

engage.



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Valerie from Exeter*



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**Amherst Court
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Palmerston Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 6LU

Amherst Court provides 24-hour care and support for people living with dementia, where the team of qualified and attentive staff focus on the individual needs of the residents. At the heart of our home is our Philosophy of Care, the Eden Alternative, where staff encourage social interaction, engagement and work towards the eradication of loneliness and boredom.

For more information please contact us on **01634 400009** or visit our website at **www.avantecare.org.uk**

CQC Overall Rating - 10 April 2018 **Outstanding** Palmerston Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 6LU



Welcome...

... to the summer edition of Engage, our customer magazine.



Meet the team...

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As CEO of this amazing charity group, I am always pleased to share with our customers the great news about exciting new developments, and service changes that our staff and volunteers have worked hard to bring forward in the period, to ensure that every older person in Medway is able to access the services of care and support they want and need. For this edition of the magazine, I am going to let the articles and pictures tell their own story, as it's been an exceptionally challenging time. In our last edition, we showed you all of the things we had been able to contribute to the nationwide emergency response to the pandemic, but as this edition reaches you, I hope you all feel as we do too, that we are entering a brighter future, with lots to look forward to.

I hope each of you have taken up the NHS offer of your free vaccine, we all certainly have and we have been thankful that as charity staff working directly with vulnerable people often, we were prioritised for the vaccine to ensure we could continue to offer services to our amazing customers. I am sure every one of you will have a tale to tell about the pandemic, how you missed

your grandchildren, maybe very sadly you lost friends, or even how you learned to shop online, or looked forward to your delivered meal every day. One thing for certain is that all of us that have made it through have something to celebrate - our resilience and our continued health. I hope soon that larger groups of people will be able to meet, but we have already opened our day centres so that many of you can get together with friends again. However you are looking forward to the country unlocking again, please do take the opportunity to find friends, re-connect, try new things, and most of all, do all that you can to enjoy yourselves. This last year has certainly shown us how much we can miss each other when we are forced apart, and forced to stay at home. So when we are able, let's all take positive steps to embrace friends again and enjoy ourselves. I hope to see many of you soon.

John

John Norley
Group Chief Executive

About Us

Since its foundation in 1974, the charity formerly known as Age Concern has existed in several guises providing services across the Medway towns. It is now proud to be a local brand partner of the national Age UK charity. We provide services with a real impact Age UK Medway is a charity working in the community to support older people in Medway, their families and their carers. We want everyone to be able to love later life, and that's why

we do what we do. Even as people grow older, we want everyone to still feel as young as they used to. Each service we offer is designed to support the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of our clients, and to help them remain independent, and with choice and control in their lives. They are run by experienced and trained staff, all familiar with the challenges faced by older people, and who know how to ensure each individual gets the most out of the service.

Our Services

Mainstream Day Care



Delivered from The Mackenney Centre in Gillingham, our mainstream day care service provides social interaction for individuals aged over 50 and living in Medway.

For a daily charge you can look forward to a full day including:

- Hot drinks, refreshments and a freshly prepared two-course lunch
- Transport to and from the centre in one of our minibuses
- A variety of events and activities
- Accessible gardens, where you can enjoy some fresh air, or maybe a little light gardening activity.

Other services available include foot care, hairdressing, hearing aid clinics and a visiting optician.

We are able to offer a bathing service, where you can bathe in our accessible bathroom supported by trained care staff.

Supplementary to activities in the centres, we provide a wide range of day and afternoon outings, including

trips to the seaside, theatre, boat trips and pub lunches. These day trips are bookable in advance, and offer a door-to-door service with support available throughout the day from our staff and volunteer team. Throughout the year we provide various day and evening events with visiting performers providing entertainment. We have a trained staff team who are assisted by our volunteers, who provide invaluable support in a variety of areas in and around the building.

Contact Us

If you would like to arrange a free taster session at our Day Centre, or would like to know more:

The Mackenney Centre, Gillingham

☎ 01634 380195

✉ enquiries@ageukmedway.org.uk



Meal Delivery Squad

Our Meal Delivery Squad will bring you a hot, freshly cooked midday meal and dessert, prepared in our 5* kitchen and delivered directly to your door, for just a small one-off charge. You can even add a snack pack consisting of a fresh sandwich, crisps, a sweet treat and juice for a small fee.

We cater to all dietary requirements, and use locally sourced ingredients to prepare traditional and nutritious meals.

Contact Us

The Mackenney Centre, Gillingham

☎ 01634 380195

✉ enquiries@ageukmedway.org.uk



Dementia Services

Dementia Day Care



Our specialist day services are available at our Capstone Day Centre in Chatham, as well as the Pat Warner Suite in Gillingham, to anyone diagnosed with Dementia or memory problems.

A day at either of our specialist centres includes:

- Refreshments and lunch
- Transport to and from the centre in one of our minibuses
- A variety of events and activities specifically designed for people living with Dementia or memory problems.

With an ethos focussed on understanding each individual and their needs, care is delivered through stimulating activities ranging from cookery and baking, to arts and crafts and reminiscence. The service also provides an opportunity for respite to family and carers of those living with the condition, allowing them to continue a daily routine in the knowledge their loved ones are being looked after in a secure and caring environment. Referrals can be made by any Health and Social Care Professional, by yourself or family.



Dementia Drop In



The Dementia drop-in service is run from our Capstone Dementia centre, and aims to allow families to have the option of a small amount of respite in a flexible way. This means that the carer can take some time out to pop to the shops, make a few phone calls or simply have some time to themselves without any worries. You can book a slot with the Day Centre where we can help engage with the client to stimulate them and help keep their mind active without the need to sign up to the Day Centre.



