

spadework
sowing the seeds of opportunity

2024 Impact Report

"I really feel like this is where I belong."

Spadework Ltd. • A company limited by guarantee • Registered Charity No. 291198 • Registered Company No. 01820460
Spadework Social Enterprises CIC • A Community Interest Company • Registered Company No. 13099464

Contents

4 By the numbers
6 What we do
8 Why we do what we do
11 Dementia services
19 Learning disability services
29 Carers services
33 Wellbeing services
42 Objectives and achievements
43 Awards
44 Thank you
46 Celebrating 40 years



The making of this report

This is Spadework's third Impact Report. We have continued to work with an independent evaluator, Insley Consulting. However, this year we have used the evaluation process to upskill the Spadework team so that we are more able to measure and report on our impact. We would like to thank Emma Insley and her team for guiding us through this process.



Note about content

All people photographed have given us their permission to use their photo. In people's stories the photos are not of that person and names have been changed for confidentiality. © Spadework 2025. Produced by Spadework, supported by Insley Consulting.

Sample size

Number of respondents to surveys by people who accessed our services:

- 15 people living with dementia
- 22 carers of people living with dementia
- 41 people who wanted to improve their wellbeing
- 57 people with learning and other disabilities
- 33 parents/carers of people with learning and other disabilities

Introduction



Everything we do at Spadework is rooted in a commitment to inclusion, belonging and community. Our work goes beyond providing services: it's about creating a place where people feel safe, valued and supported. Spadework exists to create opportunities that enable individuals to be more independent, feel less isolated and live happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives.

The year 2024 marked Spadework's 40th anniversary, a milestone that reflects our long-standing dedication to supporting people with learning disabilities, those living with dementia, carers and individuals seeking wellbeing and bereavement support. While we have evolved over the years, our purpose remains the same: to ensure that everyone who visits our site feels part of something meaningful.

Our learning disability service has been at the heart of Spadework from the very beginning, helping trainees build confidence, develop new skills and find a sense of purpose. Alongside this, demand for our dementia care has grown significantly, with more people seeking support than ever before. We focus on enabling people to live well with dementia, ensuring individuals and their families feel understood, connected and better equipped for the future. Our work with carers extends throughout their journey and beyond, ensuring they have the resources, guidance and emotional support they need. Our wellbeing and bereavement services continue to expand, offering safe spaces where people can find comfort, resilience and community.

While this report shares key outcomes, it is the personal stories that truly bring our work to life. Within these pages you will find real-life experiences that reflect the resilience, transformation and shared commitment that define Spadework. None of this would be possible without our dedicated staff, volunteers and supporters, whose passion and collaboration make everything we do possible.

This collective effort has not gone unnoticed. In 2024 Spadework was Highly Commended as Medium Charity of the Year at the National Third Sector Awards. We also received numerous other local and national accolades. This recognition belongs to everyone who has played a role in making Spadework what it is today.

As we look ahead we remain committed to fostering inclusion and belonging by providing opportunities that support individuals, strengthen community and enhance wellbeing. Thank you for being part of this journey and for ensuring that Spadework continues to be a place where everyone has a role, a purpose and a community to call their own.

Kris Healey

Kris Healey, CEO

By The Numbers

Spadework's mission

Spadework fosters inclusion and belonging by providing opportunities that empower individuals, strengthen community and enhance wellbeing. We enable people to be more independent, feel less isolated and to live happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives.



In numbers – we supported

189 People affected by dementia

115 People with learning and other disabilities

161 Carers on site

80 People to improve their wellbeing

Some of our outcomes*

People living with dementia

93%
have made new friends at Spadework

100%
feel happy at Spadework

Adults with learning and other disabilities

98%
feel proud of themselves at Spadework

98%
feel happier since coming to Spadework

Carers

100%
of carers of people living with dementia feel better prepared for the future as a result of their involvement with Spadework

People who would like to improve their wellbeing

92%
report an increase in their overall life satisfaction

86%
feel less lonely/isolated since coming to Spadework

*Results based on people who strongly agree/agree with statements in 2024 survey

The Café, Farm Shop and Garden Centre are open to the public seven days a week.

