

Draft Community Interest Statement.

Matter2Me CIC

The world has changed in many ways over the last 40 years. Some changes like the internet, has had both positive and negative impacts. Financially, the value of products and services has increased, and wages have not increased proportionately. Many services and benefits show the same.

I come from an area that is that is considered one of the most deprived areas, not just in the southeast but, has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England. Back in my early thirties, I was definitely aware that Murston was disadvantaged area but, like many others I just accepted it, and didn't consider there could be an option for this to be addressed. After some health problems, it has allowed me time to really reflect and think about the things that could bring change to an area, that to me, my family and friends call home.

Problems that Murston deals with today, due to its impoverished status include Antisocial behaviour, theft, fly tipping, drug crimes, homelessness and in the winter not only are they exacerbated but expand into territories reported by mainstream media, such as heat or eat and loneliness.

Murston, from an outside perspective could be perceived as a volatile, hostile and sometimes a dangerous place. It has a reputation that forbodes most from wanting to live there and it has an incredibly large proportion of social housing. The aggression can come from all races and ages but, there is a particular concern regarding the behaviour of some of its younger members. In speaking to its two primary schools, the local secondary school and parents in the area, it has helped highlight ways in which the current social and economic situation is affecting the children in the area, and they all agree that action is needed to help support students, especially those in the really deprived areas of swale, one of those being Murston.

Murston is also full of well-meaning and caring residents who are struggling to maintain households with the amount of time and finances available to them. Many would like to be proactive in making improvement to their area, however most feel that their efforts would be in vain. It is said that it takes a village to raise a child, and in today's society those villages appear to be very small or even non-existent in some cases. Neighbours don't chat like they used to; some residents act without care or consequence in their community, increasing the division and social cohesion even more.

As mentioned above, the internet has also had an effect. Children are growing up glued to screens, learning how to freely access information, in a world that even adults find hard to decipher between true or false information. This is contributing to some children not always receiving an education on how to kindly and empathetically, socially interact

with people, often feeling like they can acceptably behave in the same way that they do in their computer games, but in reality, could have negative real-life consequences.

Throughout most of history, communities have banded together through common interests including war, religion or just in the name of survival. Due to many factors, this does not seem to be the case anymore and we are living our lives without the benefit of a strong community to support us.

Many people are not religious and those that are, can also cause conflict because there are now far more options for people's religious beliefs, compared to this area's typical historical options.

We have not experienced war in its historical typical form for two generations, which although a negative thing itself, has been shown to draw people together as they unite to take on the enemy, and console in times of loss.

In terms of survival, it also has a very different meaning today. We are far from hunter gatherer communities, and you can now order anything you want, to be delivered to your door and have it put in your hand within hours. Even impoverished or disadvantaged families can experience this.

We know that communities can and do become more cohesive when a catalyst is introduced, as through Covid, residents all stood on their doorsteps and clapped for the NHS, they reached out to support each other, even if it meant playing a crude game of "knock down ginger" to drop off supplies whilst still maintaining social distancing. The catalyst doesn't always need to be a negative one and Matters2Me hopes to fill that void and invoke the same reaction from a positive perspective.

Additionally, the idea of "Need" has changed through the years and that also amplifies the separation within our communities, due to its generational interpretation and misunderstandings between them.

A lack of social interaction, understanding and empathy has led to isolation for many, young and old. Social skills and etiquette are rarely prioritised, and this has led to many areas, including Murston, that has a sole commonality, people hate where they live, resulting to widespread habitual complaining and experiencing, but not always identifying, systemic mental health issues.

We are not naïve. We don't think our few ideas can fix Murston and its complex issues, but we do believe this proposed organisation can benefit and improve the lives of its residents.

