

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

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

DECISION NO:

25/00038

For publication *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision: Public Health Service Transformation Programme - Physical Activity Service for Older People

Decision:

- (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.

Background

Since 2015, Kent County Council (KCC) have commissioned a physical activity service for older people, known as the 'Postural Stability Service'.

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.

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).

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.

The Service is delivered in recent years by two organisations. In East Kent, the service was provided by Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT) (ceased in March 2025), and in West Kent by

Involve.

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.

As part of the PHSTP, market, stakeholder and public engagement has been undertaken. All responses and contributions from engagement has been analysed and informed future service delivery.

Reason for Decision:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

As part of the PHSTP, a new commissioning/service model has been developed to better serve Kent's changing population.

The new approach will include providing more classes in more locations across Kent, particularly in communities that would benefit the most. It will offer support to those aged 50 and older and include shorter, more intensive courses 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.

Activities will continue to promote and improve strength and balance and accessed via self-referral or via a health or care professional.

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.

Instead of commissioning two organisations to provide the service in the East and West of the county, services are to be 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be entered into with Active Kent to administer and manage the grant process and ongoing management of the service.

How the proposed decision meets the priorities of New Models of Care and Support as set out in "Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy 2022 – 2026"

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.

How the proposed decision supports Securing Kent's 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.

How the proposed decision supports the 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.

Financial Implications

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.

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

Equalities Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken and updated following the public consultation.

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.

The EqIA will be regularly reviewed.

Data Protection Implications

A new Data Protection Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken and completed during service

mobilisation.

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.

Legal Implications

A MOU will be entered into 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.

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.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be discussed at the Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee on 8 July 2025 and the outcome included in the paperwork which the Cabinet Member will be asked to sign.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

- **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.
- **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.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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signed

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date