be able to visit these places virtually. Her favourite was Anna in Norway. But Erkan in Turkey was a close second. She is going into year six when she returns in September. Many thanks once again. This summer holiday we have made full use of KCC's offering. Thank you again."

Sir Linkalot

Positive feedback from beneficiaries suggests that Sir Linkalot helped to support student learning, specifically English and literacy, in an enjoyable and engaging manner.

- (Year 3) – It's really cool because it helps you know how to spell correctly. It helps me to learn.
- (Year 5) – I really liked it when he visited because he taught us and then he used different techniques that weren't on the app to help us. He is very enthusiastic and encouraging.
- Just to say we've been using this app for the past year and it is fantastic. Really, very good and an excellent resource. A much better way to learn spellings than lists or competitions.

Families Supporting Families (FSF)

This targeted programme supported families in small groups to come together and learn with and from each other, to build social networks and resilience.

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| The following is a range of activities which potentially increase learning and wellbeing, which families identified as undertaking more often with their children because of taking part in FSF Pathway. | Families doing more or a lot more |
| ○ Reading and looking at books together | 100% |
| ○ Singing songs and rhymes | 60% |

| | |
|--|-----|
| o Creating made-up stories with their children | 80% |
| o Make-believe play | 40% |
| o Cooking | 60% |
| o Household chores | 60% |
| o Messy play | 80% |
| o Play outdoors together | 80% |
| o Access community events and facilities e.g. the library, swimming pool, the park, local woods. | 80% |

Playground

Organised by KCC's Culture and Creative Economy Service, 311 playground sessions were delivered across 26 weeks in Children's Centres and Libraries by external creative artists. In total there were visits by 1537 babies aged 0-2 years and 1665 adults. The majority of babies were aged between 3 and 15 months. Feedback from Parents/Carers was hugely positive:

- o 95.4% would recommend Playground to other families.
- o Reasons for liking Playground sessions varied but the most popular answers included being free (84.6% of families), sessions were calming /relaxing (78.5%), sessions were baby-led (76.9%), and sessions encouraged baby development (66.2%).
- o Following participation in Playground parents/carers reported engaging in creative play more often with their baby at home. Before attending Playground almost a quarter of the parents/carers (23.1%) reported that they either never engaged in creative play, or only engaged once a week. Post Playground however, this had reduced to 7.7%. In contrast, the numbers of parents and carers engaging in creative play at home at least once a day, or even several times a day, had increased from 33.8% to 58.4%
- o "It is absolutely brilliant; I really look forward to the sessions and make a special effort to make myself and baby available. I've never seen my little boy so happy."

Big Writing Challenge

Almost 1700 C&YP submitted entries into the Kent Big Writing Challenge which was delivered by the Kent and Medway Charity Group. This broke down as KS1 (532), KS2 (740), KS3&4 (385) entries. The organisers received incredibly positive feedback from the district winners, participating schools, parents, and children with a celebration and prize giving event held at Canterbury Cathedral. The three individuals who were the age group winners won their schools funding for an off-site educational trip of their choice for their class. So far visits to Wingham Wildlife Park and Port Lympne have been planned and approved. The Kent and Medway Charity Group plan to continue running the competition annually.

Charlton Athletic Community Trust

This project combined teaching and youth work. Phase 1 has focused on the Isle of Sheppey. Participating children weekly received an hour of tutoring from a qualified teacher, and then had a youth worker led session. They committed to undertake two hours of home learning each week using the School-Online platform. 59 children participated with 51 children completing the programme. Pre and post programme assessments were carried out:

| School | % of pupils making progress | Average progress (% improvement) |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Queenborough School | 73% | 37% |
| St Edmund's RCPS | 84% | 50% |
| Thistle Hill Academy | 70% | 21% |

Reconnect Big Adventures

Schools with 40%+ of their pupils living in IDACI bands A-F (disadvantaged communities) were able to access funding to support an offsite education trip. The objective was to support the reconnection with learning and recognised that post pandemic these school communities would find it hardest to reinstate this sort of opportunity.

62 Primary, Secondary and Special schools from all parts of the County took up the offer, with trips including the theatre linked to KS4 GCSE English, visits to Castles linked to KS2 history, and excursions to outdoor activity centres such as Bewl Water to provide enrichment.

When asked if they thought their activity or trip had provided disadvantaged C&YP with opportunities to engage in learning, schools and trip facilitators gave the following responses:

“Definitely. Many of the children had never been to London so even the journey there was amazing for them when they saw the landmarks of London. They were amazed by the golden rooms of the Houses of Parliament and that they were walking in the Queen’s footsteps.”

“Yes, it helps build schema and cultural capital, it allows them to be equal to peers who may have had the experience from a parent or carer.”

“Yes, definitely. We are a small primary school in a deprived area of Thanet with a large number of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils with over one third of these children in receipt of Free School Meals. We also have a large number of children with special educational needs who greatly benefited from this experience. Some of our pupils had never been outside of their home town or Thanet. Some of our children had never travelled on a coach before either or seen any exotic animals in real life. There were a lot of 'awe and wonder' and 'wow moments' seen throughout the day!”



Word Cloud: Children were asked to think of three words to use to describe their experience.