We plan to use “Matters2Me” to:

- A) Reduce loneliness, by creating opportunities for neighbours to have meaningful engagements.
- B) Promote and improve community communication and Involvement by providing a welcoming space that offers benefits and support to residents, also community-based events, such as BBQ's, competitions and nominations for recognition of efforts towards their community.
- C) Provide services to help improve the appearance and functionality of the area, for example, using local companies to legally remove rubbish for residents that would likely have been fly tipped and providing social support and a sense of belonging and meeting basic needs through shared resources.
- D) Work with companies such as Citizen's advice and organisations that deal with domestic violence to support residents with Benefits, debt and safety.
- E) Provide services and opportunities for community engagement such as social events, hobbyist meets and area improvement actions (litter picking, gardening in communal gardens etc.)
- F) Work with other services and charities to support residents with the heat or eat conundrum. This could be done by working with food banks, soup kitchens and providing a warm “Hub” during the day to residents, also promoting social interactions.
- G) Provide activities for children and teens, encouraging a non-discriminatory, empathetic and communicative culture in the format of educational, sporting, and emotional intelligence events, in both group and individual settings. Including coverage of life skills such as cooking and money management, with a focus on responsibility, accountability, respect and independence.
- F) Provide Mental health support. Speaking to the local schools and people who work in the field, they have acknowledged that the services available to swale has some extreme waiting lists in most subcategories. Mental health for teens at the local secondary schools has a waiting list of between six months and a year and am aware of residents that have been waiting longer than a year for NHS support. Using both volunteers who are still working towards completing their courses and needing their 100 hours practice, supervised by qualified providers and the qualified providers themselves, the organisation proposes to provide another service directly to the heart of the Murston covering domestic violence recovery, child play therapy, and other talking therapies.

The plan is that “Matters2Me” will benefit the community of Murston by focusing on the importance of Social Interaction, lifting the veil on the misunderstandings of a multicultural area and its benefits to mental health, general wellbeing and combating loneliness.

By encouraging personal investment in the area’s presentation, based on the idea that if we all do a little, it will cover a lot, with the added benefit of doing it together will encourage bonding of residents.

By providing activities and support to the community’s younger residents, it aims to reduce the amount of antisocial and destructive behaviour experienced in the area, replacing boredom with opportunities to educate, have fun and experience personal growth in a safe environment.

By providing a safe and warm environments for residents to attend, it aims to support residents, who in the winter months cannot afford to put on the heating during the day and promote positive interactions with neighbours over a cup of tea.

By providing a judgement free hub to residents, who are experiencing anxiety over bills, struggling with mental health or worried about their safety at home, to gain freely available access to support and help when they need it.

By encouraging residents to take ownership of their local area, and mutually acknowledge their efforts, creating a space that they are proud of.

By encouraging residents to be more neighbourly, have less division and promote a more understanding and empathy-based culture that supports the safety and wellbeing of all residents.

By helping to build relationships, that do not currently exist, between members of the community, that due to the ongoing pattern of social isolation, which is apparent for many reasons including finance, culture, religion or age.

To achieve all of this and maintain the true purpose and drive behind its creation, “Matters2Me” must be led by its core values. It must grow and develop using our fundamental principles and beliefs to guide the behaviour and decision-making at every step of the way.

Mission

Accountability & Transparency

Trust & integrity

Teamwork

Empathy & inclusiveness

Responsibility

Sustainability

Mission is our foremost prime directive. We must ensure that our organisation remains dedicated to its public purpose. We must support and truly embrace what is needed and what matters most to the community it serves. Understanding the ever-changing nature of the place we live and being both flexible and innovative in meeting its need, through education, empathy and understanding, we must support the neighbourhood and community to evolve, promoting a more integrated and prosperous society.

Accountability & Transparency is key to gaining the trust of the residents and service users. As an organisation we must be open to the scrutiny of the people we serve and hope to benefit by its operation. Publishing biannual reports and welcomed feedback from regular performance reviews, in formats that can be read by all, will hold “Matters2Me” true to its core values and allows for the organisation to build trust with the community.

Trust and Integrity are essential for public confidence. Demonstrating honest and ethical behaviour in all actions and decisions will solidify the body to be a cornerstone of support for its service users, that can be relied on when it matters. By adhering to our values, we aim to build a culture of trust throughout all levels of the business.

Promoting **Teamwork** and open dialogue to achieve our common goals, we can provide a shared sense of belonging, amongst staff, volunteers, donors and the public we serve. By integrating an ethos of sincerity and authenticity from the start, we can direct our energy to listening without judgement and further our understanding of the area and the people who inhabit it. The value of the transformative impact, from collaboration will move to build courage and motivation, around what we can achieve, when we work together.

