

You said, We did: Postural Stability Service

June 2025

Between 6 November – 17 December 2024, Kent County Council (KCC) held a six-week public consultation on the proposed service redesign for the Postural Stability Service. Postural stability means how well someone can control and keep themselves stable to help them move and keep their balance. The consultation invited people who use the service (service users), residents and other interested parties to provide views.

There were four proposals that KCC consulted on. These were:

- Reducing the current course from up to 36 weeks to 12-weeks.
- Extending the service to more adults aged over 50.
- Including more classes in more locations across Kent to reach communities that will benefit the most.
- Giving more organisations a chance to apply for grants of up to £3,000 a year.

We proposed these changes because of feedback from service users and what we know about the way the population in Kent is changing which suggests that we need to update the current offer. We want to make these changes so the service can be used by more people, more locally to them, and earlier in life so they are able to get the most use out of the help on offer to stay well, fit, mobile and independent for longer.

Rather than make savings, we proposed delivering the service differently. The current budget for the service would remain the same and there would be no savings associated with the proposed changes to the service.

There was a total of 141 responses to the consultation. 116 were received online and 25 were paper or emailed questionnaires.

Most consultees were white (94%), female (75%), older (56+ years), retired (71%), and 52% of people reported having a disability. 46% had used the service in the past, and 47% had never used the service.

Prior insight was gathered from public and stakeholders' sessions before the consultation. Stakeholders included NHS services and current organisations who provide this service as well and organisations representing community and voluntary organisations. This feedback has been considered alongside the results of the consultation questionnaire.

Feedback suggests that consultees largely agreed with the following, but had some concerns, too:

- KCC should extend the service to people at a younger age (69%), with 75% in favour of those from age 50 being able to attend.
- Mixing age groups may not work as they may require different things from the service (prevention vs. rehabilitation) and/or progress at different paces.
- KCC should consider the social support people enjoy from these sessions and concerns that these proposals may take that away.
- 89% of consultees agreed that we should have services (classes), in those Kent communities and areas that most need them.
- 51% of consultees agreed that a 12-week course would help more people to benefit from attending a class, with 20% of these currently using or have used the service in the past.
- 12 weeks may not be long enough for service users to benefit / see real behaviour change.
- There is a desire for continuation / longer term solutions to be offered to those who need it once the 12-week sessions are complete.
- 67% of consultees supported the funding proposal of up to £3,000 annually with options to seek additional funding from elsewhere, and the flexibility of awards exceeding £3,000 as deemed appropriate.

Table 1 shows the themed responses from the consultation and KCC's response to these. Where relevant, prior insight from stakeholders is mentioned to compliment or contrast views from the public consultation.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in and helped to promote the consultation. KCC commissioned an independent organisation, Lake Market Research, to analyse the feedback and produce the consultation report, which has been published on our website: [Postural Stability Service | Let's talk Kent](#).

Table 1 Summary of themed comments from consultation and KCC responses.

Theme	KCC Response
Age Consultees gave their views about the inclusion of adults below the age of 65. - Over two thirds of consultees (69%) agreed that we should include adults below the age of 65. - Three quarters (75%) agreed to extend service to adults aged 50 and older. Some consultees noted that mixing age groups may not work as they may require different things from the service (prevention vs. rehabilitation) and/or progress at different paces.	KCC agrees with consultees on the need to extend this service to those below the age of 65. We recognise the concerns raised about mixing age groups. To address these concerns, we would encourage providers to consider how they will manage mixed age and abilities as part of their application process. Providers will be expected to measure fitness of participants before and after a course of classes. This will enable tailoring of class format and content for attendees for example, providers could: - Do classes for different age groups/abilities on varied dates and times. - Adapt exercises within classes for mixed abilities. - Use equipment that can be adjusted for different abilities.
Service promotion Some consultees commented that the service was relatively unknown and needed to be more widely promoted. The advertisement of the service to those who may benefit from the service was mentioned in comments.	KCC recognises that new service providers may need guidance on how to promote and market their services. We will: - Give advice, guidance and support to providers to encourage and increase targeted promotion of this service. - Encourage providers to advertise their courses in their area, making sure professionals who refer know about the service. We would recommend advertising on the Active Kent and Medway website.

