



*The Test Bed Fund*



## Medway Diversity Forum (MDF)

### Who We Are:

We promote social inclusion by working with people in Medway and Kent, who are socially excluded on the grounds of being members of minority ethnic communities, relieving the needs of such people and assisting them to integrate into society.

We provide support to reduce health inequalities and barriers they face and promote increased access to opportunities available from local authorities, service providers and other charities. We organise events, workshops, seminars, festivals, activities like, lunch clubs, exercise sessions, woodworking, training, and advisory sessions, to build their capacity, empower them to develop skills and confidence to make informed choices, improve quality of life and prevent isolation of the vulnerable people.

MDF currently represents 28 community organisations in Medway, and service providers, i.e. Medway Adult Education, Donate Life UK. Our current partners include Medway Public Health, Medway Voluntary Action, University of Greenwich, Diversity House, Ellenor hospice, Kent Police, Medway Spice Credits, VCS Leaders' Network.

### What Our Project Is About: Connect All

In the light of emerging mental health issues due to the current pandemic, Medway Diversity Forum is fully committed to alleviate the disproportionate challenges BAME people are facing in Medway including language barriers to access services on line, lack of culturally appropriate support to cope with loneliness and bereavement. The project would involve:

- Designing an activity pack for the vulnerable older adults and young people which would include a 15-page de-stress colouring book, using real-life stories of the lockdown. A professional artist will turn these stories into sketches and colouring book format. Each illustration will depict a real-life experience. After the books are delivered, a follow up call will be made to get feedback about the pack and general chat about their wellbeing. People will have the option either to ring us on the number provided in the pack or we can call them back.
  - A simple therapeutic tool to improve mental wellbeing, especially for people who are not engaging with the mainstream services, face language barrier and not digitally proficient.

Laying the foundation for starting a BAME befriending project. This will allow us to find out what befriending looks like for BAME people, the areas people need help with to ensure a correct match, how many befrienders would feel confident or comfortable working in the wider community because majority of them have been doing befriending within their own community groups. This project would allow us to link up with MVA's Befriending service and their training program for befrienders.

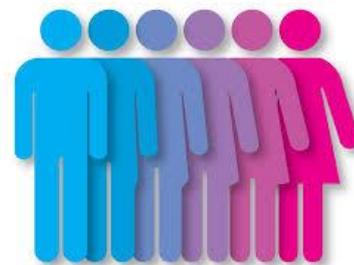


Kent and Medway  
Clinical Commissioning Group





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## South East Gender Initiative (SEGI)

### Who We Are:

Since 2011 SEGI have provided peer support and counselling services for the Transgender Non-Binary & LGBTQIA+ community. This support has developed over the years and currently comprises the following weekly services:

- Trans & Non-binary support Groups for Young People, Adult People, Parents and Carers of Trans & Non-binary People.
- An LGBTQIA+ Counselling service

Due to Covid-19 restrictions These services are currently provided virtually via Zoom video & What's App Messaging. SEGI is led by LGBTQIA+ people and the organisation is staffed and managed by volunteers.

We also provide awareness training and act as a resource for organisations on Trans & Non-binary matters. We work closely with Kent Police & NHS to prevent Hate Crime, improve access to Health Care.

We are a founding member of Medway Pride Community Organisation and work closely with other LGBTQIA+ organisations to help provide and improve local services for our community.

### What Our Project Is About: SEGI Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Pansexual Support

SEGI have been receiving an increasing number of enquiries from members of the Lesbian community and older Gay men looking to access local support groups & Bisexual / Pansexual support services are not present in Medway.

Stonewall recently announced in their response to Covid-19 'Life has changed for all of us recently. But some lesbian, bi, gay and trans (LGBT) people are harder hit than others while socially distancing. It's clearer than ever that equality is not a luxury; it's essential for everyone's safety, health and wellbeing'.

SEGI who currently provide Trans/NB support services would like to expand these services to include separate support groups for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual/Pansexual People.

Initially due to self-distancing measures we would be looking to pilot these services virtually. We will need to employ voluntary staff to facilitate the service and build a self-supporting network of service users.

These groups will be created and managed by SEGI and based at MGSD Centre in Rochester. Which will eventually be available as a safe place for members of the groups to meet up on a weekly / Monthly basis.





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## Swale Community & Voluntary Service (Swale CVS)

### Who We Are:

We are still known as Swale CVS and we are an umbrella organisation covering the whole of Swale offering support to the voluntary and community sector (VCS) including back office support, bid writing, governance a training programme and admin support. We are the Trusted organisation for the Eastern Sheppey Big Local and the Accountable body for Ideas Test art programme.

