



Appendix A KSAS Future Options Evidence Base

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Executive Summary

This report provides evidence about the existing form, function and operation of the Kent Support and Assistance Service. It provides key information to enable decision makers to form a view about any future iterations of a local assistance service in Kent and the merits of this kind of provision.

The report sheds light on the current model of provision and the demand experienced in the first 15 months of operation from residents who cannot access help elsewhere. It describes the assessment criteria that ensures that the service is targeted at those most in need i.e. those with children who are in need of food and emergency travel. It finds that the highest demand has been in the most deprived areas of the county. Demand for food and energy are the most frequent awards requested, but among the cheapest to deliver.

The evidence suggests that while the costs of the individual awards made to vulnerable people is low, the preventative savings to the wider authority are significant, with awards forming a fraction of the cost of statutory interventions. The service has been successful in meeting the short and medium term needs of people in crisis who otherwise would have progressed to draw on statutory services and resources such as those under Section 17.

In examining options for alternative provision, it finds that outside of the KSAS commissioned provision, supply for some types of award e.g. food and furniture does not match the existing and escalating need. There is no provision for emergency gas and electricity.

In examining the three options of a future for the service it finds:-

Option 1 Using the underspend to provide a further year of the service. A diminution of the service would be necessary. Each diminution option presents risks to health and wellbeing of vulnerable groups. The provision of a further year of the service will raise expectations for Year 4 and may further the council's difficulty in considering future options.

Option 2 Commissioning service delivery. This model enables the council to deliver on its ambitions to be a strategic commissioned authority whilst empowering and supporting the third sector to become suppliers delivering outcomes detailed in a specification. This tailored approach would become self-sustaining within 4 years.

Option 3 Grant fund to voluntary organisations. This option is unlikely to deliver the current outcomes. Coverage and capacity of existing charities is inequitable and cannot meet the demand. The level of funding proposed would be insufficient to have any real impact once diluted countywide.

1.0 Overview of the Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS)

The Kent Support and Assistance Service went live on April 01 2013, as the discretionary elements of the Department of Work and Pensions' (DWP) Social Fund (Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants) were ceased and responsibility for local welfare assistance was devolved to local authorities. The county council's discretionary service differs substantially from the DWP scheme which simply offered cash to all applicants, the majority of whom were single people under 35. For those in crisis or emergency, the council's KSAS scheme seeks to offer to Kent residents advice and support in their own community to alleviate their difficulty.

The grant funding awarded to the county council to devise and run a local service was as follows:-

2013/14: Administration £605,142

Grants £2,863,798

2014/15: Administration £554,678

Grants £2,863,798

Specialist, trained advisors connect enquirers to the sources of support and help to which they are eligible, including signposting to Jobcentre Plus, referrals to housing support or linking enquirers with local voluntary support groups. Where there is no other recourse to help, the service offers assistance with the goods they need. The service is accessible online or by phone and supports Kent households in a crisis and

- Enables people to move back into the community from institutional care or step down from intensive supportive settings.
- Prevents from moving into institutionalised support or care.
- De-escalates crisis or emergency and dependence on statutory services.

The council has adopted a mixed economy approach to commissioning its local welfare assistance programme. The KSAS operational team was commissioned internally from Contact Point and have specialist training in benefits advice and signposting to relevant agencies to tackle the root causes of customer difficulty and prevent recurrence. The KSAS staff have access to KCC's internal recording systems such as Liberia and Swift and to the DWP benefit data, CIS.

The KSAS offer comprises:-

- **Furniture and equipment** - provided by a consortium of reuse social enterprise, led by West Kent Extra;
- **Food and welfare items** - 7 day parcels of nutritionally balanced food and welfare items such as soap, washing powder and sanitary items, provided by ASDA supermarkets
- **Energy vouchers** - provided by PayPoint for 7 day emergency supply of gas/electricity
- **Emergency cash awards** - for those at immediate risk of harm these are supplied by PayPoint and rarely provided.

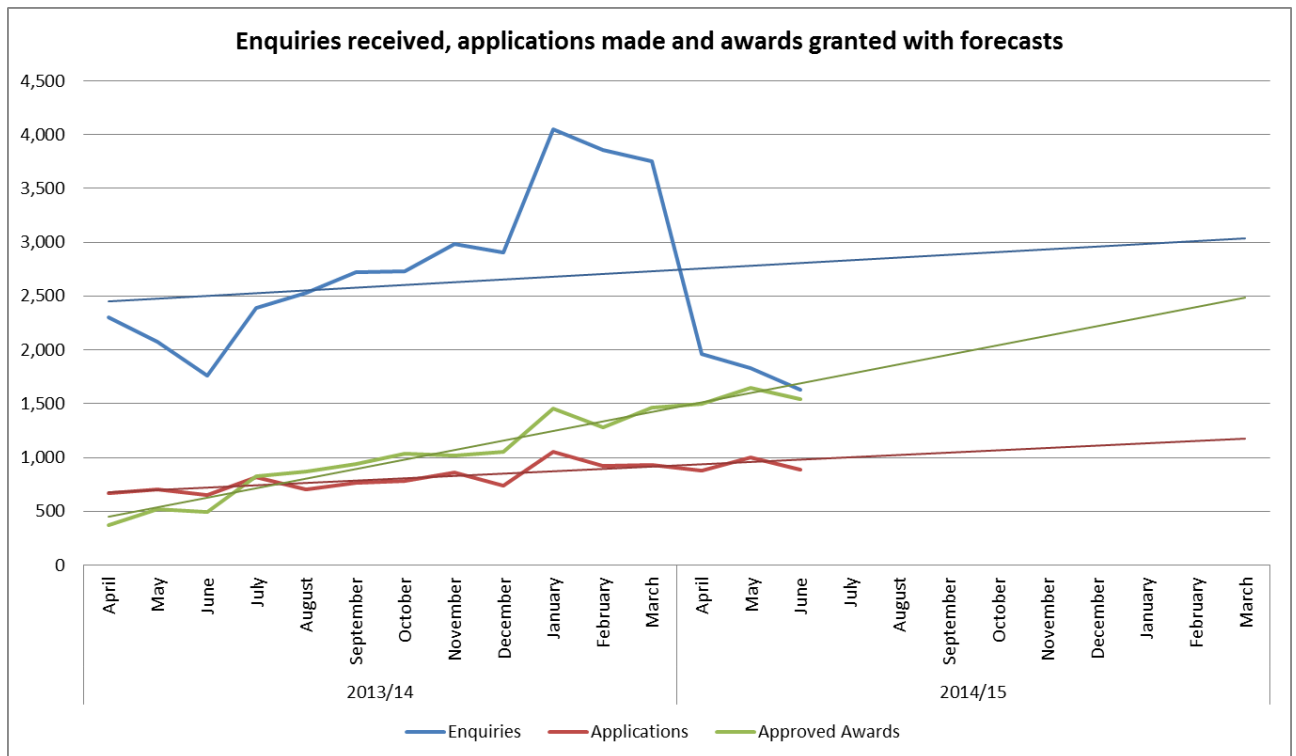
All the awards are specific to the customers' needs and uniquely deal with immediacy of need not provided elsewhere.

Vulnerable households in crisis or emergency can be offered a single or combination of awards to support them through their crisis and prevent future escalation of their needs. In its first year of operation, KSAS received over **34,000** enquiries, **9,600** applications and approved **6,133** awards. The value of awards given to households was **£1,140,911**.

As the service has continued into 2014/15, records show an increase in the number of applications received on the previous year and a significant increase in the number of awards being approved, as more relevant applications are received. Forecasts predict further rises as the financial year progresses.

As **Figure 1** shows, towards the end of this financial year, there are expected to be approximately 3,000 enquiries received, 1,200 applications made and 2,500 awards approved each month.

Figure 1: Enquiries received, applications made and awards granted with forecasts: April 2013 to March 2015



2.0 Who uses KSAS?

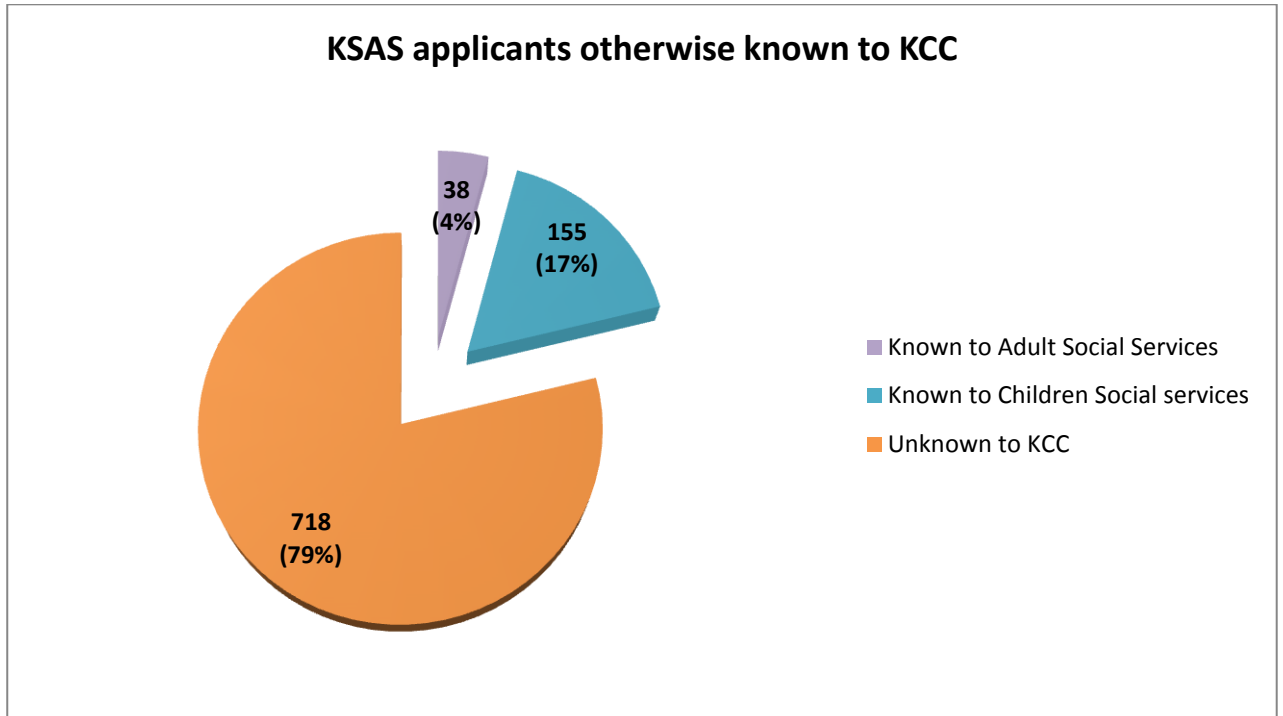
The customer demographic differs substantially from those using the DWP scheme. In Quarter 1 of 2014/15, KSAS helped 2,055 separate vulnerable households, half of whom (53%) lived with children. It helped 768 people with physical disabilities and 611 with mental health problems.

There are a range of circumstances that lead individuals to contact KSAS for support. In many cases residents approach the service for advice and can be signposted to supporting agencies or alternative sources of help such as DWP Budgeting Loans or Short Term Advances. Where the candidate is ineligible for other sources of help, an application can be made. An applicant may be fleeing domestic abuse or experiencing exceptional pressure because of an emergency or crisis such as fire or flood. They may also be in need of support to move on into, return to, or stay in, the community rather than remaining or entering a care or institutional setting. Awards are both *reactive* in alleviating an immediate short-term need and *preventative*, to prevent the further escalation of support required by statutory services and the resulting costs incurred.

A sample examination of the 911 applications received for June 2014 suggests that almost 80% of households applying for support through KSAS are otherwise unknown to KCC. KSAS plays a significant role in providing preventative support to these applicants, granting awards and signposting to help in their own communities to enable them to remain independent and less likely to require statutory services in future.

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of the number and proportion of the 21% of applicants who applied to KSAS in June and were already known to KCC services. As the chart shows, of these the majority (17%) were known to Children Social Services.

Figure 2: KSAS applicants otherwise known to Kent County Council: June 2014



Of the 481 children in the above households, 155 were known to Children Social Services. Of these, 124 were seeking support with food and energy. There were 171 applications from households with disabilities and 145 with mental health problems; of these 38 households were known to Adult Social Services.

The geographic demand for the KSAS service is shown below:

Figure 3: KSAS demand across Kent, April 2013 to March 2014

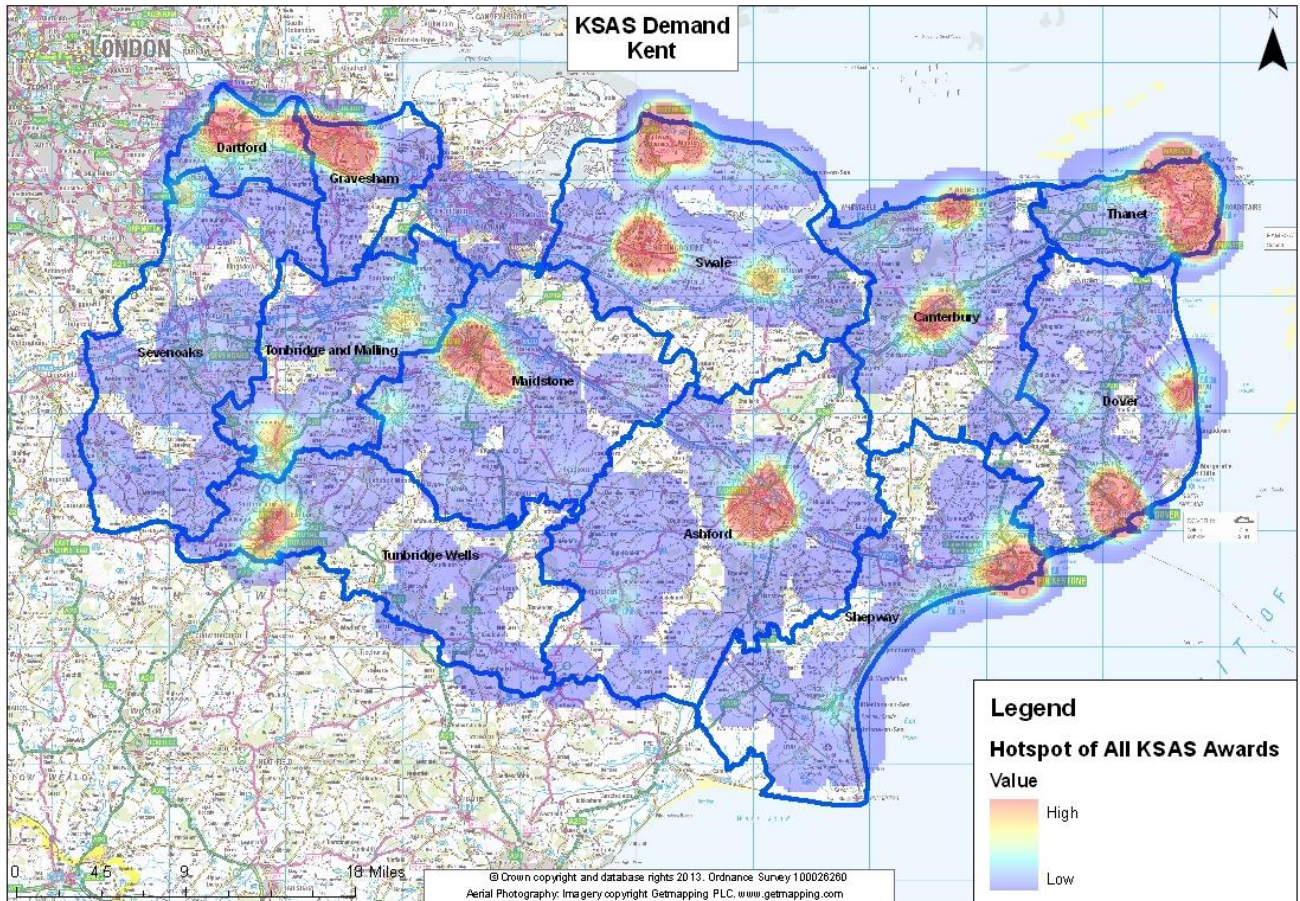


Figure 3 highlights hotspot areas of demand for the KSAS service, with those making the highest number of awards being represented in red. Those placing a lower demand on the KSAS service are represented in dark blue.

