



Real life stories

How Live Well Kent has changed peoples lives

Live well 
Community wellbeing

On behalf of



by

shaw trust



Porchlight

What is Live Well Kent?

At Live Well Kent we help you improve your mental and physical health and wellbeing by connecting you to local services and organisations that can help you with everyday living such as employment, housing and financial support as well as introducing you to groups and courses to support you with your mental health and wellbeing.

Our team of Community Navigators and Live Well Kent Volunteers will make sure you have access to the widest possible range of support and services to meet your needs.

We want to help you live well and feel good again.

Live Well Kent funds a number of Specialist interventions delivered by a number of local providers as well as supporting people to access services in their local community.

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Steve's story

I have been receiving support from Live Well Kent for the last year and I wanted to share my positive experience.

I have several long term health conditions (physical and mental) and was struggling with life. I was stuck in a system that would not help me. I had been repeatedly dismissed, misdiagnosed and mistreated by the people I had trusted. Unable to work, my debts spiralled out of control and I was forced to sell my home. I had no confidence in myself or the NHS. A few months after I lost my home, I lost a beloved pet which broke my heart. A couple of months after this, my partner of almost three years ended our relationship. This had a catastrophic effect on me. 2019 was the worst year of my life!

It was suggested that I self-refer to Live Well Kent. I was reluctant to do so because I had explored many other avenues and always ended up being told I needed to speak to someone else, somewhere else. I was ready to give up altogether and had started to make plans to end my life.

I have received an incredible amount of support over the last year and I cannot emphasise enough the impact it has made on my life.

I would say I had ticks in every box and needed help with just about everything!

Ben, my Employment Adviser, provided support with my mental health and the employment side of things. I understand the ultimate goal is to get clients working but it took many months before I was ready to think about this! He has always made me feel valued and treated me with respect. I have spoken to him about my problems at length and he has always made time for me. Ben helped me to apply for Universal Credit and referred me to someone who helped to apply for Personal Independence Payment. I could not have done this alone!

Ben helped me apply for several jobs and prepare for interviews, he text me to wish me luck and checked in to see how I was afterwards. As someone who really struggles to regulate their emotions (I have Borderline Personality Disorder), this really helped me to stay grounded.

I have recently been offered a job as a Peer Support worker at a Psychiatric Hospital. Ben sent the job description to me and I never would have considered such a role but now I am really looking forward to it and I think I will do a good job.

To date, there have been 4 job offers on the back of the work that I have done with Ben! The recent pandemic stopped me from starting my job as I am classed as clinically vulnerable but I hope to be starting a new job very soon! Ben helped me apply for jobs with the DWP and their application process was complex and intimidating. To be successful for two different DWP roles is a huge achievement and a team effort. I think I would have given up at the first assessment activity if applying without support! Ben has helped my confidence to grow so much over the last year!

I have also received a huge amount of support from Reid, my Community Navigator. He has been in regular contact with me and is always positive and encouraging. He has introduced me to several coping strategies and has sent me lots of links and things to try. After my breakup, I was able to access some helpful videos from TED Talks. Thank you Reid so much for this! Reid referred me for some housing advice at the end of last year which was very much appreciated and more recently I have been working with a Bereavement and Loss Counsellor (Julie) who makes up part of the Live Well Kent network and has been amazing. I could write an essay about this experience alone!

Reid also introduced me to the virtual meetings offered by Live Well Kent during lockdown. I really enjoyed the 'Mindful Mile' activities. The Mindful mile connects me with others virtually and during the call, we all go for a 30 minute walk, run or cycle taking notice of the things around us. There is a now a possibility I may be able to run the London Marathon in October for Shaw Trust! This will be an amazing achievement for me and will be down to Reid... I'm currently equally terrified and excited!

Reid has also put me in contact with 'Take Off' and I am planning on joining their virtual support groups. Take Off offer 1:1 telephone/online support to use tools and resources to improve and sustain health and wellbeing. There is a Borderline Personality Disorder group which I am really looking forward to. I have been unable to access support with this through my GP/NHS/Adult Social Care so I am very grateful!

“ There are more things I could say. I felt so lost and lonely, and that nobody cared about what was going on in my life. Ben, Reid and others in Live Well Kent have made me feel that I was not alone, and that's probably saved my life! ”



Amy's story

I wanted to say thank you for the input of Shaw Trust/Live Well Kent over the past year. This is the third referral I have had with the charity and the most in-depth and supportive help so far. At the beginning of the referral my housing, money and wellbeing was seriously affecting both my mental and physical health. Although I still have disabilities and a serious mental health condition, I feel I am more able to cope with these. Your service has been a safety net for me. Both myself, and the people around me have seen huge improvements in my life.

