

# Our People, Our Place

A Community Engagement and  
Development Strategy for South Kesteven

2024-  
2027



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce **Our People, Our Place**, South Kesteven District Council's Community Engagement and Development Strategy 2024-2027. The Council's commitment to ensure a sustainable future for our communities is at the heart of our corporate vision for the District. The incredible variety of groups, services and organisations that operate across South Kesteven help to keep the community healthy, inclusive and strong. If we are to fully empower the voluntary and community sectors we must walk alongside them to support of the communities in our District.

South Kesteven District Council is committed to an approach of 'do with rather than do for' so that the voluntary and community sector can grow and become self-sustaining for years to come. It is our intention to continue our support for this vital infrastructure, to work alongside our partners in the voluntary and community sector and to help them to help themselves. This strategy is an important step toward our aims for the District. Its intended outcomes of building the capacity, knowledge and skills of a community to help itself; fostering mutual help in a community; addressing the needs of disadvantaged

and under-represented communities and enhancing acceptance and cohesion can only be achieved through collaborative working.

I look forward to empowering healthy, strong and inclusive communities as we work to deliver this strategy together.



**Councillor Rhea Raysia**  
Cabinet Member for  
People and Communities

# Introduction

This strategy has been developed to support and complement South Kesteven District Council's corporate vision for the area to be "A thriving District in which to live, work and visit." It aims to support strong, active and inclusive communities with which the Council has open dialogue. We can then learn what the community aspirations are through engagement, helping the District's voluntary and community sector to achieve their goals through supportive community development.

The Council's commitment to working with communities was highlighted as part of its 2021 Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge which stated that the Council should "*...continue to deepen understanding of, and engagement with, communities and other partners to strengthen SKDC's community leadership role. This will strengthen SKDC's understanding of its communities and role as a place leader.*

This strategy draws on the good practices already in place in recognising the important role communities play in shaping and supporting our District, thanks to our strong and experienced Community Engagement team. We want to build stronger relationships with the voluntary and community sector, creating partnerships and networks that benefit our communities.

In essence, community engagement and community development are two parts of the same whole. Over time, these terms have been used to describe what is the same thing. We need to get to know our communities, build trust and learn what it is those communities want – **community engagement** – and then, once this is in place, work with them to help them achieve their goals – **community development**.

The aim of this strategy, and the action plan which will support it, is to provide a framework to guide community engagement and development activity within South Kesteven which complements the Council's emerging Corporate Plan and its ambition of "Connecting Communities" by:

- Enabling opportunities for increased public dialogue and engagement to empower and connect our communities.
- Working in partnership with the voluntary, private and public sectors to deliver effective and responsive support services to meet the needs of all our communities.

There are several other corporate and service-area documents this strategy links to, which include: the Volunteer Strategy, State of the District, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the (evolving) Economic Development Strategy.

# How the Council currently operates

For South Kesteven District Council, community engagement and development means active participation at a local level, working directly with communities to enable them to deliver their aims and aspirations and helping them to sustain their projects for future generations.

The Corporate Plan sets out the vision to make South Kesteven a thriving District in which to live, work and visit. The mission of the Council's emerging Corporate Plan states:

*"South Kesteven aims to be a modern and forward-looking Council that delivers effective, efficient and equitable public services to enhance the well-being of our residents, enable prosperity, protect the environment and empower communities for a sustainable future"*

The Community Engagement Team service plan sets out specific activities and it is through this 'golden thread' that ensures the Corporate Plan's mission is achieved.

Through this strategy, and its accompanying action plan, we will show what links our communities with the corporate vision and the Community Engagement Team's service plan. We will explore what we do through Community Development ensuring a positive connection between the Council and our rural and urban communities. Those associations aim to engender a sense of belonging and pride in our District as a place in which people feel welcomed, accepted and connected.

Two of the main challenges faced by voluntary and community groups centre on the need for appropriate governance and access to funding. Engaging with groups to determine where they are in their journey and what their support needs are, is key to beginning a dialogue. This will ultimately lead to a passage of development that delivers a local project and sustains the group to continue its work within its community.



Community events at Deepings Library



The Council's Community Engagement Officers support the voluntary and community sector to ensure effective governance is put in place for their group. Officers - work with groups to source and attract funding to meet the needs of their projects.