N.B. Although Medway is one of the areas showing demand, this relates to 10 awards to eligible Kent residents who were being re-housed from Districts across Kent into accommodation in Medway.

An overview of demand by district is provided in **Appendix 2** of this report.

3.0 Targeting those most in need

The service employs an assessment matrix that enables fair and consistent access to awards and ensures the service directs its resource to those in highest and most urgent need. The assessment matrix balances the risk in the household against the nature of the need within it, according to prescribed criteria. The scores are aggregated to arrive at priority rating for award.

The assessment matrix is shown in **Figure 4** below. The highest household risk categories are shown in red; the highest need scores are similarly shown in red.

Figure 4

Does the household include:-	Does the household need:-						Priority Rating
	Food	Energy	Equipment	Emergency Travel	Cookers	Clothes	
children aged under 5?	Red	Blue	Blue	Red	Blue	Blue	High
3 or more children?	Red	Blue	Blue	Red	Blue	Blue	High
include a disabled child?	Red	Blue	Green	Red	Green	Green	High
child in the home	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Low
person with a terminal illness	Red	Blue	Green	Red	Green	Green	Medium
homelessness	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Low
a disabled adult*	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Low
young parents? [under 21]	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Low
fleeing domestic abuse	Red	Blue	Blue	Red	Blue	Blue	High
lone parents?	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Low
people over 65?	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Low
pregnant women?	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Low
carers?	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Low
grandparents caring for children?	Red	Blue	Green	Red	Blue	Blue	Medium
Risk Rating	H	M	L	H	L	L	

For example, applicants with children and those experiencing domestic abuse attract the highest household risk score; those requiring food or emergency travel attract the highest need score.

Figure 5 Priority Rating

		Household Risk		
		High	Medium	Low
Household Need	High	1 working day	Up to 4 working days	4 working days
	Medium	1 working day	Up to 4 working days	10 working days
	Low	Up to 4 Working days	10 working days	

The above risk and priority targets now form Key Performance Indicators for the service. These have been measured and reported upon since April 2014.

Analysis completed by KCC’s Business Intelligence, Research and Evaluation Team identified that KSAS is attracting applications from the Mosaic groups who are in most need, and therefore the primary target for the service. Awards are also targeted to these groups.

4.0 Impact of local welfare provision

An initial Health Inequality Assessment has indicated an impact on a range of vulnerable groups including the young, older people, women, those in areas of highest multiple deprivation indices, those in poor physical or mental health, those with long term conditions, those experiencing violence or abuse, offenders and service veterans.


Views have been sought from a wide range of stakeholder groups such as probation, supported living services, districts and boroughs and the voluntary sector in Kent. All have expressed concern about the non-continuation of a local welfare assistance service in Kent.

Feedback from the voluntary sector indicates that they view their strength to be in working with local communities to identify needs and create innovative and low cost solutions, then lobbying or applying for funding to make it a comprehensive service. They have tailored their support to people who fell outside that original DWP remit.


DWP and District councils have stated that when faced with customers who have welfare problems, children in need, adult disabilities etc. that they would normally signpost to the council’s welfare service, KSAS. In the absence of a local welfare assistance service, they will continue to either signpost to the county council or treat as a safeguarding referral.

Quantitative evidence from KSAS customers also demonstrates the positive impact of the service. The record of KSAS customer feedback for the financial year 2013-14 shows that the overwhelming majority of comments are compliments. Feedback from KSAS customers has also indicated the longer term benefits of the scheme:


• "It will prevent my children being taken into care"

Client A 


• "I care for my one year old daughter who is on a child protection plan for neglect... If we have these things then Social Services will know I have a safe home for my daughter and let us stay together"

Client B 

• "This will enable me to live an independent life without having to live with other people or rely on people to look after me"

Client C 

• "I am concerned that this may be a 'crossroads type of situation' for me"

Client D 

An example of a typical case history is attached at **Appendix 1**.

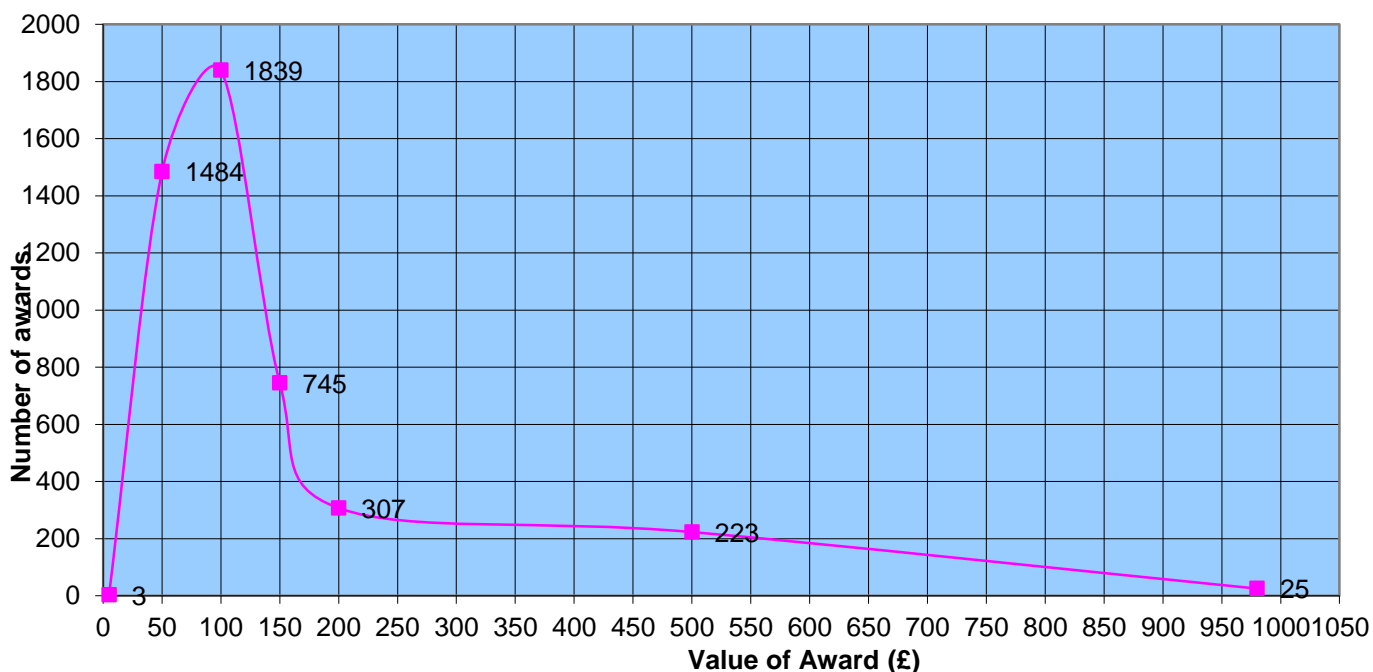
The council has a statutory responsibility to support:

1. Care Leavers and Children in Need, 16-17 year olds who are homeless
2. Families with children experiencing exceptional hardship (section 17)
3. Vulnerable adults experiencing exceptional hardship (domestic abuse victims, Mental Health, Learning Disability, Physical Disability, Older People)

KSAS has been proven to alleviate short term hardship within these client groups, preventing the need for households not known to the council to call on statutory services. It has also supported households known to the council who need immediate short term assistance.

The Personal Social Services Research Unit published a report in 2013¹ to assist those involved in health and local authority planning and commissioning with information on the costs of services. As can be seen from Figures 6, 7 and 8 below, the average cost of a KSAS unique award is far lower than a week's Social Care support provided for those with vulnerabilities, namely those with physical disabilities, mental health problems and older people, and for children. These types of clients are supported by KSAS to stay in the community and are prevented from going on to use resources of higher cost to the Council.

Figure 6: Value award: Quarter 1 2014/15



As the above chart shows 4,375 awards (95%) were valued less than £200.

¹ 'Unit Costs of Health and Social Care', 2013, Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU)

Figure 7: KSAS costing vs other Children’s Health and Social Care costs²

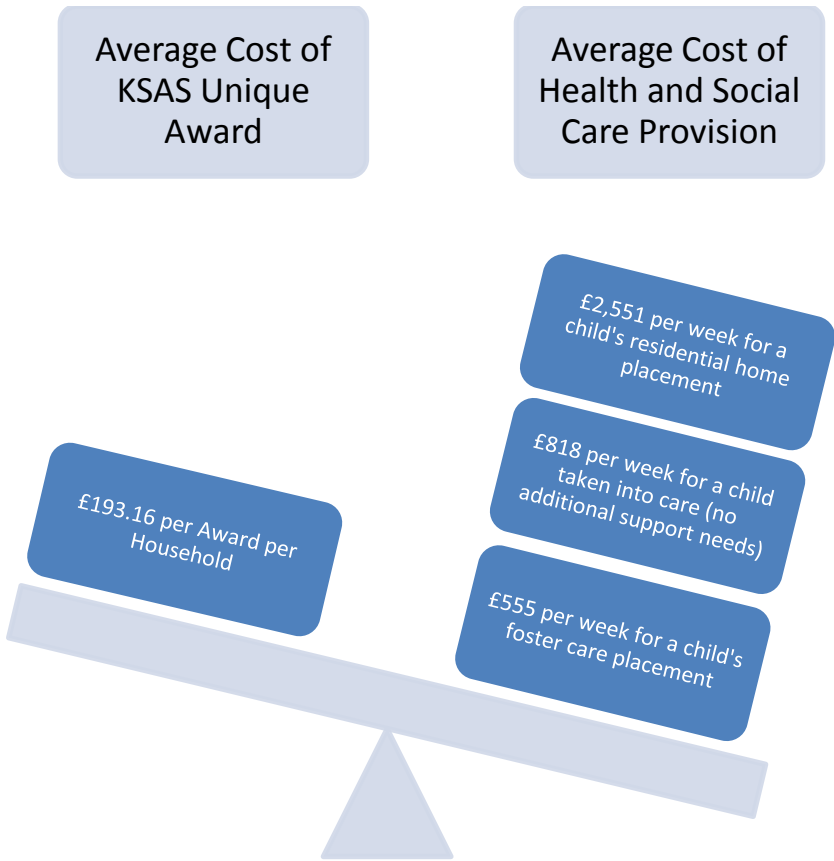
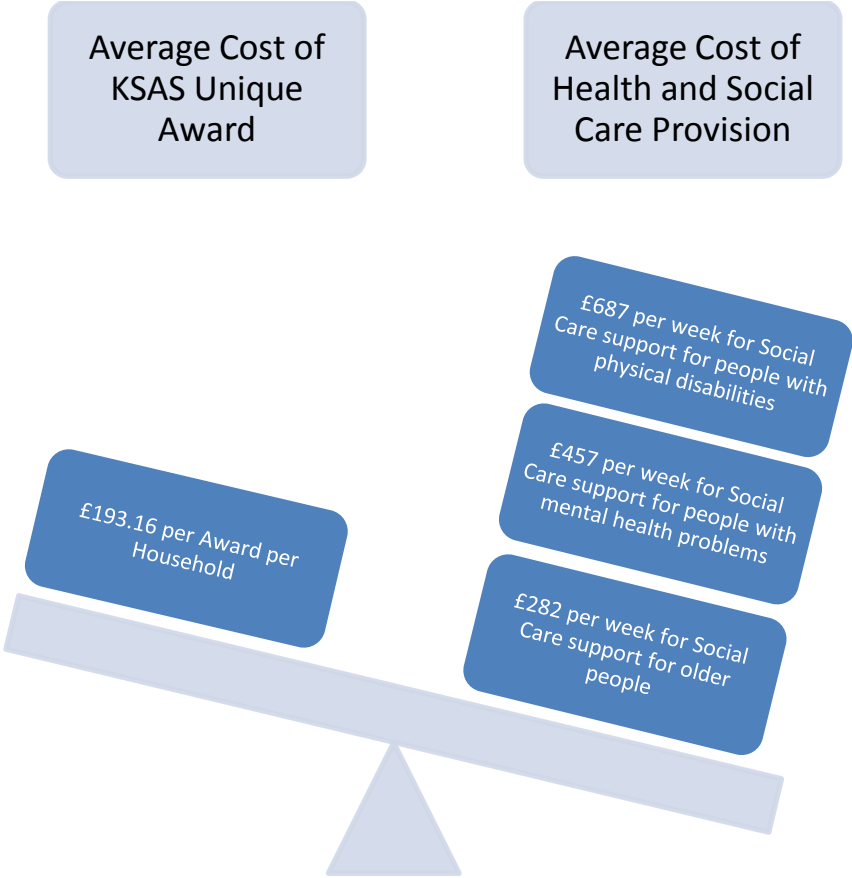


Figure 8: KSAS costing vs other Adult Health and Social Care costs³



² The care packages described are drawn from the National Evaluation of the Individual Budgets Pilot Projects (IBSEN).

³ The care packages described are drawn from the Troubled Families Costs Database.

5.0 Options for future provision

The Government funding stream for local welfare provision is intended to cease at the end of the financial year 2014/15. The following future options are considered in greater detail in response to the Cabinet Committee in July 2014.

a) Option 1 – Use the underspend to retain service for a further year.