COGS Club / MCST



Age UK Medway run Maintenance Cognitive Stimulation Therapy sessions (MCST) and COGS Clubs five times a week, which are designed to help those that may be experiencing problems with their memory. COGS Clubs offer a day of activity for people with mild dementia or memory concerns, with each session based on cognitive stimulation therapy. The groups provide the opportunity to recall and/or develop new skills, and to facilitate the transfer of these skills into the home environment. During the day, members are encouraged to participate in purposeful activities and to develop or maintain active minds.

Contact Us

For further information about any of the above Dementia services:

- Capstone Dementia Centre, Chatham
☎ 01634 406058
- Pat Warner Suite, Mackenney Centre
☎ 01634 380195

Home Care Services

Flexible Dementia Outreach



This service offers flexible activity based support for people living with dementia or with memory concerns living in their own home. The service is designed to enable individuals who are experiencing the early stages of a dementia type illness to be supported in continuing to pursue their interests, take part in meaningful activities, maintain their independence and retain or develop social contacts. By allowing a person to remain at home longer, enabling them to retain daily living skills and independence, and by giving them a sense of achievement and purpose, disruptive or challenging behaviour can be alleviated. Referrals can be made by any Health and Social Care Professional, by yourself or family. The service operates 7 days a week, 9:00am to 5:00pm.

Homecare Services



Age UK Medway provides a full range of care and support services across Medway, Faversham and Sittingbourne. We treat each person as an individual by offering a personalised service, to support people with the same respect you would want for yourself or a member of your family.

We offer a full range of care and we can help with:

- All personal care needs
- Breakfast calls
- Lunch and tea calls
- Assisting to bed
- Medication prompt

We also provide domestic support, including help with cleaning and shopping.



Community Bathing Service



The Community Bathing Service provides the required level of assistance to allow people to have a bath or shower safely in their own home, treating each person as an individual and promoting their dignity and respect.



Foot Care Service



Age UK Medway provides a footcare service for older people—both in the community and at our Day Centre in Gillingham.

The service includes:

- Cutting and filing toe nails, keeping them at a comfortable length
- Smoothing and moisturising dry and rough skin
- Checking for cracks and breaks in the skin, and inflammation such as blisters
- Looking for signs of infection.



Contact Us

For any information about the above services:

Homecare

☎ 01634 401099 (Medway)

☎ 01795 506490 (Faversham)

The Mackenney Centre, Gillingham

☎ 01634 380195

Information & Advice



Free, impartial information and advice on a wide range of issues for people aged over 50, their families and their carers. After having to sadly close our Information & Advice service as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, Age UK Medway are delighted to be working with our sister charity Age UK Faversham & Sittingbourne, who have extended the catchment area of their Information and Advice service to reach residents of the Medway towns.

The service can help you with:

- Welfare benefit checks/form filling
- Pensions
- Housing issues
- Health and social care
- Gas and electricity bills
- Help with blue badge/disability bus pass applications

And most other things that affect your quality of life.

If we can't help you, we can put you in touch with people who can.

Contact Us

Age UK Faversham & Sittingbourne

☎ 01795 532766

✉ IAenquiry@ageukfs.org.uk



Handy Van Service



Our Handy Van service provides customers with a vetted handy person to carry out small jobs that can make a difference to your quality of life. We aim to make it easy for you to remain independent and maintain your home, whilst knowing you will receive a friendly and professional service. Rates are based on the first hour and then quarter hourly thereafter, plus the cost of any materials used. We can carry out small household repairs, minor adaptations and odd jobs around your home including:

- Fitting handrails/grab rails
- Home security (key safes, door chains, window locks)
- Path clearance
- Small decorating jobs
- Minor repairs
- Small garden clearance jobs

The service is administered from our Head Office in the Historic Dockyard, Chatham. The service operates Monday-Friday 9:00am-4:00pm.

If we are unable to carry out the work, we may be able to signpost you to appropriate tradesmen from the Medway Council Fair Trader Scheme. If you would like further information on our Handy Van service, or you would like to make a referral, please call Head Office on 01634 572616.

Disclaimer: This service cannot undertake certified work i.e. gas heating and electrical wiring, or large building or decorating jobs.

Charity Shop



“It’s like Aladdin’s cave!”

Age UK Medway have been operating a charity shop in the heart of Gillingham for over 20 years. The shop is run by a friendly team of staff and volunteers and is known for its good quality, affordable items.

Available in our shop:

- Vintage and modern clothing with prices starting from 50p
- Bric-a-brac
- Books, CDs and DVDs
- Toys
- Household items
- Shoes, handbags, etc.
- Daily Living Aids (read more about this on page 18)
- And much more!

All donations are gratefully received, although because of the shops size we are unable to take large items.

Our charity shop is a vital source of income to fund the work of Age UK Medway.

Good Day Calls



Our Good Day Calls service is a daily call, available 365 days a year, to have a chat and check on the welfare of an older person.

Our Good Day Calls service aims to:

- Provide reassurance to family members
- Ensure the person is up and well each day
- Take a friendly interest and share laughs
- Listen carefully for concerns and give support when needed
- Escalate for assistance if we have cause for concern.

You can sign up to receive calls yourself or make a referral for someone else to receive the service. Please note, if you are referring someone else, we will need to contact the older person to obtain their consent.

Contact Us

- ☎ 01634 578085
- ✉ gooddaycalls@ageukmedway.org.uk
- 🌐 www.ageuk.org.uk/medway/our-services/good-day-calls



Carers Relief Service



Now part of the Age UK Medway organisation, Carers Relief Service provides support and short breaks for adults with learning disabilities, offering a person-centred approach which provides:

- A flexible service based on the individual’s requirements
- Personal Support Workers to work in the community with adults who have a learning disability to relieve the main carer from the pressure of caring.

- Promoting the independence of adults with a learning disability to make choices about the activities they engage in within their community.
- A choice of a sit-in service at home, client-led activities such as bowling, cinema, shopping, etc., day centre clubs or day trips.