Theme	KCC Response
Funding activity after the course has finished Some consultees mentioned that they would like financial assistance to continue activities after the course had finished.	KCC recognises that people would like to continue their journey to becoming more active. We would encourage people to look outside of the service once they have completed the course. This is to enable more people to benefit from the course. At the end of the course, people will be provided with information about other activities which may also provide opportunity for social interaction.
Location In comments, consultees spoke about how transport to locations may impact them because of proposals. Common themes included: • Requests for locations to be easily reached by public transport routes. • Service providers need to consider people living in rural locations and how they will get to where the service is provided. • Service providers should consider known community locations.	KCC would encourage service providers to consider well-known, local and accessible locations to host their courses when applying for grants. KCC will consider service providers' approaches to addressing transport barriers.

Theme	KCC Response
Course length Just over half (51%) of consultees agreed that a 12-week course would help more people to benefit from attending a class. In comments, consultees had differing points of view on the length of the course: • Some felt that a course of 12 weeks was not long enough. • Others felt that a 36-week course was too big a commitment. • Some mentioned that there should be an option for staying on the course beyond 12 weeks, for example up to 20-24 weeks.	KCC recognises that 49% of consultees did not agree with this proposal. Our proposals were developed to respond to population changes in Kent. We want to make these changes so the service can be accessed by more people, locally and earlier in life. This is so they can get maximum use out of our offer and stay well, fit and mobile for longer. By reducing the length of course, we are being more responsive to the needs of a changing population. KCC notes the variance in preference of how long the course will run for. We will continually evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the proposed new service. This will include looking at outcomes and the impact of reducing the course to 12 weeks.
Funding We asked consultees for their views on funding proposals: • Two thirds (67%) welcomed grants over 3 years for up to £3,000 per year. • Seven out of ten consultees (71%) agreed to joint applications. • Over half (57%) agreed to encouraging organisations who could provide the service to seek additional funding from elsewhere.	In the consultation, most (but not all) of the consultees who answered questions about funding were residents across Kent. 73% of responses for these questions came from residents. 3% came from organisations including NHS and community and voluntary groups. KCC acknowledges the support from consultees for the funding proposals. We also acknowledge that fewer supported encouraging organisations to seek additional funding from elsewhere. KCC will provide an event for organisations (showcasing what support is available for them and to including advice on additional funding)

Theme	KCC Response
Funding (continued). - Some consultees also said they wanted to see accountability for the proposed grant system to make sure money is spent appropriately. Prior insights from stakeholders before the consultation told us they wanted to see: - Long-term project funding to deliver the service sustainably. For many smaller organisations, funding for longer periods of time offered a lifeline and meant they could feel financially secure / could plan their business activity more effectively.	Some organisations who can potentially provide the service gave us feedback (prior to consultation) that they would welcome longer-term funding periods to give them more stability over a longer period of time. KCC acknowledges the challenge many organisations face related to workforce planning and funding arrangements. As far as possible, KCC will work with organisations who could potentially provide this service to give assurance over longer periods to facilitate the sustainability to develop and keep this service. Additional engagement will be planned with potential community organisations who could provide this service to gain more insights into funding requirements. We will evaluate the effectiveness of using community grants for this service in both the short term and long term.
Application process We asked consultees how the grant process would work. They told us through comments that: - Applications for grant funding should be widened to attract local small businesses, sole traders, giving the smaller organisations a chance to deliver. - Applications must be simple and easy to complete with relevant information (including screening for applicants).	KCC understands that for organisations bidding to become providers for the first time, the application process could be daunting and resource intensive. KCC's offer to organisations who could provide this service includes: - We will review our application process to see where we can make this more streamlined. - We will look at promoting the application process in places where organisations new to the bidding process may look. - We will commit to engagement with potential organisations to understand where best to advertise.

Theme	KCC Response
Application process (continued). Insights from stakeholders prior to engagement told us that: They would welcome support around staff training.	We will work with established and organisations that are new to this service to understand how we can make the application process as easy to follow as possible. We understand that during the contract, support may be required to help with our requirements for reporting. We will provide advice and guidance on how best to do this ahead of bidding, so that organisations are aware of our expectations.
New service name suggestions We asked consultees for a new name for the service and to give views on the terms ‘active and ‘later life’/ 68 consultees gave comments. Names suggested included: • Get up, get active, get healthy • Strength & Balance • Forever Fit • Forever Active • Active Ageing • Moving More • Strength, balance, and mobility Consultees also mentioned concerns over the phrase ‘later life’ as this may put people off and not appeal to those who were 50 years and older. Consultees also saw the inclusion of the term ‘active’ in the service name as more positive.	KCC would like to thank consultees for their contributions and suggestions for a new service name. We will consider the suggested names and announce the new service name if and when changes to the service are agreed.