

From: Dr Anjan Ghosh, Director of Public Health

To: Diane Morton, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Subject: **Public Health Service Transformation Programme – Physical Activity Service for Older People**

Decision Number: 25/00038

Classification: Unrestricted

Previous Pathway of Report: Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee

Future Pathway of Report: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This document outlines a proposed decision regarding the commissioning and implementation of a new physical activity service model for older people in Kent, aimed at enhancing health and wellbeing while reducing the risk of falls. This will replace the current offer, which is known as the 'Postural Stability Service'.

The proposed new commissioning/service model aims to better serve Kent's changing population and will:

- Offer support to those aged 50 and older
- Provide more classes in more locations across Kent (particularly in communities that would benefit the most), include shorter, more intensive courses to increase the course completion rate and enable more people to access the service.

The estimated cost to KCC Public Health from 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2029 is £507,800.

The new commissioning/service model will be delivered through a Grant Scheme (administered and managed by Active Kent) which is planned to be fully mobilised with services starting no later than 1 April 2026.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health is asked to:

- (a) **APPROVE** the commissioning and implementation of a new service model for physical activity for older people
- (b) **AGREE** to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Active Kent to administer the grants through delivery organisations
- (c) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to review and

agree the annual MOU with Active Kent until 31 March 2029, providing it is on similar terms

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Public Health to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Since 2015, Kent County Council (KCC) have commissioned a physical activity service for older people, known as the 'Postural Stability Service'.
- 1.2. There is a well-established and evidenced understanding of the need for all adults, including older and frail adults, to maintain physical activity for as long as possible to delay the onset of disability, long-term health conditions, and remain independent as long as possible.
- 1.3. Regular physical activity contributes to the key determinants of healthy ageing:
 - Good physical and mental function
 - Opportunities for social interaction
 - A sense of control over, and the responsibility for one's own health and well-being
 - Managing or coping with disease symptoms and functional limitations.
- 1.4. In Kent, 22.1% (2023/24) of adults are physically inactive ([Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)), and the hospital emergency admission rate for falls of people aged 65 and older in Kent is 1,895 per 100,000 (2023/24) ([Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)).
- 1.5. Under the Care Act, KCC is obliged to provide or arrange for services, facilities or resources which would prevent, delay, or reduce individuals' needs for care and support. Within the Care Act statutory guidance, secondary prevention or early intervention, is defined as more targeted interventions aimed at individuals who have an increased risk of developing needs, where the provision of services, resources or facilities may help slow down or reduce any further deterioration or prevent other needs from developing.
- 1.6. KCC also has a statutory duty to improve the health of the population and reduce health inequalities (Health and Social Care Act 2012). KCC receive a ringfenced Public Health Grant to meet this statutory duty and annually report to Government on how this Grant has been allocated.
- 1.7. Physical activity services for older people supports the Council to achieve priorities set out in 'Framing Kent's Future' and 'Securing Kents Future' and

plays a vital role in ensuring the effective and timely provision of preventative services which can help meet key priorities:

- Play a key role in the delivery of early intervention and prevention strategies
- Reduction in health inequalities
- Reduction in the number of emergency hospital admissions due to falls in older people
- Increase in the percentage of adults who are physically active
- Increase strength, balance and exercise education and activities for older people
- Enable people to remain independent for longer, enjoy a better quality of life and delay the onset of disability

1.8. KCC is currently developing in collaboration with key stakeholders a proposed 'Adult Social Care Prevention Framework'. Ageing Well is outlined as a priority area for future action.

2. Current Service Overview

2.1. The Postural Stability Service commenced in 2015. In East Kent, the service was provided by Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT) (ceased in March 2025, as per section 2.8), and in West Kent by Involve.

2.2. The service is for anyone aged 65 or older and those aged 50-64 years who are judged by a health professional to be at higher risk of falling. It is accessed through a self-referral which can be made through the [KCC website](#), or via a referral from a health professional.

2.3. The service offers a course of one-hour classes which are held weekly, in-person, and led by an instructor. The length of the course is up to 36 weeks (eight months). In 2024/25, there were a total of 14 courses delivered (nine courses in the East of Kent and five in the West.)

2.4. The service aims to:

- Improve balance strength, mobility and confidence to reduce the risk of falling
- Increase knowledge and awareness of causes of falls, and potential resultant injury, and the benefits of exercise and good nutrition
- Reduce hospital emergency admissions due to falls.