Empathy & Inclusiveness will be essential to providing a service with compassion and a focus on helping others. The company should aim to be recognised for generously contributing time, resources and effort to those in need. Within all aspects, “Matters2Me” needs to strive to recognise and understand the perspectives, feelings and lived experiences of others, including and especially those who feel or identify, the most different from the people around them. “Matters2Me” should value a culture

where we prioritise each other, learn to value ourselves and show kindness by listening intently, being sincere, and creating a safe environment for all.

The **Responsibility** of meeting the needs of the people it serves is not small.

“Matters2Me” must strive to ensure equality and fairness for all in all of its undertakings. We must be flexible to adapt to the situation at hand, be it with staff or patrons. A small act by the organisation can have a knock on and lasting effect to all who rely on it’s support or employment. We have a responsibility to keep the heart of the mission front and centre to promote growth and community cohesion within its reach.

Our values drive to promote **Sustainability**. When we make decisions based on our values, we are more likely to make choices that align with our long-term goals. By making a commitment to environmentally responsible practices and investing into the staff, volunteers and community, we can strategically work towards long term success and impact.

To make this work, and ensure sustainability, “Matters2Me” will rely on three sources of income to ensure its longevity.

“Matters2Me” will be required to bid for funding to support it in some of its focal areas, i.e. subsidising some of its mental health program activities, and providing a warm hub etc.

Public Service membership. The CIC “Matters2Me” Plans to structure its offerings with varying tiers, each providing a different combination of features, benefits, and pricing. This allows the CIC to cater to a wider range of customers with varying needs and budgets. This could be mixed and matched in different ways, with the highest tier coving all available benefits and the lower tier only what would benefit the family the most. Some services will be universally without purchase of product such as its attempts to prevent fly tipping and access to the warm hub. Some would entitle tiers to reduced or free entry to events and others would reduce costings based on the amount of use.

“Matters2Me” sits just to the west of the largest industrial area in Kent and provides a huge amount of employment to Murston’s residents. “Matters2Me” intends to work with the employers to provide any needed support to its employees, in the context of services already mentioned, promote, advertise and support residents to apply for vacancies within their businesses and also request sponsorship or donations for events, activities and groups to which their name will be advertised.

“Matters2Me” intends to draw on local resources for employment in providing its services. By employing local residents, where possible, it aims to encourage mental investment into the project as well as financial benefit. The employment is

acknowledged in its need to be flexible and supportive as many of its employees would be expected to have never or not worked for long periods of time. It will also need to include employee development programs to help educate, grow and maintain personal satisfaction in the roles they undertake. This approach hopes to provide work to those who either have not been able or have been prevented from working in the past due to family commitments or reasons, such as lack of transport. It also hopes to provide each employee with skills and knowledge that will benefit them in their own life experience and choices.

In terms of remuneration, the plan is to work between two levels of earnings. Most employees will start on minimum wage with flexible working hours to support the local residents in their involvement of the company. Wages can be increased through performance reviews or reaching management level, up to a maximum wage of no more than a 50% increase on the current minimum wage, for any employee, member or director. We would also strive to provide holiday, sickness pay and pension plans included as part of the employment contract and would also include training and employee skill development.

“Matters2Me” would make use of volunteers and work experience at available opportunities.

“Matters2Me” aim to use companies and services, where possible, directly relating to the local area to support the residents and ensure the CIC’s beneficiaries remain the residents of the area.

The CIC is positioned to be a central point of support and community engagement. A staple that residents come to rely on and provides a benefit to the area from aesthetics to urgent help.

The plan is that the services noted here are relevant to the area of Murston as it is now and will grow and develop as the community needs, it has the possibility to offer other services in the future such as mother and baby clubs, support groups, autism support or homework and tutoring as well as hosting resident performed plays, musical shows and other entertainment.

It is also noted that should this enterprise be affective, “Matters2Me” may go on to be of benefit to other areas like Murston. To do this, it would need to hold to the same principles and core values and develop action to tackle issues that would likely be both similar to Murston and also unique to its own area.