We are also a Volunteer Centre recruiting and supporting volunteers and volunteer using organisations. We run projects using volunteers including a large volunteer transport service offering essential appointments (mostly health related) to our elderly and vulnerable clients, we have over 1300 transport clients and undertake in excess of 25,000 trips per year using volunteer drivers. We also have a one to one befriending service that has been accredited by the NCVO Mentoring and Befriending approved befriending provider.

### What Our Project Is About:

We want to expand our one to one befriending service and add on a telephone and keeping in touch service and want to reach up to 250 socially isolated residents/clients across the whole of Swale and surrounding rural areas with a weekly keeping in touch call.

During the recent Covid 19 crisis we helped alongside Swale Borough Council (SBC) man the Sittingbourne Food Hub and undertook shopping and prescription collection to the shielded and vulnerable using volunteers. By doing this we came across more and more vulnerable and isolated people in urgent need of ongoing support and we were also referred many clients through the SBC helpline.

We want to keep in touch with the large number of these residents/potential clients and offer them a weekly keeping in touch phone call and being able offer further support from our transport service now it is gradually resuming and also our one to one befriending service offering a shopping and book swap/puzzles and games swap service if required. Many people we spoke to just are asking for someone to call and to do this call on an ongoing and regular basis and they want to build up a lasting relationship.

We have a number of volunteers wanting to help but we now need a part time member of staff to organise and set this up by contacting the client and asking their interests and matching them to a suitable and DBS checked volunteer. We also have volunteers that helped us while furloughed and say they could continue with this telephone keeping in touch outside of work hours now many have returned to work and we do not want to lose these volunteers either.





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## Walderslade Together CIC (WALT)

### Who We Are:

WALT currently has over 100 members drawn from the ME5 area. Under normal circumstances, we would be running coffee mornings, brunch, art & craft sessions and a Time to Talk mindfulness and wellbeing session, amongst other activities such as swimfit.

We also undertake shopping and prescription deliveries, and accompany members to GP and hospital appointments, as well as carry out befriending and welfare calls every week to members who are unable to join in physical sessions.

### What Our Project Is About: Keep Calm and Carry On

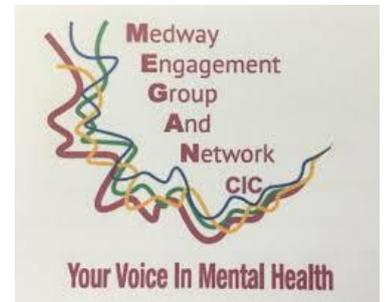
Due to the coronavirus lockdown our activities in person have been curtailed and we now need to support our members in other ways, which include:

- Delivering activity packs for those now isolated at home.
- Running Zoom video conference calls in place of the wellbeing sessions.
- Increasing capacity for welfare and befriending calls with more mobile telephones and call packages.





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## **Medway Engagement Group And Network CIC (MEGAN)**

### **What We Do:**

We offer support for adults (aged 18+) who have mental health issues living in the Medway, Swale, Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley areas. We run peer support groups for specific mental health issues including depression, anxiety, bipolar and personality disorders.

We also offer informal sessions including coffee & chat groups and social groups to reduce social isolation. In addition to these sessions, we hold Forum Events bringing together service users, carers and service providers to share information, feedback and help shape future services. We offer awareness sessions to support service users, carers, family members/friends and professionals to increase understanding of mental health issues.

MEGAN CIC is involved in the Medway REAP Partnership supporting people experiencing hardship crisis and has recently started an Outreach Project working one-to-one with individuals to tackle issues such as benefits, debt, housing, social isolation, access to services, etc.

In the DGS area, we also run the User Voice Project feedback back peoples experiences of mental health services to Commissioners and Service Managers to improve the services available.

### **What Our Project Is About: Peer 2 Peer**

During COVID 19 Outbreak, our services have changed dramatically to support the needs of our members. This has included offering Wellbeing Calls to check in with individuals to ensure they have support in place, where necessary, offer guidance, signposting and information regarding coping strategies, psychoeducation, etc.

Through this provision, we have identified a number of people that, regardless of COVID 19, would benefit from a regular befriending call from a peer – someone with lived experience of mental health issues that can offer empathy and understanding around individual circumstances.

We are experienced and recognise the value and positive impact in delivering peer support. Building on this and what we have learnt through COVID 19, we propose to employ a Peer Mentor who will take on a caseload of service users who require befriending from someone who understands their mental health issues.

We have come across many individuals who do not require Wellbeing Calls from our Support Workers but do require a listening ear due to social isolation, lack of support networks, etc. In addition to the calls, the Peer Mentor will encourage individuals to join MEGAN groups (Zoom) to check in with other members. Should individuals require additional support, our Peer Mentor would be trained to identify needs and would refer/signpost on to our Support Workers or other relevant agencies.