The most recent forecast (14/15) shows running costs for the service is as follows

- £1,897,000 for awards
- £549,300 for administration

The service is forecast to generate a total underspend of 2014/15 of £2.69m, which includes a rolled forward amount of £1.7m from 2013/2014. The spend on awards has increased from Year 1 to Year 2 and continues to rise in 2014/15.

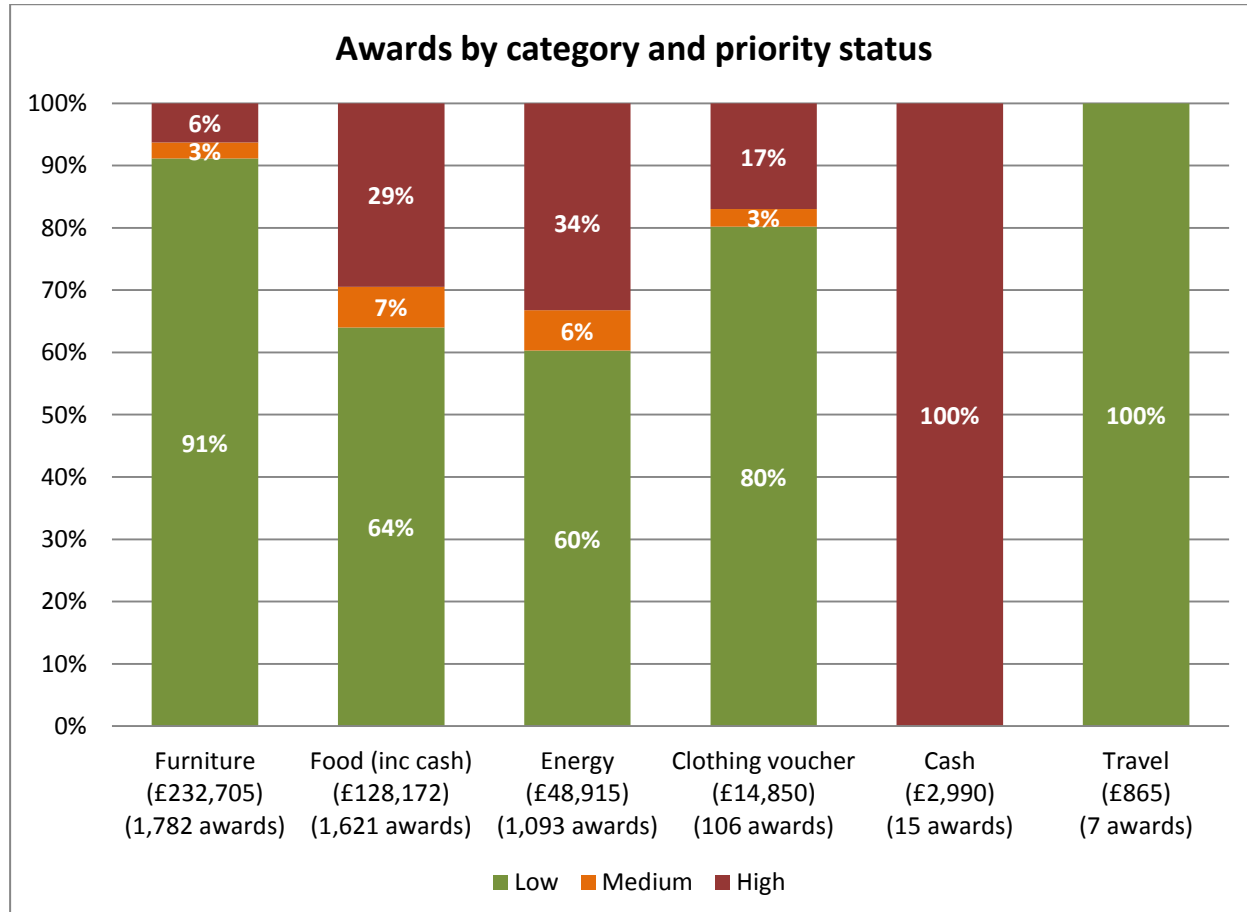
To meet future demand from this underspend, there is likely to be a need for a diminution of the current service. This section looks at current service delivery and scopes the opportunities and risks of reducing each aspect of the service.

- Cease provision to low priority applicants
- Removing a category of Award (Furniture, Food, Energy, Clothing, Travel)

Context: In the first quarter of 2014/15 the total cost of awards delivered was **£428,498**. **Figure 9** illustrates an analysis of the awards made by priority status.

The figure shows that the greatest spend was made on furniture with the lowest category of priority. A greater proportion of high priority applicants were awarded food and energy, though these cost significantly less.

Figure 9: Awards by category, priority status and cost: Quarter 1 2014/15



i) - Ceasing provision to low priority applicants

Of the awards that are delivered through KSAS 30% are assigned as High or Medium risk. The priority status of awards differs between award categories with only 9% of Furniture awards assigned as high risk compared to almost 40% for both Food and Utilities.

The total cost of awards in **Quarter 1 was £433,448**. If KSAS were to restrict the provision of awards for only those banded as high or medium priority, the cost of awards, across categories, would have been reduced to **£91,991 in Quarter 1**. A review of the priority and risk may be required to include what would be considered high priority to the Council.

At present, low risk households in need of equipment would include a person over 65 in need of a cooker, a pregnant woman requiring a fridge, a carer requiring a bed.

Potential benefits

- Significant short term savings in the cost of awards

Potential risks

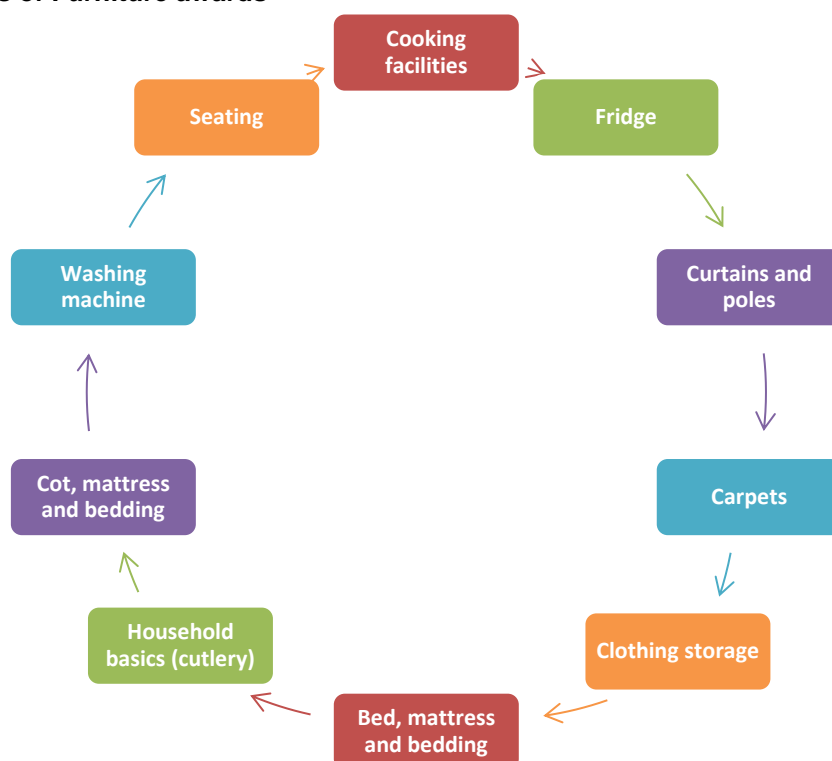
- Fewer opportunities to signpost customers to preventative/alternative services.
- Individuals assigned as low priority are unable to obtain the furniture items required e.g. cookers, fridges.
- Low risk applications escalate to high risk, duplicating administration of applications.
- Escalation of risk factors to individuals and potential for required statutory interventions.

ii) Removing a category of award

Furniture awards

Furniture awards currently account for almost 40% of all approved awards and over 50% of award expenditure. There is a wide range of items grouped within the umbrella term of furniture from fridges and washing machines to curtains and seating. **Figure 10** provides an illustration of the breadth of items that have been supplied in furniture applications.

Figure 10: Types of Furniture awards



The following quotes from applications for these awards demonstrate the need and subsequent risk, both directly and indirectly, of not providing some of these key items:

•"I need a proper bed to help avoid future hospital admissions due to my Ashtma"

Client A

•"My son needs clean uniform. He currently has absences from school as a result. Our family also needs to be able to store food safely and economically"

Client B

•"It will make the house more of a home"

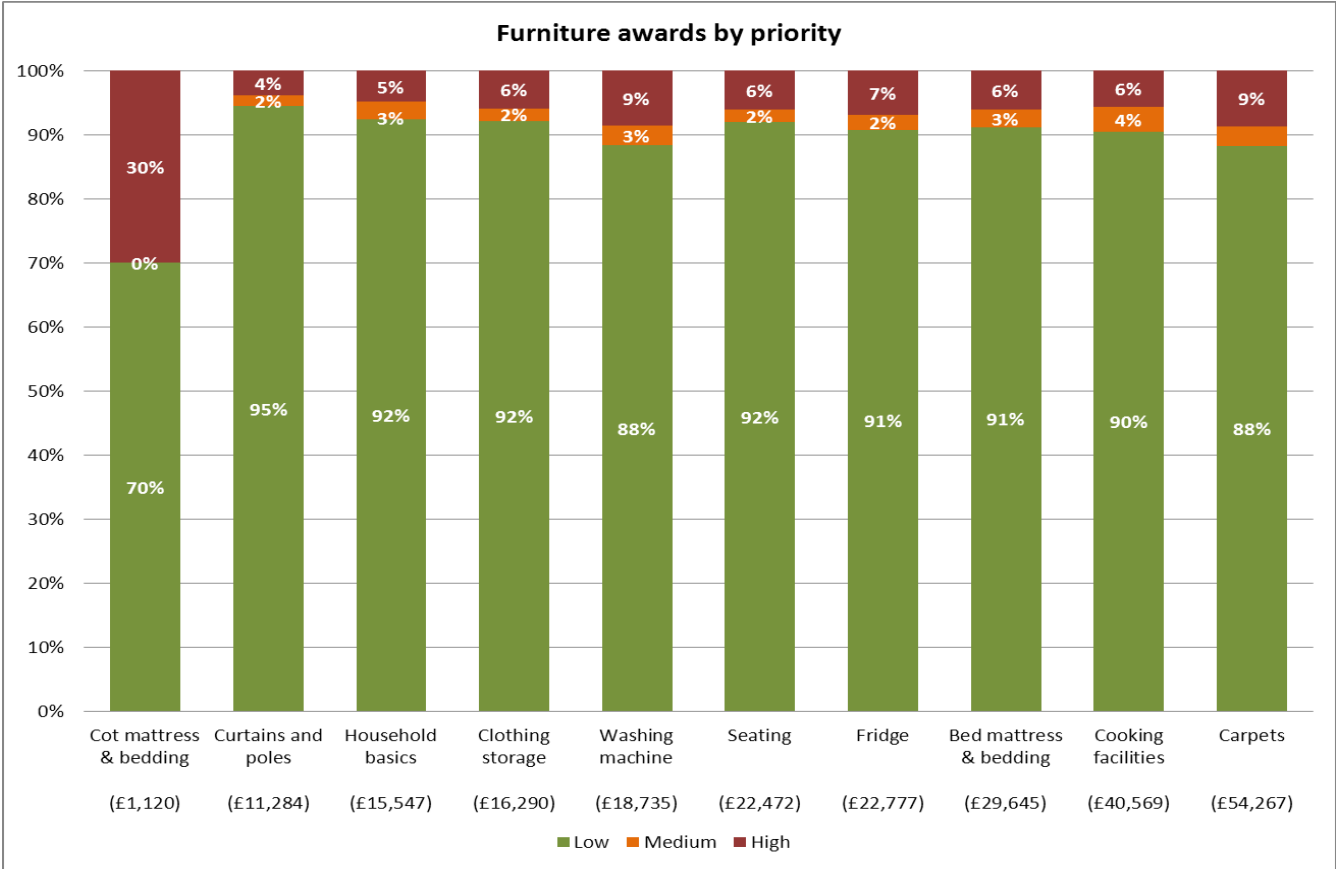
Client C

•"A bed will give the children a good night's sleep"

Client D

Figure 11 below indicates the proportionately high number of high priority awards for cots, cot mattresses and bedding. An elimination of the furniture category would have an impact on provision of cots, mattresses and bedding to vulnerable families. The cost of each furniture item is a further consideration. Despite cots, cot mattresses and cot bedding having the largest proportion of high priority awards, it is also the cheapest furniture item type. Carpets (including delivery and fitting) are the most expensive furniture item, costing **£54,267 in Quarter 1**. Carpets are only awarded in households where there are infants and babies or where there is a risk related to disability e.g. epilepsy.

Figure 11: Furniture awards by item type, priority status and cost: Quarter 1 2014/15



In considering the removal of this category, there will remain some vulnerable applicants in exceptional circumstances who will need items of furniture and equipment such as the below example:

- "My property has been condemned by Environmental Health and they have said that all my furniture is not fit for use and needs to be replaced."

Client A



Alternative supply arrangements

Under existing KSAS commissioning arrangements, successful applications for furniture and white goods are passed to West Kent Extra to coordinate the ordering and delivery of goods via a consortium of furniture reuse outlets throughout the county. The benefit of using this coordinated consortium approach is that the supply of goods is not restricted to the stock in the immediate vicinity of the application. This is of greatest benefit in areas where supply of reused items is low and cannot meet the high demand (e.g. Thanet). In these circumstances the consortium can draw on supply in other outlets. The furniture reuse sector is largely comprised of charitable organisations that generate income from their supply of furniture and household items to KSAS.