☎ 01634 715995
 ✉ CRS@ageukmedway.org.uk
 Read more about the merge of Age UK Medway and CRS on page 13

Volunteer Services

"It doesn't matter if it's pouring with rain, you're still on my doorstep and it's a lovely feeling just knowing that you care."

Befriending



Age UK Medway's Befriending Service provides companionship to older people living in Medway who are experiencing loneliness. A fully trained and vetted volunteer will be carefully matched to an older person and spend 1-2 hours a week together, chatting about life and becoming not just a familiar face, but a friend. The main aims of the service are:

- To reduce social isolation
- To build confidence
- To maintain independence
- To enhance wellbeing
- Assist with engaging with the community.

The Befriending service is a free service that is provided by fully trained and vetted volunteers, whom are carefully matched to ensure that we connect people with similar interests and to create a long-lasting friendship.

Contact Us

☎ 01634 790140

✉ enquiries@ageukmedway.org.uk

Become a Befriender

Did you know that there are 1.4 million chronically lonely older people living in England? You can help by becoming a Befriender with us:

- Make a difference to someone's life
- Give something back to the community
- Be a part of our volunteer team
- Do something incredibly rewarding

Use the contact details above to enquire.

Become a Volunteer



Volunteers are vital to our work, we couldn't run our services for older people without their help and kindness—and we always need more volunteers. At Age UK Medway, we take pride in delivering this invaluable volunteering service to the older people of Medway. People volunteer for various reasons but most do so because it gives them a great sense of achievement—that they have brightened up someone else's day.

No matter the reason behind why you want to volunteer, we have many options for you:



- Day Centre: Assisting older people during their visit and serving snacks/meals
- Minibus Drivers: Pick up and drop off our visitors to and from the Day Centres
- Charity Shop Assistant: Serving customers and carrying out small admin tasks.
- Befrienders: Offering companionship to older people in their homes.
- Meal Delivery Drivers: Delivering freshly prepared meals from our Day Centre to customers' doors.

Could this be you? Call 01634 790140 to speak to our dedicated volunteer team!

2021

LUNCHTIME TRIBUTE SHOWS

12 – 3pm

Running on the second Wednesday of the month, including a two-course lunch, tea/coffee & a live show with a special salute.

14th JULY A SALUTE TO ELVIS PRESLEY
 11th AUGUST A SALUTE TO MOTOWN
 8th SEPTEMBER A SALUTE TO THE SWINGING 60S
 13th OCTOBER A SALUTE TO COUNTRY & WESTERN
 10th NOVEMBER A SALUTE TO ROCK & ROLL
 7th & 8th DECEMBER A SALUTE TO CHRISTMAS

INN ON THE LAKE

A2 Shorne, Gravesend, Kent DA12 3HB
www.fcdhotels.co.uk events@fcdhotels.co.uk
 01474 823333

For more information and to make a booking scan the QR code or use the contact details below



Membership Scheme

Become a member of Age UK Medway and unlock exciting benefits and offers. Not only will you receive discounts on services at our Day Centres, you can also stop by for lunch and a chat with others. You will receive a membership pack containing information and news about our services, discounts, special offers and much more. Being a member also entitles you to attend organised and varied day trips, including collection and drop off in one of our minibuses, from lunch at a brewery to a nice seaside retreat. We offer two types of memberships. A full membership unlocks all of the above, and a supporting membership gives access to fewer offers, for example for friends and family that wish to accompany a full member on a day trip. Full Members should be aged 50+ and living in Medway, whereas Supporting Members can be of any age, wanting to support our work through fundraising and raising community awareness of the challenges of getting older.

Full Member Benefits

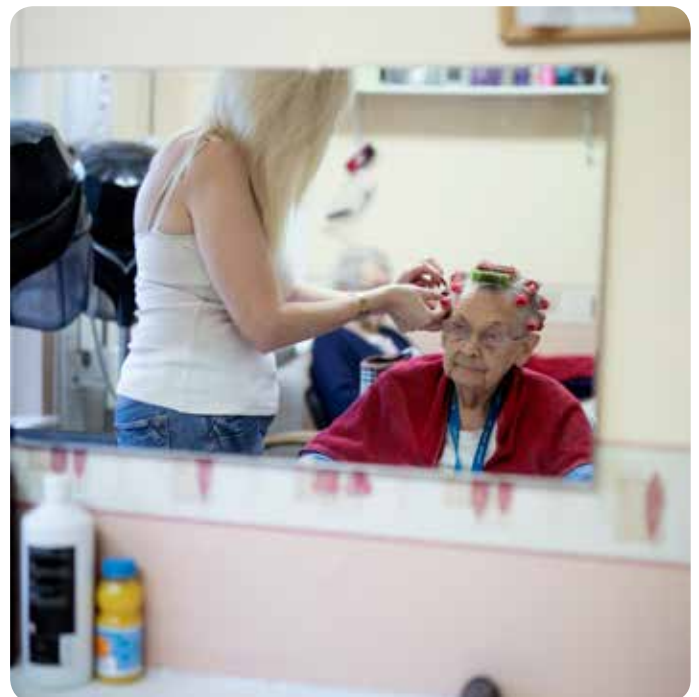
- A twice yearly magazine
- Able to access organised day and afternoon trips*
- Access to subsidised services (i.e. footcare, hairdressing and lunch at the Day Centre when booked in advance)
- Invitations to social and fundraising events
- Exclusive access to hire Age UK Medway centres (evening and weekends only)**
- Discounted dual membership option.

*Fees will apply

**Fees and terms apply

Supporting Member Benefits

- A twice yearly magazine
- Regular mail updates of events, discounts on products and services
- Access to organised day and afternoon trips (if accompanied by a full member)
- Invitation to attend focus groups, forum meetings and take part in surveys
- Regular updates on the charity's activities and achievements through our social media outlets
- Access to a range of volunteering opportunities with full training provided.