2.9 Health & Happiness (HH)

The following are a few key projects and activities on the programme which sought to support the following HH objectives for not only C&YP and families in Kent, but also key groups: SEND, C&YP in care, BAME, LGBTQ+, C&YP affected by domestic abuse and bereavement.

- o To support C&YP to engage or re-engage with activities that promote resilience and positive well-being.
- o To source and promote additional activities and opportunities for children and young people, relating to health and happiness.
- o To promote suitable engagement with children’s and family services and support groups.

Individuals with SEND

Youth group:

“Since the beginning of this year we have had a number of young people new to our youth group. Of the 9, 5 are diagnosed to be on the ASD spectrum (...) and all are totally happy and feel included. 2 boys are looked after. There is a variety of different races and religions represented too. I have had conversations with some parents who have been over the moon about the fact that their children have found a friendly place to be themselves”.

Thanet Wanderers

“We decided to set up a SEND hub as this is a huge passion of mine. I work with autistic children, and I also attended a special needs school and know first-hand how amazing a sport rugby is. I know rugby can help grow confidence, help with mental health, improve fitness and strength and work as part of a team. We’ve been inundated with parents/carers registering their children to attend the hub and a day before the first hub session there were 32 students registered, which is remarkable and beyond our wildest dreams.”

BSL

Supporting families with deaf members who have been especially isolated in covid. 30 C&YP altogether were able to go on trips and outings with others C&YP their age. "I was very enjoying to go BSL community's events because I was meeting lots of new and old faces for the first time and long time since we met. These activities were very good and encouraging for Deaf/hard of Hearing youths to go because this helps and develops our social, mental and communication skills! These skills are very massive important of their entire life!"

Nova Children's Project

Youth Club for YP with SEND. 93% of YP reported that the activity they took part in was very fun. 100% of YP reported that had enjoyed spending time with other young people. "Having time away from my parents and getting to know others is good. I do love my parents but it's nice to do things with other people." (YP)

LGBTQ+

Porchlight's BeYou project provided opportunities for YP through 1) Three Trans-Inclusive Swimming Sessions – 10 C&YP and their families and 30 contacts. 2) Intergroup meet ups with 12 Kent-based groups - supported 52 C&YP. 3) Three family activity days with parents and their children who would benefit from additional peer support. (approx. 15 children and their families with 45 contacts). 4) Pride Event summer 2022 (approx. 75 young people). Feedback included - "it's the first time they have been swimming for years" and "I felt safe"

Children affected by bereavement

Demelza - Bereaved Siblings Project - The project aimed to support C&YP whose sibling has died. A total of 25 individual children participated in the events and activities. Together there were 95 spaces used across these events, 45 for C&YP and 50 for other family members.

"My daughter spoke so animatedly about the day and how she had enjoyed mixing with others. She told me that she finds it hard at school, that she is shy and often doesn't join in. My daughter is keen to take part in more events and the impact of reconnecting over the summer is clear, extending in to how she feels about school, how we spend our time as a family and her feeling more relaxed and positive."(Parent/Carer, Sibling day at Bewl Water)

"Just wanted to say a massive thank you for yesterday. We absolutely loved it. Singing has always felt so cathartic. Music was a big part of [my Son's] short life."

ShivaNova

ShivaNova have delivered 180 culturally diverse music and dance workshops in Folkestone, Dover and Ashford, involving 2600 C&YP, 100 adults. 240 participants have SEND.

“The children absolutely loved the sessions. It created a real buzz around the school and they were all very excited afterwards”

Mental health and wellbeing – interventions (counselling & mentorship) **South Kent Mind**

Delivered wellbeing courses and activities aimed at improving the mental wellbeing of C&YP, supporting 250 C&YP overall. The three most common answers from participants to “the best aspects of sessions/activities” were: 1) Learning about anxiety, stress, coping with life, confidence, and self-esteem. 2) Improved confidence, improved self-expression, improved communication. 3) Learnt more about peers and friends, understand more about recognising mental health in others.

Salus Intensive Mentoring

Supporting 58 children and young people. 'I feel like I have come SO far with my anxiety. I feel happier, I was just so unhappy. I was so negative about myself and that's changed now. I've come so far.'

Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust

Reconnect funding sought to reduce the referral to treatment time for the C&YP's counselling service from 12 - 6 weeks. In the second quarter 2022 489 C&YP were reported to have received a Tier 2 (Targeted) Emotional Wellbeing Intervention (C&YP Counselling). 92.80% of children had closed referrals (and two or more contacts) with paired scores. 72.70% of children's paired scores show measurable improvement

Talents and Interests Grants (Jan- Sept 2022)

55 out of the 62 evaluation forms for T&I grants this year stated that they either agree or strongly agree that the activity has improved their resilience.

“Archery is just me. It lets me control what I am doing, and I do not have to think about anything else. I did not mix well before I started shooting but I think I have got a lot better.”

“I find the [gym membership] helps me release stress. It makes me feel better about myself physically and mentally.”

2.10 Sports, Activities and the Outdoors

Sports, Activities, and the Outdoors objectives were:

- To support children and young people in Kent to live healthier lifestyles and engage in sport and physical activity.
- To co-ordinate and promote a range of activities and opportunities for children and young people relating to sports, activities, and the outdoors.