2.5. In July 2023, KCC initiated the Public Health Service Transformation Programme (PHSTP). The programme responded to a series of strategic developments, challenges, and opportunities in the commissioning landscape, and is underpinned by an evidence-based review of all internal and external Public Health funded services and grants.

- 2.6. As part of the PHSTP, a review of the current Postural Stability Service identified that while the current service is clearly valued by those who use it, it is not reaching enough people. Circa 500 people start the course each year and on average 50% do not finish the classes, reasons for this include the length of course and accessibility. It also identified that there is a cohort of adults aged 50 and older who could potentially use and benefit from this service.
- 2.7. The current Postural Stability Service contracts are due to end March 2026 and a new service arrangement is required to be in place by 1 April 2026.
- 2.8. In 2024 a decision was taken by KCHFT to cease this arrangement and not continue to offer this service post March 2025. This means that until a decision is made on the future of the Postural Stability Service, and the new model is in place, people in East Kent are being signposted to other providers of local activities via links on the KCHFT [Falls Prevention Service](#) webpage. This includes links to KCC's '[Get moving](#)' webpage, [Everyday Active Kent](#), [Age UK](#), KCHFT "[One You Walk and Talk](#)" and [Active Kent and Medway](#), where people can see what is on offer in their district. People also have the option to receive a DVD of exercises from KCHFT or view an online (internet) exercise class.

3. Kent County Council and Key Partner Strategies

- 3.1. **Council's Strategy 2022-2026 Framing Kent's Future** - Physical Activity Service's for Older People supports the Council to achieve the following priorities set out in the Council's Strategy 2022-2026 'Framing Kent's Future':
- Priority 1: Levelling up Kent
 - To see significant improvements in the economy, connectivity, educational attainment, skills and employment rates and public health outcomes in deprived communities in coastal areas so that they improve faster than the rest of Kent to reduce the gaps
 - To work with our partners to hardwire a preventative approach into improving the health of Kent's population and narrowing health inequalities
 - Adopt an unrelenting focus on reducing cardiovascular disease in our population by continuing to focus on healthier behaviours, stopping smoking, taking up exercise and healthier eating.
- 3.2. **Securing Kents Future** - Physical Activity Service's for Older People supports the Council to achieve the priorities set out in Securing Kents Future, by improving balance strength, mobility and confidence leading to reduced risk (reduction) of falling, which will decrease the demand and costs in Health and Social Care.
- 3.3. **Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy** - Physical Activity Service's for Older People supports the Kent & Medway Integrated Care System to achieve the following outcomes set out in the Integrated Care Strategy:

- Helping the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society to improve their physical and mental health; with a focus on the social determinants of health and preventing people becoming ill in the first place
- Helping people to manage their own health and wellbeing and be proactive partners in their care so they can live happy, independent and fulfilling lives; adding years to life and life to years.

3.4. **Moving Together – Physical Activity Strategy 2023-2027** - Physical Activity Service's for Older People contribute towards the Kent Moving Together Strategy, to achieve the following objectives:

- Creating partnerships that enable everyone to benefit from an active lifestyle
- Connecting Communities – Making it easier for people to be active locally and using sport and physical activity's unique ability to make places better to live in and bring people together, particularly where inequalities are greatest
- Active Environments – Creating and protecting places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active
- Supporting Sport – Supporting local organisations to better understand their community and to deliver activities that are appropriate to people's needs and motivations.

3.5. **Adult Social Care Strategy 2022-2027 – Making a difference every day** - Physical Activity Service's for Older People contribute towards Making a difference every day as the service supports people to "*feel empowered, resilient and develop their independence*".

3.6. **Adult Social Care Prevention Framework 2025-2035** - currently in development

4. Public Health Service Transformation Programme (PHSTP)

- 4.1. In July 2023, KCC commenced the Public Health Service Transformation Programme (PHSTP) which included the Postural Stability Service.
- 4.2. The Programme required the evaluation of existing service models and collaboration with key stakeholders to identify recommendations for future service delivery.