Contact Us

For an application pack or more information, contact our Membership Administrator:

☎ 01634 572616

✉ enquiries@ageukmedway.org.uk

Fundraising

Surviving the Coronavirus Pandemic, Against all Odds



The coronavirus pandemic had a detrimental effect on so many businesses and charities last year, and like many, we were unsure whether we would make it through to the other side. On 23rd March 2021, we shut the doors to our day centres upon the government's announcement of a national lockdown and we really didn't know what the future held for us. As an income generated not-for-profit, closing our most popular service was a worrying concept not only in a financial sense, but more worrying was thought of the dozens of older people becoming isolated at home during such unprecedented times.

Emergency meetings were had with our senior management teams and with our Board of Trustees, and it was clear that giving up and closing the charity – though a very real concern - was an absolute last resort. At Age UK Medway, we are passionate about being there to support our older communities, and disappearing during a time where older people have never needed us more was just not in our nature. So, we came up with emergency contingency plans and brainstormed a response to the pandemic, and, for the first time in our history, we created a fundraising team and launched our very first fundraising campaign – our urgent coronavirus appeal.

We were completely astonished by the support we received from dozens of people wanting to volunteer, donating us emergency food and raising their own funds in order to help us keep going. If any good came out of the pandemic, it was the incredibly strong community spirit we saw firsthand; everyone came together to make sure our older communities were looked after. In March 2020, we took a visit to our eerily empty day centre in Gillingham and our extremely busy day centre in Strood (where instead of customers, we had dozens of staff and volunteers working hard to fulfill our sudden influx of meal deliveries). We made a video detailing what these changes meant for us, and for our older communities, and asked for the public's help for the first time.

As a result of our urgent campaign, we raised an incredible £109,000 which enabled us to carefully create and roll out a new 'Virtual Day Centre' service to those who needed it during the months that our centres and social hubs were

closed. The service included a daily meal, an activity pack and two phone calls - one to take part in fun activities on the phone, and the other to check on the individual's welfare and take action if we were concerned. Thanks to every single person involved (donators, volunteers and staff), we were able to act quickly and continue to be there for our older communities, something that many Age UK's across the country were sadly not able to do. We are so proud and so grateful for everything that we accomplished, and would like to say some special 'Thank You's':

Mandy's Head Shave

Thank you to Mandy Cole, who completed a head shaving challenge to raise an incredible £655 for Age UK Medway. Mandy said "I am raising money for Age UK Medway, in light of coronavirus, to support the elderly and vulnerable with the amazing work that they do. They need our



continued help to provide essential care and support to the elderly and vulnerable including those with Dementia. The community day centres provide them with a safe and secure place to socialize, do daily activities, have hot meals and meal delivery service, foot care, baths, hairdressing and day trips. For some, this can be the only form of contact and escape from their homes, so it is important

for us to continue to support this vital service."

Mandy - we were in awe watching your head shaving video and we can't thank you enough for your support.



The 2.6 Challenge

As you may recall from our last issue, our CEO and Commercial Director completed a 26-mile cycle in just 54 minutes, and raised over £1k towards our coronavirus response! Because every charity needs its very own superheroes.

Birthday Fundraisers

Some wonderful people, including our staff both past and present, chose to use their birthdays to raise funds to support Age UK Medway and we thank every single one of you: Katrina Festorazzi (Trustee), Odette Lamb, John Norley (CEO), Bernie Doyle, Jo Groves (Shop Supervisor), Karen Treacy (Fundraising Manager), Anna Stansell (EA to CEO) – together you raised a total of £840!

Corporate Donations/Grants

Thank you to CAF, Standard Chartered, Co-op, Barclays, BAE Systems, Bow Financial Services, Pamela Champion Foundation, Colyer-Ferguson, the National Lottery, Age UK, Tesco Bag of Help and BAE Systems for your support towards our Urgent Coronavirus Appeal. Thank you for choosing to support our charity!

Thanks to the generosity of these grants, we were able to offer our long-term volunteer, Cheryl, a permanent position to focus on growing our Befriending service. Sue, our Volunteer Coordinator says: "Cheryl has been volunteering with us regularly for around 4 years now and has become a real asset to our services. We were lucky enough to offer her a one-year contract to become a part time member of staff and now, thanks to BAE Systems, we are able to ensure that Cheryl can continue to support our vital Befriending service, including the recruitment of volunteers, by offering her a contract to become a permanent member of staff. Having this support in place allows me to look for other opportunities to expand the ever-growing and ever important Befriending and volunteer services to support the older people of Medway."

To read more about our Befriending service, visit page 9



Cheryl Savage,
Volunteer Administrator

Get Involved

It's not too late to join in!

Operating our day centres under strict guidelines has not been easy, and over the past few months we have been working hard on creating a 'Virtual Retirement Community', to help re-connect people back to their community and to ensure we have a way of staying in touch should anything like this pandemic ever happen again. If you want to help support our work, you can...



DONATE

You can donate £10 by texting AUKM to 70191, calling 01634 790127 or by visiting www.ageuk.org.uk/medway/get-involved/donate



FUNDRAISE

You can get involved in one of our exciting fundraising events, such as the Ultra Challenge! The Ultra Challenges are set out in some of England's most iconic places, and are suitable for all fitness levels. To find out more visit www.ageuk.org.uk/medway/get-involved/ultra-challenge



VOLUNTEER

Volunteer with us! There is nothing more rewarding than making someone else's day, and it's a great way to make new friends and gain experience too. Call 01634 790140 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/medway/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities



PARTNER WITH US

A partnership with us could be beneficial for your business by helping you meet your corporate social responsibility objectives. It's a great way to motivate employees, gain insight into the over-50s market, get some great PR and help Age UK Medway to support vulnerable people in the local community. Email us at fundraising@ageukmedway.org.uk or call 01634 578085 for more information.