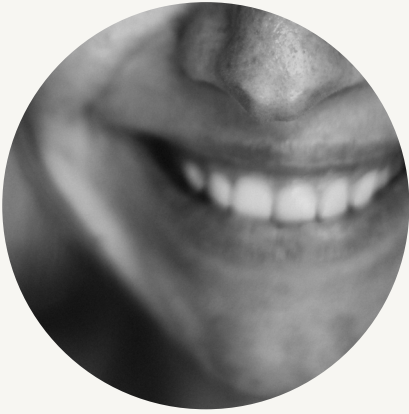
The most pressing issue was supporting my housing and finding permanent secure housing. Having housing support from Clarion, part of the Live Well Kent Network, meant there was someone to talk through this and the knowledge and expertise has helped me manage this situation and get my deposit returned from my old address. My Navigator, Reid, provided a calm and sensible approach to reviewing my benefits situation. The referrals to Citizens Advice Bureau enabled me to challenge my Personal Independence Payment reduction and to go through my Employment Support Allowance review meaning that I am financially ok for the next couple of years. When I was in crisis with an Employment Support Assessment

investigation, you were also able to help by pointing me to the right direction. Through Live Well Kent, I took the Money Management course with Citizens Advice Bureau, and was also referred to One You for support services to help me be healthier. I also attended a mental health Solution Focus course. These inputs mean I've felt like I've been able to help myself and work towards building resilience whilst healing.

Although I feel like benefits and health conditions will always be there, this year has helped me to find some stability and get myself out of crisis. I have felt that there has always been somewhere to turn if I couldn't cope. The advice has always been understanding but upbeat. Live Well Kent always has a solution if the problem is broken down and we are guided to experts.

Navigating illness, homelessness and unemployment is hard. It is very easy to slip through the net at an alarming rate. Caring for others or even caring for yourself is hard. I was trying to do all of these things whilst managing my medical health and was failing. Your service took the pressure of some of this off of my shoulders and made it possible to find the help I needed. Thank you.

“Live Well Kent is more than wellbeing and signposting. It is as important as healthcare. It is a way out of rock bottom and into living again.”



Sandra's story

Being with Live Well Kent has had a very positive impact on my life as I was shown there was more to life than just coping, I was learning to live again. The impact on my family was that they saw a change in me and we could laugh together with no more living on egg shells.

As part of my journey with Live Well Kent, I was able to access Art Psychotherapy. Joyce, my Art Therapist from Canterbury Art Studio, helped me with being with other people and knowing that most people do not behave like the people I have been around most of my life. Joyce also showed me that I could draw with different art materials, at this moment two of my pictures are being shown in an online art exhibition.

Live Well Kent also provided me with one to one bereavement counselling with Julie Rogers Counselling. It was the biggest impact on me and I do not think about my father anymore. Julie also helped me with the death of my son over twenty years ago. She also gave me some tools to help me when I get over-whelmed with things.

Being with Reid, as my Community Navigator, helped me understand about how I was feeling and thinking. Reid helped me to talk to people again and, I could say, he brought me out of my shell. To know what it is like to be unafraid of anyone or anything.

Reid putting me in touch with Joyce and Julie who are part of Live Well Kent were the best things that happened.

“ I would not be who or where I am today without Live Well Kent. I cannot thank you enough for helping me so much.”



Nicola's story

I was referred to Live Well Kent for support around managing my Anxiety and Depression as well as lacking in confidence. When I first joined Live Well Kent I was withdrawn and quiet and needed a lot of support to keep motivated due to my Mental Health. At my first meeting with my Community Navigator, we explored the support and services that were available to me. I attended the Personal Development course for confidence building, where I connected well with others in the group, and started to build my confidence. I disclosed that I had a bad time in my last job and that I was very concerned over finding a new role. With the support of my Employment Advisor Vicki, I worked hard on updating my CV, creating Speculative Letters

and Cover letters. I was allowing myself to feel that I was once more taking control of my own destiny which helped towards me regaining my strength of character and to feel more able to move into work again. I became more confident as time went on, my sense of humour returned and I was showing the ability to take control with areas that in the beginning of my journey I would have relied on other people to do for me. The Live Well Kent Team worked with me to feel worthy and listened too and I felt I was able to grow again. It all paid off and I found a Full Time job for a Care Agency. I am now a Senior Carer there, having worked hard and kept at the role for over 6 months.