Figure 12: Furniture Re-use Outlets availability vs demand for furniture: April 2013 to March 2014

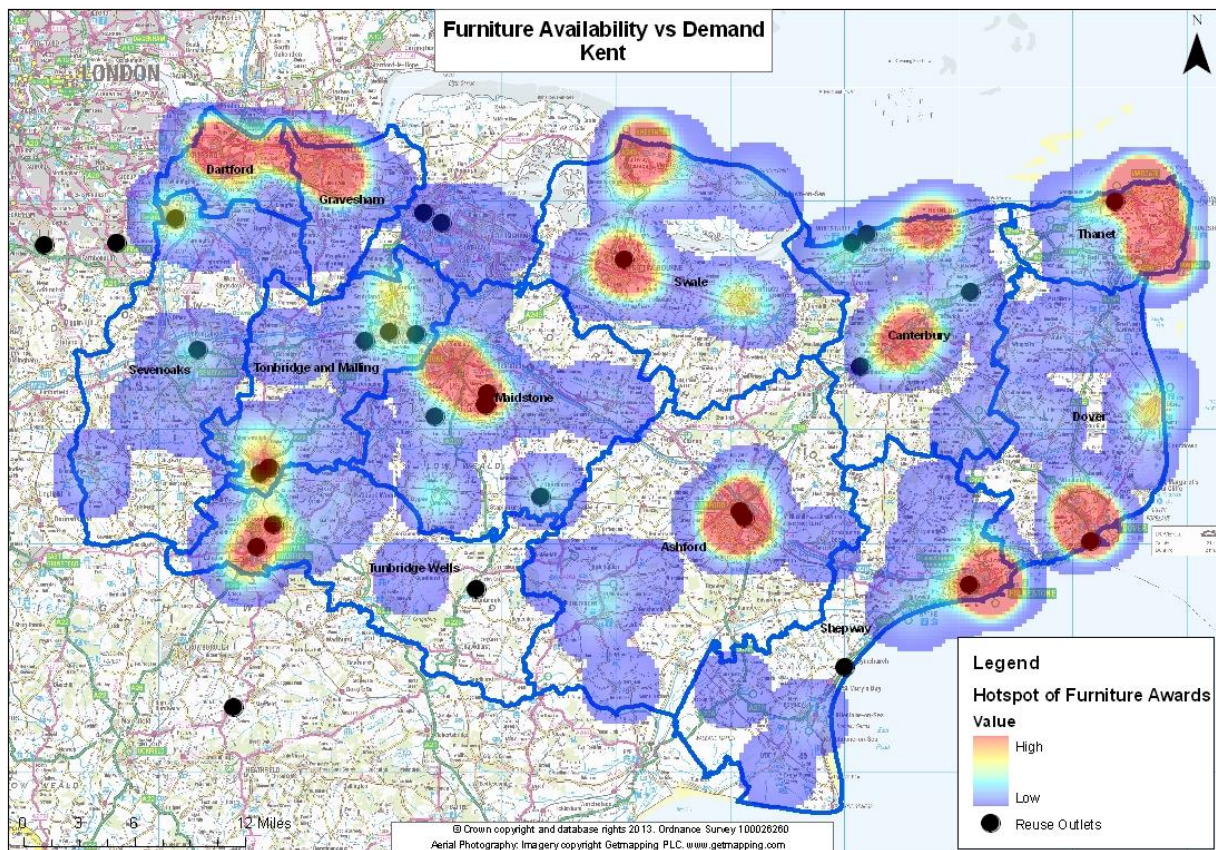


Figure 12 above highlights the areas in which approved furniture re-use outlets are currently utilised; this supply is cross-matched with a further illustration of the demand for furniture from KSAS applicants in 2013/14, shown as hotspot areas.

Whilst many of the main hotspot areas highlighted in red on the map appear to match the provision available, it is also evident that some areas of high demand do not have local provision. This includes large proportions of the Dartford and Gravesham Districts and Sheerness. Rural coverage is also sparse. The scale of demand in Thanet does not appear equally matched with the one re-use outlet currently known.

A Local Government Association report published in March 2014⁴ indicates concerns about the sustainability of the reuse sector and found that

“price [was] the most significant motivating factor for consumers in choosing to purchase a second-hand product. This poses a challenge to reuse groups wishing to expand and which can often only raise additional revenue through increasing prices, which can undermine sales.”

The report continues to highlight the difficulties faced by reuse outlets in terms of increased demand:

“Voluntary and community sector and commercial organisations carrying out reuse activity often operate at the edge of viability and can find expansion and the associated increased expenditure challenging to justify.”

In the absence of a KSAS offer on furniture, local and national charities would be unable to subsidise the supply of the required items on the scale required at zero cost, as this is an important means of generating income. Households would need to source funds to purchase their own furniture and equipment through re-use outlets. Residents would also need to fund any delivery charges. The absence of the coordinated consortium is likely to lead to problems with supply as local re-use outlets cannot be guaranteed to have the required furniture in stock. The effect is most likely to be felt in the east of the county and in Thanet in particular.

Potential benefits

- Potential reduction in award costs by half, all furniture awards are ceased

Potential risks

- Fewer opportunities to signpost customers to preventative/alternative services.
- Inadequate and unequal supply; supply unable to be sourced at zero cost to applicant
- Impact on individuals’ immediate health and wellbeing without items such as fridges, cooking facilities and washing machines. This is a particular concern for vulnerable customer cohorts such as children and those with physical disabilities or mental health problems.
- Potential increased uptake of payday loans and unsecured loans to purchase these items, or proliferation of high-interest stores on the High Street risking debt and further deprivation.
- Potential increased contact and interventions required from statutory services.

Food awards

Food (including personal and household hygiene) awards accounted for a third of the overall spend on awards in Quarter 1 with over 1,600 individual awards made to households in Kent. Of those awards, over half (56%) were for households living with children. Timely provision of food is of the essence and currently KSAS works closely with ASDA to provide food awards within the time period set, according to the risk status of the award. Almost a third of food awards are assigned high risk. In these circumstances a decision will be made within 1 working day and food delivered to those homes within 24 hours.

As well as added health benefits, wider life benefits of food packages were highlighted by many of the clients applying via KSAS for food and hygiene items.

Client A: "We won't have to go to the hostel to eat food"

Client B: "We will be able to save money as... we can cook healthier meals for our children which will be less expensive than takeaways"

Client C: "This will increase the money coming in as we won't need to buy as much food, so we can put it towards the rent and other bills. At the moment it's getting too much and there is a risk of eviction"

Client D: "I am currently on a suspended sentence for shoplifting and if I do not receive help with food I will end up shoplifting again. If I am caught I will go to prison for this offence"

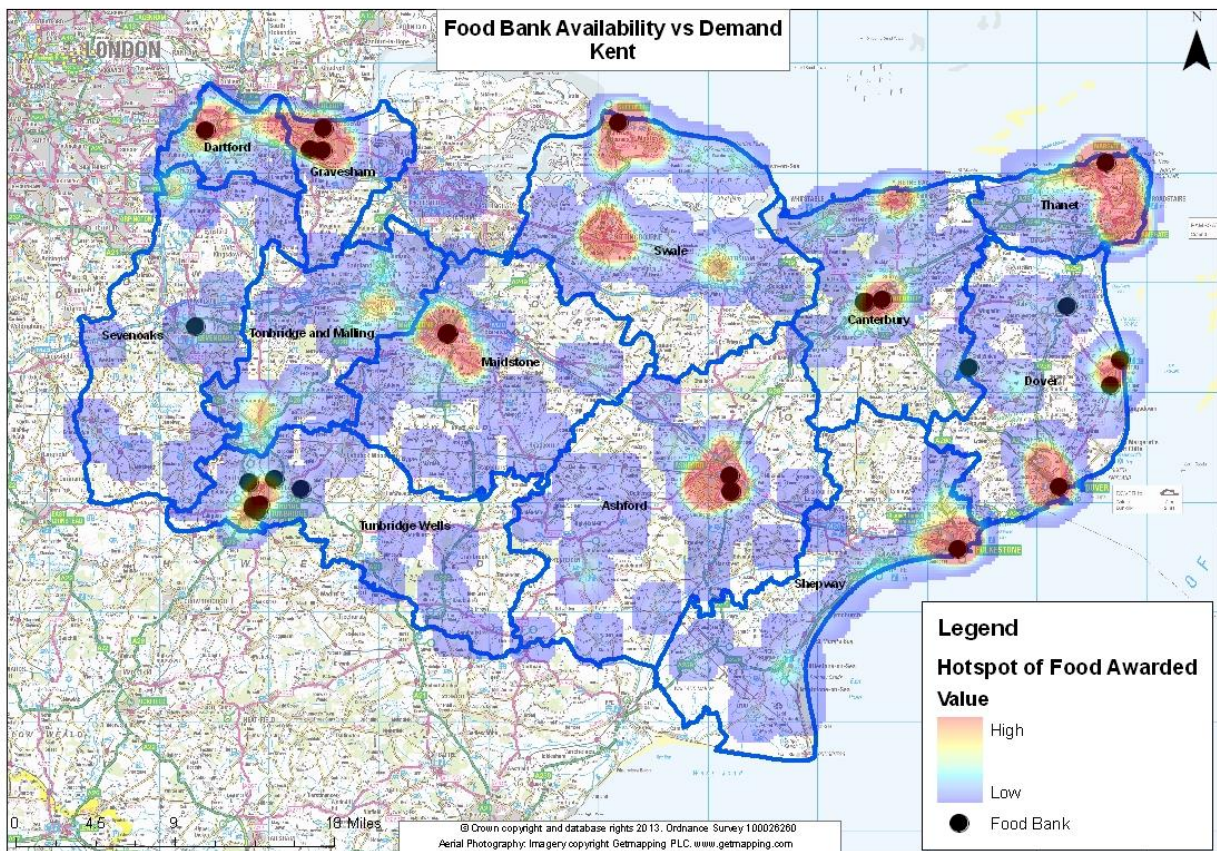
⁴ 'Routes to Reuse, Maximising Value from Reused Materials', Local Government Association, March 2014.

Alternative supply arrangements

Figure 13 below illustrates the current provision of known food banks available to the public in Kent, cross matched with the location of residence of food awards approved by KSAS. These food banks operate a voucher system whereby the local council, social services or partner organisation issue the applicant a voucher to permit attending the food bank to request food. It is common practice to issue a 3 day food parcel per person and is generally made up of dried or tinned goods of food available at that time according to donations made. There are additional, discrete local church groups who deliver food on a very small scale in very limited geographical areas in their immediate area.

As can be seen from the map, known food banks accessible by the general public when issued with a voucher are not evenly distributed across the County. Demand exists across Kent in many areas, including isolated rural areas, where there is no availability. Similarly, in less deprived areas with lower demand there is a greater supply of food banks.

Figure 13: Food bank availability vs demand for Food: April 2013 to March 2014



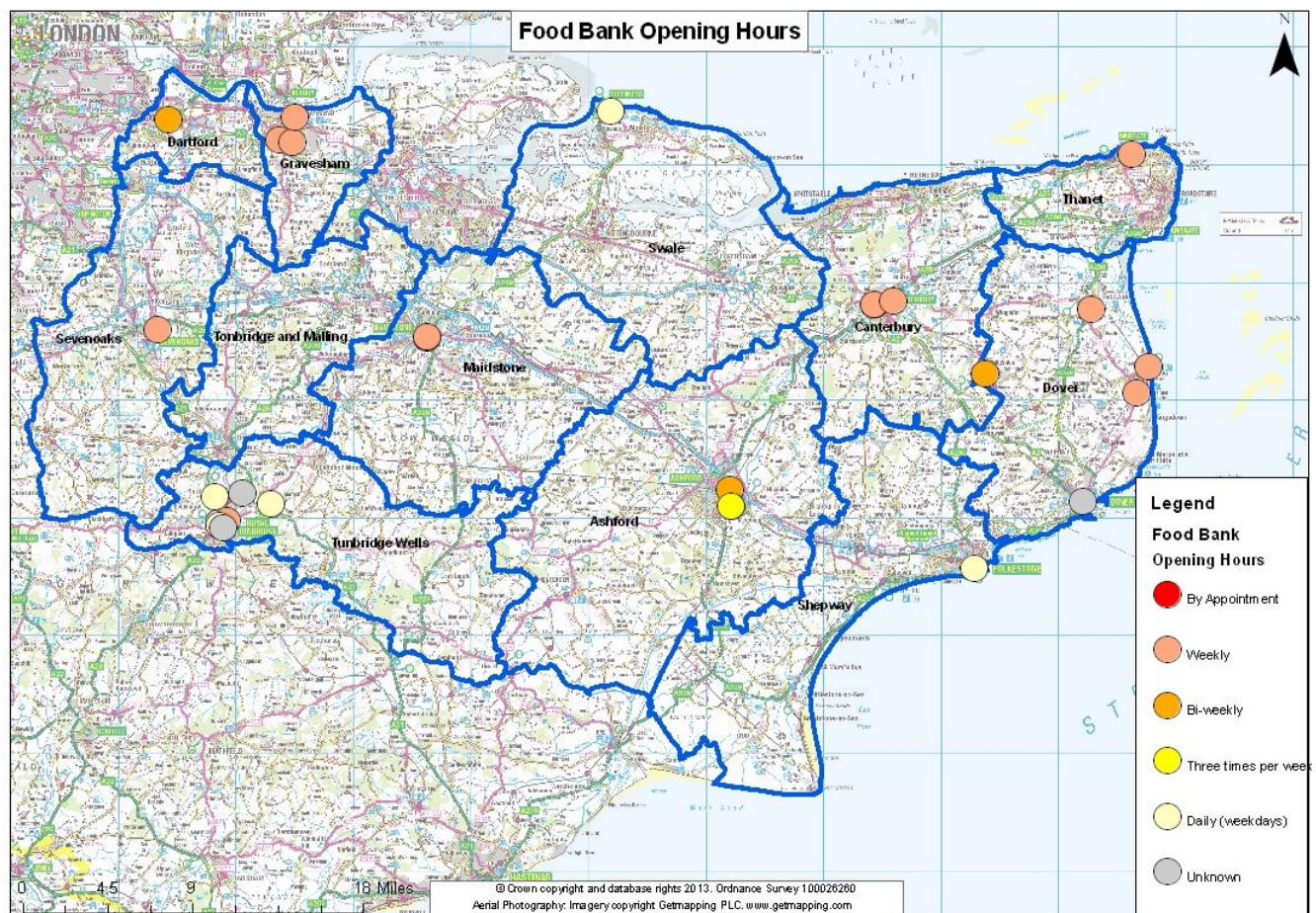
As **Figure 13** demonstrates, Food Bank provision is not equitable across Kent; there is low provision in areas of high demand and high provision in areas of low demand.

Example: *In Thanet, currently only one food bank (Thanet Food Link) operates between the hours of 10:30 – 12:00 each Thursday. In an area which is shown to have the highest demand for food, this limited operation would not be sufficient to meet the high demand. Other areas of high demand include Sittingbourne, Faversham and Herne Bay, none of which appear to have any food bank provision in place.*

Conversely, in Tunbridge Wells District there were a total of 7 known food banks at the time of writing. Areas such as Sandwich, Aylesham and Sevenoaks all have food bank provision but this is not matched by the level of demand.

Figure 14 provides an illustration of each food banks known operating hours. Most food banks across the county are only open once a week. The opening times themselves vary, with most food banks operating over a two hour period only, some by appointment only.

Figure 14: Food Bank opening hours



The Trussell Trust estimates that nationally two new food banks are launched each week to meet the growing demand⁵. It is evident from the analysis above that not all food banks will have the capacity to service the general population.