All of the proceeds from our social enterprises go back into the charity to support our mission.



What we do

On our five-acre site in West Kent we provide services for:

People living with dementia

We support people living with dementia, as well as their families and carers, with a variety of popular services. These include memory cafes, singing groups, music and movement groups, arts and crafts, carers support groups and a specific support group for people with young-onset dementia. All of our services are free to attend and people do not need a formal diagnosis to join us.

Adults with learning and other disabilities

We have been supporting adults with learning and other disabilities since Spadework was founded in 1984. We enable people with learning and other disabilities (known as "trainees") to take part in a range of activities focused on horticulture, lifeskills and creative arts activities. Through participating in these our trainees have an increased sense of belonging.





Carers

We provide services for carers of people living with dementia, people with learning and other disabilities and their support networks. These include activities and talking groups. We also help to signpost other relevant organisations. Our information events are open to anyone irrespective of whether the person they care for attends one of our services.

People who would like to improve their wellbeing

We offer a range of activities for people who would like to improve their wellbeing, like gardening, woodwork, walking and sewing. These enable people to connect with each other in small groups and to share and learn new skills and to have an increased sense of belonging.

spadework
sowing the seeds of opportunity

Need

The need that Spadework responds to

We can sometimes be limited by the world around us. Support and services may not be there when we need them and people can treat us unfairly.

Purpose

Our role in achieving the vision

We create an environment that fosters a sense of meaning, direction and resilience.

At Spadework people are supported to:

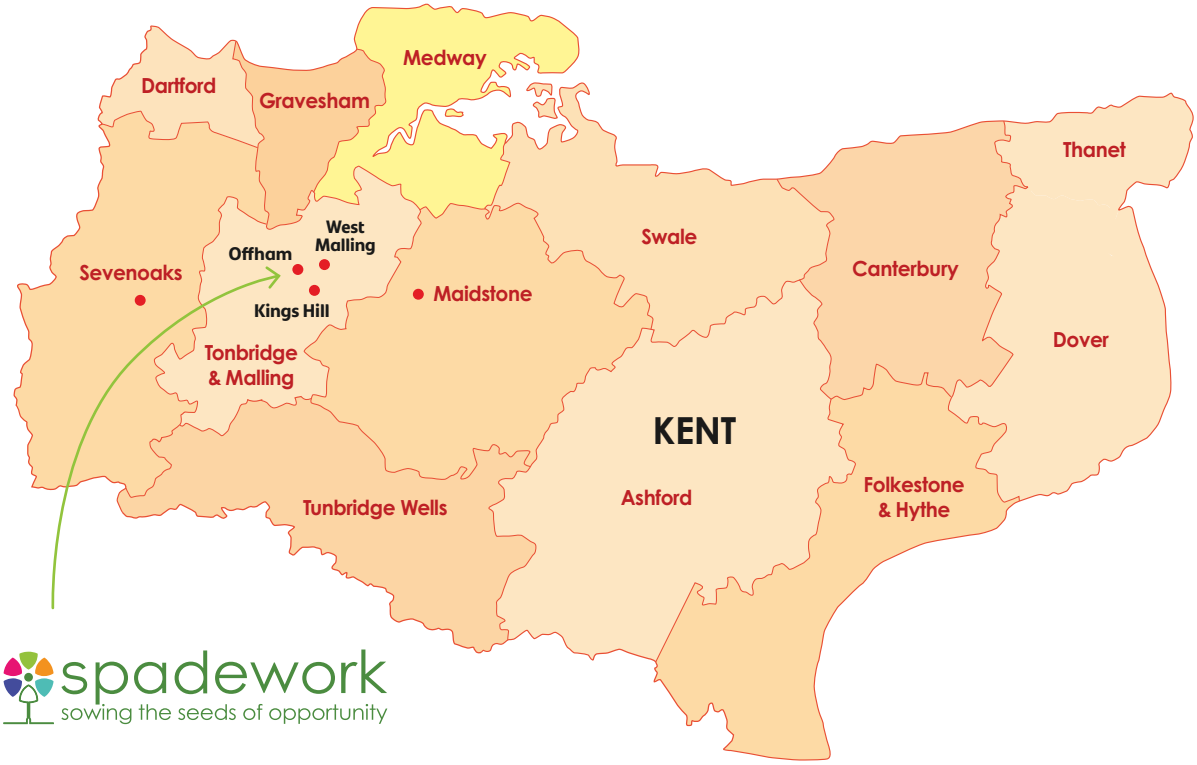
- **Be happier** and **healthier,** live a **more fulfilling life** and have an **improved sense of wellbeing.**
- Have an **increased sense of self-worth, belonging and purpose** by feeling the value of doing a job, being part of something bigger than themselves, playing an active part in the community and feeling **accepted for who they are.**
- **Reduce their feelings of isolation and increase connections with others** by feeling part of a community, accepting each other's abilities and supporting each other.
- Be **more independent** and better prepared for life outside of their family and Spadework.