## Support includes:

- Advice on the relevance of status (constituted group, charity, social enterprise etc.).
- Undertaking funding searches to identify the most appropriate funder for their project -including with the bid writing process and ultimate submission.
- Funding and project surgeries to explore the ideas of voluntary and community groups, share knowledge and advocate partnership or collaborative working.
- Acting as a sounding board for new projects and helping identify solutions to bring the project to fruition.

# Consultation

The Council and the Community Engagement Team believe community engagement should be at the heart of all we do. Knowing our communities, building trust and encouraging involvement is vital in building sustainable and effective relationships. Working together with the vast network of voluntary and community groups across the District, aids development and inclusivity.

The consultation, undertaken between 21st August and 22nd September 2023, with residents and the voluntary and community sector relating to the creation of this strategy. Respondents were asked if they agreed with the themes, principles and objectives outlined in the strategy.

**From the responses received:**

77% agreed with the themes

81% agreed with the principles and the objectives

Respondents said they would like help with things like accessing funding, help with writing/submitting bids, putting effective governance in place and encouraging volunteering.

**We will:**

- Deliver a series of funding workshops in partnership with national and local funders
- Provide support to voluntary and community groups by assisting them with their governance structures
- Signpost to organisations such as Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service to engage groups in workshops provided to get groups 'fit for funding'



The latest State of the District Report for South Kesteven shows that, as of 2020/2021, volunteering rates in South Kesteven were below national, regional and county levels.

Through the consultation we asked how the Council could encourage volunteering and collaborative working between groups.

Respondents said they would value opportunities to network with other groups and individuals.



We asked if respondents felt there was a strong sense of community involvement in their local area.

50% of respondents either tended to agree or definitely agreed.

**We will:**

- Develop and deliver a series of networking forums to bring together voluntary and community groups to discuss project ideas, possibilities for working together and volunteering opportunities
- Promote volunteering opportunities within our own services and with voluntary and community groups through the Council's website, social media channels and our digital magazine
- Work closely with Lincolnshire Voluntary and Community Service to actively promote volunteering opportunities across the District

**We will:**

- Continue to support local groups and organisations that promote inclusive opportunities for people from different backgrounds to come together to celebrate their similarities and differences
- Work with colleagues in other service areas to promote opportunities for equality, diversity and inclusion to flourish within the District



# The Council's vision of community engagement and development across South Kesteven

## The strategy

The Council's mission is to work effectively with partners in the voluntary, private and public sectors for the benefit of communities within the district of South Kesteven.

**To help achieve the mission, this strategy will focus on:**

- Places, People and Spaces
- A strong and thriving voluntary and community sector
- Vibrant, inclusive and connected neighbourhoods



## Inclusion

People need to feel they belong within communities and identify with others through groups, values, language and common interest such as music, sport and art. For communities to thrive there needs to be acknowledgment, understanding and acceptance of people's differences. These differences may include age, cultural background, caring responsibilities, disability, gender or gender identity, faith, sexual orientation and socio-economic background. Bringing communities together through community development helps to increase understanding, a sense of belonging and drives ambition to become involved in the place.



## Partnerships



Partnerships help bridge divisions between people, groups, communities, agencies and organisations. Partnerships are relationships based on understanding and trust that lead to mutual benefits. These collaborative relationships break down the silos in which we work and live and engender opportunities that will have positive impact within communities through collaborative initiatives, activities and projects.

# Place-based Community Development

Place-based community development focuses on geographic location. Local communities feel a strong connection to the place in which they live. Whilst South Kesteven is made up of four towns (Bourne, Grantham, Market Deeping and Stamford) and one hundred and one villages and hamlets, each has individual needs and aspirations. Each one is different with varying social, economic, and environmental

issues. In most instances, the demographics of each community are also different. It follows that those living in each local community are in the best position to address local challenges. It also follows that the District Council's Elected Members are key to providing insight into local challenges and aspirations. Their front-line knowledge and involvement is vital to the development of community. The diversity of South Kesteven includes

