



Social
Enterprise
Kent

APRIL 2025-MARCH 2026

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 2025-26

*Every day, we shape
a better tomorrow*





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IMPACT SUMMARY

April 2025 to March 2026

Social Enterprise Kent (SEK) is a **Community Interest Company** with over **40 years' experience** delivering **social impact** across Kent and Medway. Each year SEK **supports** thousands of **individuals** and hundreds of **VCSE organisations** through skills and employability programmes, health and wellbeing services, and sector leadership that channels investment directly into **local communities**.

This summary sets out SEK's headline achievements for April 2025 to March 2026.

- Over **£1 million** distributed directly to grassroots organisations
- **2,764** learners upskilled, with a 4.8/5 Trustpilot rating
- **£920,242** invested through the Social Impact Gateway, connecting funders to 197 VCSE organisations
- **177 tonnes** of food redistributed and saved from landfill through SE Kitchens
- **3,058** people supported through Wellbeing Connections, with £78,000 distributed to 22 local organisations



FOREWORD

This year has been another reminder of just how much can be achieved when people, organisations and communities are given the right support, opportunities and connections.



Across Kent and Medway, people are facing real challenges. The cost of living remains difficult, public services are under pressure, and many organisations are being asked to do more with less. But we also see every day what happens when communities are backed properly - people gaining confidence, organisations securing the support they need to grow, and individuals becoming healthier, more connected and more hopeful about their future.

Our role at Social Enterprise Kent is to help make more of that possible. The numbers in this report give a sense of the scale of that work. Over £1 million distributed directly to grassroots organisations. Nearly 2,800 learners upskilled. Thousands of people reached through our health, wellbeing and cancer awareness work. Hundreds of VCSE organisations supported to become stronger and more sustainable.

But those numbers only matter because of what sits behind them - real people, organisations and communities moving forward.

None of this happens on our own. We work alongside brilliant partners, funders, volunteers and community organisations, and I am incredibly proud of the SEK team, who bring skill, commitment and genuine care to their work every day.

Our ambition is simple - stronger communities, a stronger VCSE sector, better partnerships and services that genuinely work for the people who need them.

This report shows just some of what that looks like in practice.

Rebecca Smith, Chief Executive Officer

Every day, we shape a better tomorrow.



SEK GROUP



OUR MISSION: LASTING IMPACT

Provide **support for people**, particularly in areas of deprivation or for those most disadvantaged, to have access to affordable food, gain skills and employment

Supporting the creation and development of **social enterprises and small enterprises** to become sustainable organisations

Bring together strategic leaders from **VCSE, health sectors, statutory services and the private sector** to develop relationships and discuss and tackle inequalities

Invest in young minds, the school events are designed to provide students with unique opportunities for growth, learning, and recognition



SEK Team

Over
£1MILLION
distributed to
grassroots
organisations



SEK GROUP

SKILLS, ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYABILITY



Training

Business Support

Employment Support



TRAINING

April 2025 to March 2026

2764 learners upskilled
Trustpilot rating **4.8/5**
Survey Monkey score **96.18%**



SEK helped businesses, individuals, VCSE organisations and community groups build confidence, strengthen their organisations and develop the practical skills needed to grow sustainably.

Training continued to support people across a wide range of roles, from frontline community work to leadership, safeguarding, project management and organisational development.

SEK partnered with Town & Country Housing

to deliver a capacity-building training programme for residents and community groups across Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

The programme engaged 86 unique individuals and generated 251 course bookings, with participants reporting increased confidence, new knowledge and practical skills they could apply in their communities.



Across these projects, the impact was clear: stronger organisations, more confident leaders, improved skills and greater resilience across the VCSE sector.



SODEXO

Funded business online training

For the third consecutive year, Social Enterprise Kent has partnered with Sodexo to deliver a programme of fully funded online training. Together, we are helping SMEs, VCSEs, start-ups, and diverse-owned businesses build the confidence, skills and resilience needed to thrive while creating meaningful, lasting social value for the communities they support.