“ I count Live Well Kent as extended family, and will be forever thankful for the love and support I received, and have recently achieved working for my company for over a year now and have been offered the chance of promotion to Manager, while I don't feel ready to accept the offer, I never thought I would be offered this opportunity, and feel that it wouldn't have been possible without the continued support of Live Well Kent. ”



Vanessa's story

I was referred to Live Well Kent as I was having problems with my housing situation at the time. I was going to be served notice on my house and moved into temporary accommodation. I wanted support with moving to a different property. I felt very socially isolated and I spent a lot of time in my bedroom. I wanted to attend social activities to help with my isolation and my anxiety and depression. I met with my Live Well Kent Navigator, Amy, who referred me to housing support to assist with liaising with the council. I was referred to the Creative Minds Art Group and the Art Therapy Group to help with my mental health needs and social isolation. I

moved into permanent accommodation after bidding on properties through the council. I attended Creative Minds for the duration of my journey at Live Well Kent. By attending creative minds and the art therapy group, I felt had the confidence to join Live Well Kent as a volunteer. I then volunteered as an assistant in the Creative Minds Art Group and I helped run the wellbeing pop-in café with another volunteer.

“ I found the Live Well Centre a very calm and welcoming environment. The staff were very friendly and helpful. I gained a lot from meeting new people and got my confidence back from attending the various courses provided.”



Anthony's story

I was referred to Live Well Kent seeking alternative support other than the mental health services. I wanted employment support as I had not been in employment for some time due to my mental and physical health. I also needed housing support. I was feeling low and was struggling to maintain my moods as well as feeling worried for what may happen next with regards to my housing. For many people, asking for help is something that people find difficult. Live Well Kent is about taking the time to listen to people like me in a safe environment.

I explained my situation and discussed the support that can be put in place for me at Live Well Kent with my Navigator Jennie. I wanted to take positive steps in my Recovery. At my first meeting, I was made aware of what was available within Live Well Kent as well as other services in Maidstone. This was when a plan was put together. I met with my Jennie monthly and the reassurance and continued support throughout my journey was given. I was able to express any worries or concerns, achievements and seek on-going support if required and if my circumstances changed. I have been working with the employment

team to seek appropriate employment. I have been supported with my housing and am now moving in to new accommodation due to unforeseen circumstances.

I was originally referred to the employment team as my main focus was to find a job. However, as time went on, I found other support was useful. I was referred to Blackthorn which gave me a chance to get out in the community and meet new people whilst undertaking an activity of my choice. Blackthorn offer activities such as gardening and crafts and have a café. I was a chef previously, and I chose to volunteer in the kitchen at Blackthorn. I found this environment therapeutic and welcoming and accepting of all people. I have grown in confidence and found it easier to ask for help. Since attending and completing 8 weeks at Blackthorn, I have now been given the opportunity to access their pain management programme for a further year. I have found myself here and I am looking forward to the alternative therapies the programme also offers that can support me.

“ I am looking forward to continuing my journey with Live Well Kent and building my confidence in new experiences in the future. ”



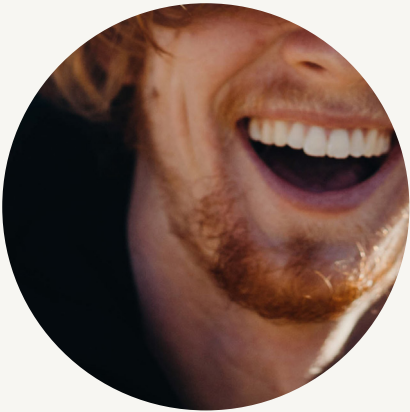
Dawn's story

When I was referred to Live Well Kent, I was due to be discharged from the Community Mental Health Team. My Live Well Kent Navigator Emma worked with me to identify different areas of need and put appropriate measures in place to enable me to address my barriers. I was encouraged by Emma to engage with the Primary Care team at Invicta Health who provide mental health counselling. I was referred to Clarion for support to liaise with the local authority about repair work that needed to be carried out on my property. I was also referred to Live Well Kent Employment Advisor, Ben Edmonds-Taylor for support to explore my employment options as well as Citizens Advice Bureau to participate in the Live Well Kent Money Management workshop and for support to address some accruing utility arrears. I was supported with the transition from Income Support to Universal Credit and made sure that I had access to sufficient food/funds during this time. I was supported to apply for Personal Independence Payment. Alongside this, I was also referred to the Community

Counselling Service and was supported to quit smoking. I have successfully transitioned to Universal Credit and I am now in receipt of Personal Independence Payment. I am budgeting well, paying off my utility arrears at a manageable rate, and am financially stable for the first time in years. I now have two paid jobs that I am enjoying one at Take Off and one at Poets Corner. I have completed Maths, English, and First Aid qualifications, have given up smoking, and have learnt to drive. I recently passed my driving test and now own a car. The Local Authority have carried out the required repairs and I have now decorated my flat to my liking. I have massively grown in confidence and am feeling super positive about the future. I have recently fallen pregnant and am very happy.