LEAVE US A LEGACY

An important part of our donated income comes from legacies left by ordinary people who, after providing for their loved ones, want to leave something to a local cause they believe in. Some may have been helped by Age UK Medway themselves, or had an older relative or friend who has benefited from our services. Legacies are a crucial part of our income and can allow us to offer services we couldn't otherwise afford to run. Everyone who leaves a gift to Age UK Medway is playing a part in our future. And your legacy doesn't have to be large to make a difference. Whatever you leave is a truly unique gift; your way of ensuring that your kindness and compassion lives on. If you would like more information on legacies, please call us on 01634 572616.

News

Age UK Medway merges with Carers Relief Service!

Age UK Medway are delighted to be bringing the Carers Relief Service (CRS) into our organisation as part of our portfolio of services. CRS will benefit from a host of support and efficiencies that come with being part of a larger organisation, whilst retaining their individual identity.

CRS approached Age UK Medway back in late 2019 to open a discussion about the potential for merging with us, recognising that Age UK Medway demonstrate a great number of similarities to CRS as organisations and also that our infrastructure investments made over the last few years would greatly enhance their offer to their clients.

As discussions have progressed, it has become increasingly clear that the benefits are reciprocal, and Age UK Medway will benefit too from having CRS inside the organisation. Our client groups, whilst distinctly different in the way that their support needs initially present, overlap considerably, in age demographics and also in the way we deliver services, out in the community through a mobile



workforce. The computer software systems and smart phone technology Age UK Medway uses to support its homecare service, will be of immediate benefit to the CRS staff and clients after the merger, and will allow a greater flow of important information from the client to the people charge with their support in real time.

CRS will be able to take advantage of the efficiencies that Age UK Medway have discovered through using this technology, and which has resulted in the freeing up of carer time, to spend more and better quality time with the clients across the services. In addition, CRS will benefit from a shared central office location, improved access to IT and other business support functions including financial management, payroll and HR.

Age UK Medway will gain the opportunity to align our services with CRS, and to reach CRS clients with offers of additional support which might further enhance their ability to maintain effective support at home, including delivered meals, membership, access to centre based

activities and the backing of a CQC regulated provider with a “Good” rating.

While the legal processes to effect the merger take place in the background, CRS will move into the Age UK Medway buildings and begin the painstaking processes of integration of their services to the Age UK Medway systems, so that when the legal work is complete, the transition will be seamless to anyone looking in from the outside.

It is the discussion and planning at this strategic level that will underpin the sustainability of the local voluntary sector, and we are thrilled to have made a start bringing a smaller charity into the Age UK Medway group, despite the challenges of the pandemic, it is key that the sector maintains focus on the longer term goals of partnership, collaboration and sustainability, and we look forward to demonstrating the benefits to all as we move through to completing the merger.

*John Norley
Group Chief Executive*

BIG KNIT



The innocent Big Knit campaign has returned and Age UK Medway is calling on the knitters and crocheters to get their knitting needles out to help raise urgent funds for older people most in need. This is the 18th year that innocent has been running the Big Knit in partnership with Age UK and woolly warriors are needed again this year to craft some little hats to sit on innocent smoothie bottles. For each be-hatted smoothie sold, Age

The Big Knit is Back for 2021

UK receives 25p, which will help the Charity make a big difference to the lives of older people. With many of us spending lots of time at home at the moment it's a great opportunity for stitching superstars to get crafting, or for knitting newbies to grab some needles and give it a whirl. The pandemic has had a huge impact on older people over the past year so Age UK is in need of these little hats more than ever to help raise funds for its vital services.

News

The Big Knit 2021 continued

John Norley, our CEO said: “We need the people of Medway to join us and help knit as many miniature hats as possible to help us hit our target. It’s been a challenging time for everyone, but this is a really fun campaign to get involved in and it’s a great activity to do whilst we’re all spending more time at home.

“The money raised from these little hats will make a big difference to the lives of older people in our area, many of whom have been badly affected by the pandemic. Every hat knitted will help to fund our hugely important services, including our exciting new virtual retirement community, which you can read more about on page **. Katie Simpson, Head of Brand at innocent drinks, said: “We’re delighted to be working with Age UK on the Big Knit once again. After a hard year, we want to make this campaign as big as possible so we can help more older people than ever. We’re

incredibly grateful to all the heroic volunteers helping us get there.” For more information on The Big Knit contact us on 01634 572616 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/bigknit. Please send completed hats to Age UK Medway at The Admiral’s Offices, The Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TZ.

There are six exciting new hat designs for this year, including a rainbow, rabbit, cupcake, pom-pom, fox and bird. These knitting and crochet patterns are available to download, or you can call us on 01634 572616 and we can send you whichever pattern you like. Happy knitting!



Technology News

Age UK Medway collaborates with MiiCare to provide older people with their very own ‘Digital Guardian Angel’.

Age UK Medway has teamed up on a pilot programme with an innovative Medtech company, MiiCare, to provide older people in the Medway towns with an interactive piece of telehealth technology, which is designed to extend life expectancy and improve quality of life of older people and their carers. The MiiCube, which is being provided free of charge to 100 Medway residents, uses clever technology to assist older people in their daily activities, look after their health and wellbeing, keep their loved ones informed about their situation and even contact emergency services if something is wrong. The main feature of the MiiCube is its inbuilt virtual assistant, Monica, who speaks to

and takes care of the older person. The lockdowns and restrictions that the past 12+ months brought with them, resulted in many older people feeling isolated, lonely and depressed as they were unable to see friends and family and were discouraged from going outside. Simple things like getting out of bed, remembering to take their medications and staying warm may become more difficult during this time and without anyone to check on them, could go unnoticed. Monica uses subtle and polite prompts to keep older people company, encourage them to maintain self-care and monitor their physical and mental wellbeing, all whilst maintaining their privacy. The idea for the MiiCube was



engineered in Kent by MiiCare’s founder, Kelvin Summoogum, who says, “I developed MiiCube after losing both my father and grandmother to falls at home. I made myself the promise that no family should ever go through the



same pain.” Kelvin’s grandmother, like many older people, was reluctant to move out of her family home to a care home and wanted to spend the rest of her life in her house. However, she sadly succumbed to injuries to a fall at home, which left her lying on the cold floor in pain and agony for several hours. After doing over a year of research, Kelvin realised that he needed to develop something which is ‘person-centred’, is simple to use and one which adapts to older people and not the other way round. Kelvin also knew that social interaction is important to older people, and knew that he needed to produce something which interacts as a companion and this is where the idea of Monica was stemmed.