115

Participants



43

New to SEK
(Organisations)



59

Unique
Organisations



100%

Would recommend

"It is used in my work every day now and I feel more confident than ever."

"It has really helped educate me on the benefits of AI and how it can enhance the work we do and save time to focus on other things."

"It really has upped our social media game!"

Creating lasting relationships

This multi-year model demonstrates that when business and community partners unite around a shared purpose, the impact is greater than any one organisation could achieve alone. By combining our strengths, we are creating opportunities, inspiring innovation, strengthening resilience and supporting the delivery of meaningful, measurable social value for communities.

Partnering with: **Môn CF** *you & help here to help*

Social Enterprise Kent

FUNDED ONLINE WEBINARS

- SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL MARKETING
- AI ESSENTIALS
- FUNDRAISING & TENDERS
- INCLUSIVE TEAMS
- MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS
- DISABILITY AWARENESS

Feb - May 2026

REGISTER NOW

*Funded for businesses in **KENT** and **NORTH WALES**

In collaboration with: **SOCIAL IMPACT** *sodexo*

Supporting SMEs, VCSEs and diverse-owned businesses. *Eligibility criteria applies www.sektraining.org.uk



BUSINESS SUPPORT

April 2025 to March 2026

THANET SOCIAL ENTERPRISE BOOST

£124,999

in grants distributed to 32
VCSEs across Thanet

- Tailored one to one support
- Hosted 3 conferences
- Supported 68 VCSE clients
- 18 peer-led lunch and learns
- 11 targeted training workshops
- 6 networking forums

Thanet Social Enterprise Boost helped turn local ideas into stronger, more confident and more sustainable social enterprises.

Boost has supported a transformational period for social enterprise in Thanet through one-to-one support, training, networking, peer learning and grant funding, **the programme helped people move from early ideas into action**, and helped established organisations build stronger foundations for growth.

This year, the programme supported more people, more organisations and more activity than originally planned. But the **real impact was deeper than the numbers**. Across Thanet, we saw social entrepreneurs grow in confidence, strengthen their structures, build connections and create new opportunities for local people.

“The support gave me clarity and confidence.”

“Networking has been one of the biggest benefits.”

“The programme helped me understand how to build something sustainable.”



THANET SOCIAL ENTERPRISE BOOST



7

training sessions delivered

5

Thanet Social Enterprise Network
events delivered

198

people attended network events

36

people attended the end of
project showcase

322

hours of one-to-one support
delivered

77

referrals into the programme

49

early-stage "Start It" organisations
supported

8

"Grow It" organisations supported

140

people attended the annual social
enterprise event

***"Before this, we were doing everything on goodwill.
Now we can actually think about growth."***

***"Not only a boost as a social enterprise but a boost in
my sense of purpose. I do believe you have changed
the course of my life."***

INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT FUND extension

Business mentors provided tailored **one-to-one** organisational development support to **24 VCSE organisations**, delivering **216 support hours** focused on strategic planning, sustainability, income generation and impact measurement.



"ISF has been fantastic, enabling us to look at our project through a business lens rather than a healthcare one. I now have a simple, concise but very powerful way to explain the project."

Wendy, Pilgrims Hospice

RECOVER, PIVOT, SCALE PROGRAMME

SEK supported **10 VCSE** organisations across Kent and Medway with **221 hours** of **one-to-one mentoring, training** and **90 hours** of group sessions.

Using the nationally recognised TOMs framework, the programme generated an estimated :

£673,200 in social value from an £18,000 investment a return of **£37.40** for **every £1** invested



EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

April 2025 to March 2026

SEK delivered a range of employment support programmes, each with different eligibility criteria, but all focused on **helping people** build confidence, overcome barriers and take **positive steps** towards work, training or volunteering.

Across these programmes, **support was tailored and personalised**.

Participants received **one-to-one guidance** including confidence, motivation, CVs, job searching, applications, interviews, transferable skills. Participants also receive **up to 12 months in-work support**.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

One to one support for individuals living in East Kent, to help them overcome barriers to employment and move towards or into sustainable work.