Our values:

- **Inclusion**
  We welcome and celebrate everyone, ensuring our services are accessible, respectful, and designed for all.
- **Belonging**
  We create friendly spaces where every individual feels safe, accepted, and valued.
- **Community**
  We work in partnership with our local community, ensuring our services reflect its evolving needs.
- **Collaboration**
  We believe in teamwork, supporting each other and partnering with others to maximise impact.
- **Purpose**
  We create an environment that fosters a sense of meaning, direction and resilience.
- **Integrity**
  We are forward-thinking, aligning our actions with our intentions to ensure our services remain relevant, impactful and community-focused.

Why we do what we do

- 1.6 million people live in Kent making it the most populous county in south-east England
  (Source: Kent Carers Matter)
- The population of Kent grew by 1% (15,800 people) between 2022 and 2023
  (Source: ONS 15 July 2024)



Our journey: 40 years of Spadework

1984
Mobile gardening service for adults with learning disabilities, Hildenborough, Tonbridge



1988
Base also established at Leybourne Grange



1994
Land at Offham purchased

Garden Centre open to public



1995
Trainee activities expanded beyond horticulture



Dementia

In November 2024 it was estimated that 25,902 people aged 65 and over in Kent and Medway had dementia

(Source: Dementia and Healthcare Surveillance fact sheet Kent and Medway ICB Nov 2024, published by the Department of Health and Social Care)

"It's lovely to have these services locally, just three miles from home in familiar surroundings as we frequent Spadework and enjoy a coffee in the café from time to time."

Couple who attend Spadework Dementia Service

Learning Disabilities

The prevalence of learning disabilities has been higher in Kent than in England as a whole since 2021

(Source: Kent Health Public Observatory)

24,635

people claimed a disability benefit for a learning disability in Kent in November 2023

(Source: DWP)

In Kent and Medway:

Nearly

1 in 5

have depression

(Source: Kent Health Observatory, May 2024)



2003

Café opened



2011

All Spadework services moved to Offham



2021

First wellbeing and dementia services



2023 & 2024

First learning disability carers group

Spadework named Kent Charity of the Year

First bereavement group

Spadework Highly Commended Third Sector Awards

Why we do what we do

Carers

"Spadework has helped me to take a break from my 24/7 caring role and go back to being a wife for a short time."

Carer of person living with dementia

Typically carers are unpaid and are not the same as paid care workers



1 in 9

adults in Kent are carers - more than 151,000 people

(Source: Kent Carers Matter)

3 in 5

people in Kent will become a carer at some point in their lives

(Source: Kent Carers Matter)

Wellbeing

"I feel I have somewhere to come to escape my anxieties."

Spadework wellbeing service attendee



1 in 4

people will experience a mental health problem of some kind

(Source: Mind)

1 in 6

people report experiencing a common mental health problem (like anxiety and depression) in any given week in England

(Source: Mind)

In December 2022 there were

194,698

people with depression in Kent

(Source: 2023 Kent Joint Strategic Needs Exception Assessment (JSNA) Report)



spadework
sowing the seeds of opportunity

Dementia Services

92%

of people living with dementia feel less lonely/isolated since coming to Spadework

Our dementia services





"I wanted to do something practical to assist Spadework with their dementia services, so volunteering to help in the memory café fitted the bill. I have enjoyed my involvement. It is good to see people making friends and enjoying themselves."