The MiiCube’s assistive technology means that older people are able to stay in their own homes, saving money and undue stress to older people and their families. Kelvin, a Medway resident himself, says he is “proud to be able to bring innovation” to his home town, after starting up the Medtech company in Kent, moving it to London and then expanding it across country due to its success. The clever cube, which is placed in the older person’s living room, automatically connects to various wireless sensors which the older person places at key locations in the house themselves, meaning there are no household visits by installers required. These sensors

allow the voice assistant to know where the older person is, how hydrated they are, whether they have taken their medication, and much more. The MiiCube is also paired up with a smart watch to monitor physical activity and sleep duration, a wireless thermometer to check their temperature and an oxygen level detector to check their vitals. The voice assistant, Monica, internalises and monitors these readings, prompting the user with personalised advice and reminders. Pam [pictured below], who is 86 years old and one MiiCare’s first customers, says: “I’ve been living on my own now for about 18 years but I don’t feel lonely and part of it is because I have this cube. It’s very good because the lady talks to me, reminds me of taking my medicines and sometimes if I take the wrong medicines she will tell

me. It keeps an eye on me and that I find very comforting.”

John Norley, Chief Officer of Age UK Medway said: “Age UK Medway are delighted to be partnering with MiiCare in this pilot to bring the MiiCube into the homes of vulnerable older people across Medway. The pilot will help us, and MiiCare, show what we have known for some time, in that a little assistance at the right time, in an unobtrusive and supportive way, can go a long way to supporting people to remain independent at home for longer. Being able to use technology, and specifically AI based tech within the MiiCube is exciting, and gives us the opportunity to trial care and support provision in a new and innovative way, which of course, will be the way of the future. Care of our older people is expensive, and finding ways to enhance and improve care that takes advantage of emerging technologies is crucial to solving the problem of a growing older population and a reduction in the funding available to support them.” If you or an older relative live alone, are a Medway resident, and have underlying health conditions, we would love to have you as a participant in this free trial. To find out more, get in touch with Age UK Medway now, limited spaces available. Email enquiries@ageukmedway.org. uk or call 01634 572616 today!



News

Technology News

Virtual Retirement Community with SparkoTV

After the challenges brought by Covid-19, it became clear we needed to discover how to support older people virtually, and someone to lead us on that journey. That's where Charlotte, our new Virtual Coordinator, comes in! Charlotte's passion for technology, her compassionate nature, and her ability to think creatively made her the ideal candidate, and we're delighted with the progress she has made as our new Virtual Services and Systems Coordinator. Thanks to her efforts, more and more people each day are learning about the potential for Sparko TV to change lives, and the relationships she has developed with local organisations are bringing even greater value to the platform for Medway's older people.



Charlotte, Virtual Services Coordinator



About Sparko TV

Sparko is a new, interactive TV channel, tailor-made for older people, which supports each user's wellbeing, mental health and independence. With a user-friendly platform, Sparko enables people to connect with their local community, and with their family and friends.

And every one of the fantastic features available can be accessed easily through the Sparko TV kit, consisting of a small box which connects to a TV, a webcam, and a simple remote control. The Sparko TV box does not interrupt or interfere with TV programmes, with the camera only becoming active if a person is on a video call or a taking part in a live class or activity, when a small light will show it is in operation. A privacy slider has also been included for added peace of mind, allowing the user to cover the camera when not in use, if they wish.

Sparko is all about creating communities, and supporting the wellbeing of older people, which it achieves in three ways;

1) Bespoke, exciting content for browsing; The platform provides its users with a wide range of bespoke videos, from lifelong learning and exercise, to entertainment and local history. They can also learn new skills, sing-along to memorable wartime songs, or take their pick from a library of old films. Here at Age UK Medway, we have our own 'cubes' on the system, which allow users to request any of our services, such as meal delivery, home care and day care. We are also working closely with other local organisations to create content for our 'Age UK Medway' Video section.

2) Connecting with the local community and Sparko's wider community; Sparko offers a way for members to join live sessions, much like a group video call, but on the TV, where they can enjoy a wide range of activities including coffee mornings, dance classes, creative writing, art classes, exercise sessions, quizzes, live bingo, and so much more. Activities will mostly be run by Age UK Medway in partnership with local organisations for our Sparko box, with the aim of providing a place to meet familiar faces and make new friends in your community. This is a great opportunity for people who are feeling isolated or lonely in the current climate.



3) Connecting with family and friends; Family and friends do not need the Sparko TV kit to connect; they will be able to do this through their smartphone, using the free Sparko Connect App. That means they can call and speak with their family face to face wherever they are in the world, free of charge, and to the comfort of their loved one's home!. By simply providing a person's email address when they register, that nominated individual will become the main contact. That main contact can then add additional family members and friends through the app. We do not share any data with third parties, the email address will be used for the sole purpose of connecting the Sparko Community Member to others. Of course, members who don't have family or close friends to connect with, could still be linked with friends who also have Sparko, meaning they can still benefit from the full range of exiting features available.

