



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

COMMUNITY



Refernet working with Kent County Council

ReferKent – Online referral system to mitigate the action of signposting

ReferKent launched in September 2022. The initiative was driven by a working group made up of different agencies from the public and voluntary sector across Kent. The group identified a need to mitigate the action of signposting. Often people are signposted from one organisation to another, and the person being signposted can feel as if no one is helping. If the person is not confident in reaching out, they may not get the help and support they need to remain resilient and end up falling further into hardship.

Services in Kent also saw an increase in people presenting to them with complex issues for which their specialist organisation could not provide support and they were therefore regularly signposting to other organisations. There was a growing need to implement a secure online referral system that allowed referrals to be made rather than a signpost.

ReferKent offers an online referral platform (Refernet) that mitigates the action of signposting. It offers a simple referral form, where only a person's name, contact number and a brief reason as to why the person has been referred are gathered. This information is then sent to the receiving organisation who pick up the referral and contact the person who has been referred within three working days.

The ReferKent platform is set up so that organisations who join can allocate a primary user and users, with Kent County Council acting as the system administrator.

System Administrator

- Has access to a dashboard that shows all referrals made through the platform, their outcome category, whether they are opened, accepted, or closed (but not any personal data)
- Onboard organisations and users.

Primary User

- Able to update their organisation information
- Receive referrals/make referrals
- Access a dashboard that shows their organisations referral activity
- Add users.

User

- Make referrals.

Achievements

To date, 186 organisations and teams across Kent have joined ReferKent offering a wide range of support services. All the Citizens Advice Bureaus across Kent are onboard as well as a local credit union, an organisation offering fuel advice and support, gambling support and advice, mental health support and advice as well as many more with a further 186 pending.

There are 916 users onboard, who have made more than 1300 referrals for people who need more help than their organisation can give. The referral is open to one of the following advice and support outcome categories:

- Grant support
- Damp and mould
- Financial vulnerability
- Homelessness services
- Money management and budgeting
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Housing
- Fuel
- Food
- Family services
- Family breakdown
- Employability
- Domestic abuse
- Digital inclusion
- Debt
- Community services
- Benefits
- Elderly people
- Addiction

Alongside the ReferKent platform, we hold monthly networking meetings and spotlight sessions, as well as send out a newsletter and have a LinkedIn account that highlights

projects and services that can be referred to, spreading awareness of initiatives that can help people during challenging times.

The focus of ReferKent is to prevent people falling further into hardship, so that they are less likely to need services in the future. The initiative works in partnership with organisations joining the ReferKent platform on goodwill, addressing the social and economic issues presented to us. We are working together to ensure people have access to the right support and advice quickly.

For further information contact:

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