5. Market, Stakeholder and Public Engagement

- 5.1. As part of the PHSTP, extensive engagement activities have been conducted, including consultations with stakeholders and the public.
- 5.2. This included:

- **Market/Stakeholder Engagement** - Between February – August 2024, KCC held two engagement workshops with key stakeholders (including service providers). Those in attendance included representatives from 57 different organisations
- **Public/Stakeholder Engagement** - In May/June 2024, engagement was carried out by two organisations on KCC's behalf (31Ten and Active Kent). They had conversations with older adults and organisations who have an interest or stake in services for older adults who have issues with strength, balance, and activity. Participants were from all over the county and included people from areas where people are more inactive. Those living in deprived communities (in Thanet, Folkestone and Hythe, Gravesham, and Swale) were also represented. A total of 375 people shared their views
- **Public Consultation:** On the 6 November 2024, a six-week consultation was launched and ran until the 17 December 2024. The consultation invited service users, residents and other interested parties to provide views on the proposed changes to KCC's physical activity services for older people. There was significant activity to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation, including media releases, posters, advertising via social media and promotion via partner agencies. There were 141 responses to the consultation. A copy of the consultation report is included in Appendix A and has been published on the Let's Talk Kent website

A 'You Said, We Did' document has also been developed (Appendix B) and uploaded on the Let's Talk Kent website, which outlines how proposals have been further developed, taking into account feedback from the Public Consultation.

- 5.3. All of the feedback gathered has been analysed and highlighted the need for services to be more flexible, accessible, and better promoted.
- 5.4. Key insights from all of the engagement activity indicated that older adults require varied activities, social interactions, and local availability of services. This has been used to develop the proposed new commissioning/service model, which is detailed in Section 6 below.

6. Commissioning/Service Model

- 6.1. As part of the PHSTP, a proposed new commissioning/service model has been developed to better serve Kent's changing population, across the whole of the county.
- 6.2. The new approach will include providing more classes in more locations across Kent, particularly in communities that would benefit the most. It is proposed to offer support to those aged 50 and older and include shorter, more intensive courses of 12 weeks (instead of 32 weeks) to increase the course completion rate. This will enable more people to get onto the course and complete it and it is anticipated that this will fit better with peoples' lifestyles and commitments outside of the course.

- 6.3. Activities will continue to promote and improve strength and balance and accessed via self-referral or via a health or care professional.
- 6.4. Exit plans will include signposting/referring to alternative activities/interventions for people who require on-going support after the 12-week period.
- 6.5. The new service will aim to:
- Expand the age range of participants and include more older adults by offering support to those aged 50 and older
 - Improve access to information
 - Deliver helpful and enjoyable activities, that are accessible
 - Increase the number of classes offered across Kent, particularly to underserved groups
 - Continue to help older adults to increase and maintain their strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination in a place and time that suits them
 - Reduce inactive lifestyles such as sitting too much for too long, to help people to remain independent for longer, enjoy a better quality of life, and delay and in some cases prevent the onset of disability.
- 6.6. Instead of commissioning two organisations to provide the service in the East and West of the county it is proposed services are delivered via a new grant system. This will allow various organisations to apply for grant funding to provide evidenced based, desirable local activities closer to where people live, contingent on meeting service requirements. This approach aims to foster community-led projects and increase service reach.
- 6.7. The new service will be promoted by the successful organisations and supported by the Kent Integrated Care System (ICS). The activities would be featured in the Active Kent and Medway directory of available services within each Kent district for public information.
- 6.8. The Grant system will allow organisations to apply for funding for a three-year period. However, services will be reviewed annually to make sure that the activities being provided are meeting the service requirements and needs of older people.
- 6.9. Joint applications from groups of organisations (consortiums) who may wish to provide services will be welcomed. In these instances, the funding may be increased. Applications from community-led projects or services will be encouraged.
- 6.10. Organisations will be expected to seek additional funding from other funding sources, for their project to increase capacity, reach and sustainability.
- 6.11. When deciding to award funding, those applying will be required to detail how they would address and deliver against the desired key aims. This information will be reviewed by a grants awarding panel.
- 6.12. Grant Applicants will be expected to capture data and provide evidence to demonstrate they are supporting their local communities to get more active, move more, and any benefits relating to health and wellbeing.

- 6.13 Alongside the delivery of the new model, KCC's Public Health Research Team will be undertaking an evaluation of the new approach to assess the impact and effectiveness of the 12-week course and the use of community grants for delivery of the service via community capacity building. Findings from this will inform future commissioning.