For example, some Children’s Centres do supply small parcels of food for a family in need; however, these are akin to small-scale distribution centres or satellites for other larger food banks, with only around 3 parcels kept on-site at the Children’s Centre at any one time. Furthermore, eligibility is restricted to existing known families with a child under 6. Operations within these locations would not service wider demands from all areas or sections of the community.

In DEFRA’s report from February 2014, ‘Household Food Security in the UK’, its researchers suggest that *“there is no evidence to support the claim that increased food aid provision is driving demand. All available evidence, both in the UK and internationally, points in the opposite direction. Put simply, there is more need and informal food aid providers are trying to help”*⁶.

This statement appears corroborated by the demand in Kent, which outweighs current supplies from food bank provision. Food banks will have a limited capacity to meet the demand in Kent.

Potential benefits

- Potential reduction in award costs by approximately a third.

Potential risks

- Fewer opportunities to signpost customers to preventative/alternative services.
- Little alternative sustainable food provision currently available in Kent to meet the demand.

⁵ <http://www.trusselltrust.org/stats#Apr2013-Mar2014>

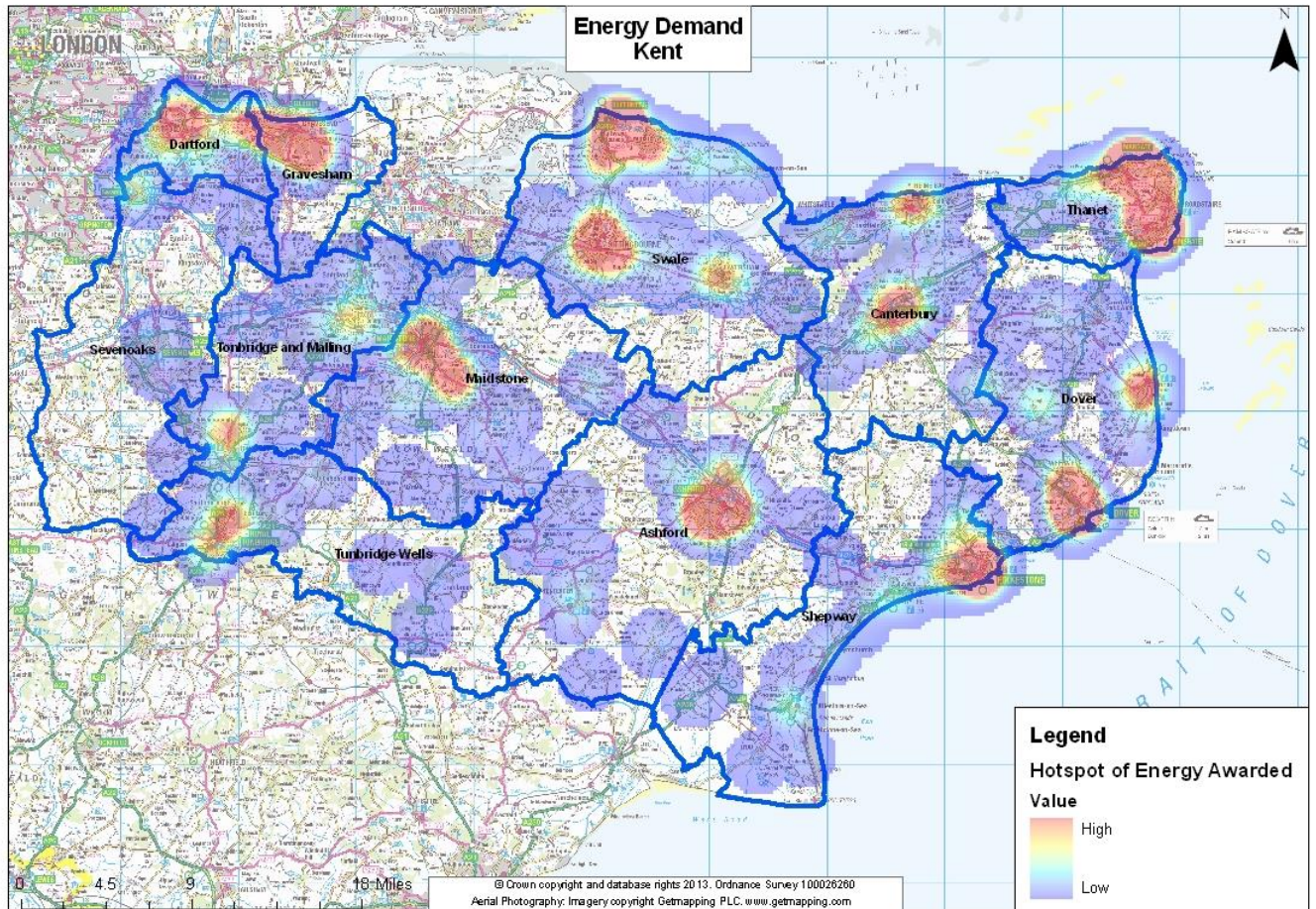
⁶ *The Guardian, Families turn to food banks as last resort ‘not because they are free’* February 2014: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/20/foodbank-review-undermines-ministers-claim>

- Impact on individuals' immediate health and wellbeing.
- Potential increased contact and interventions required from statutory services.
- Negative publicity due to the ceasing of food provision. 56% of awards in Quarter 1 were for households living with children.
- Greater impact on high risk households.

Energy awards

Figure 15 below illustrates the demand for assistance with energy across Kent.

Figure 15: Energy demand: April 2013 to March 2014



The cost of individual energy awards are comparatively low (£45 per award) in the context of other award types. These awards generally accompany high risk awards of food. The availability of gas and electricity is vital for basic household tasks including warming the home, cooking and cleaning. KSAS approved over 1,000 awards for energy in Quarter 1; of these, 33% were assigned a high priority, the largest proportion of any award category.

PayPoint are commissioned to provide energy vouchers and cash in exceptional circumstances. PayPoint is the provider of a national scheme that allows the issuing of vouchers for a specified value to be printed out for recipients, or sent to their mobile phone and redeemed for energy charge on their pre-pay account keys. In exceptional circumstances, households in immediate risk of harm can be sent a cash award by text or voucher for immediate redemption. Recipients redeem their voucher at one of the 926 PayPoint outlets in Kent. 99.3% of the UK population live within one mile of an outlet in urban areas and within five miles in rural areas. The outlets are generally open 7 days a week and extended hours (e.g. 7am – 11pm) making them highly accessible to residents in crisis.

Alternative provision

Other than KSAS, research has revealed no other known source of funding for gas and electricity for Kent residents in crisis or emergency situations. A number of large energy companies offer grant schemes to help

households in fuel debt, but these are inappropriate for the KSAS customer base who require help in the form of an immediate energy supply.

An example is the British Gas Trust⁷, a charitable trust funded by British Gas for any resident of England, Scotland or Wales. The Trust awards grants to clear domestic gas and electricity debts owed to British Gas and other suppliers. The grant is awarded only to those who have accumulated an unmanageable debt.

Most applicants would not be eligible for these grants as they require urgent short term top-up for their pre-pay meters for gas and electricity. A further deficiency with the national energy schemes is the speed at which grant applications are assessed and decided upon for those who are eligible. The KSAS service works to deliver awards in a timely manner; high risk awards are granted within 24hrs and in most cases the same business day. The national schemes cannot provide this assurance leaving even those households that are eligible without gas or electricity during a lengthy assessment and application process.

Potential benefits

- Potential reduction in award costs by approximately a tenth.

Potential risks

- Fewer opportunities to signpost customers to preventative/alternative services.
- No alternative provision currently available in Kent to provide cash or energy grants for pre-pay meters.
- Inability to heat a house, cook food and clean clothing may impact on individuals' immediate health and wellbeing.
- Over one third of individuals receiving energy awards have a physical or mental health problem. The withdrawal of energy awards may increase the contact and interventions required from statutory services.
- Greater impact on higher risk households.

Clothing voucher awards

In emergency situations individuals can apply to KSAS for clothing vouchers. Approximately half of all clothing voucher awards granted in Quarter 1 were recorded as being for customers with generic need. The remaining awards were split between those requiring clothing in the event of a disaster such as the Yalding Floods and those fleeing domestic abuse.

In comparison with other award types, the provision of clothing is low with less than £15,000 spent in the first Quarter of this financial year.

KSAS also provides generic school wear for children in eligible families. This enables children to attend school rather than be absent as they have suitable clothing.

Alternative Supply

There are no current services known to KSAS that supply free clothing or clothing voucher grants to all members of the public in need. The Local Authority, under Section 17, can provide cash to those leaving abusive situations to purchase new clothes for children. There is a good supply of charity shops in the High Street that will provide used clothing at a cost but are unlikely to be able to do so at zero cost.

Potential benefits

- Potential reduction in award costs by approximately 3%.

Potential risks

- Fewer opportunities to signpost customers to preventative/alternative services.
- No alternative provision currently available in Kent to provide cash or clothing voucher grants to individuals in need of free new, or used clothing.
- Potential increased contact and interventions required from statutory services.

⁷ <http://www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/help/grants-for-individuals-help-pages/how-can-the-trust-help>

Travel awards

KSAS has awarded only 7 individuals with travel awards in the first Quarter of 2014/15. These were provided in the form of travel tickets or in very exceptional circumstances, cash. Four customers required this assistance to travel to funerals with the remaining requiring assistance to travel to hospital. Travel vouchers are also used to enable Kent residents and their children to safely flee domestic abuse.

Alternative supply

There are no current services known to KSAS that provide travel grants to all members of the public in need. Whilst some public bodies have the ability to award travel warrants, the coverage and eligibility for accessing these resources is very restricted.

Potential benefits

- A negligible sum of money is spent on travel awards through KSAS and the savings made by ceasing this type of award would be minimal.

Potential risks

- Fewer opportunities to signpost customers to preventative/alternative services.
- No alternative provision currently available in Kent to provide travel assistance grants to all in need. There are a number of services that provide travel assistance, however only to selective cohorts.
- High risk households, including those where there is domestic abuse, will be more greatly impacted.

Option 1 – Summary

On reflection of the detail above, should diminution of the services be considered the greatest saving can be made by removing the provision of Clothing and Travel, along with all Furniture items except for cooking facilities, fridges, washing machines and beds (including cots).

In Quarter 1, this would have saved the council 31% of KSAS award costs (£135,575).

Food and Energy are the most critical categories of awards for customers due to the potential impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals of any withdrawal. Whilst costly, the total expenditure of both award types in Quarter 1 was approximately £185,000, comparatively cheaper than the cost of Furniture (£232,705) and reaching many more vulnerable people.

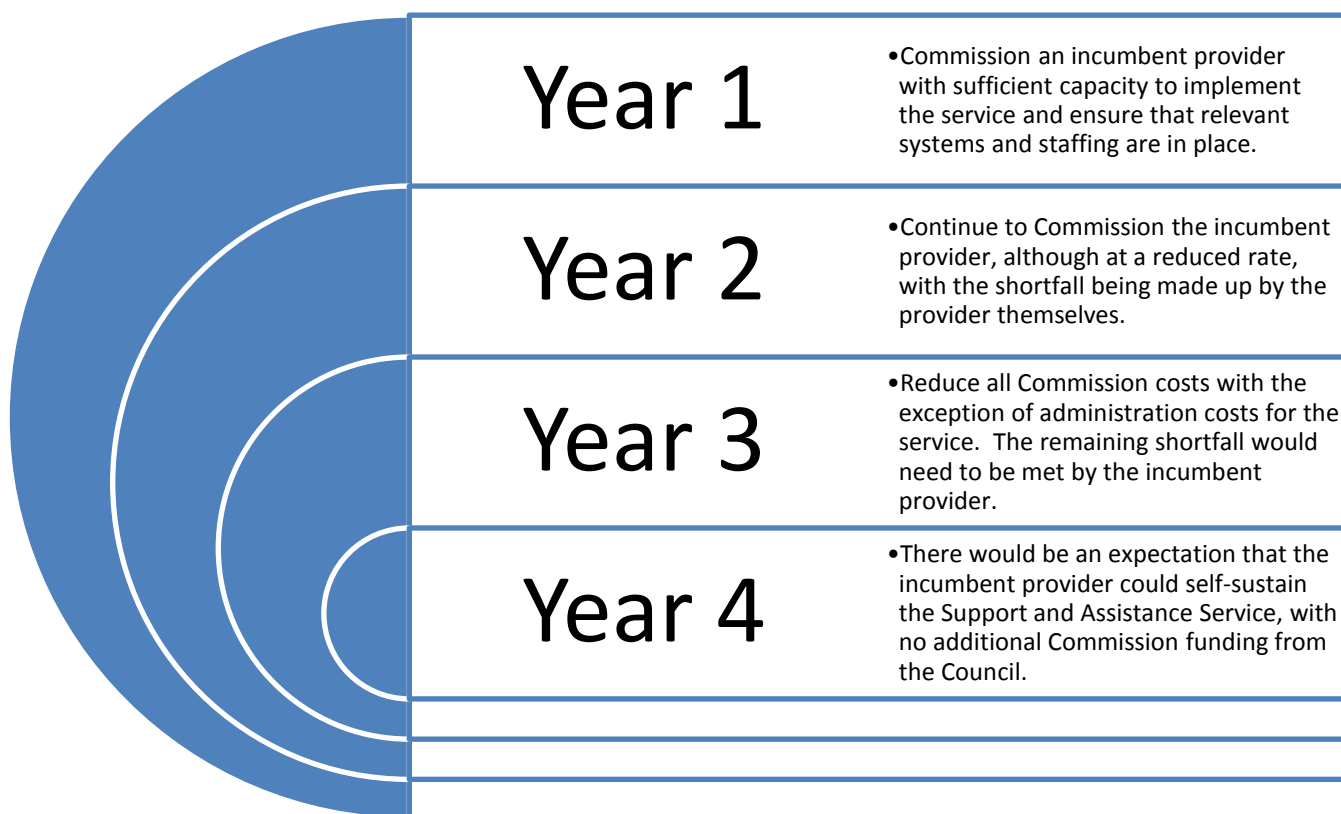
As **Figures 13** and **14** demonstrate, Food Bank provision is not equitable across Kent, neither would it satisfy the demand from vulnerable households in Kent. In addition, energy trusts will not meet the needs evidenced by KSAS.

Food and Energy have the highest proportion of high priority cases than any other category (**Figure 9**).

b) Option 2 – Commission service delivery

The council may choose to commission the provision of service delivery from the third sector, charity or voluntary organisation(s). This option will minimise costs incurred by the Council, by developing a commissioning model which places some risk and cost onto the provider organisation:

Figure 16: Proposed commissioning model for voluntary sector delivery



An outcomes' focussed commissioning model could be tendered by KCC; staff would need to be employed to support the commissioning element of KSAS, both in the initial tendering stages and throughout the course of the contract. In addition, time will need to be spent in managing the transition of the scheme from its current form. Costs of £78,460⁸ per annum would therefore need to be factored into Council budgets accordingly.