Leisure Centres

40 leisure centres in every district of Kent ran a summer 2022 Reconnect offer. Offers varied according to the facilities and staffing available. Emphasis was given to helping those in most financial need (FSMs), children in care/care leavers, and those with SEND, although the expectation was there

would be a strong universal offer. 6271 C&YP and families were supported through leisure centre activities.

- 'I think it was a really positive offering, which really made a difference to local people.'
- "The free bus travel and really low-cost swimming has given my kids so much to do this summer, I made them go (swimming) at least once a week to meet up with their mates as I had to work throughout."
- "The housing development on which the Community Centre is situated, comprises of a range of families (with varying ages of children) including some who are housed in affordable accommodation through Golding Homes. It is felt that our offer had something for everyone."
- "The boys came together to play football and are now meeting up regularly for casual kickabouts. The foster carers that stayed have connected with other foster carers and now attend coffee mornings together where they can share experiences and advice."
- "A number of parents have told us that they would never have considered the gym for their children without the incentive of the discount or free membership being offered (the targeted groups) especially as some of these young people suffer with anxiety, ADHD, autism. The parents have told us how much using the gym has benefitted their children and, in some cases, given them some much needed rest bite."

Play Place

Play Place established a new outreach programme that focussed on working with children, young people (0-18 years old) and their families / communities. They achieved total contact numbers of 4,820 during the delivery of 120 sessions. The parks included areas that have high levels of rural, social, or financial deprivation. Parents, partners and C&YP have told us that they were pleased to be getting back outdoors and having something positive to do locally.

Kent Scouts - International Jamboree had 3,500 C&YP and 1,000 adults in attendance. This five-day residential event at Detling Showground would not have taken place in 2022 without grants from Reconnect and Headstart Kent, which enabled both additional activities to be provided and reduced the costs for some families to make attendance affordable, and thus in turn generate the attendee numbers needed to make the event viable.

Kent Scouts – Squirrels

Squirrels is the new Scout group for children aged 4-5 years. To accelerate the creation of dreys across Kent and open this opportunity for children who had missed early socialisation opportunities, Reconnect funded training for leaders and potential leaders in early years development and forest schools. The intention was to give confidence to potential leaders that they could meet the needs of younger children and deliver high quality sessions for participants.

The numbers of Squirrels dreys has increased, with an additional 13 well established groups and a further seven starting out. Four of these dreys were in areas of deprivation. However, several of the Squirrels drey leaders reported they had families come from lower deprivation areas as the families are travelling to attend.

There was a total of 189 attendees across all training sessions, the most popular being introduction to forest school, den building and stories training. It is estimated that during the life of the project it has reached 650-700 young people. Several leaders fed back they could adapt what they learned at the training they attended for the older sections (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers).

YO! Street Zone CIC

YO! STREET ZONE CIC ran a weekly indoor street football club in Margate, as well as two street football competition events in a local park. This enabled C&YP from low-income families to attend weekly football club sessions free of charge. The YP really appreciated that the club was in a sports hall which was in walking distance from their homes. Many vulnerable BAME YP attended regularly. Feedback includes:

- "The club helped me to get better at football and I also made some new friends"
- "I was able to get more confident"
- "It was great that I could attend for free because my family couldn't afford it."

The two street football competitions ran in Dane Park in Margate. These were family events and open to anyone to attend. The first competition was for 11-15 year olds, the second for 16+ year olds. 5-side teams competed against each other in heated 7 minute matches to find out which team has got what it takes to rule the court. Yo! also had their Panna Arena set up where anyone could get involved and play fun 1v1 panna matches. Over 80% of players attending this event were black or from other minority ethnic groups. Feedback includes:

- "It is moving to see so many young black people together. The work you are doing for the local community is truly amazing."
- "These events have been amazing for the community! It helps to put Margate on the map"
- "We didn't expect to see such a professional street football competition set up here in Margate."
- "I really enjoyed the food, the vibes and the people. Great day!"

Dance Buddies

'Activate Us' ran a dance buddies project for children aged 12 and under in the Dover area. The aims were to:

- Encourage children to return to face to face activities after the covid pandemic.
- Encourage children to enjoy a new activity with a friend or relative.
- Try a fun and popular dance form that could become a hobby.
- Introduce children to a different part of culture - musical theatre.
- Get children physically active again after the pandemic.

Up to 15 different children attended the sessions. Some children were already attending dance classes but wanted to try a different style and try with a friend. Other children had never attended a dance class before.

“The parent of one of the children who attended for the whole block of lessons said that her daughter had wanted to attend dance classes for a long time, but financially it was not possible for the family to pay for regular classes. This child will also attend the second block of classes starting in September as we have been able to refer her to another scheme supporting families with low incomes whose children want to take part in activities that are beyond their means. This has been a real success story for this girl.”

Children enjoyed various aspects of the class and when asked what they enjoyed most their answers varied from learning how to dance, having fun, being able to bring my friend, learning a routine from a musical and then performing it to their parents at the end of the lesson block.