P (Volunteer)

We provide people living with dementia and their support networks with a variety of popular services.

These include a memory café and groups for:

- Singing
- Music and movement
- Arts and crafts
- Carers support
- Young-onset dementia support

A formal diagnosis is not required to attend our services.

These services currently take place on Mondays and Wednesdays. These services are run by two members of staff, who are assisted by nine volunteers. Several of the volunteers have personal experience of supporting a person living with dementia.

At the end of 2024 our memory cafes were regularly getting 40 attendees. One of the challenges we face is having enough space to accommodate the attendees, staff, volunteers and entertainers. Every session has some entertainment and a quiz and a raffle, which raises valuable funds to support our services.

In 2024 we started a peer support group for people with young onset dementia (under 65 years old). This means that while those living with dementia can meet, their support network can get together to discuss issues that affect them and share their experiences, forming their own support group.

See more on page 29 about Spadework's carers services

The scope of our services

Dementia sessions January to December 2024

Total number of... ↓	Memory cafe	Music and movement	Singing	Young onset carers group	Carers support group (over 65)	Arts and Crafts group	Under 65s Peer Support Group	Bereavement group
Sessions	22	21	24	12	11	12	4	9
Attendances	621	287	429	96	117	36	50	35
Hours	44	31.5	36	24	22	24	8	18
People living with dementia supported	69	27	34	N/A	10	11	9	N/A
Carers supported	76	30	39	8	19	5	9	7
Individuals supported	145	57	73	8	29	16	18	7

The outcome of our services

For people living with dementia, meeting other people outside of the home can be daunting. It is easy to become isolated. Along with the services that we offer, we know that many people feel comfortable coming to Spadework. There's nothing more normal for many of them than visiting a garden centre or café and supporting a charity.

"We love coming to the memory cafes. It is such a wonderful distraction for D and he always leaves with a smile on his face."

Carer of someone living with dementia



Our dementia services

In 2024, we have expanded the services that we offer to include an arts and crafts group as well as a second singing group.

Our services focus on allowing people to live well with dementia. One person who attends the arts and crafts group used to do a lot of art before her diagnosis and had lost the confidence to paint. Through her participation in our arts and crafts group she re-discovered her passion for painting, much to her delight! We enable people to live well wherever they are on their dementia journey.

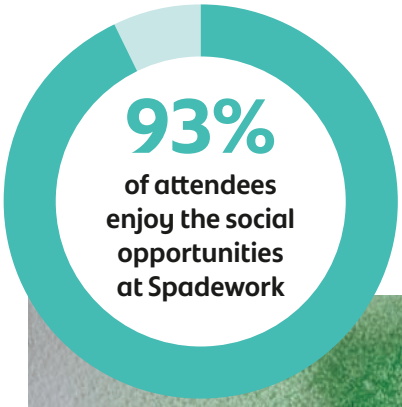
100%
of attendees feel happy at Spadework

100%
of attendees have tried new things

"Spadework provides a safe, friendly environment where we have met old friends and new."
Carer of someone living with dementia

"My husband never sings at home but joins in whole-heartedly at singing class. At music and movement, it helps him to think what he is doing."
Carer of someone living with dementia