154 people supported

30% moved into **employment**

A further **31% progressed** into work-related training or volunteering

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTORING

One-to-one and group delivery, **supporting young people aged 18-24** in Thanet to understand local opportunities, build confidence and become job ready.

74 young people supported

33% progressed into employment



jobcentreplus



WIDENING ACCESS DEMONSTRATORS

A 6-month pilot programme supporting people in Thanet into careers in **Health and Social Care**, working in partnership with East Kent College Group.

80 people supported

46 achieved a **Level 1** Health and Care qualification

15% secured paid employment



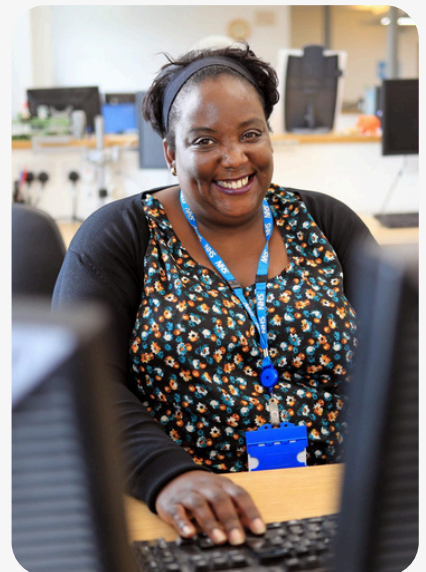
GET REMOTE TO GET WORKING



A pilot programme, trialling remote employability support.

22 people supported

14% progressed into employment or volunteering



Together, **these programmes helped people** move from uncertainty to confidence, from barriers **to action**, and from support **into real opportunities**.

"I am loving my new job! The project was absolutely pivotal in me going into work."



SEK GROUP

HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Community Engagement

Community Wellbeing

Social Impact Gateway

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

April 2025 to March 2026

CANCER SMART

Cancer Smart helped people talk more openly about cancer, understand signs and symptoms, and feel more confident to take action around screening and self-checking.

Delivered in partnership with Kent and Medway Cancer Alliance, the programme brought trusted, accessible cancer awareness into community spaces, education settings, workplaces and targeted local events.



Kent and Medway
Cancer Alliance

2142



People engaged through **102 events** and sessions, including community events, youth sessions, workplace activity and Skin Smart events.

57

Smart Community Champions were trained by SEK, to share accurate information within their own communities.



Cancer Smart worked

because it met people where they were. The team used simple language, interactive materials, **lived experience**, videos and informal conversations to make cancer information feel less frightening and more accessible. This helped people ask questions, **talk to family and friends**, check symptoms, complete screening tests and seek support earlier.



"I have the test at home but haven't sent it away yet, but I will after the information provided."

1,145

young people reached with information on signs, symptoms and screening

98%

of surveyed participants reported increased awareness of cancer signs and symptoms

This outreach supported earlier diagnosis, cancer prevention and screening uptake across Kent. Community events, co-produced videos and digital resources empowered our communities experiencing health inequalities with vital understanding of signs and symptoms, risk factors, self-checking and cancer screening programmes.



ENERGY ADVICE PROGRAMME

Supporting communities with impartial and bespoke energy advice to increase energy and money saving skills and access to further support, through community engagement events, home visits and targeted work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

The project ran from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

Funder/s: Community Energy Pathways, SGN

Facts/figures from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

664

Total Actual
Community Engagement
Conversations

75

Home visits

84

Conversations with
Gypsy, Roma and
Traveller Communities

„Your professionalism, warmth, and care go far beyond the grant itself. You gave me confidence, dignity, and hope at a time when I needed it most. I deeply appreciate the way you combine practical solutions with genuine compassion.”

„I want to sincerely thank you for all the help and kindness you have given me. Your guidance on how to use electricity more efficiently, along with the folio you provided to install behind the radiators, has already made a practical difference in my home.”



COMMUNITY WELLBEING

HEALTH EQUALITIES

1000+

people supported via
community funding

£450,000

invested over 3 years into
community-led solutions



themed around engagement work with the ICB, how the sector can support with the NHS 10-year plan, as well as the neighbourhood **health implementation programme**.