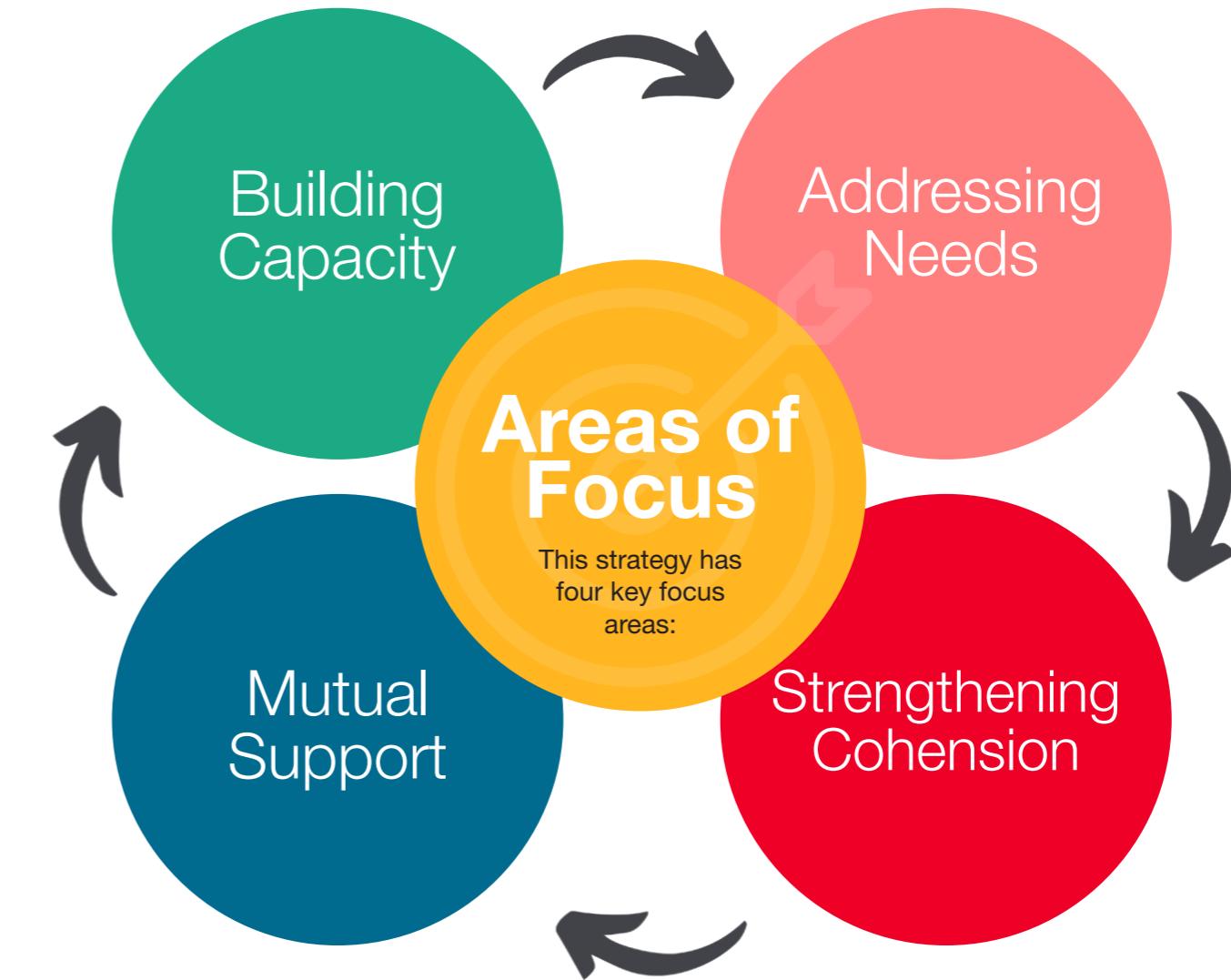
community-focused individuals, dedicated not for profit groups, community-minded businesses, the faith community, parish and town councils and those disadvantaged by health and socio-economic inequality. The diversity and collaborative inclusion and engagement of all these stakeholders are essential if change is to be made and sustained within communities.

## Sustainability

The sustainability of communities, community groups and community assets is important to the success of any community engagement and development interventions. Increasing skill-sets within the voluntary and community sector builds ability and confidence which, in turn, enables communities to have ownership of their own projects. A sense of ownership and pride is known to engender sustainability.