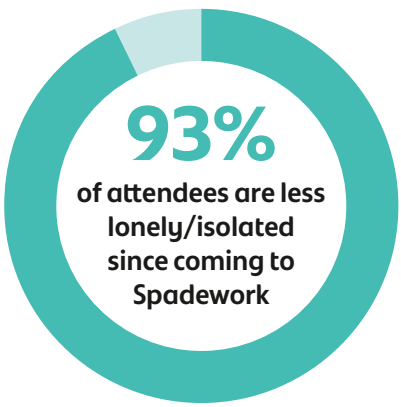


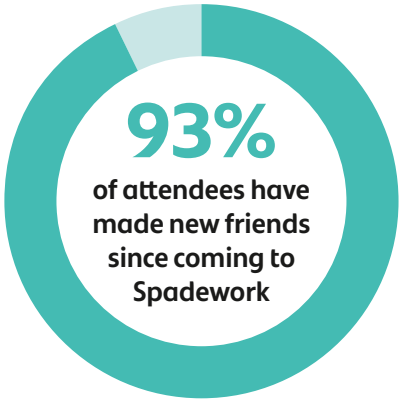
"My wife, who has Alzheimer's, really enjoys the singing group. That activity and the memory café make a difference insomuch as they provide the opportunity for social interaction."

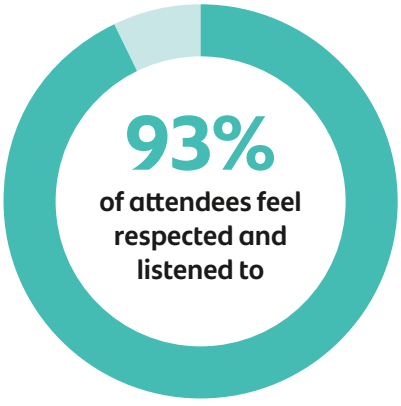




Created by dementia service users at Spadework dementia arts and crafts group







Barbara and Peter's story

Spadework's walking group is a joint Wellbeing and Dementia Service. Barbara and Peter have been coming to the walking group at Spadework for the past 18 months.

They live locally and for many years have visited the Garden Centre, Café and Farm Shop. One day they saw a sign on site advertising the walking group. "We enquired about it, turned up and have been walking for 18 months," Barbara said. "It's brilliant."

Peter, Barbara's husband, is 82 and was recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Barbara knew three years ago that something was not right with him, but it was when out walking that one of Spadework's staff members was talking to Peter and noticed that he was repeating himself.

Spadework's Dementia Services Manager suggested the couple see a doctor. "She said to me you need to go to the doctor to find out what is going on," Barbara said. "I would have taken Peter to the doctor eventually, but she said the sooner I took him the better."

"Spadework has been helpful. If we hadn't joined the walking group at Spadework we wouldn't have known any of this.

"We now go to the other Spadework dementia groups. On Monday we were at the singing group. It was crowded and very good, because everyone is in the same position. It makes you forget your problems. You sing and you feel relaxed and light-hearted. I don't know what we would do without it.

"Spadework in general is so good. They're good to people and are so kind. They can't do enough. I thought our life was all right before



"There's a good group of people who we talk to. Sometimes we go and have a cup of tea or coffee with them after."

I joined, doing gardening and sitting at home, but this is something else. It's really opened our eyes.

"Coming walking, there's a good group of people who we talk to. Sometimes we go and have a cup of tea or coffee with them after. We always used to be trailing at the back and people had to wait for us to catch up, but now Peter's up the front. He's normally first or second to finish.

"It's good for Peter. When we went to see the doctor who gave him the results of the scan, she asked what we did. We said that we walked. She said: 'You look very good on it. Keep it up, because it's very good for your mind. You are meeting other people and having different conversations'."

What our service users say about our service

"It is very helpful as this condition is hard. When you are given the news about dementia, you are left quite alone, and it is very helpful to have someone there to ask questions and give you advice."



"The memory café is a welcome retreat and there's always a listening ear if required."

"Spadework go above and beyond with their support for us. Thank you."

"I don't feel so isolated."

"The staff are excellent and very caring. Feel part of one big family. Thank you."

"Brings a lot of people in the same situation together. Very supportive."

"Something to look forward to. Also, I have become attached to the people I have made friends with."



Bereavement services

In 2024 we started holding a regular bereavement group. It meets once a month and enables those who have lost their loved ones to spend some time together, sharing their experiences and supporting each other. Strong friendships have been formed through this group. A closed group of people who were bereaved several years ago and still meet is hosted on site once a month. It means that the bereaved are not losing their community and that Spadework is there for them wherever they are on their journey.