There is now strong recognition from statutory stakeholders about the **importance of VCSE involvement**, but that involvement needs to be accompanied by robust funding locally as well as involvement at a strategic level, which is where the East Kent VCSE Alliance fits.

SEK's work through this programme helped strengthen the role of communities and the VCSE sector in **shaping healthier, fairer systems**.



The Health Equalities programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, completed in July 2025 after three years of delivery.

In the last 3 years the programme invested **£450,000** into work that supported community-led solutions, strengthened cross-sector relationships and **helped embed the VCSE sector as a strategic partner** in tackling health inequalities.

East Kent VCSE Alliance

Membership has grown to over **35 organisations**. We have run 2 more successful alliance meetings,

RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT NETWORK (REN)

The REN project aims to make health and care research more inclusive and **accessible for people** who are often underrepresented. We bring together local NHS, council, academics, and voluntary and community organisations to help more people understand, shape and take part in research. SEK's role was to lead on delivery in East Kent, as well as coordinate for the whole programme at Kent and Medway level.

The Kent and Medway REN has strengthened and embedded a sustainable, partnership-led model to **increase diversity** in research participation. We have further embedded the programme strategically through **the Kent and Medway Joint Research Innovation Collaborative (JRIC)** and the developing **PPIE collaborative network**.



NHS
Kent and Medway

70

signposted
to registries

680

signposted
to studies

2

supported in
to recruitment

Our model includes **research champions across VCSE partners**, NHS organisations and primary care, working to promote opportunities and provide **1-2-1 support** to community members. We have expanded relationships with the local medical school and the ICB GP Research Lead to strengthen primary care engagement and alignment with their Research Hub, supporting more coordinated identification and promotion of studies.



UNIVERSAL WELLBEING

Distributed

£78,000

in grant funding to 22
organisations



Wellbeing Connections has helped people feel less isolated, more supported and more able to manage their health, money and daily life.

Through the Wellbeing programme, funded by KCC, SEK **supported 3,058 people** to access low-cost and free community activities, information and advice across East Kent.

The programme also distributed **£78,000** in grant funding to **22 organisations**, helping local groups deliver activities that improved confidence, movement, friendship and wellbeing.



160+

regular activities delivered, supporting
over **3,058** individuals living in East Kent



CONNECT WELL

Community Navigation

2266
referrals received

- The majority of referrals from social care and health professionals
- Support focused on older people and those living with disabilities
- Help provided with benefits, housing, healthcare access, and social connection

Connect Well enhanced social prescribing service supported people at home and in the community with practical needs such as:

- Benefits maximisation
- Form filling
- Blue Badge applications
- Equipment referrals and adaptations.

The **Connect Well** service received **2,266** referrals, with **95%** of clients living with a disability and **89%** aged over 60.



95%
reported improvement in wellbeing

69%
improved their ability to manage money

98%
would recommend the service

PUBLIC HEALTH UPLIFT PROJECT



9 organisations

delivered **1,000+** blood pressure checks for

460+ people

SEK helped community organisations offer blood pressure checks in trusted local settings.

The project also helped identify people needing GP support, lifestyle changes or medication, while **saving an estimated £12,700 through reduced demand on NHS services.**

Together, these programmes show the value of meeting people where they are, in community spaces, at home, and through trusted local organisations. From walking groups and seated yoga to benefits support and blood pressure checks, Wellbeing Connections helped people build confidence, improve health and feel part of something again.

“This activity brings me together with others. I live alone and don’t see anyone socially otherwise.”



SOCIAL IMPACT GATEWAY

April 2025 to March 2026

The **Social Impact Gateway (SIG)** is a new SEK initiative designed to **bring the VCSE sector closer** to corporate, public sector and social value investment.

Launched this financial year, the SIG creates a **clearer route for funding** to reach the **community organisations** that are best placed to deliver meaningful local impact. It **connects funders with VCSE organisations across Kent**, helping turn social value commitments into practical, measurable projects that respond to real community need.

