

Report on the work of Maidstone Mediation Scheme (MMS) and West Kent Mediation Scheme (WKMS) in relation to the SLA 2020-2024

These are the combined number of referrals to both mediation services from March 2020 to date. 20/1/2021. Please note that to enable business continuity both services have been operating their services remotely and offering mediation and anger management course on line, via zoom, whatsapp etc. Both organisations have done their best in trying to keep their service running during the Pandemic thus ensuring that we have been available to those that have needed us.

40 Referrals. (0 schools trained in Peer mediation due to Lockdown)

- Neighbour/community cases 27. 1 case involved 9 second parties
- parent and teen cases 2
- family cases
- Anger Management courses.(MMS) 9
- preventing Homelessness 2
- Restorative justice process 0
- Due to Lockdown schools in TMBC area have not asked for Peer mediation training for their young people, they hope to resume this asap.
- When things return to normal Maidstone Mediation and West Kent Mediation will resume training 2 cohorts of new volunteers as and when we are able; they are trained in mediation skills to deliver neighbourhood mediation, family mediation to address the issues that arise in the home, to prevent them from being made homeless, sofa surfing and presenting at TMBC as homeless. We also work with families when there has been Adolescent to Parent violence and the threat of homelessness, residents/ parents ask for our support and help which prevents their children entering into the criminal justice system. We are also able to offer Anger Management courses to any resident from the age of 12 through to adults

All of our work takes away some of the burden off the statutory agencies; preventing, responding and resolving the common issues in the community. Statutory agencies are working at crisis levels; Police, Housing providers, the Council and Early Help preventative services. If the two mediation services did not exist, the burden on those agencies would increase exponentially.

We are able to offer a free service to those in the borough who most need it, both services have the Restorative Justice Quality mark for 'best practice' staff and volunteers have trained and achieved the certificate of competence in KCC E-learning safeguarding.

The Mediation services regularly attend the TMBC meetings, e.g. the TMBC CSVG, The TMBC DA forum, and Strategy group meetings. We attend any training that is offered to us e.g. Prevent training and also offer training to TMBC staff. We constantly remind agencies of the referral process and about our service.

Kim Salisbury

Manager

Maidstone Mediation Scheme.

Involve Kent - Report to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council 2020

Introduction

Involve Kent and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council have an established partnership in place through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) worth £3600 a year with the aim of promoting and supporting volunteering across the Malling Borough.

In this reporting year, like many other organisations, our work was severely impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic and following social restriction including 'lockdowns'. This impacted on our ability to connect and empower people in traditional ways and run operations as normal. In this period many volunteers themselves went into isolation due to age or health conditions and many organisations struggled to continue to provide volunteer roles as offices and activities ceased. However, the pandemic also provided new opportunities for volunteering and 2020 saw a mass movement of people committing to supporting vulnerable people in their community, through both national initiatives such as NHS responders and local and informal support for neighbours and friends. This report will detail how Involve Kent worked to both recruit, support and promote volunteering across the Borough of Malling during this difficult time.

Reporting on the specifics in the SLA for 2020;

Recruiting volunteers who reflect the demographic makeup of the district and including volunteers who have experienced need for support from voluntary or statutory services.

We have 36 volunteers from the district currently participating in Involve volunteer roles or activities. 12 of these engage in 2 or more activities or roles.

Volunteers are currently in the following roles:

1 exercise group (virtual) volunteer

3 Volunteers supporting people with a cancer diagnosis

3 Older people's befrienders

9 'Get Involved' volunteers taking part in gardening and DIY

9 Members accessing creative activities including knitting, sewing and craft

6 have completed 'Response' training courses

3 Volunteers are supporting the local link worker in the Snodland Medical Practice

8 Volunteer Drivers supporting the community

This represents 36 volunteers in total, however many of the volunteers undertook multiple placements in this period and 48 placements were filled by volunteers from the Malling Borough.

18 of these volunteers have identified support needs either in the form of mental or physical health, prior convictions or low confidence and have been supported by the Volunteering and Engagement Officer to access volunteer roles or activities within Involve.

Involve Cancer support volunteering in depth

Cancer support volunteers continued to offer support, befriending and advocacy for people with a cancer diagnosis in this period. From March 2020 this moved from being face to face support to telephone support. 3 Malling volunteers supported 14 people in the Malling area this year, including during the first lockdown, through the initial shielding requirements and later lockdowns. They ensured that people who were on many occasions nearing end of life had someone outside of their household to talk to. With support from the volunteers, clients have been able to access free transport to hospital appointments and have accessed virtual exercise classes and support groups in addition to the one to one support the volunteer offers.