Road Safety

The Riot Act arts company delivered road safety performances in schools, an opportunity schools and pupils have missed due to covid-19 related restrictions. 77 virtual sessions were delivered to 15,489 children in years 7 through to year 9, and 31 live performances to a further 5,662 children.

A survey was carried out with the pupil participants to understand the impact the performance had on their understanding and knowledge of road safety. Feedback was that most pupils had a greater understanding of road safety (76%).

1. *“I've learnt that you should come off your phone or pause your music when crossing the street. “*
2. *“that crossing the road without looking could be very lethal”*
3. *“Wait till it's safe to cross, use zebra crossing”*
4. *“I have learnt about peer pressure and peer influence and to always choose the right choices when crossing the road. I liked learning about road safety and lots of facts all about this!”*

90% of teachers reported that the presentation had been beneficial for students.

2.11 Friends, Family and Communities

During the pandemic many families enjoy quality time together, bringing them closer to one another and making them reassess their lifestyles. Nationally reports of families moving to new locations, working remotely, and enjoying greater flexibility fill the headlines. However, the pandemic also saw C&YP not able to see grandparents, missing their siblings or a parent in cases of separated households, exposed to higher levels of domestic violence, isolated from friends, and in too many cases, left anxious about social re-engagement. While activity to support some of these issues sits in other themes, particularly Health and Happiness, the Friends and Family theme has been tremendously important. It sought to quickly rekindle relationships, which we know are fundamental to wellbeing, confidence, learning and happiness. The objective was:

- To work with multi-agency partners, businesses, community organisations and groups to increase the number of local activities and opportunities available to C&YP in their communities.

Bus Passes

Free bus travel has been the backbone of the Reconnect programme. It has made engaging in other activities possible for many C&YP and families. It has supported YP to reconnect with friends and provided the opportunity for independence many would not ordinarily have during the summer holidays.

18 bus companies provided free travel to pupils in Years 6 to 13. 150,000 paper-based young person's bus passes were distributed in both summer 2021 and 2022. Free Family bus passes were distributed in summer 2021, focused on low-income families. All families with children on free school meals (benefits related) and those accessing "free for 2" early years places were issued electronic bus passes for Christmas 2021 (50,212 issued, 24,277 accessed). 34,000 families downloaded electronic bus passes in the summer 2022.

In summer 2022 Stagecoach and Arriva recorded over 1m Reconnect journeys between them. Unfortunately, we do not have travel data from the other companies that provided free travel.

Youth Reconnect

KCC's commissioned youth providers were able to provide an additional 769 sessions, which had in totality 11,573 attendees (including 4960 YP). Activities included sailing and street sports (Canterbury Academy), a residential trip to Wales, mountain biking (Pie Factory), laser quest (Salus), choir and theatre trip to London (The Gr@nd).

Ice-skating Events

416 C&YP enjoyed skating in the mobile ice rink which popped up in four locations. Positive feedback was received from attendees:

- "We all had fun on the ice rink, we laughed so much. Thanks for putting it on."

- “We all had a fantastic day, we all laughed and had fun skating. This is a day to remember, a special memory.”
- “A day of the holiday that will be remembered for the right reasons.”
- “It was great to get outside as a family and socialise with others.”
- “It is not an activity my daughter can do, due to no local skating rink and the costs involved, so she was able to participate in a new experience.”
- “My little one has never been ice skating before, and she really loved it.”
- “Spend time together - quality time.”
- “Nice to have something to do together for all the family and different aged children so positive.”

Canterbury Festival - We:Connect

18 Young people were part of the panel that created the event. 104 audience members made up of friends, family, students and college staff. 14 volunteers, 3 professional bands, 3 professional workshops, 6 student bands, 34 students performed, 8 students led workshops, and 42 participants in workshops.

“just wanted to say I’ve really enjoyed volunteering and being a part of this. It was really fun being able to have a part in event managing and being able to perform. Thank you for the cool opportunity and well done to everyone involved in organising” - Panel Member

Pillar Reconnect Festival, Folkestone

1500 YP participated in workshops. These took place as part of the enterprise challenge on NCS (National Care Service) over the summer. 15 YP formed the Youth Board which helped to take the ideas from the workshops and book the venue, bands etc. 350 YP attend the festival.

- “It was great being asked what we wanted the festival to look like, it was great” - Sophie, Workshop Participant
- “I feel like the skills I learned over the last few months will help me in the future” - Samuel, Youth Board Member
- “The Highlight of my summer” - Max, festival attendee

Big Summer Challenge

With 40 challenges, one for each day of the holiday, families could access resources to help keep their children occupied this summer. 1087 families registered to participate in the challenge, enabling them to upload photos and children’s work to the Big Summer Challenge portal, and be in with a chance to win one of 64 voucher prizes.

- “Wow Thank you so much! L loved taking part in this with her brothers! Was full of great ideas to fill the summer holidays! And not things that would cost a fortune being from a big family!”
- “Wow, I didn't expect us to win anything, that is great news! Thank you so much. My son is autistic, so he found it a bit hard to complete the tasks at times, he will be really happy to know that he also gets this as a reward for his hard work.”
- “That is wonderful news. Thank you. My granddaughter will be absolutely delighted. We had such fun doing these activities during the summer.”