We often receive spontaneous comments about our dementia services:

"I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Spadework team on their fantastic facilities and services provided. My mother-in-law regularly attends your dementia-related activities, which she loves, with the added benefit of the garden centre (she was a keen gardener before her illness)."

"Thank you for all that you do for the dementia community, I know that mum and dad would have been totally lost without the services you provide. You all work so hard to make our difficult situation a little easier and give us good advice. I'm sure everyone will tell you: you are a lifeline in what can become a lonely and isolated existence. Thank you."

The quote below was received after collaboration with a charity called Wishing Hearts (Registered Charity No.1198101). They had the support of Dunelm and gave us Christmas gifts to share. We try to collaborate with other charities where we can, to share resources and knowledge.

"Thank you for a lovely afternoon. Our gifts from your lovely Santa were a great surprise and most unexpected. E had asked me for slippers for Christmas - he is so contrary at the moment, that I hadn't bought any. The slippers in his bag were lovely. Thank you all again, for all of your hard work."







spadework
sowing the seeds of opportunity

Learning Disability Services

98%

of trainees feel proud of themselves at Spadework

Our learning and disability service





The activities we offer to people with learning and other disabilities (known as our 'trainees') with our day services are broadly divided into three categories; horticulture, lifeskills and creative arts activities.

Internally, we refer to these activities by the colour of the space where they take place. Activities take place in eight-week cycles allowing the trainees a wide variety of experiences.



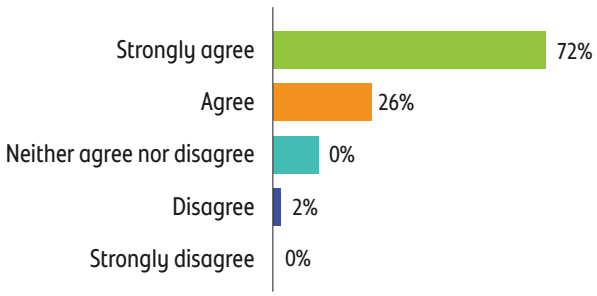


"It's a wonderful place and wonderful staff. They really help you."

Trainee S

98%

of trainees say they are happy with the service from Spadework







"It is lovely to learn new skills as well as brush up on other skills."

Trainee C

Green (Horticulture)

Our five-acre site is in a rural location. Our trainees use their gardening skills to keep our site looking welcoming for visitors. They also plant seeds, tend plants and grow vegetables that in season are sold in the farm shop and used in our café. Our PYO pumpkin festival is one of the biggest fundraising events of the year and our trainees grow and harvest many of the pumpkins that are sold.

Orange, Purple and Blue (Lifeskills)

In the trainee kitchen our trainees learn and practise their cooking skills. They prepare dishes for themselves and cook items for sale to staff, volunteers and other trainees in the Tuck Shop. The Tuck Shop also teaches skills like managing money. Other lifeskills include learning about making better food choices, the importance of regular exercise and relationships. At Christmas our trainees make food hampers that are sold on site and made for corporate clients.

Brown, Pink and Red (Creative)

There are so many different ways to be creative at Spadework, from woodwork to making a podcast, to writing and performing a play. Our trainees make seasonal decorations, bird boxes, bug hotels, even bigger items like garden benches. Some of them are sold in the garden centre. Recently we have made blankets from crisp packets which are then distributed to the homeless through charities like Gillingham Street Angels.

Trainee Council

Twice a year we hold elections in which eight trainees are elected by their fellow trainees to the Council. The ninth trainee is chosen by staff. The Council is consulted on matters affecting Spadework and represents the views of fellow trainees. In 2024 more trainees than ever put themselves forward for election and we changed the way we vote, to include a photo of the candidates.

We enable people to be more independent

People with learning and other disabilities can be isolated. At Spadework, as well as the skill-based activities we give our trainees the time to form meaningful relationships and to socialise.

Independence can look very different for each person, but it is a key measure of our impact.

This year we are pleased that key indicators of independence have increased.