For VCSE organisations, the SIG provides a more accessible way to find and apply for funding opportunities. For corporate and public sector partners, it offers a trusted route to invest in local organisations, support community-led solutions and understand the impact of their contribution.

"The Social Impact Gateway is brilliant. It's great to have a centralised place to apply for funds and makes applying feel smooth."



£920,242

has been invested through the Gateway

197

VCSE organisations registered across Kent by 31st March, ready to deliver projects that improve lives and strengthen communities



SEK GROUP

SOCIAL VALUE AND SYSTEM LEADERSHIP



SEK Community Food Shop

Volunteering

SEK Schools



SEK COMMUNITY FOOD SHOPS

April 2025 to March 2026

FOOD FOR THE COMMUNITY



Social Supermarkets

Social Enterprise Kent's two social supermarket sites shared one mission: making good food more affordable, reducing waste and supporting people with dignity when household budgets are under pressure.

Across the year, our social supermarkets recorded

55,544 transactions

showing the continued need for accessible, lower-cost food in the community.

The two shops sold the **equivalent of 421,461 meals**, helping people and families facing food poverty have access to affordable food.

177

tonnes of
food saved
from landfill

Environmental Savings

**354
tonnes
CO₂**



**470 million
Litres of
water**





FOOD FOR THE COMMUNITY

April 2025 to March 2026



The shops go beyond providing access to affordable food. Wrap-around support is available in-store, offering practical advice and guidance on employment, benefits maximisation, debt advice, digital skills, and wellbeing. This additional support aims to address the root causes of food poverty, helping individuals and families build greater financial resilience and long-term stability.

National Coverage

Channel 4's Dispatches visited our **Ramsgate social supermarket** to speak with us about the ongoing cost-of-living pressures facing local people. The interview provided an opportunity to highlight the realities experienced by our customers, the growing importance of affordable food provision, and the role community-based services play in helping households manage rising costs with dignity.

9,852
volunteer hours

With an estimated **9,852 volunteer hours**, our social supermarkets created meaningful opportunities for people to give their time, build confidence, develop skills and feel part of their community.

This sustainable model demonstrates how practical community food support can respond to cost-of-living pressures while also reducing waste, strengthening local connection and creating opportunities for volunteers.



TACKLING FOOD SURPLUS AT THE FARM GATE

April 2025 to March 2026

With funding from **Defra**, Social Enterprise Kent is creating a stronger route for **surplus food** to move from Kent's farms into local communities.

Through our growing **gleaning programme**, **64 gleaning sessions** have rescued more than **15 tonnes (15,067 kg)** of fresh surplus produce, redirecting good food back into human consumption through our **social supermarkets and community partners across Kent**.



64

Gleaning sessions



15,067 KG

Food re-distributed



Funded by
UK Government

The project is also **strengthening relationships** between **farmers, volunteers and food organisations**, while improving the infrastructure and logistics needed to respond to farm surplus.

By making redistribution easier and more accessible for growers, we are helping to **reduce food waste** at source, increase access to fresh food and build a more sustainable countywide food redistribution network.





VOLUNTEERING

THE HOURS DEDICATED TO SUPPORT SEK COMMUNITY

3726

Ashford SE Kitchen

6127

Ramsgate SE Kitchen

Our volunteers dedicate their time across a variety of SEK projects, additionally contributed **14 hours** to **Community Engagement**, **90 hours** to Digital Inclusion, **220 hours** to administration, and **130 hours** through our two volunteer drivers, with additional support also provided through gleaning activities.

296

hours approximately has been dedicated to volunteer training by SEK employees.



7 PROJECTS

- Ashford SE Kitchen
- Ramsgate SE Kitchen
- Chatham SE Kitchen
- Cancer Smart and Energy Champions
- Digital Inclusion
- Schools Team Admin support
- Drivers (collect food waste and deliver to animal rescue centre, weekly collection of potato donations. Collection of produce for Planet Thanet.)
- Gleaning
- Corporate volunteering: Sodexo



"I have really enjoyed volunteering at the SEK community shop . The experience has been welcoming, enjoyable, and rewarding. From my first day, I felt supported by the staff, who were friendly, patient, and always willing to answer questions and provide guidance.