A chat with Charlotte

What do you like about the Sparko box?

At a first glance, it's easy to think it's just watching tele, but there's so much to it. It has health benefits from exercise live sessions getting

people up and on their feet to attend yoga, dance, etc. It helps establish a daily routine, giving them a sense of purpose and encouraging healthy habits. It creates connectivity and gives people access to a community that they have otherwise been isolated from – those who feel forgotten about. It's a great place for people to make friends, and access a whole range of areas such as the arts (via Nucleus Arts) and adult education (Medway Council). It also provides people with security of knowing that they've got someone on the other end just at the click of the remote, whether it be family abroad or even us at Age UK Medway.

How has Sparko TV helped older people so far?

One lady is completely isolated with no friends and family around her. Since having her Sparko box installed, she has attended multiple live sessions and even said to me "this is most I've spoken to anyone in months." There's also a couple that has the box installed, who never had internet before having their Sparko box. They have watched over 200 videos together and were amazed by all of the content they have access to at their fingertips!

How can it continue to help older people even once the pandemic is over?

As lockdown ends, more face-to-face events will be become available and they will have exclusive access to these activities. Not only does it encourage connectivity from their homes, but it provides them with the chance to get out of the house too. Sparko users are learning new things and taking part in new activities every day, whether it's reigniting a love for an old hobby, or discovering a completely new one!

In order to benefit from Sparko, an HDMI port must be available (any TV that's 15 years old or less should have this) Sparko then plugs directly to an existing TV. A broadband connection is needed to run Sparko, and this can be included in the installation if required, although the cost cannot be funded by Age UK Medway. If you do not have broadband, Sparko TV are currently offering 2 months' free internet connection (exclusively for the Sparko box), which will then be priced at £16.25 per month.

If you would like to know more about the Sparko box, please contact Charlotte at Age UK Medway on 01634 578085.

Charity Shop News

Re-brand of our Shop!



During the pandemic so far, our charity shop has been a living version of the Hokey-Cokey... forced to close, and then later allowed to re-open, three times! In total, between the 23rd March 2020 when the first lockdown began, and the 12th April 2021, when non-essential retail rules relaxed, we were open for just 23 days from a possible 215. We did make good use of our time though, taking the opportunity to give the shop a colourful refresh with some new fixtures and fittings, to bring a smart, Age UK-branded look throughout.

News

Charity Shop News

TV Appearance

In May, we were extremely proud to watch our charity shop feature on the Channel 5 programme, 'Rich Kids Go Skint'. The premise of the show is for young adults from privileged backgrounds to swap their comfortable lifestyles for time living with families on the breadline. And, when the producers decided to look for a charity shop to visit with their 'Rich Kid' and his Gillingham-based host family, we were very happy to oblige. The photos below show the filming in action on the day, and anyone wishing to watch the episode can find it by visiting www.my5.tv, searching 'Rich Kids Go Skint', and choosing Series 4, Episode 13.

Daily Living Aids

For many in later life, remaining independent at home can bring challenges with even the smallest of tasks. For example, some might



now find opening jars or cans far more difficult than it used to be, whilst others might now struggle to turn their key in the front door, or to eat with narrower cutlery.

Age UK Medway is pleased to announce it is now an official retailer

of the nationwide supplier, Able2, and can provide a complete range of daily living and rehabilitation products. Some of that range is available from our charity shop, but if you would like to discuss a specific need, or request a brochure, please call Nick Chamberlain on 01634 572616.

'Rich Kids Go Skint' - Channel 5



“Nobody’s gotta do it alone”: Age UK Medway collaborates with Sahara UK

Sahara UK provides support for older South Asian people and carers and was founded by Paramjot Kaur, who is Sikh with Punjabi heritage, and was born and raised in Medway. Paramjot noticed, first hand, the void in the help available to elderly Punjabi people and their carers, in particular the language barrier due to no Punjabi speaking support being readily available.

Paramjot decided to take the matter into her own hands in 2020 and started Sahara, to support older South Asian people and their carers by offering companionship, day-to-day support, information and signposting, and much more.

Paramjot says:

“A few years ago, my nani (grandmother) was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s – a form of dementia. She had moved into our home and my mum became her primary carer. We saw every step of her rapid decline over 3 years. It was difficult, to say the least. I saw that there is a BIG void in the help available to elderly Punjabi people and their carers. There were day services, but my nani couldn’t understand



or be understood by anyone there. There were care workers, but they couldn’t communicate with her either. Imagine an isolated, depressed, scared and confused person being placed in an unknown, noisy world, amidst a culture that is not her own... she may begin to feel even lonelier. People shouldn’t have to feel so lonely. Information should be available and accessible to everyone. So I thought, I’ll do it.”

At Age UK Medway, being more accessible to our minority communities is something that is really important to us, so when Paramjot reached out to us we were very keen to work with her. Paramjot has much experience working with older people, having spoken to many isolated older people and hundreds of struggling carers about their experiences and can help with anything from practical or emotional support, live yoga sessions to even just a chat on the phone.

For more information, or to contact Sahara:
 Facebook: fb.me/sahara.uk
 Instagram: [@sahara.uk](https://www.instagram.com/sahara.uk)
 Email: sahara.medway@gmail.com
 Phone: 079 4323 5088



Bereavement and the impact on our volunteers

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, deaths among our service users had a real effect on our volunteers and sadly we lost 12 of our longer term service users during the last 14 months. The difficulties faced by our volunteers after the loss of their friend were particularly hard to cope with. Volunteers were quite surprised with the feelings of despair and not knowing where they fitted into the grieving process as they weren’t family but felt they were more than a friend. In some cases, they were unable to attend funerals due to restricted numbers permitted to attend, so had no opportunities for closure or to say goodbye.