Live Well Kent has been a real lifeline for me and has given me the confidence to push on despite things being tough at times; I feel reassured to know that Live Well Kent are here if I happen to need you again in the future.

“Live Well Kent has been a real lifeline for me and has given me the confidence to push on despite things being tough at times.”



Ricky's story

When I was growing up, I didn't have a stable childhood and was in foster care from a young age. I struggled throughout school. I later discovered I have dyslexia; which helped me understand why I struggled at school. I began using drugs recreationally but as time went on I became dependant and I developed problems with anger. Over the last few years, I became a carer to my mother who grew very unwell and sadly passed away. I knew then I needed to change and knew I needed to break the cycle of drug use. I feared my life was spiralling out of control. I took the decision to leave my life in London behind and move to Swale for a new start. Following the move, I felt isolated which impacted on my mental health and although I wanted a fresh start; I needed help. My Job Centre Work Coach referred me to Live Well Kent Employment Service for support to manage my health and wellbeing and to regain structure in my life. With my Advisors, Michael and Natasha, we started an action plan to identify barriers and agree achievable goals. Shaw Trust suggested the 5 week

Vocational Pipeline Training for Cook Kitchen's RAW Talent Programme. I was excited to hear of the opportunity, wasted no time in booking my place.

The RAW Talent Programme which stands for Ready and Working, is a programme developed to help those with barriers such as; criminal convictions, mental health challenges and homelessness back into work. We were offered vocational training both at Shaw Trust and with Cook, peer mentoring and in-work-support.

In January 2020, I secured a place on the RAW Talent Programme which was full on but really rewarding. I was offered a full-time position on the production line. Shaw Trust have supported me every step in my journey including, providing details of a moped scheme so I could get to work on time. My advisor declined my offer to take a spin on the back of my bike! Things are going really well for me now, I am enjoying my job and being part of a team!

“ I am still working as a key worker in providing food for people when most of the country is in lock down. I am really loving work and working overtime to meet with demand.”



Julie's story

I was referred to the Live Well Kent for support to find a new job, after finding out that I was about to be made redundant.

I met with Emma, my Community Navigator who referred me to the Live Well Kent Employment Team.

I was struggling to manage debts and was keeping this a secret from my husband. Emma provided me with some useful tools, including the Martin Lewis 'Mental Health & Debt' guide, and then referred me to Citizens Advice Bureau to participate in the 'Be Money Smart' workshop; from this I went on to access 1-2-1 debt support. It was identified that my debts weren't nearly as bad as I had thought they were and that they could be easily resolved – Citizens Advice Bureau supported me to address these.

Emma helped me in identifying that I had always had a very difficult relationship with my

mother & sisters, and that this was something that I had been carrying with me emotionally for my life – it was impacting absolutely everything that I did and massively affected my confidence & self-belief. My navigator, Emma referred me to JR Counselling which is part of Live Well Kent. This was Loss and Bereavement Counselling and it supported me to process my feelings around the loss of these relationships.

I worried a lot and felt overwhelmed with responsibilities at home, and I was then referred to The Activity Box to participate in 10 sessions of art & craft therapy. This helped me to have a positive focus away from my worries and responsibilities.

I am now in a new job, managing my debts well, and I am in a really positive place in terms of my mental health.

“When I left Live Well Kent, I was in an incredibly positive place and felt excited about the future for the first time in years. I felt like a different person and I have let go of a lot of the 'emotional baggage' that I have carried around with me since I was a young girl. I have decided to follow my dream of becoming a school counsellor and I have applied to do a counselling course.”



Rachel's Story

I was originally referred to Live Well Kent for support to explore my employment options, but not long after my referral I experienced a bereavement and my mental health deteriorated. Bereavement had previously been a trigger in me experiencing an episode of severe psychosis. Just when I felt things were getting back on track, my circumstances then changed again; I was evicted from my privately rented flat and became homeless.