Matching volunteers to opportunities within volunteer involving organisations

We supported 54 groups/organisations based in Tonbridge and Malling as they adapted to Covid restrictions with information and updates. During this period, many smaller volunteering involving organisations ceased to be able to offer roles/engage volunteers. We did however work with the Hub at Tonbridge and Malling council for which we actively recruited volunteers. We also promoted national volunteering initiatives including widely publicising the NHS Responders volunteer programme.

Providing support for individual volunteers, particularly those facing barriers to volunteering e.g. through age, disability, culture, income etc.

Volunteers are supported not only in their roles, but to access other opportunities. Our dedicated Volunteering and Engagement Officer offers 1-2-1 support, working with volunteers to identify opportunities they may wish to engage with. Volunteers are given information and/or support around education and training, further volunteer opportunities and full-time work, amongst other things.

Involve have a partnership with Community Learning and Skills who offer free training courses which include health & safety, assertiveness, mindfulness and IT skills. Courses run throughout the year and if volunteers need assistance getting to the venue due to confidence concerns, the V&E Officer can meet and accompany them to their course.

This year we supported groups of supported volunteers through lockdown which often had detrimental impacts on health and wellbeing and anxiety levels. We worked hard to provide both one to one support and to build online communities where volunteers could find some space for positive socialising. We also worked with other specialist support organisations including 'Mind' and ensured that supported volunteers knew where to turn if things got too much.

Involve Supported Volunteering in depth

Supported Volunteering provides the opportunity for people who are socially isolated to access volunteering and give something back to their community in a safe and supportive environment. This year 9 supported volunteers from the Malling area worked with us pre lockdown doing general light DIY for older people under the supervision of our handy person. In addition, 9 supported volunteers worked across our craft groups. These volunteers were extensively supported through lockdown through the provision of weekly calls and a range of virtual social opportunities including a weekly supported volunteer zoom quiz. Many of our supported volunteers really struggled with isolation and worsening mental health in this period and staff ensured that wellbeing and self-care were promoted throughout. One of our Malling supported volunteers worked throughout the summer to clear garden paths and cut grass so that older people had access to their outside space. Another of our supported volunteer gardeners from Malling completed his NVQ and found work in a local garden centre.

Promoting, stimulating and encouraging local interest in volunteering and community activity

This year we promoted volunteering across lockdowns, including in T & M hub, NHS responders. We updated our directory to highlight what specific groups were doing in terms of a Covid response and ensured that where needed, groups were supported to recruit volunteers.

Involve Befriending Volunteering in depth

As part of our Covid 19 response we recruited additional peer befrienders, 3 from the Malling area. They work to support people across T & M with 922 calls being made to people who were shielding in the ME16, ME18, ME19 and ME20 postcodes.

Promoting existing volunteer driver schemes within the area

Involve Kent continued to promote volunteer driving in the area. This was challenging as volunteers were often older themselves and many were isolating/shielding for much of this period. We did successfully recruit 8 volunteer drivers from the area. These drivers supported 36 people throughout lockdown making 315 trips with food, medication drop offs and transport to vital medical appointments.

Promoting good practice within organisations involving volunteers by providing support and information.

Information is distributed weekly in the 'Digest' newsletter – now with 1712 contacts receiving the Digest. The Digest includes events, news, training and vacancies.

Involve organise and facilitate 2 ad hoc VCS Groups networking events, that bring together colleagues across the VCS. In 2020 there were 2 virtual events giving information on working in a Covid secure way, accessing funding during the pandemic and providing information on our 25k grants programme.

In addition, our Information Officer re – mapped the area and ensured that an up to date directory of services operating during Covid was available to staff and organisations both in the voluntary and statutory sector.

Involve maintains relationships with 54 organisations across Tonbridge and Malling and are able to offer support and signposting to these groups when required.

Liaising with local organisations, including parish councils and other voluntary groups to promote services

Contact is maintained through regular newsletters promoting volunteering and other community initiatives.

Our online directory Connect Well has 54 organisations from Tonbridge & Malling registered on it, including Spadework, Tree of Hope and Malling Parkrun. This directory is free to join and due to being online, is publicly visible to all. This directory was constantly updated as activities closed, and new ones opened due to Covid this year.

Providing information through the Involve Kent website and online directory

The website is regularly updated alongside the new Connect Well directory, www.connectwellwestkent.org.uk . Volunteer opportunities are now advertised on Do-it.org and kentvolunteers.org.uk. Social media is now a key communication tool with 3072 'followers' and frequent updates. Volunteer opportunities are advertised in GP practices including Snodland.