Volunteering at the SEK community shop has helped me improve my customer service, communication, serving at the Till ,teamwork, and time management skills. It has also given me a better understanding of working in a retail environment, including stocking shelves, assisting customers, maintaining cleanliness, and working as part of a team to ensure the store runs smoothly.

I appreciate the positive and respectful atmosphere, where everyone works together and volunteers are made to feel valued. The experience has increased my confidence and given me valuable skills that I am using already.

Thank you to everyone at SEK community shop for the opportunity to volunteer. I am grateful for the experience and appreciate the support and encouragement I have received from the team."



"SE Kitchen helped me to regain my confidence and self esteem when I unfortunately was unable to work due to a period of depression that meant I had to leave my job.

Having a safe place in SE Kitchen to rebuild my self worth was what helped me regain purpose in my life and spending time doing volunteering gave me a structure in my life to use as a springboard into the work place again."

Kerri.



SEK SCHOOLS

April 2025 to March 2026

Across the year, SEK delivered a varied programme of awards, challenges, showcases and hands-on learning experiences, including **Kent Education Awards**, **Young Cooks**, **Green STEM**, the **Big STEM Challenge**, **Green School Awards**, the **Big Writing Challenge** and **Thanet Community Champions**.

Together, these events encouraged creativity, confidence, environmental awareness, STEM learning, cooking skills and community pride. They also gave schools and young people the chance to connect with employers, sponsors, volunteers and local role models.

6 school events

- Green School Awards
- The Big STEM Challenge
- Young Cooks Competition
- The Big Writing Challenge
- Kent Education Awards
- Thanet Community Champions

Sponsor collaborative experiences

- Cook Factory Tours
- Brakes Masterclass
- Dog at Wingham Showcase Lunch
- BAE Simulator day
- MAV Systems Drone experience
- Quex Park workshop



900+

people involved



37

Green School
nominations

2178

Kent Education Award
nominations

125

Young Cooks
entries

134

Big Writing
entries

165

Green STEM
participants

216

Big STEM
participants

356

Thanet Community
Champions
nominations

AWARDS



National Recognition for Our Impact

In December 2025, SEK was proud to be named **Education, Training and Jobs Social Enterprise of the Year** at the Social Enterprise UK Awards.

This national recognition celebrates the impact of our education, training and employment work across Kent and Medway – but, for us, the award is really about the people behind that impact.

It belongs to the individuals who trust us to support them, the partners and volunteers who work alongside us, and our incredible team who bring commitment, care and belief to what they do every day.

After **40 years** of creating opportunities, building confidence and helping people and communities to thrive, this award was a wonderful recognition of what can be achieved when people work together to shape a better tomorrow.



Highly Commended for Social Value

SEK was also proud to receive a **Highly Commended award in partnership with Sodexo** in the **Social Value category at the Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM) Impact Awards**.

The national awards recognise organisations making a measurable difference through sustainability, inclusion, innovation and community impact. Being highly commended in the Social Value category reflects the strength of SEK's work across Kent and Medway, creating opportunities through employment, training and community support.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR SEK

Our work does not stop here.

Our **2026-2029 strategy** sets out an ambitious plan for the next stage of Social Enterprise Kent - strengthening communities, supporting a thriving VCSE sector, building better partnerships, developing new ideas and ensuring SEK remains a strong and sustainable organisation.

Alongside our frontline work, we will continue to play an active leadership role across Kent and Medway. That means bringing organisations together, creating opportunities to share learning, hosting sector events and conferences, representing the VCSE sector in strategic partnerships and making sure the voice of our communities is heard where decisions are being made.

We will also keep looking for new ways to respond to changing needs - testing ideas, building partnerships and creating practical solutions that make a lasting difference.

There is much more to do, and we are looking forward to the next chapter.

Find out more about our work, programmes and partnerships at www.sekgroup.org.uk



Every day, we shape a better tomorrow