Some of our trainees' favourite things

- Sitting with friends, having a chat at lunchtimes
- Playing football to help calm down
- Enjoying the company of others
- Working on the pumpkin patch

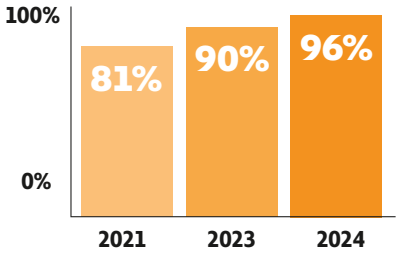


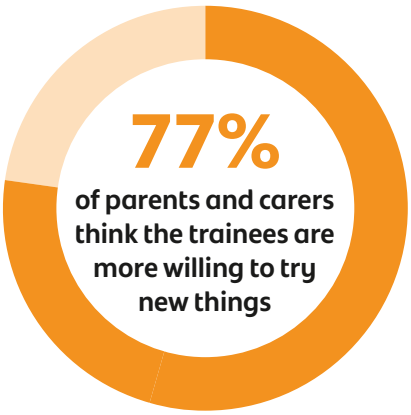






More trainees than ever say they feel brave to try new things



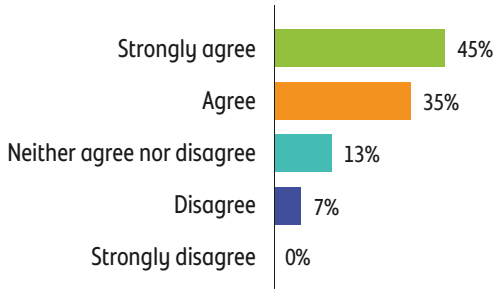


"At home I do try to bulk cook, so I don't have to eat microwaved meals"

Trainee S

80%

of parents and carers think the trainees are able to make choices about the things that affect them since coming to Spadework.



The number of parents and carers who think this has increased over time:





We enable our trainees to feel less isolated



Having a sense of belonging is crucial to feeling less isolated.

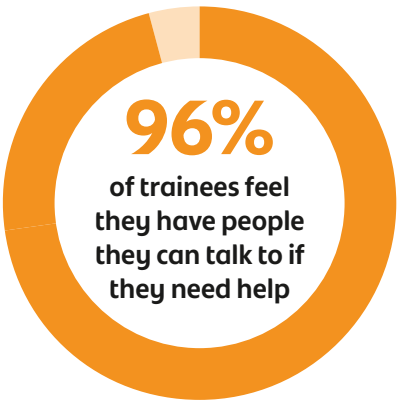
In 2024 Spadework celebrated its 40th anniversary. Our trainees, staff and volunteers came together one Sunday evening in June to celebrate at an event they chose to call "Spadefest". They listened to a band, enjoyed a barbecue, had a talent competition and celebrated together. Events like this have increased a sense of community, creating memories together.

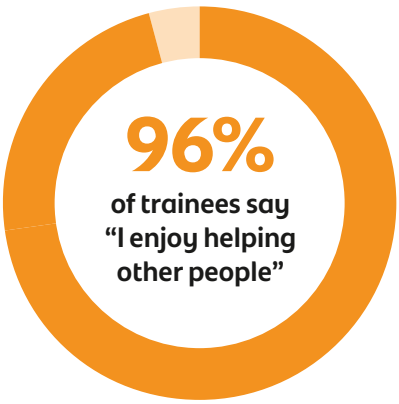
Our staff have excellent relationships with our trainees. Ensuring our trainees feel supported is one of our highest priorities.

Our care team have a wealth of experience to share with our trainees and we are proud of the length of service of several of our staff members.

100%

of trainees say "I feel that I belong in the Spadework community"

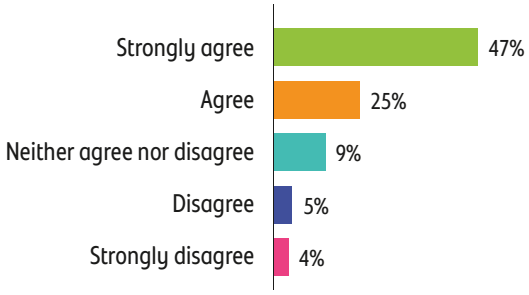




We endeavour to make Spadework an inclusive community, so no one feels isolated. We will continue to talk to our trainees to ensure they feel part of our community.