As KCC moves towards becoming a strategic commissioning authority this option sits well with the Council's vision for the future.

Potential benefits

- Increasing reduction in spends over a period of time.
- The utilisation of other providers meets the Council's vision for the future; to become a strategic commissioning authority.

Potential risks

- Costs will still need to be incurred by the Council, albeit these will diminish over time.
- KCC would still need to commit to providing staff to manage the KSAS contract throughout the commissioning cycle.
- Difficulties may be experienced in getting providers to work jointly with the service. Administration costs attributed to the service may not make it a viable financial proposition for outside agencies to take on.
- There may be a lack of interest from potential providers when the service is tendered, leading to little competition.

⁸ KSAS Evaluation Report 2014

c) **Option 3 – Grant fund to local voluntary organisations**

The council may choose to use the underspend to issue grants to local organisations to deliver welfare assistance across Kent. To achieve longevity, the total grant fund could be set at £500k per annum, enabling provision to be spread across five years.

It is clear that such grants could not match or sustain the current level of provision. Similarly, there is no certainty that the suppliers of such services exist in areas of greatest need which could lead to an inequality of provision (see **Figures 12** and **13**). It is unlikely that any provision for emergency gas and electricity could be found.

A bidding or selection process would be necessary with robust outcomes and criteria. There is a risk that should a number of awards be made each year that they are too small to be impactful and deliver transformational outcomes, particularly the higher cost elements of the services such as furniture. In granting funding to many smaller organisations, there is a risk that there is a higher proportion of the spend used for overheads rather than direct provision.

The services would not have access to the current data systems such as CIS, Liberi, and SWIFT and robust fraud and safeguarding controls would need to be in place.

However at ward level, these organisations are well embedded in their local areas and know and understand the needs of their local neighbourhoods.

Appendix 1 Case Study

A mother with a 12yr old daughter, who had fled an abusive relationship made an approach to the assistance scheme as she had no food, insufficient clothing, serious rent arrears and suffering depression. The child was not attending school because she did not have suitable clothing to fit her child. KSAS supplied cash for emergency food, clothing vouchers, a seven day food parcel and energy vouchers were also issued. The service signposted her to specialist Floating Support who set about assessing her needs, worked with the local housing benefit office to arrange back payment of benefit and reduce rent arrears. They further negotiated a reduction in rent with her landlord. A CAF was set up to ensure support for the mother and child across agencies.

In assessing her needs, KSAS became aware that in the midst of this crisis, the applicant was also the sole carer for her elderly parents. Her parents, themselves vulnerable as the mother had a chronic illness and the father a terminal illness, were also in crisis and at risk of homelessness as a result of harassment due to their ethnicity.

It was clear this household was under considerable strain. Without help with her own issues and those of her daughter and parents, her ability to continue caring for herself, her daughter and parents was in jeopardy. KSAS awarded food and energy to the parents and again signposted to floating support to help the older couple.

Outcome

This intervention, including the signposting to supporting agencies, prevented the customer losing her home and enabled her to get the help she needed to manage her own affairs. KSAS provided immediate support with provision of food and clothing which protected the health of the customers and allowed the daughter to return to school and stabilise their living arrangements.

Her parents' health was protected by being supported with food, energy and equipment. With the assistance of Floating Support both households were made safe from eviction and the customer recovered sufficiently to continue as Carer for her parents allowing them to continue to live independently in the community without any statutory involvement.

Cost to KSAS

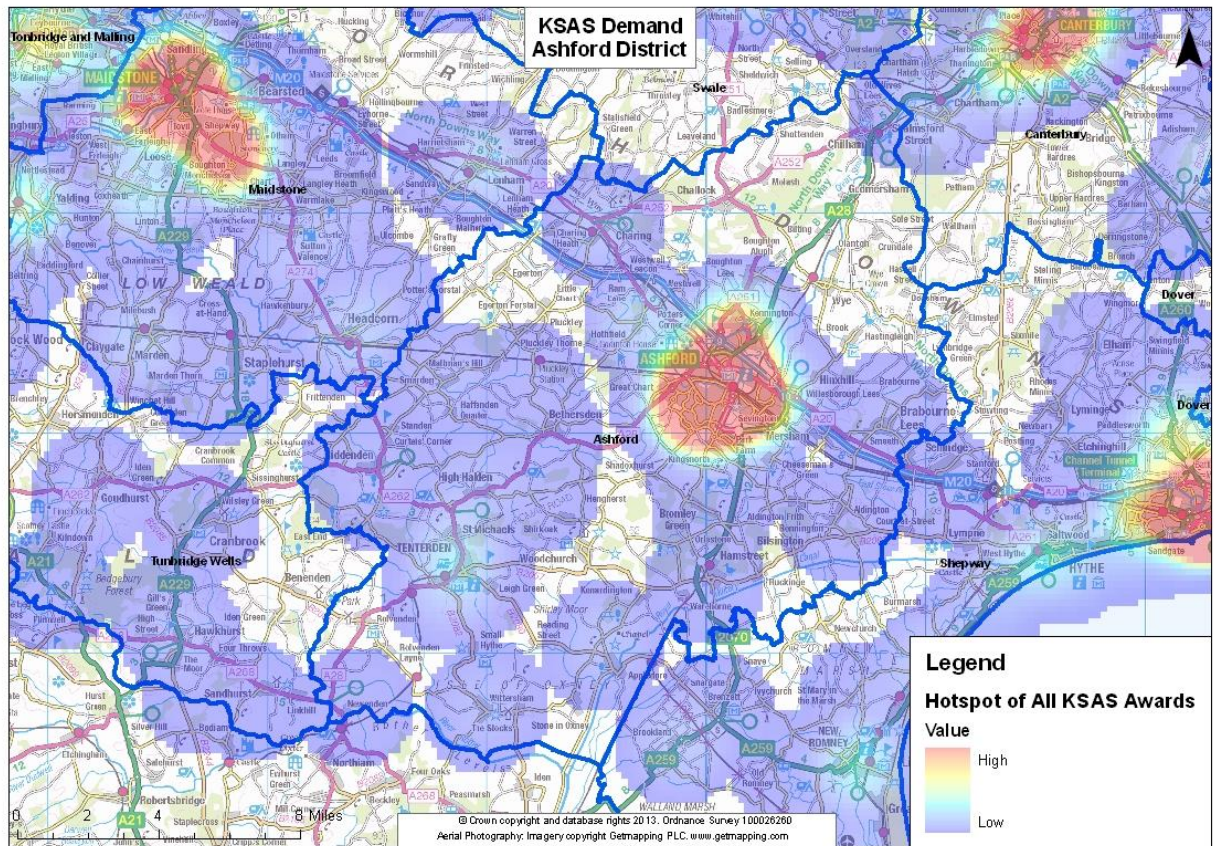
Cost of food, clothing, energy, furniture and equipment for the mother and child was £747.12. Cost to support parents was £304.32.

Potential savings to KCC statutory services

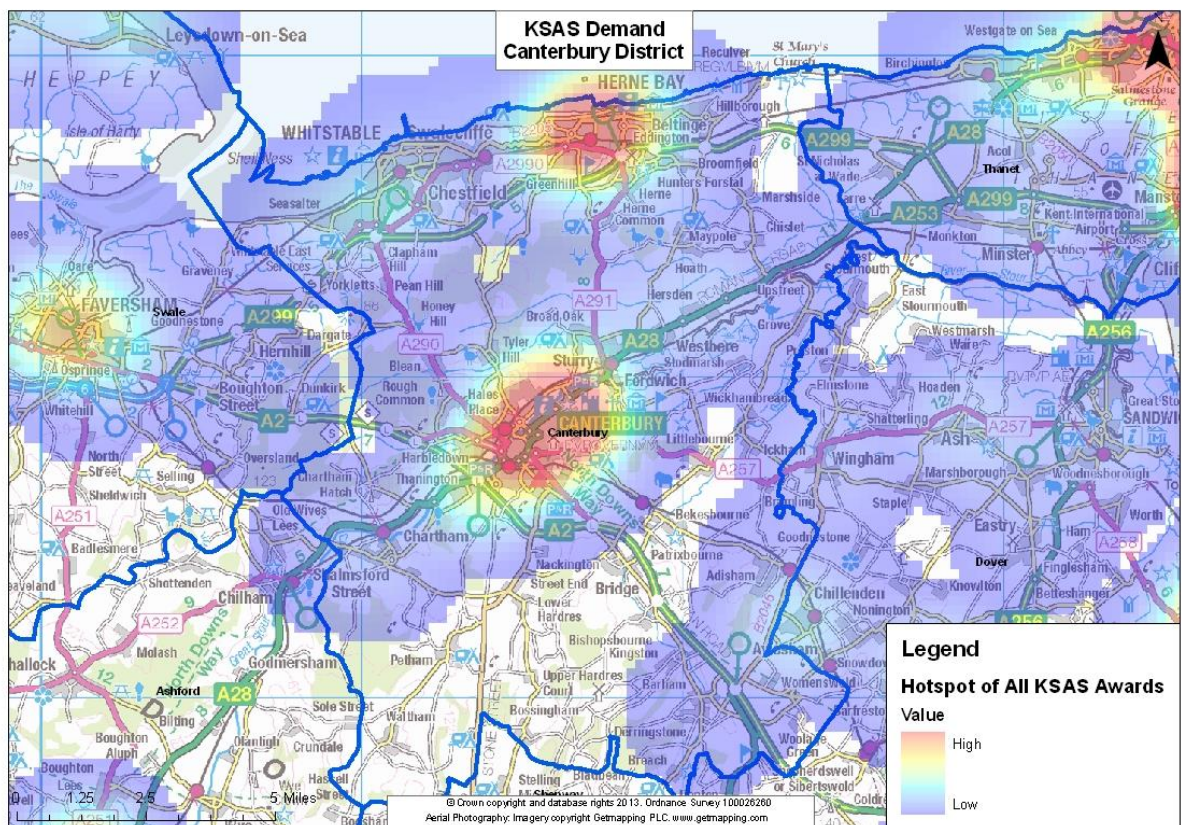
- £2,551 per week for a child's residential home placement, or
- £818 per week for a child taken into care, or
- £555 per week for a child's foster care placement;
- £457 per week Social Care support for people with mental health problems
- £687 per week for Social Care support for people with physical disabilities, or
- £282 per week for Social Care support for older people

Appendix 2 KSAS Demand by district/borough

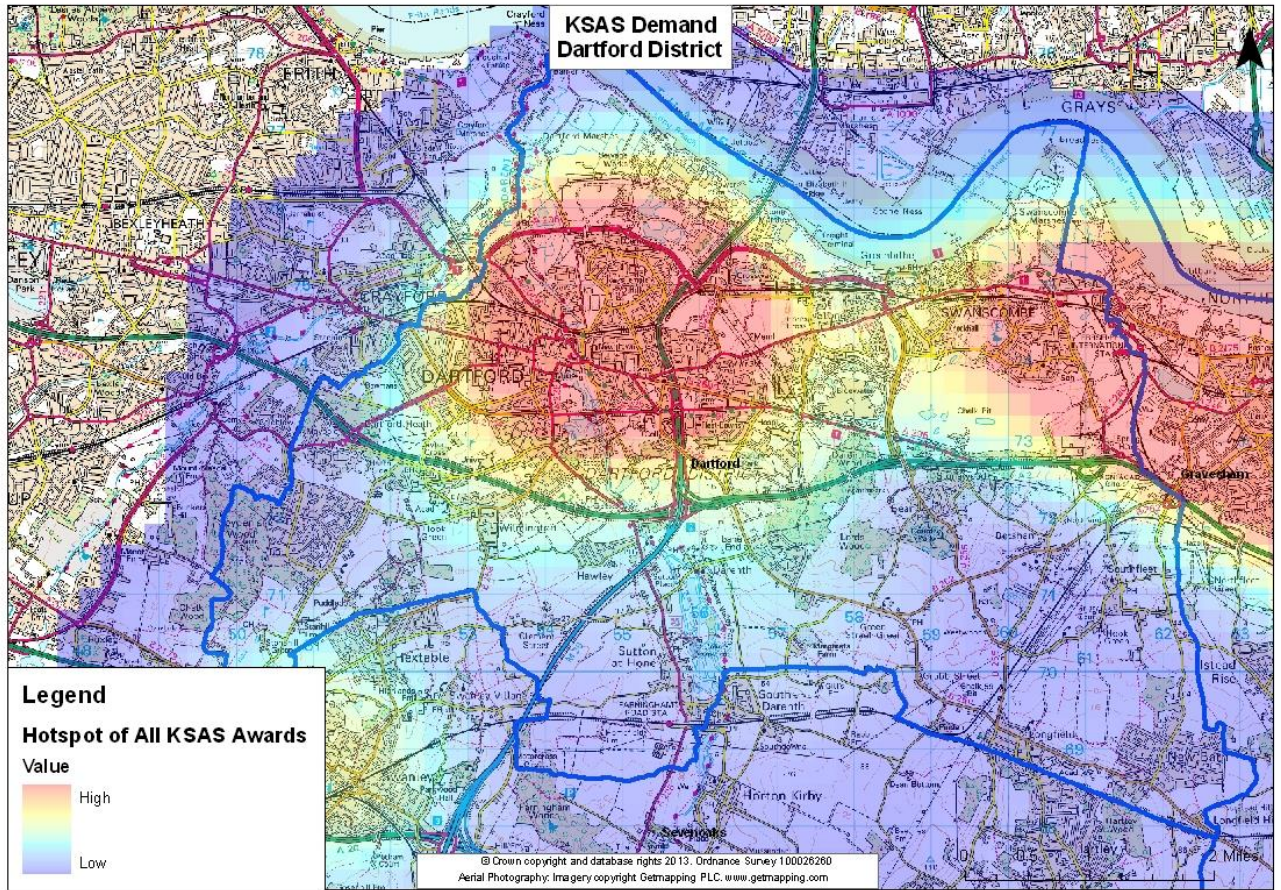
KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Ashford District



