



TMBC SLA Funding

1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022

As with the previous financial year, 2021-22 has been particularly challenging with the ongoing implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. Continued restrictions have meant that we had to adapt our services as the situation changed. In addition, some older people have been keen to get out and about when they can but on the other side of the coin, we have also found that others have been quite anxious about mixing with people again which has had an impact on the services we provide. We have also found that our clients are much frailer than they were previously and that their needs are greater.

In addition to the pandemic, as TMBC will be aware, Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge lost the funding from KCC for day care from June 2021 and we were not successful in gaining the Health and Wellbeing Contract. The implications of this are that we have had to close our day centres in Tonbridge and Edenbridge and cut back on our transport fleet. We have also had a change of management in that Gill Shepherd-Coates retired in June 2021 and we are now sharing a Chief Officer with Age UK Maidstone.

On the positive side, the changes have meant that we have been able to look at what we are offering and adapt and grow our services to match the needs of older people at the moment. We are now offering Dementia Day Care at our Hollybush Day Centre as well as Dementia Outreach in the community. We have employed a Social Inclusion Officer who is working with clients in the Tonbridge and Malling area as well as the Sevenoaks district to help them access the support that they require. The Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator has also been supporting clients in the Tonbridge and Malling area through the Pop Ups in Edenbridge, Chiddingstone and Ryarsh and also providing support and advice around the health improvement agenda.

The Information and Advice team continue to work in the Tonbridge and Malling area and our Tonbridge Office continues to be a hub. It opened back up to the public in June 2021 and footfall has steadily increased. Between 1st April 2021 and 31st December 2021, the office responded to 1356 signposting queries as well as providing specific information and advice to 869 clients. Of these, 90 have been supported to claim benefits. We have improved their lives (financially) to the tune of £7583.60 per week or £394,347.20 per year. We have been running a hybrid service with some appointments being via telephone with forms completed online (typically for simpler forms such as benefit checks or blue badges) and others been done as home visits or office based interviews with the appropriate social distancing and PPE in place. Staff are supported by a team of experienced volunteers and we have just taken on a new volunteer who will be able to cover the West Malling area.

In addition to providing information and advice, other services running out of the Tonbridge Office include a Knit and Natter craft group, line dancing sessions, a weekly coffee morning, a monthly lunch club, a thrice weekly Chiropody clinic, hearing aid assistance (both through Hi Kent and a battery replacement service), computer lessons and postural stability classes. We also now have dedicated befriending officer who covers the Tonbridge and Malling area and works out of the Tonbridge Office.

With regards to transport to the Hollybush Day Centre, we currently have 7 clients attending regularly from the Tonbridge area and several on the waiting list. Of those attending, 4 are brought in by Age UK transport and the others make their own way. We are in the process of trying to arrange transport for 2 new clients so that they are able to attend.

We are hoping to continue to grow services for the rest of this financial year and into the 2022-23 financial year. We are in discussions with Malling Parish Council regarding offering more services in the Malling area of the district in partnership with Age UK Maidstone. We are also expanding our Dementia day care and outreach services as this is an area of need which is becoming more and more important.