Participating in local, regional and national campaigns, either individually or in partnership with other providers

National campaigns include; Volunteers Week, World Mental Health Day, Carers Week, Carers Rights Day.

We worked closely with T & M health action team and KCC public health team to ensure Covid response cohesion.

Providing input into strategic development of volunteering locally, regionally and nationally

Involve have maintained a relationship with Stronger Kent Communities, providing support in accrediting organisations applying for the REVAMP award. REVAMP is a quality mark designed to recognise good practice in volunteer management and was co-developed by Involve and SKC. Organisations from across the county are encouraged to apply.

Carrying out DBS checks on all volunteers working in Involve Kent, who work with vulnerable adults

All volunteers and staff working with vulnerable adults are DBS checked and a DBS check service is offered across the Malling area, enabling local groups to check their staff and volunteers.

Acting as an umbrella body for DBS checks for all Voluntary Organisations

We continue to act as umbrella body for DBS checks and promote the service widely.

Please see below a summary of activity delivered by Imago across the Tonbridge and Malling borough during 2020.

We have provided a volunteer recruitment service that has benefited organisations in Tonbridge and Malling. However 2020 has been a difficult year for volunteer recruitment, not least because organisations did not have available opportunities when they paused their services as a result of the pandemic. In addition we were unable to promote volunteering as we usually would at college career fairs, or at events organised by Job Centre Plus or by special interest groups.

- We have NCVO Accredited Volunteer Centre status
- Marketing volunteering: We liaise with voluntary and community groups and include their volunteering opportunities in our West Kent Volunteer Centre newsletters. In 2020 4 newsletters were produced in January, March, October and December. They are usually bi-monthly and so we would have expected 6 per annum. Our March 2020 edition, anticipating a lockdown of a few months was full of opportunities that people could consider while locked down and would be available when we re-emerged into normal life. Many of the usual volunteering opportunities were no longer available and most of the Volunteer Coordinators were on furlough. We were not able to respond to the increased

interest in volunteering with available opportunities as many services were temporarily closed. We started to see more volunteering opportunities becoming available as voluntary organisations offered more online support and so we were able to produce an edition in October. It included a variety of opportunities and contained adverts for NHS Responders and for volunteer Journey Makers at Tonbridge station, to help people returning to work and school who were anxious about using public transport. Our December issue contained lots of online volunteer recruitment opportunities to deliver largely virtual services.

- We received volunteering enquiries from local residents and we directed them to www.do-it.org, the latest Volunteer Centre newsletter or provided them with tailored advice about the volunteering opportunities usually available and the ones available at the time of their enquiry. Recently some volunteers have been interested in testing and vaccination opportunities.
- Good practice development - We facilitate a Volunteer Coordinators Forum and usually we would have physical meetings of this group. Some of our Coordinators have been furloughed (more than once) and sadly a few have lost their positions as a result of the pandemic and its impact on charity finance. We have kept in touch with the forum members and some have used the forum as an ongoing opportunity for peer support. For example, they have been sharing ways to keep their existing volunteers engaged when they are unable to volunteer.
- We have continued to operate our Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking service for organisations.
- Our Dial 2 Drive Community Transport service now has 16 registered drivers in the Tonbridge and Malling area and 170 clients. We stopped offering drives in March 2020 and restarted the service in November 2020. Since the service restarted we have had a reduced pool of volunteer drivers to call on as some are shielding. When our service wasn't operating our drivers were organised into a befriending network and, alongside our office volunteers and Dial 2 Drive staff, made regular befriending calls to Dial 2 Drive members.

In addition:

- We have provided direct one-to-one support to voluntary and community organisations that deliver services in Tonbridge including Crossroads, Compaid, Thrillseekers of Kent, Kisumu Children Trust, Home-Start South West Kent, Citizens Advice North and West Kent, Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge, Tree of Hope, DAVSS, Heart of Kent Hospice and Live Well Kent.
- Our Community Development Manager is a member of the Linda Hogan Community Fund panel that awards grants to Tonbridge based organisations.
- We produce monthly newsletters with sector information for local organisations. Our Imago newsletter is distributed to voluntary and public sector organisations, some of whom are Tonbridge based.
- We represent the voluntary sector on strategic partnerships including the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership and then disseminate useful information to the sector.
- We provided information to 5 thematic groups – the West Kent Young Peoples Provider Forum, the West Kent Older Peoples Provider Forum, the Community

Groups Network, the Disabled and Sensory Impaired Network and the Volunteer Coordinators Forum.