- “The girls had lots of fun doing the different activities and were so pleased to have completed them all.”
- “The news still hasn't really sunk in yet. We are going to use it to buy some new resources. The children are so excited.”

Nearly 500 organisations were supported through locality grants 1 and 2, resulting in 36230 CYP supported. Examples of activities and their impact are:

Sevenoaks Scouts

Paddleboarding and activity day - “both of these events have been a huge success for us with a lot of positive feedback. We now have some great equipment and trained volunteers to continue to run these activities. Kemsing Scouts had their second event yesterday. We estimated about 200 people turned up which was beyond all expectations. It was great to see so many people from the village getting together and having fun.”

Allington Primary School

Song writing workshops with 57 children involved - 100% of children enjoyed the workshops.

- “Music session was well structured. Kept the children engaged and interested. It allowed all children to achieve success by collaborative work with peers leadership from teacher. Allowed SEN children to access session.”
- “WOW! This is the best music workshop that I have been part of. It was inclusive to all abilities including a SEND pupil. Every child was focussed inspired. A few told me that they wanted to go home and write their own music. would recommend this to everyone do. Thank you for making me enjoy a music session”

Free tennis/sports coaching

“We have coached over 30 children, and currently we are coaching around 15 per week. I have reduced the classes to a maximum of 8 children per class from 12 as I found the indoor space inadequate for 12. I have noticed a significant change in the children’s confidence and interaction within each other along with their physical improvement.”

"My 7 year old daughter loves attending the tennis sessions with Caroline. She has been able to grow in confidence not only with the sport, but also in responsibilities that Caroline gives her too. From the sounds of it she has learnt and developed many new skills and importantly has been given the time to do so as well, which in a school PE lesson is not quite as possible."
(Parent)

2.12 Economic Wellbeing

The following are a few key projects and activities on the programme which sought to support the following Economic Wellbeing objectives:

- To work with businesses and partner agencies to support young people to engage with future employment opportunities.
- To co-ordinate and promote a range of activities and opportunities for children and young people relating to economic wellbeing.

CSCS Cards

41 people attended four courses in separate locations, attaining 91 qualifications between them. 19 people have since found work. Everyone completing the course felt they were in a better place to find work. They all reported having improved their employability and their confidence.

Kickstart Programme

KCC employed 80 YP aged 18-24 via its Reconnect Kickstart offer. These YP were placed in schools, particularly special schools, to learn to be teaching assistants, with some training as administrators and caretakers. Schools provided the day-to-day management and support. Employability training was delivered by Runway Training. 51 have moved onto employment, training, or education, 36 of which have employment in a school.

Propel - The Mason Foundation

A county wide programme to support 60 young people with SEND into meaningful employment. Of the 9 young people that have secured employment, these roles range from paid to voluntary positions. They include General Assistant at American Golf, cleaning for various local and national companies, housekeeping at Premier Inn, several Teaching Assistant roles, within local educational settings, care work and volunteering at a local charity shop.

YMCA

This Locality Grant funded project has seen 12 young people gain Sitech qualifications (construction based), while on its cycle project 12 young people get their Level 1 technician qualification, meaning that they are qualified bike mechanics now. YMCA also ran a Job Club: "We had 23 young people that engaged regularly. 82% ended up with some form of work."

NEETs Bootcamp

Delivered by West Faversham Community Association this project has supported 74 YP who were NEET or at risk of being NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) through a variety of activities such as employability skills (CV writing, interview skills), L2 Food Safety, Health and Safety, Teambuilding with a reward of gym membership and opportunity to undertake work experience at the end.

"We got a 96% satisfaction rate from the parents, and we're talking probably 200 parents. 81% of the YP felt more confident going into an interview, and 91% of attendees felt they were better positioned to gain employment after completing the boot camp."

MyPocketSkill

This is a digital platform that connects YP to skills-building, money-earning opportunities with households and businesses. It supports savings goals using behavioural science-based “nudges” to build financial capability within the YP. The platform was marketed through secondary schools, with 282 YP “onboarding”, the process of registering with the platform and advertising their skills to potential employers. Household and Businesses form the demand side, with 142 onboarding, meaning they are looking to employ a YP to help them. Tutoring services prove to be of high demand, a natural fit with older YP supporting younger children. Reconnect commissioned Ella through this platform to be the photographer at the Celebration event.

Education Business Partnership (EBP)

The EBP was commissioned to support schools and businesses provide work placement opportunities for YP, something that had become more challenging during and post pandemic. The EBP supported 2230 students and engaged 442 new employers. An alternative blended model of placement was designed and delivered for some YP, recognising their needs and challenges in accessing genuine work placement opportunities.

- Mainstream placements - 1068 Students, 8 Schools
- Alternative/Blended - 1090 Students, 12 Schools
- SEND schools - 72 Students, 6 Schools
- Identified as vulnerable - 308 Students across 12 Schools

‘Thanks so much it was a huge success! I have been involved with Enterprise related activities for many years and I can't remember seeing such a high number of student engagement and positivity.’

"It was fantastic that despite not having a work experience placement, students were still able to develop their employability skills and get an insight into the world of work."