7 Options Considered but Rejected

- 7.6 **Keep current service the same** - Keeping the current service model was concluded as a non-viable option, due to the service currently having a high drop-out rate attributable in part to the length of the programme at 36 weeks, and the age/health/vulnerability of the target population. The current service is unable to meet current need and is unable to support enough people to have a significant impact on falls.
- 7.7 **Discontinue all elements of the service** - Decommissioning the service was concluded as a non-viable option, due to frailty and falls being a key issue in Kent. Physical activity services for older people supports the Council to achieve priorities set out in Framing Kent's Future and Securing Kent's Future and the Kent and Medway Integrated Care System to achieve key outcomes set out in the Integrated Care Strategy. The service plays a key role in supporting KCC to reduce health inequalities and improve the health of the Kent population.

8 Commercial Implications

- 8.1 The contract for the current Postural Stability Service is due to expire 31 March 2026.
- 8.2 In advance of this date, we are seeking approval to commission the new physical activity service for older people, as per the proposed new commissioning/service model detailed in Section 6.
- 8.3 It is proposed to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Active Kent to administer and manage the grant process and ongoing management of the service.
- 8.4 KCC Public Health currently has an MOU in place with Active Kent, which is reviewed and agreed annually. It is proposed to include the requirement to administer and manage the grant process and ongoing management of the service as part of that MOU.
- 8.5 Active Kent will administer and manage the grant process in line with KCC's Grant Framework, detailed in the [Civil Society Strategy](#).

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The new service length will be:
- Annual MOU with Active Kent, which will be reviewed and agreed annually. This approach will be in place until 31 March 2029. Findings from the evaluation will inform the future commissioning approach to be implemented after this period.

- 9.2 The estimated cost to KCC Public Health from 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2029 is £507,800. This will be funded from KCC Public Health's ringfenced grant.

| Financial Year | KCC Public Health Funding |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| 26/27 | £169,400 |
| 27/28 | £181,700 |
| 28/29 | £156,700 |
| Total | £507,800 |

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 It is proposed to enter a MOU with Active Kent to administer and manage the grant process and ongoing management of the service. The MOU will outline the requirement and include terms which would enable KCC Public Health to clawback funding which had not been spent for agreed purposes or which was misapplied.
- 10.2 Legal and Commercial advice will be sought when setting up the MOU (including reviewing the terms of the agreement) with Active Kent and as and when required.

11 Equality Implications

- 11.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken and updated following the public consultation (Appendix C).
- 11.2 The EqIA found the impact of this work to be positive. The new offer aims to reach more people and improve access to activities closer to where people live. Services will play a key role in supporting KCC to reduce health inequalities, via increasing provision of local and timely service access to exercise classes especially for at-risk groups.
- 11.3 The EqIA will be regularly reviewed.

12 Data Protection Implications

- 12.1 A new Data Protection Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken and completed during service mobilisation.
- 12.2 Active Kent will also be required to undertake a Data Protection Impact Assessment during mobilisation and support the completion of KCC's Data Protection Impact Assessment.

13 Management of Works

- 13.1 The management and implementation of the new service model will be delivered by KCC Public Health and Integrated Commissioning. Progress will be monitored through internal governance arrangements.
- 13.2 KCC Public Health and Integrated Commissioning plan to update Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee of progress.

14 Conclusion

- 14.1 Since 2015, Kent County Council (KCC) have commissioned the Postural Stability Service. The service plays a vital role in ensuring the effective and timely provision of preventative health and wellbeing services and can help meet key priorities.
- 14.2 The Postural Stability Service contract is due to end 31 March 2026.
- 14.3 As part of the PHSTP, market, stakeholder and public engagement has been undertaken on this service. All responses and contributions from engagement have been analysed and informed the new proposed physical activity service for older people.
- 14.4 The proposed new model aims to better serve Kent's changing population and will:
- Offer support to those aged 50 and older
 - Provide more classes in more locations across Kent (particularly in communities that would benefit the most), include shorter, more intensive courses to increase the course completion rate and enable more people to access the service.
- 14.5 The new commissioning/service model will be delivered through a Grant Scheme (administered and managed by Active Kent) which is planned to be fully mobilised and services starting no later than 1 April 2026.

15 Recommendations

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health is asked to:

- (a) **APPROVE** the commissioning and implementation of a new service model for physical activity for older people
- (b) **AGREE** to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Active Kent to administer the grants through delivery organisations
- (c) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to review and agree the annual MOU with Active Kent until 31 March 2029, providing it is on similar terms
- (d) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

16 Background Documents

- 16.1 Updates on the Public Health Service Transformation Programme have been presented at each Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee since its inception.

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