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## **The Mess Room**

### **What We Do:**

The MESS ROOM, established by artists Wendy Daws and Christopher Sacre, is a creative, inclusive space where we facilitate fun, accessible and innovative artist workshops for all. Our open and collaborative approach promotes independence and community-led peer support, where all who work and play with us strive to break down barriers and reduce social isolation.

With over 30 years of combined experience working with diverse groups, our artists specialise in supporting deaf and people with hearing loss or blind and visually impaired people to express themselves in new and exciting ways, using a combination of inclusive activities and communication methods, including British Sign Language (BSL) and tactile materials. We work with schools, local artists and community partners to raise awareness, train and mentor the next genera/on of MESS ROOM advocates.

As professional artists we also develop unique commissions and exhibitions to promote the exceptional abilities of our participants, organise cultural events and projects that support inclusivity and equality for all.

### **What Our Project Is About: Out of Sight Not Out of Mind**

'Out of Sight Not Out of Mind' is for Blind and visually impaired residents of Medway. MESS ROOM will connect with this hidden community to offer guidance and support to get creative at home and instill the confidence previously gained at the studio. Wendy Daws volunteers with the Kent Association for the Blind (KAB) running art groups for adults with sight loss.

The adults are concerned with their isolation, lack of creative stimulation and need to connect with their peers. As it is not possible for studio meetings Wendy aims to connect the group by inviting everyone to make art wherever they are. By responding to individual needs, supplying materials and tailoring artists support she will explore new ways to enable others to create by methods other than traditional 'face to face sessions' - by phone, email, Zoom, visiting doorsteps.

It's about giving individuals the permission that creativity can happen anywhere. The photos will be available for digital display, online and for publication. These artworks will be exhibited at Rochester Art Gallery. The project does not end with the exhibition; individuals could reach out to each other but find it difficult to pick up the phone. Sight loss and art are the reasons this group has formed, Out of Sight aims to re-connect the group.





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## Medway Voluntary Action (MVA)

### Who We Are:

Medway Voluntary Action is the infrastructure organisation for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector in Medway. We work to reduce barriers to participation, and to build self-esteem, resilience and aspiration in the individuals and communities in Medway.

Embracing and reflecting the diversity of the VCSE in our work, we provide an open and welcoming environment accessible to all. Operating in a culture of continuous improvement and reflective learning we act as a catalyst for social change through our central hub of information, support and guidance to support and empower Medway communities to come together to help improve their lives and solve problems that are important within their communities. Part of these roles include these activities:

- Coordinating the Involving Medway programme,
- Running the Befriending programme,
- Hosting Simply Connect (the Social Prescribing and wellbeing navigation tool),
- Hosting networking and information sharing sessions in person and virtually,
- Signposting funding opportunities to the wider sector,
- Providing training

### What Our Project Is About: Alternative Engagement- Bridging the Divide

This is a pilot project to facilitate digital connectivity for socially isolated members of the community without access to IT.

- 20 people will receive a refurbished tablet which is already set up (with appropriate apps etc) with a pre-paid sim allowing connectivity, plus an easy to understand booklet with photographs showing them how to use it.
- Participants will sign a waiver explaining that they will have to return the equipment if not used, and paid for if damaged.
- They will be supported by our young outreach volunteers (R2R), digital volunteers from Carers First, MidKent College and from the Nigerian and Muslim communities in Medway.
- Participants will be assessed before and after the programme to see if their health and wellbeing has qualitatively or quantitatively improved over the project.
- If they have engaged with the project and improved their health and wellbeing they will be offered the opportunity to keep the tablet; if they have not engaged with the project or improved their health and wellbeing then we will arrange for collection of the tablet so it can be re-used.

For those who wish to keep the tablet, a donation will be requested towards the cost of the tablet; it will be at the discretion of the recipient as to how much they can afford- the minimum donation being £2, the maximum being £75 (to allow for full cost of the tablet less depreciation).





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## Kent Muslim Welfare Association (KMWA)

### Who We Are:

KMWA usually supports the local Muslim Community providing education, religious activities, emotional and wider support. The Mosque is a Third Party Hate Crime Hub (linked in to the Police).

They provide IT support for the community and for those who have been subjected to racial abuse; and discussion groups about modern living covering many themes including science, philosophy, religion, broader cultural topics, protecting the young and more.