Case study - EHCP student placed at East Kent Railway Trust

‘He’s had a great placement; he’s got to know most of the staff and he’s really come out of his shell. They have said if he wants to carry on working there he can. He’s like a different young person after the challenges of lock down. He goes train spotting at the weekends and he knows all the volunteers here. The driver has taken him up and down the track in the cab’.

Be Your Own Boss (BYOB)

This project provided workshops for older YP who were considering starting their own business. 56 people started across 4 courses, with 49 completing. Through a ripple effect with learners passing on what they had learned to friends and family, BYOB estimate that an additional 50 people indirectly accessed the course material and would have been able to access their support. At the end of the grant there have been 15 new businesses started, 24 people have said they intend to start their business idea this year, and 11 existing small businesses said they felt they have improved their ability to run and manage their own business.

2.13 IDACI Reach

One key aim of the programme was to reach Kent's disadvantaged groups. IDACI analysis (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) was carried out on the postcode data provided by several key Reconnect activities, including participating Big Adventures, schools and leisure centres. Analysis shows:

- Overall in January 2021, 19% of pupils in Kent lived in the 20% most deprived LSOAs in England.
- Of the 581 schools involved in the Reconnect programme, 32% have a higher proportion of pupils from the most deprived areas when compared to Kent.
- Looking at the Big Writing Challenge, 57 of the 581 schools signed up (9.8%). Of these 57 schools, 13 (23%) were from the schools with a high proportion of pupils from the most deprived areas.
- As Big Adventures was targeted to schools serving disadvantaged communities, it is no surprise 85% of these schools were schools with a high proportion of pupils from the most deprived areas.

This analysis suggests that this aim has been achieved.

2.14 Feedback from Providers

The consensus among interviewees has been one of gratitude for the programme. Many have explained that they would have been unable to deliver their activities or unable to have the impact they had if not for the Reconnect funding they received. Other interviewees were grateful that they were considered for funding, believing that they would have been marginalised or forgotten about by other funding 'pots.'

There are signs that many activities funded under the Reconnect programme will continue, being self-sustaining, such as the new Squirrel Dreys. Inevitably some providers are seeking further funding to continue delivering their activities, but they recognise Reconnect was a lifeline, with the pandemic reducing charitable funds by 30%.

Several providers have commented on the value of having a cause, such as Reconnect, to galvanise the community behind. Reconnect is believed to have become a brand that is recognised and understood, and has helped providers place and explain their offer in a context. It has also helped providers link activity with others, and to sign post C&YP to other opportunities. This is true also of those in the children's workforce who have been able to encourage C&YP they are working with to engage in activities in their communities. This is illustrated particularly with the work of the Leisure Centres, who provided direct routes in for foster carers and social workers to discuss the needs of the C&YP they were supporting and how they could access opportunities at the Centres.

2.15 Social Media

Almost 4,000 people have followed the Reconnect Facebook page since the page's inception in July 2021 and, in this time, Reconnect posted and shared

over 400 stories, news, offers and relevant information for children, parents and families through their Reconnect Facebook page.

Figures show almost **780,000** people were reached from Reconnect's own offers, discounts, activities, and events including free bus passes, leisure centre discounts, benefits-related free school meal offers, free online educational tools and signposts to vital support and help for Kent families, particularly during holiday periods. Thousands more were reached through story and post sharing by Reconnect through tagging into partner event posts and mentioning Reconnect in their feedback.

The Reconnect Facebook and Instagram pages are still live as KCC recognise that at present, it is still a great channel through which to continue sharing news and information relevant to families with children.

2.16 National Awards

The Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme was a shortlisted finalist in two national awards; the Municipal Journal's Best Council Services Team, and the Local Government Chronicle's Best Children's Service. Unfortunately the programme did not win the awards, but it demonstrates the recognition the programme has achieved.

3. Evaluation of Delivery Against Key Parameters

3.1 Community Engagement

Reconnect was intended to be a Kent County Council led, community-based programme. The evidence above indicates this was successfully achieved.

Families said at the outset of the programme, "Keep it local". The Local Children's Partnership Groups (LCPGs) made that a reality for Reconnect, targeting the offer to their community's needs, using their local knowledge and networks to draw in organisations, clubs, individuals and businesses to deliver support. Through the locality grants, approaching 600 organisations provided opportunities and support to C&YP.

Delivery involved districts and a small number of parish councils, schools, sports and leisure clubs, community groups, charities, businesses, Kent Police, Kent Fire & Rescue Service and individuals. Over 50 organisations provided area/county level services through grants or commissions.

Every major leisure centre in Kent (40) participated in Reconnect in summer 2022.