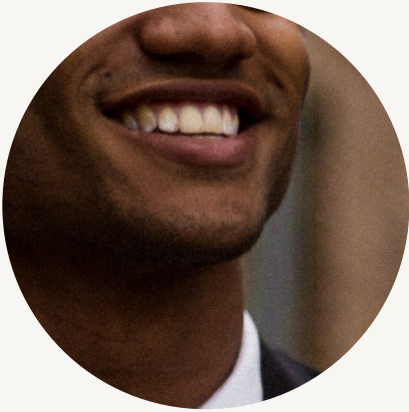
My Community Navigator, Emma supported me to access social support at the Abbey Physic Community Garden; this became a real lifeline for me and I still attend a few times a week. Emma also referred me to The Activity Box for 10 sessions of art & craft therapy; this came at exactly the right time for me and was a great support for me when I was at my lowest. Emma and I did explore the possibility of accessing bereavement counselling, but I decided that the best way for me to cope with my loss would be to find other focuses, rather than focussing specifically on it in talking therapy. When I received my eviction

notice, I was referred to Julie Morgan at Clarion Housing; Julie supported me to make a housing application and to liaise with the relevant council about my needs.

The session at The Activity Box gave me a positive focus and provided me with a safe and therapeutic environment in which I could express myself creatively; this gave me confidence at a very difficult time.

Abbey Physic Community Garden massively opened up my support network and to this day remains important in me managing my mental health. Without the garden, I wouldn't have been able to get through the past year. Julie Morgan guided and supported me throughout the process of being made homeless; after spending 3 months in out-of-area hostel accommodation, I was finally offered a bungalow back in the local area – I moved in in early August and I have settled in fantastically well. I am now in a super positive place and feel immensely proud of myself for surviving it all.

“ I haven't been this happy for at least 6 years and I feel settled and secure for the first time in a long time. I am actually feeling excited for the future for the first time in as long as I can remember. ”



Oscar's story

I was referred to the Live Well Kent for support around my mental health. I lost both my parents during my teens and I was struggling to come to terms with this loss. I was living in a shared house that I hated. I was low in confidence, and I wasn't sure where to start in terms of finding work.

After a meeting with my Navigator, Emma I was referred to JR Counselling for specialist support around bereavement. I also engaged with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy through the Community Mental Health Team and I found this very helpful. Since the therapy ended, I have continued to utilise the skills I learned, and I am now in a much better place in terms of my mental health.

Emma also referred me to Take Off and Canterbury Umbrella Centre which is part

of Live Well Kent. I was able to participate in some groups which helped me to build social connections and to develop my confidence.

We also explored the positive benefits of exercise; I joined a local gym and started exercising on a daily basis. I have continued to exercise at home during lockdown and this has had a tremendously positive impact on both my physical and mental wellbeing.

I have now moved into my own flat and I am really happy there. I am fitter, healthier, and happier, and I am feeling confident about finding work; I have recently been invited to interview for a position in a local retail outlet and I am feeling positive about the future.

“ To Emma and Ben – I just would like to say a huge thank you to you both for helping me and supporting me! You've both been fantastic! If it was not for your support I would not be nowhere near where I am today, so thank you! ”

Client testimonials

“My Navigator from Live Well Kent was brilliant, he helped me find my way through the tunnel and helped me through right to the other side.”

“I have definitely gained my confidence back because of Shaw Trust. I have made new, wonderful, caring friends through Shaw Trust and continue to do so via Microsoft Teams. I do thank the Lord every day that I was referred to Shaw Trust.”

“Live Well Kent have been so supportive, friendly and the help I received was very specific to my needs. This has helped me get a better place in my life and I feel so much more positive about my future.”

“I am finally thinking of the future positively and am managing to sleep a lot better. Things feel better in life!”

“Thank you for all of your support. You have started to help bring the defensive wall that I had built up around me, down.”

“Everyone I've met through Live Well Kent has been friendly, positive and really helpful.”

“Live Well Kent is a very good service. It's nice to know that support is there when I need it.”

“I was very glad to be referred to Live Well Kent as I feel like it has changed my life for the better.”

“Knowing that somebody cared was an enormous thing for me and Live Well Kent made a significant difference during a very dark time in my life.”

“Thank you for all the support. You have help with so many aspects of my life.”

“Live Well Kent has been very helpful and made me think about things, which has helped me move forwards. I didn't know whether I was coming or going before signing up.”

“I have enjoyed my time with Live Well Kent and feel secure that there is support in my local area.”

“Live Well Kent has been so helpful. You have helped me to get out of a really dark place and I hardly ever think about suicide anymore.”

For more information visit:

livewellkent.org.uk

Shaw Trust is a national charity working to improve the life chances for the people and communities we serve.

Last year we supported thousands of people on their journey into work. To find out more about Shaw Trust please visit our website:

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On behalf of



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