Appendix 5: Executive Summary of the Consultation Results Report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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