3.2 Spending by Theme

One key parameter was to spend KCC's £10m contribution equally between the five Reconnect themes. It proved easier to spend against some themes than others, albeit in reality spend on much activity could be assigned to a few themes. For example, a family swimming session could be "friends and

family” or “sports, activities and the outdoors”. The table below sets out the spend by theme as at August 2022.

| | Total Spend (£) | % Spend |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Programme Costs | 420,857 | 5% |
| Economic Wellbeing | 1,205,821 | 15% |
| Friends, Family and Community | 1,385,728 | 17% |
| Health and Happiness | 2,148,872 | 26% |
| Learning Missed | 1,542,248 | 19% |
| Sport, Activities and the Outdoors | 1,426,830 | 18% |
| TOTAL | 8,130,356 | 100% |

The high demand for mentoring and counselling support for children and young people meant commissions assigned to Health and Happiness took the funding spent against this theme to 26% of the £8.1m spent as of 16 August 2022. It was more difficult to commission activity linked to the Economic Wellbeing theme due to sector challenges. This was more noticeable with the spend at LCPG level which saw 13% given to initiatives linked to Economic Wellbeing, and 25% toward Sports, Activities and the Outdoors. At a programme level action was taken to try to balance the spend, for example a specific grant round focused on Economic Wellbeing was undertaken, but unfortunately the number and quality of bids received resulted in only £72k of the £150k budget being awarded.

As per the key parameters, one quarter (£2.5m) of Reconnect’s budget was distributed via grant award rounds managed by LCPGs. Work was undertaken to streamline the grant awarding process, enabling three grant rounds to be run.

3.2 **Governance Structure**

The structure set out in the Cabinet paper of July 2021 was put in place:

- The **Reconnect Partnership Board** supplied strategic oversight, direction, and steering for the Reconnect programme. The Chair for this group was Nadeem Aziz, Dover District Council Chief Executive and was formed of a wide range of individuals from stakeholders such as the NHS, Kent Police, voluntary and community sector reps, schools and early years providers, Kent PACT, and other services within KCC.
- **Delivery Board** - The Programme Director, David Adams chaired this group. The delivery board met 2-weekly and considered recommendations for commissions from Theme Teams, new bids, connected the programme locally and countywide, brought a wide range of perspectives to enhance

proposals, reviewed performance of activities and programmes already underway and provided direction to services.

- **Assurance** was supplied for the programme through various teams, such as Corporate Assurance and Risk Team, Internal Audit, Health and Safety, Strategic Commissioning and Finance.
- **Political governance** was provided through the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children’s Services and Education and Skills, with reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny, and verbal reports by Cabinet Members to Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee.
- **The Corporate Management Team** received an update on Reconnect and individual Corporate Directors have engaged to ensure services in their directorates contributed.
- **Involvement of Young People** - a young persons’ engagement strategy was developed setting out Reconnect’s approach to engaging young people on a variety of levels. This recognised that our touch points for young people were the thousands of individuals, paid and volunteers, who are working week in, week out with C&YP, talking to them about their lives, hopes, ambitions, and wants. They have shaped their offers around the voices of the C&YP they work with, co-produced their activities. These individuals have provided views to the Programme Team, bid for funds to deliver activities request by C&YP, and feedback on the successes and challenges. A Reconnect Young Persons Steering Group was set up to provide advice, guidance, and strategic direction to the programme Delivery Board – ensuring that young people were involved, consulted, and represented in decision making. However, the fast pace of the programme meant too often decisions needed to be made without the input of this group. Young People served on the LCPG grant panels, evaluating applications. Young people from the Participation Team formed the judging panel for the Reconnect Community Awards to ensure these were truly reflective of views and values of young people themselves.

The Cabinet paper also set out the intention for there to be a small programme team, with support being provided to the programme through staff embedded in services (Communications, Finance, Strategic Commissioning), and via staff in all parts of the Council. This was achieved and highly valued by colleagues. Embedded staff had the support and expertise of others in their services to draw on. Colleagues from across KCC worked together in Theme Teams or via the Delivery Board, gaining insights into the work of other, their perspectives on issues and forming new working partnerships.

4. **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme**

- 4.1 The HAF programme was launched for the Easter 2021 school holidays amidst the ongoing uncertainty of lockdowns and restrictions and expanded each holiday period as more providers were funded and places became more widely available:

| Holiday Period | Places Offered | Take-up |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Easter 2021 | 2262 | 1861 |

| | | |
|-----------------------|------|------|
| Summer 2021 | 4748 | 4577 |
| Christmas 2021 | 3236 | 2836 |
| Easter 2022 | 5886 | 5175 |
| Summer 2022* | 7401 | 7107 |

*awaiting final monitoring from a few programmes so take-up will increase

- Easter 2022, 3624 more places offered than in 2021 with 3314 more children taking up a place.
- Summer 2022, 2653 more places offered than in 2021 with 2530 more children taking up a place.

4.2 The HAF Programme Team have seen first-hand during monitoring visits the exciting opportunities and activities available to children and young people, these have included water sports, horse riding, team sports, day trips to organised events, skateboarding, dance, arts and crafts and forming a rock band. Opportunities have also been taken to incorporate other activities through Reconnect, for example in summer 2022 CREST awards (science, technology, engineering and maths based) were available to Kent families to access. Through HAF programmes 1961 children participated in this opportunity.

4.3 Family activities have included recipe ideas to support cooking on a budget with ingredients included, family cooking sessions, outdoor pizza making, family BBQ's, family breakfasts and many more inspiring ideas.

4.4 Some programmes have also benefitted from funding or resources from supermarkets and other organisations and have used these to support families and enrich their programmes.

4.5 Feedback received from parents was that access to the HAF provision was further enabled by use of the free bus passes available during the summer holidays making access especially in rural areas easier.