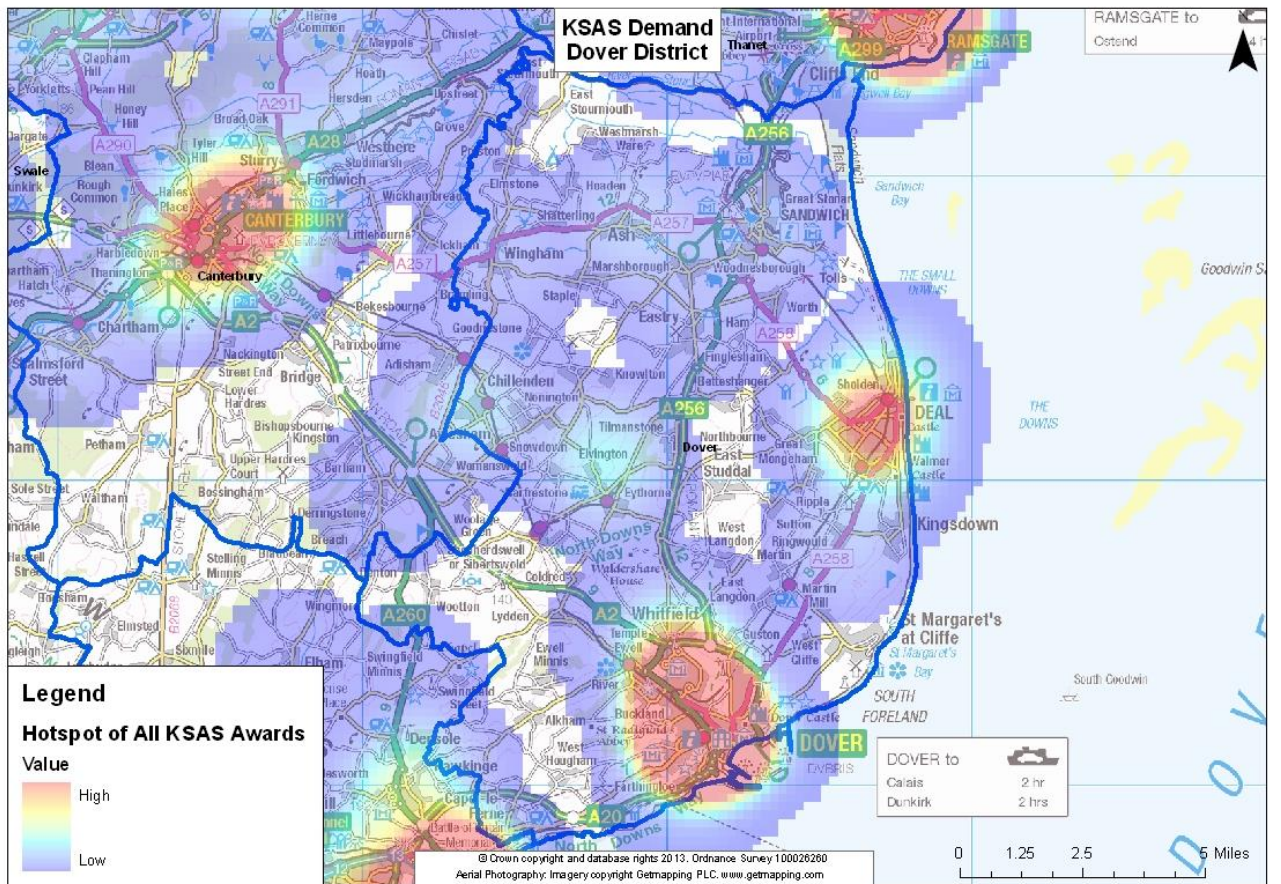
KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Canterbury District



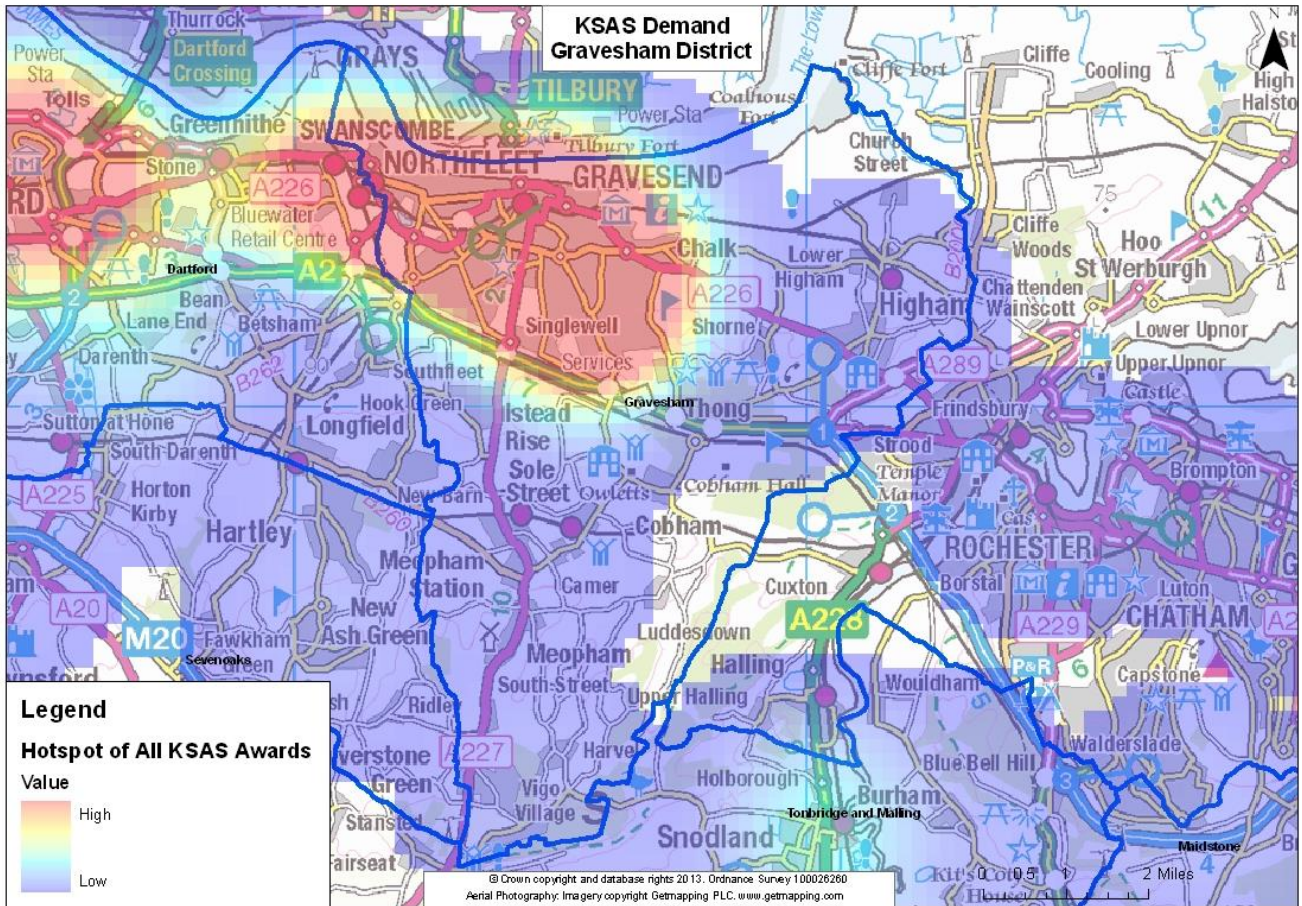
KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Dartford District



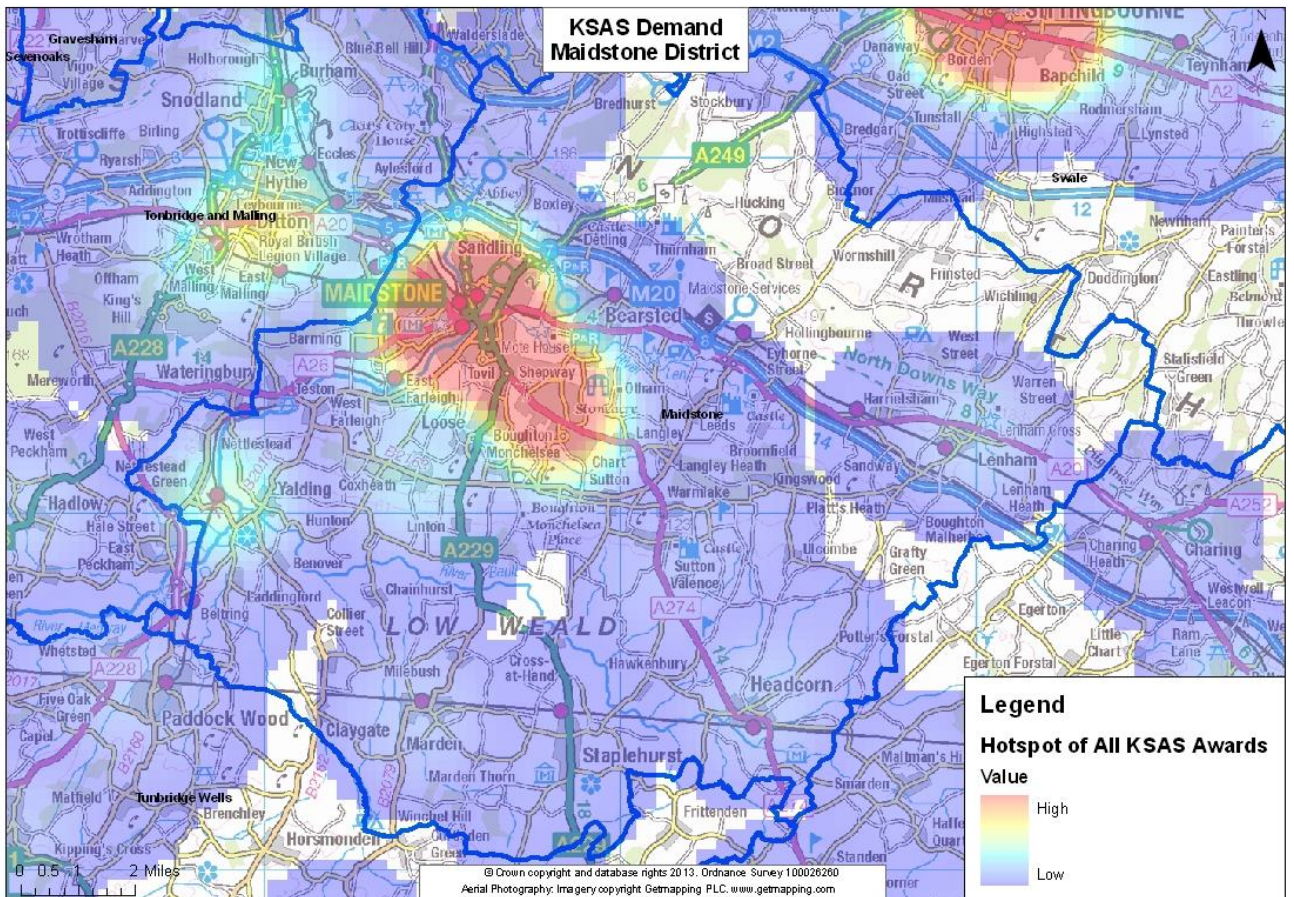
KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Dover District



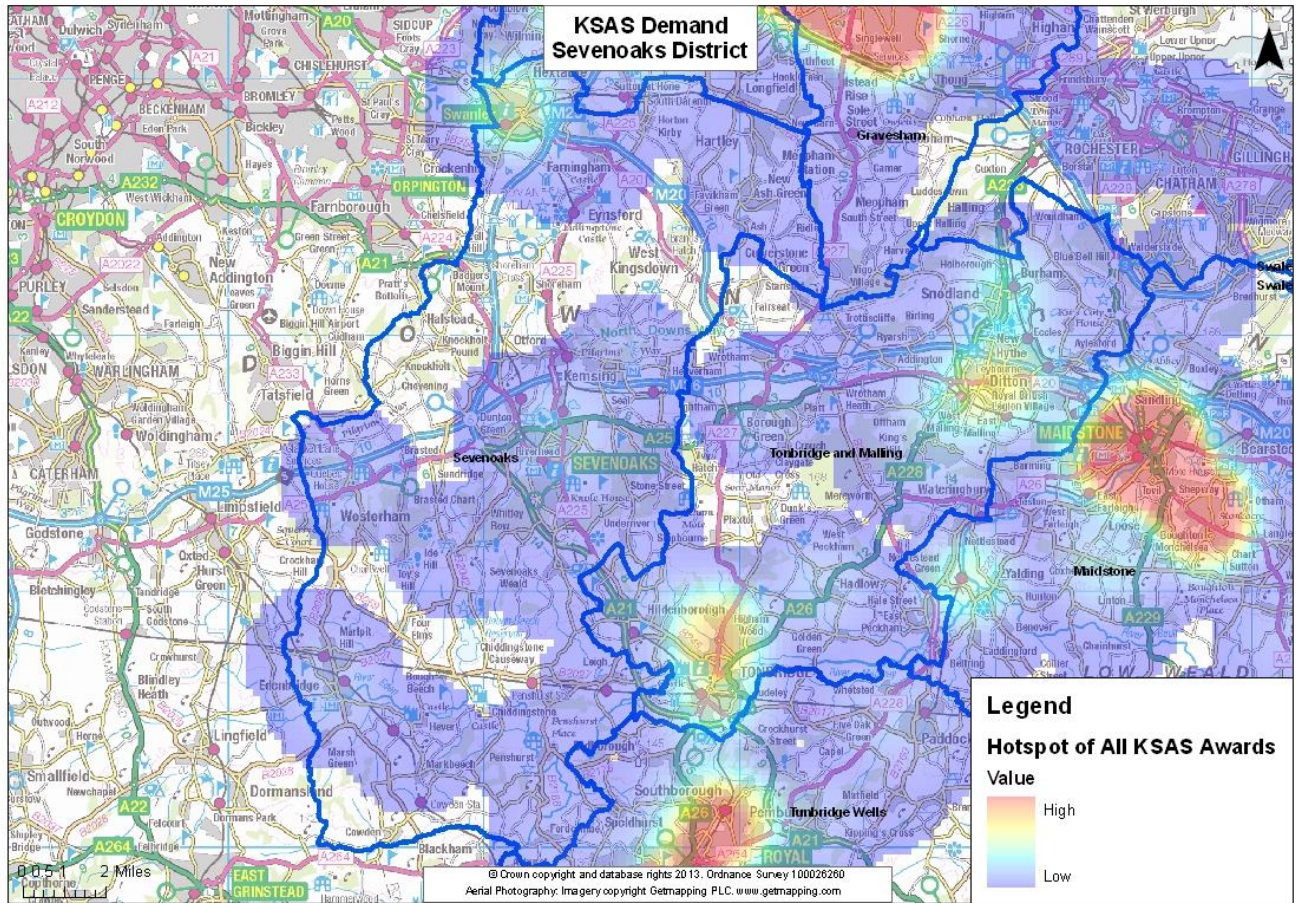
KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Gravesend District