KMWA are very active in the Interfaith Community, taking part in the Peace Walk, Medway Interfaith Action, National Interfaith Week, hosting open Mosque sessions and being a key member of the Communities and Faith Forum over the pandemic. Over Lockdown KMWA has been very busy helping Medway Council and ALL communities across Medway across the following:

- Making emergency food deliveries for Medway Foodbank;
- Collection/ delivery of pet food;
- Collection/ delivery of prescriptions;
- Transport to medical appointments;
- Buying food for people across communities (food paid for by the recipient);
- Appropriate non-urgent medical advice given to the community from GPs, pharmacists and dentists within the Muslim Community;
- Taking referrals from other communities (e.g. the Hindu community) to support their members who had no family in Medway.
- Making befriending calls
- Making face masks and PPE

### What Our Project Is About: Activity Access For All

Activity Access for All will be a safe and inclusive community transport scheme for people living in Medway who need to get to a medical appointment, school appointment, or social connectivity activity (e.g. community coffee morning) and who cannot afford a taxi, have no family available to transport them, are unable to use public transport, or whose public transport options have been limited because of social distancing.

This project will not only enable people to get to their appointments and activities, but it will also encourage young people to volunteer; to understand the ethos of volunteering and that it is a two-way street; they will learn that they give their time and energy, and will gain new skills, while understanding how different communities are affected by the pandemic and cultural/economic differences, and how their gift of time has a transformative effect on the whole community.





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## **Nigerian Community Association Kent & Medway (NCA)**

### **Who We Are:**

The Nigerian Community Association Kent and Medway is a voluntary organisation with an open and individual membership to all Nigerians in Kent and Medway. It is set up to support the socio-economic and welfare needs of Nigerians living in Kent and Medway. NCAKM is a not for profit and an all-encompassing organisation, with board members made up of individuals from our local community. Our activities include, but not limited to:

- Advice and counselling to Nigerians who may need help and support within our own frame of cultural understanding.
- Pro-creation of activities and events designed to unite Nigerians and to improve Nigeria's image.
- Endeavour to end poverty within our community by supplying food items to individuals, families, elderly and vulnerable people
- Assist Nigerians to access public services and facilities
- To advocate for improved service standards beneficial to Nigerians in service provision
- Providing a befriending service to Nigerians moving to Kent & Medway
- Providing peer support to Nigerian families needing help & solutions for common issues

### **What Our Project Is About: Heart Of Gold**

The Heart of Gold project focuses on the elderly, lonely, homeless, vulnerable and low-income families providing them with food, Hygiene essentials & befriending needs through the support of our network of community volunteers.

With so many people losing their source of livelihood, & elderly living on basic minimum pension, we have had to increase our volunteer capacity and our food outreach days have gone from 3 days a week to every day of the week. Our volunteers do not just deliver food parcels to the elderly's they also spent time chatting with them to help ease isolation..

COVID 19 has been a learning curve to enable us meet not just the demands of the groups we support but also the increased demands for support and assistance from more individuals and families that have reached out to us. We have provided our services to not only Nigerians, but people from all nationalities. We believe that with the financial assistance we are requesting for, we will be better equipped to keep up our hard work in these difficult and unprecedented times whilst also ensuring that consistency and continuity are maintained for all our recipient groups.





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## Swale Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

### Who We Are:

#### Our Aims

To provide the advice people need for the problems they face. To improve policies and practices that affect people's lives

#### Our Principles

To provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination

#### Our Values

To focus on customers, achieve results, continuously improve, promote equality and fairness, value each other and work together

Locally, we provide services for our clients through a committed and well-trained primarily volunteer workforce, offering face-to-face and telephone advice from locations in Swale's three main towns of Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness.

We are a campaigning organisation as well as an advice-provider and we seek to continually review and improve the services we offer for the people of our community. These Aims and Principles drive the work that we do with clients, in negotiations on their behalf, and in dealings we have with the various agencies we encounter through providing fair and independent advice. They also inform our own internal operating practices, staff and volunteer policies, recruitment, training and support.

### What Our Project Is About: Money Talks

Whilst we are an established debt advice provider, that work is fundamentally reactive – we see clients when they already have a problem, not before. This project allows us to support individuals and households before they get into a situation where formal debt solutions are necessary, by providing an informal and friendly setting to explore spending habits, sources of income and ways to manage finances.

The project will include links to the Swale CVS Befriending service and Swale Food Bank, as well as our own general advice team to provide a channel linking basic financial needs to wider support infrastructure so that beneficiaries have access to a friendly voice, a decent meal, and tools to help manage household bills.

Clients will either self-refer or be referred in, for a short personalised money management package, with one-one discussions including current and potential sources of income, spending habits, understanding of types of debt and prioritisation, basic bank accounts, and effective budgeting – all considered within the context of the wider household, and conducted in a non-judgemental manner. We aim to use the tenets of befriending, but with the specific purpose of helping the beneficiary avoid deeper financial trouble.