Photograph courtesy  
of Elizabeth Bowskill,  
Wyndham Park Forum.



Objectives have been set in each of these focus areas. These are intended not to be viewed in isolation of each other as, in some instances, the objectives overlap or could fit within more than one area. These objectives provide high-level actions plan and provide the framework for a more detailed action

Focus Area	Objective	Action
Building the capacity of communities to help them help themselves	To work with the voluntary and community groups within the District to enable them to participate in and deliver community-based projects and activities	Provide support for groups to develop governance structures, create project plans, identify and source funding and build in resilience and sustainability.
Addressing the needs of marginalised communities	To work within communities within locations challenged by health, economic and social mobility to enable people within those communities to feel enabled to improve place and personal outcomes.	Signposting communities to seek the support of relevant agencies to address issues faced within disadvantaged areas
Fostering mutual support within communities	To assist communities to develop, support and communicate with groups and agencies delivering projects and services in their local area	Develop network opportunities for people to come together to discuss local needs with an aim of creating collaborative projects
Strengthening cohesion	To foster good relations between communities to improve understanding and cooperation among people from diverse backgrounds	Collaborate with existing providers of support and celebratory events to enhance opportunities to bring people together to explore their differences and similarities

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plan developed utilising the outcomes of community consultation. It is also imperative that, in delivering this strategy we work collaboratively with other teams across the Council and identify external agencies that can also support to help achieve the actions.

## How we will measure success

The Council's involvement in community development plays a central role in contributing to the physical and social capacity of the communities of South Kesteven. The role of the Council is to support, advise and collaborate wherever it is needed and to understand what our communities want to achieve. On occasion this could include suggesting adaptations to ensure a successful outcome for those making a difference in communities.

Community development in local government helps to build strong and self-reliant communities and helps the Council to be responsive to community needs. Involvement will differ depending on the nature of the intended outcome; the level of expertise; capacity and experience within the groups we aim to support. The level of involvement the voluntary and community sector wants the Council to have in their project is also a contributing factor.