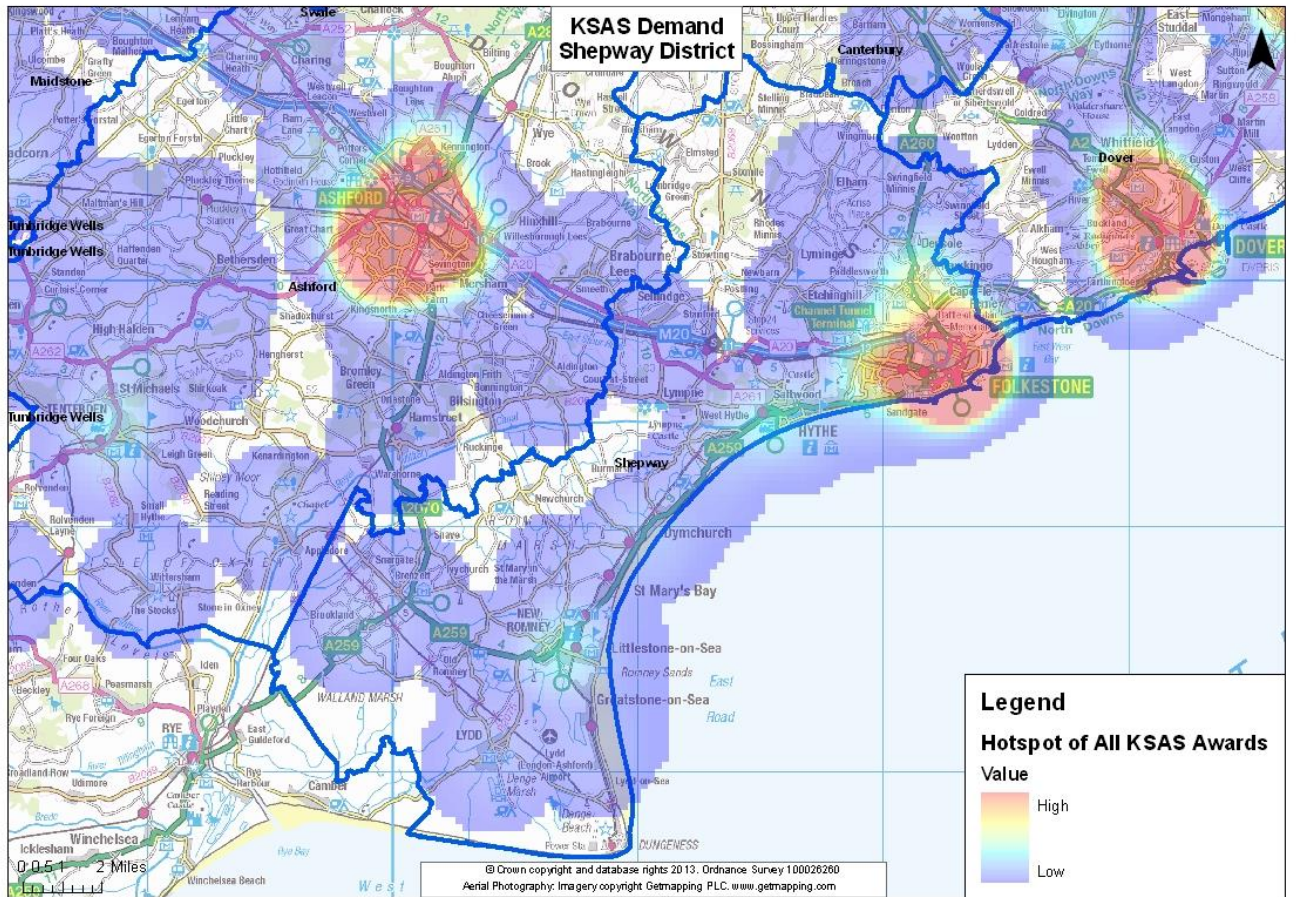
KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Maidstone District



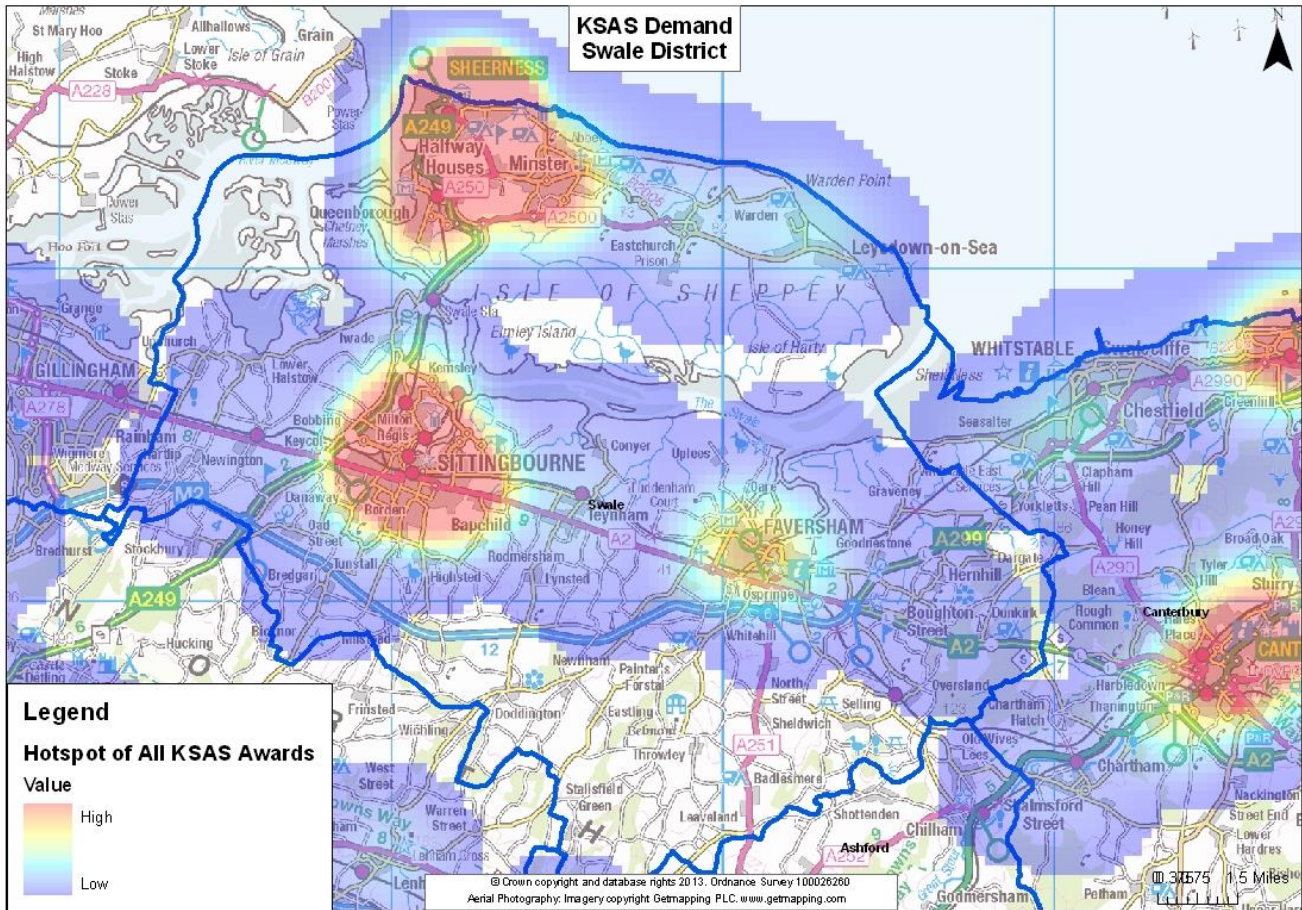
KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Sevenoaks District



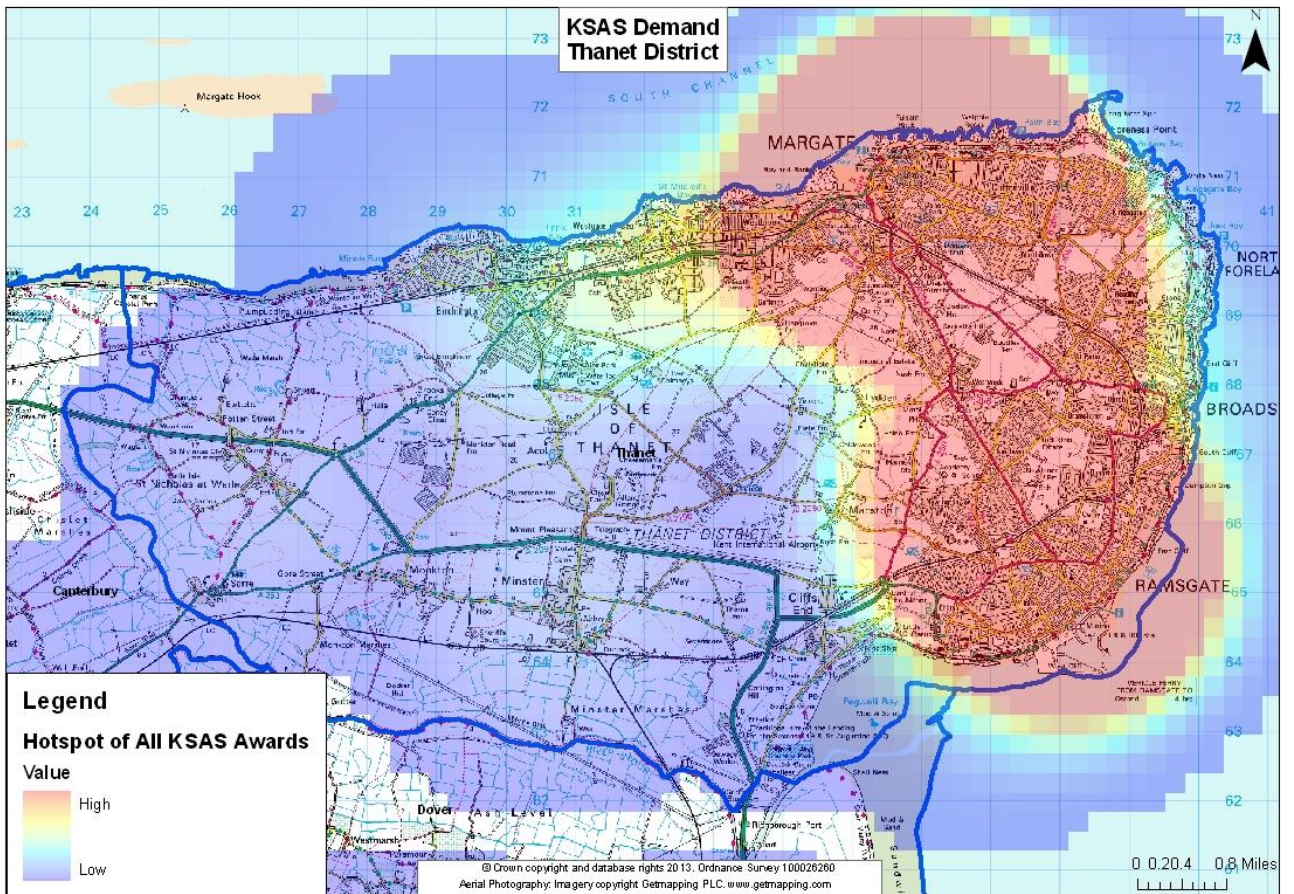
KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Shepway District



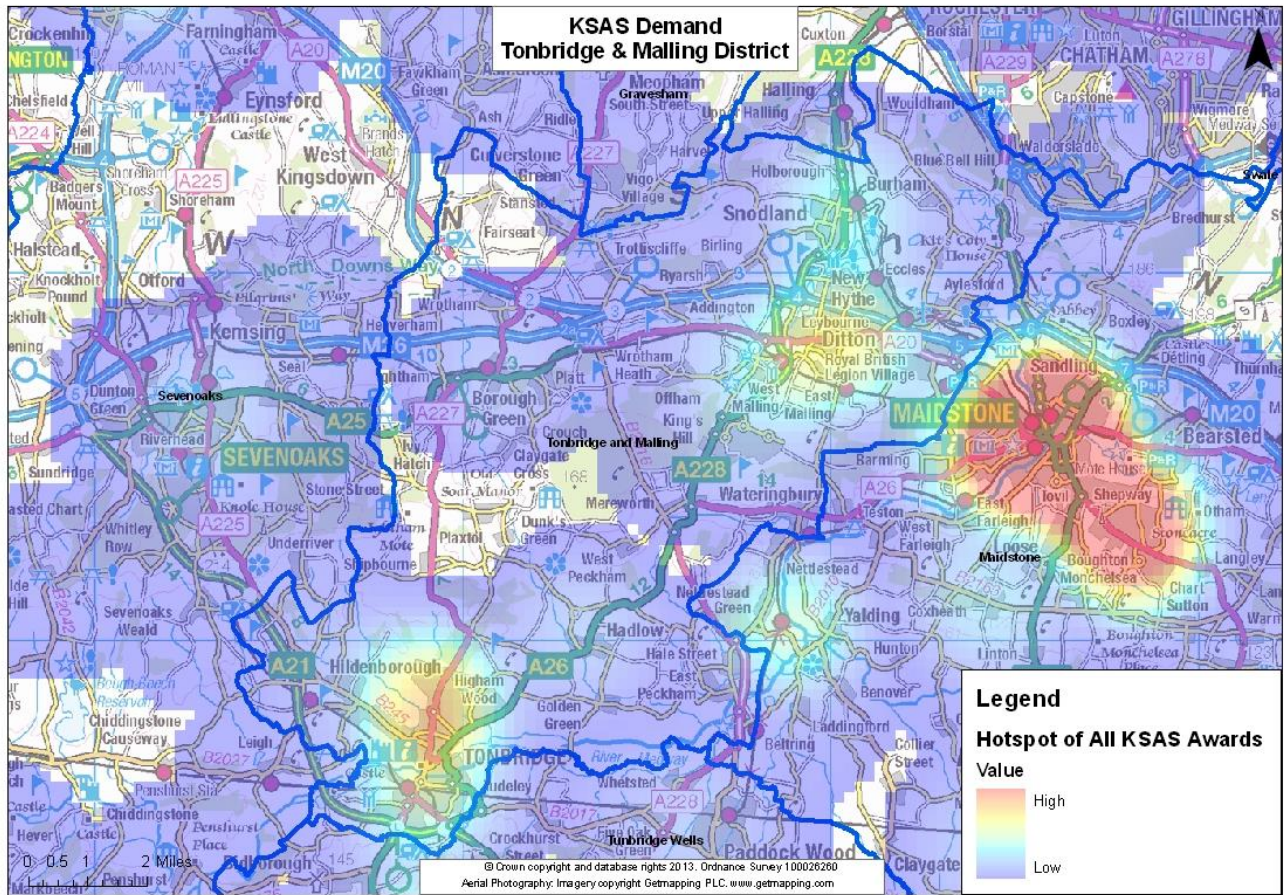
KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Swale District



KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Thanet District



KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Tonbridge & Malling District



KSAS Demand, 2013/14 in Tunbridge Wells District