5. Reconnect Community Awards and Celebration Event

5.1 The Reconnect Community Awards celebrated the fantastic work of everyone who had helped make Reconnect a success. These provided the opportunity for members of the public and service users to nominate individuals and organisations who had gone above and beyond to help reconnect C&YP to the programmes five aims, to recognise young volunteers and outstanding individuals. The participation Team in KCC were the judging panel, sifting through the many entries to shortlist finalists and winners. A celebration event was held on Thursday 6th October 2022, hosted by Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director – Children, Young People and Education with shortlisted finalists invited and attendees from a wide variety of organisations who had been involved in the delivery of some of the many activities over the previous year. The Chairman of the County Council presented the awards. Special recognition was also paid on the night to the local bus companies who had so generously supported free travel and to the Theme Leads who had worked tirelessly to drive forward the programme. The evening also included a film highlighting the Reconnect programme

<https://vimeo.com/752459732/1e6b61f074> and another regards Culture Camps from the summer of 2022 <https://vimeo.com/755184831/4b3099e6d8>

6. Reconnect Legacy

6.1 It is hoped that several projects, delivered as part of Reconnect, will continue in future years and form part of the programme's legacy:

1. Big Kent Writing Challenge – The KM Charity Team was pleased with how the competition went and are confident that they will be able to secure sponsorship to deliver the competition annually. A short film demonstrates this year's Awards ceremony <https://vimeo.com/752418952/8d9ce8eabff>.
2. Simon Langton Girls School were the winners of the first Reconnect Hackathon, with their proposal to create a platform for all Kent schools to share their thoughts and activities related to addressing climate change. A short video showcasing the event can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/693883059/09f001c4a7>. Pupils have launched their website www.biojoyversity.org which is supported by academics and professions from a wide range of backgrounds, as well as KCC's Environment Team. This will continue to grow and flourish, providing a voice for the County's C&YP to help achieve the change we need.
3. Maidstone School of Science and Technology (SST) was awarded £1,000 at the second Reconnect Hackathon event to deliver their idea of a wellbeing app. This will ask students how they are feeling and signpost to ideas and support for improving physical and mental health. Active Kent is supporting SST with this project and the app will continue beyond Reconnect. If successful, the app may be able to be replicated in other schools or settings.
4. Safety Pin – a project where QR codes are displayed in public places. Young people can scan the codes with their phones and be directed to a website containing links to information and support services. Reconnect funded the pilot of Safety Pin in West Kent but it is hoped that the project will be rolled out county-wide in the future.
5. Free holiday travel for young people – KCC Public Transport is exploring how such ticketing can be delivered in the future, both from a funding perspective and a technical perspective.
6. E-voucher system - Reconnect worked with Wonde Ltd to produce Reconnect e-vouchers and Holiday, Activities and Food Programme (HAF) vouchers. Services across KCC can create bespoke e-vouchers which can be used to provide specific support or access to an offer. Wonde has further developed its HAF platform, which is now used by several Local Authorities. Reconnect pulled services across KCC together to collectively commission an e-voucher provider. A new contract is in place with Wonde which is enabling service units to streamline and improve their processes for supporting children and families.

7. Playground has secured funding from the Arts Council and will continue delivering creative play sessions for under 2s in libraries and children's centres until March 2023. The Playground project has also secured Arts Council **National Portfolio Holder status**, which attracts 3 years of funding for 2023-26. The countywide rollout of the project has been hugely successful, as evidenced in the documentary the team had produced.
8. If the pilot of the Brighter Worlds project in West Kent is successful, it may be rolled out countywide. The animation and training package, that Reconnect funded the development of, will be available for future years for schools and settings to use.
9. Kent Scout's Squirrels Drays will continue to run following support to train volunteers and funding to set up the groups.
10. Due to the success of the first Lessons in a Box project, Visit Kent is delivering another Lessons in a Box project in September 2022. This project was STEM based and will give pupils in key stage 2 the opportunity to find out how engineering, science and technology have influenced some Kent attractions. These resources stay in schools to use with future cohorts.
11. Training and support has been provided to community groups on child safeguarding and bid writing. This will continue to support these groups with their ongoing work with C&YP.
12. Counselling support for young people Mental Health Support Teams will continue to be funded until August 2023 to ensure much needed support is accessible.
13. ShivaNova has also secured Arts Council **National Portfolio Holder status**, and thus funding for 2023-26. They plan to continue delivering in South Kent.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The evidence shows that the Kent community has enabled the Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People programme to deliver something for everyone. It delivered a wide range of opportunities to C&YP, covering all five areas of the programme, with an offer for all ages. Those involved continue to deliver week in, week out to the County's C&YP and their efforts cannot be commended highly enough. Many C&YP are in a better place because of the programme; being fitter, happier, less isolated, more connected. There is still more that needs to be done over the years ahead to ensure the pandemic does not have a lasting detrimental impact on the County's C&YP, but the prompt action of the Council, through the creation of Reconnect, has gone some way to ameliorating the effects for many C&YP.

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| <h2>9. Recommendation</h2> |
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9.1 County Council is asked to note the report.

10. Background documents

21/00044 - Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?id=2489>

11. Contact Details

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