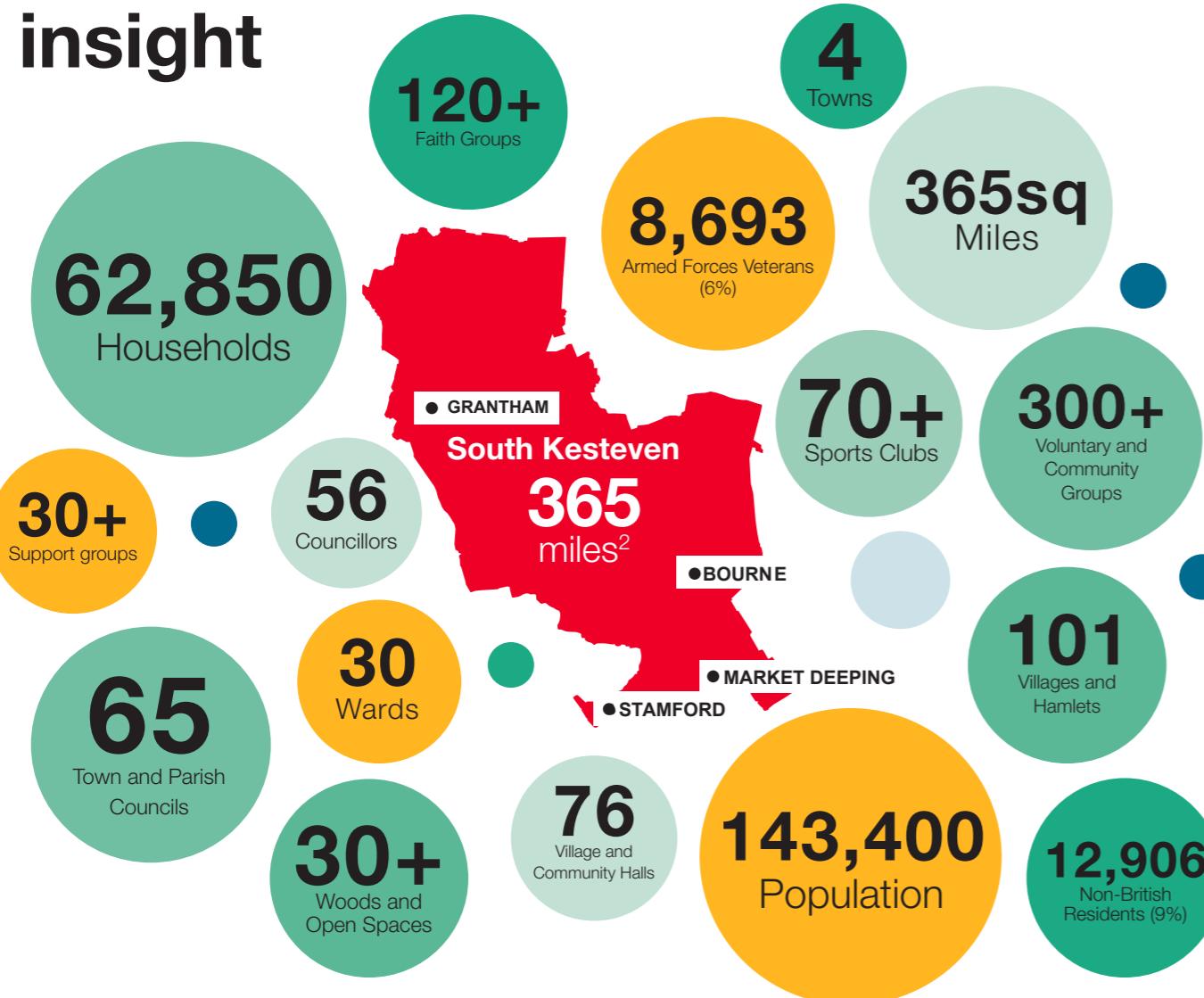


### In delivering this strategy, the Community Engagement Team will:

- Further develop working relationships with communities, faith groups, the Armed Forces sector and the voluntary and community sectors (collectively known throughout this strategy as community groups)
- Facilitate and contribute to the development of community groups and networks
- Develop, promote and support community groups to work with and learn from each other
- Work with communities to identify needs and opportunities for collaboration
- Work with and support communities to plan for change and take collective action
- Build on strategic relationships with infrastructure organisations to better support the voluntary and community sector
- Develop, deliver and report on a collaborative action plan that is informed by consultation with our communities

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# Community - definitions and insight



# What is a community?

There is no single definition of community. It means different things to different people, depending on where they are and what they're doing. In simple terms, we can break it down into three distinct parts:



**Everyone can be a member of a community.**

People can be part of the community as a whole or be part of multiple communities. Not everyone may identify as being part of a community. People may be excluded from communities because of discrimination or because they choose to exclude themselves. Social isolation can be imposed or a life-style choice. Through our engagement and development practices we must work to eradicate discrimination whilst respecting freedom of choice for those who do not identify as being part of a community. Community cannot be presumed, chosen or imposed.

## What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is like building a bridge which links organisations to communities through open and honest dialogue and based on mutual respect. Community engagement is active participation with local residents and community groups in the decisions that affect their lives. By getting to know our communities, trust is built. Community engagement is not about questionnaires and surveys, it's about talking, listening and learning from one another. What do we want for the local area and how can we work collaboratively to achieve our goals? Successful engagement at community level helps to make development opportunities possible.



## What is Community Development?

Community development is the process that builds on Community Engagement. Some communities are self-mobilising and will seek out the support available from third-sector, public sector and business to achieve their goals. Some communities are self-sufficient and do not require support from these agencies and some don't yet know or appreciate that they can evoke change. Community development is about enabling individuals and groups to bring about change within their neighbourhood.

There are a number of connected outcomes when engaging in community development:

- Building the capacity, knowledge and skill of a community to help itself
- Fostering mutual help in a community
- Addressing the needs of disadvantaged and under-represented communities
- Enhancing acceptance and cohesion

Community Development is not an activity: it is a process, or set of principles used to enable communities to grow and change according to their own needs and priorities.



# The Voluntary and Community Sector in South Kesteven

The rich and diverse tapestry of voluntary and community sector groups, agencies and organisations operating within South Kesteven are vital in the development and sustainability of the District's communities.