With a number of calls from some of our volunteers who were struggling it soon became a real concern about how to support them. This led me to offer a Bereavement Group Meeting during the easing of restrictions in October 2020. Several of our befrienders who were affected by their loss attended and this allowed us to recognise, remember and acknowledge their passing in a supportive and informal manner.

Guidance was also provided to the remaining volunteers so that they had some useful information around grief and the knowledge that support was available, should they need it themselves.”

*Sue Parker,
 Volunteer Coordinator*



News

A 'New Normal': Our Mainstream and Dementia Day Centres

Keeping our services running throughout a pandemic has not been easy, but thanks to our amazing and dedicated staff and volunteer team, both our mainstream and our dementia centres have remained open and Covid-Secure since re-opening in August 2020.

Of course, it hasn't been quite the same as we have had to stick to strict bubbles of 6, social distancing and a new demand for endless supplies of PPE and hand sanitizer, but nevertheless, we have been there to support dozens and dozens of older people in seeing their friends and keeping them active and well, both physically and mentally.

The Mackenney Centre, Gillingham

Operating our day centre in a pandemic meant a strict ban on any external visitors, but our fantastic staff took this as an opportunity to dress up themselves and put on a show on many occasions, and the customers absolutely loved it!

It also meant that all of our popular day trips had to be cancelled, but finally, after over a year, we are very excited to announce that we are in the planning stages of our next

lot of day trips, which (government guidelines depending) we should be able to tell you about very soon. Throughout the national lockdowns, our customers utilized their time in creating some really beautiful artwork, which we now proudly display around the centres. In fact, we have so much that we might have to open our very own Age UK Medway Gallery!

During lockdown, our little sweetie shop had a major re-vamp too, thanks to our HandyMan Tony and South East Decorators Ltd. Sam, who works at South East





Decorators, wanted to come and help give the shop a new look in memory of his beloved Nan, who used to attend our centre.

Kent Fire & Rescue Service

A huge thank you to the fantastic Kent Fire & Rescue Service, who throughout the whole pandemic have deployed a

small team of Firefighters to support our Day Centres in providing the Meal Delivery Service. You are some of the most and caring passionate people we have come across, and have been a light during a dark and difficult time, going the extra mile and further to support the older people of Medway and put a smile on their faces.



Silver Charity

Thank you to Phoebe and her team from Painting Our World In Silver, who have been creating wonderful little craft and activity packs for older people throughout the pandemic. Sue, Head of Mainstream Services, said: "My clients absolutely loved the packs. They were so grateful for people actually thinking about them and trying to help with their boredom during this difficult time."



News

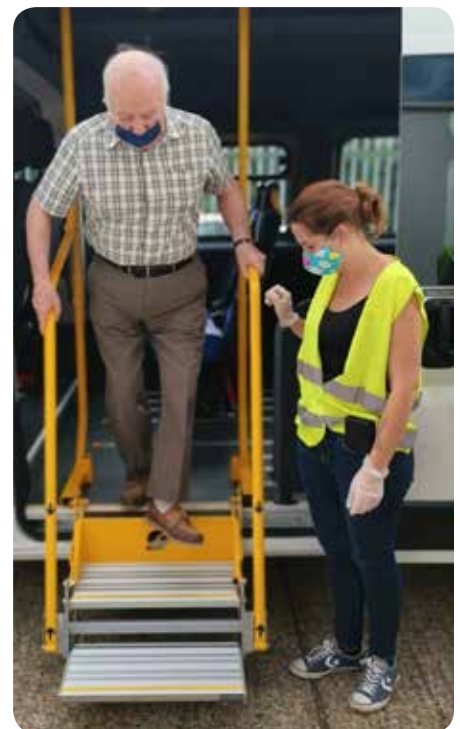
The Capstone Dementia Centre

Operating our Dementia Centre in a pandemic didn't stop our dedicated staff and customers from getting stuck into all sorts of stimulating and creative activities. Whether it was a spot of indoor gardening, creating Easter bonnets or having cuddles with an adorable Shar Pei puppy, there was always something going on. It was both a special yet stressful time re-opening the centre back in August. Our Head of Dementia Services said: "It was lovely to have some of our clients back, albeit a little stressful, as we all adjust to a new reality. Despite the temperate checks, face coverings, and social distancing, our clients were so happy to be here, and we managed to do some fun activities too."



Of course, our day centre staff and volunteers didn't forget about our customers who were shielding at home and therefore unable to attend the centre over the past

year. Our staff and volunteers paid lots of (doorstep and distanced) visits to check in on people and to even give them a little gift here and there to cheer them up.



Thank You's'

Thank you to our staff

There is not enough space on these pages to thank every member of staff who has gone above and beyond their normal duties, to support the vulnerable older people who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Staff have changed

and adapted their roles, worked extra hours, volunteered their weekends, and worked tirelessly to make sure that we, as a charity, can do as much as we possibly can to respond to every need and worry of not only our customers, but the entire older community of Medway. We are extremely proud of our whole team and the compassion and positivity they

display every day, despite the extremely challenging climate we find ourselves in. Thank you, to every single one of you; not only to our incredible front facing team who have been going out into the community every day, but also to our back office team who underpin our services. Without you all, we would not have made through this difficult time as far as we have.



In Memory of Tania, our colleague and our friend

“The world changes from year to year, our lives from day to day, but the love and memory of you, shall never pass away”.





PEMBROKE HOUSE

The Royal Naval Benevolent
Trust's **Care Home**



We are pleased
to announce that
Pembroke House is
open to new residents.

Our high standards of infection control mean we are confident in maintaining the most rigorous measures possible to ensure that there is no risk to the health and safety of our staff and residents.

However, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, we have revised our admissions procedures for new residents. Please see the New Residents page at www.rnbt.org.uk for more information.



11 Oxford Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 4BS

Call **01634 852431** or email

enquiries@pembrokehouse-rnbt.org.uk

www.rnbt.org.uk