## Community Groups and Infrastructure Organisations

There are over 300 voluntary and community groups and infrastructure organisations operating in South Kesteven. Each has its own identity, goals and needs. Some are well-established and have aspirations and plans for development, with dedicated volunteers to help them achieve their goals.

Some are new and were created out of local need (for example, as a result of a local or national emergency) or in response to their ambition to complete a local project or activity (e.g. create a new play park). Whether groups have been amongst communities for many years or are emerging, it is the Council's role to offer support, get to know them, build trust and work collaboratively with them.

## Faith Groups

Support delivered by the District's faith groups includes: provision of food to those in need through Foodbanks and community larders; debt advice through schemes like Christians Against Poverty; English classes to migrant communities who have made their home in South Kesteven; Chat Cafés to combat loneliness and social isolation and activities for young people.

## Support Groups

South Kesteven has more than 30 known support groups working to raise awareness of conditions people are living with daily. These groups provide direct support to people with caring responsibilities. In 2021 the Census showed 4.4% of residents of the District (aged five years and over) were providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week. 2.6% of residents reported that they provided at least 50 hours of weekly unpaid care. Support groups often rely on volunteers and local fund raising to enable them to deliver their service.

## Parish and Town Councils

Along with the other voluntary and community groups and organisations, parish and town councils are key contributors to vibrant communities in their area. They have knowledge of the local needs of their communities and an ability to raise money for local projects through their precept. All local councils set a precept. Every council has a budget: the amount of money required to fund its operations. Towns and parishes often work in isolation, therefore, a programme of collaborative activities to help bring them together to explore partnerships would enhance local community development.



## Armed Forces Community

The Armed Forces community consists of all people who are, or have been: regulars, reservists or cadets, cadet force adult volunteers and their partners and immediate families. South Kesteven was shown to have the second largest veteran population (8693) in Lincolnshire at the time of the 2021 Census.

A veteran is defined as anyone who has served for at least one day in His Majesty's Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve), or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations. Under this definition, veterans have already left the Armed Forces. Service leavers are serving personnel who are planning to leave, who are still under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Defence. Reservists are an integral part of the UK Armed Forces. This strategy and its accompanying Action Plan, take account of veterans young and old who exist within a wider community of family and friends. It also considers the partners and immediate families of those who have died whilst serving.

## Armed Forces Covenant

South Kesteven District Council first signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012. The Council renewed its commitment most recently in 2022. The Armed Forces Act, which gained Royal Assent in Parliament on 15 December 2021, enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant in law for the first time to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing essential services, like healthcare, education and housing. As a local authority housing provider, the Council carries specific duties under the Act which are reflected in its Housing Allocations Policy and the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy.

## The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support serving and former military personnel and their families and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses Bronze, Silver and Gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant. In 2022 the Council was awarded Gold for its engagement with, and advocacy for, the Armed Forces community of South Kesteven.

## Funding support for the Voluntary and Community Sector

Direct funding is available from South Kesteven District Council through four initiatives:

### SK Community Fund

The SK Community Fund was established in 2015 to offer financial assistance to voluntary and community groups for projects, initiatives and events which benefit our residents.

Grants are available for constituted groups, charities and organisations involved in community projects and events which benefit residents and communities in the District. Groups and organisations must demonstrate how their project or event will deliver wide benefit, contributing to the sustainability, vitality and well-being of South Kesteven's communities.

### Lottery SK

Lottery SK was launched in 2018 as an additional support mechanism for voluntary and community groups (known as 'good causes' within the lottery). This self-help fund raising platform is open to any constituted community group or charity that operates within South Kesteven for the benefit of the residents of the District.



### UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Under the theme of Communities, Health and Wellbeing, South Kesteven District Council's distribution of this funding (which is available until 2025) aims to strengthen our social fabric and foster a sense of local pride and belonging through investment in activities which enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. These include community leisure infrastructure and community-led projects.

### Rural England Prosperity Fund

The Rural England Prosperity Fund, known as the Rural Fund, is in addition to the £3.9m allocated to South Kesteven through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the Government's Levelling Up commitment.

The Rural Fund provides capital funding to support:

- new and existing rural businesses to develop products and facilities which benefit the wider local economy
- new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses



# Contact Details

Alternative formats are available on request:  
audio, large print and Braille

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