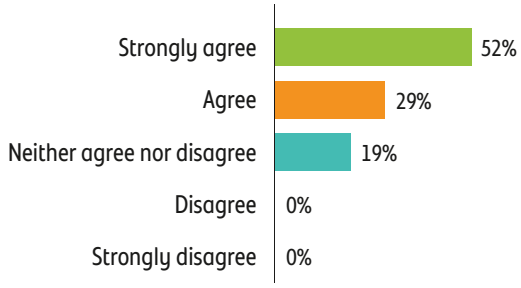
72%

of trainees say "I feel less lonely/isolated since coming to Spadework."



81%

of parents and carers say "I think they are less lonely/isolated since coming to Spadework."







Meg's story

Meg is a relative newcomer to Spadework, having just completed her first three months as a trainee. She attended a mainstream school and achieved some GCSEs. Since leaving school 12 years ago she has completed a number of training courses, including animal management at Hadlow College and a teaching assistant course at Maidstone College.

Before coming to Spadework Meg had taken voluntary positions in a school and had volunteered in a charity shop. Most recently Meg had some paid project work for an NHS Mental Health Trust.

Meg has a mild learning disability, which means she finds socialising and being with other people very difficult. She did her project for the NHS Trust from home.

Meg's parents looked for opportunities for Meg to mix with people. "Meg is very capable," her mother said. "She can cook and stay at home on her own, but if you spend most of your time at home and you don't have much going on it's difficult.

"One of the things I was concerned about was that Meg is quite independent. Although she has a learning disability it's a mild one. I was concerned, as were Kent County Council (KCC), that it might make her less able. But I can see that what she is doing here is helping her. She is socialising. She comes home with a big smile on her face."



"I'm constantly smiling all the time. I feel really like this is where I belong. I've been included."

"She's definitely come out of her shell a bit and it has helped with her anxiety as she was definitely anxious. She doesn't seem as bad, and we've noticed that in the short space of time she has been at Spadework."

Meg's first few weeks were spent doing gardening for the first time. "She came home with red cheeks," her mum said. "She hasn't been here that long, but we've noticed she's more confident, much happier and seems to have more to say about things."

Meg said: "I really love it here. I feel like I can breathe. I feel like a different person."

How does that feel? "It feels really happy. I'm constantly smiling all the time. I feel really like this is where I belong. I've been included."

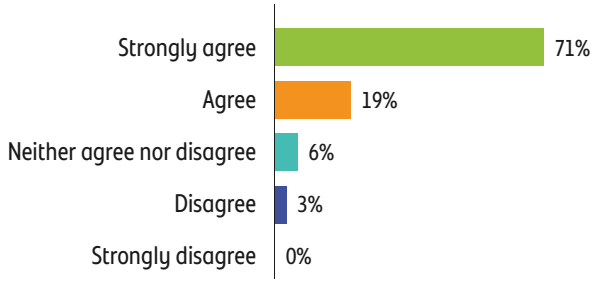
Happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives

Since our 2021 Impact Report we have introduced more activities for the trainees. While some of our trainees can be reluctant to try them, our staff discuss their choices and make recommendations. When they experience a new activity, our trainees often tell us they are proud of what they have achieved.

"Spadework is my safe place, where there's no pressure. The work here is always fun."

90%

of parents and carers think trainees have developed new skills/learned new things since coming to Spadework



98%

of trainees say they can do activities they enjoy at Spadework

88%

of parents and carers think the trainees feel proud of themselves since coming to Spadework.

98%

of trainees say "I am happier since coming to Spadework"

100%

of trainees say they have learned new things

93%

of trainees say "I have made new friends"

98%

of trainees say "I feel proud of myself"

From a parent:

"Although we regularly cook dinners with Tony we have not done any baking with him for ages.

"We made some ginger biscuits and I was amazed at Tony's skill and confidence with the measuring, mixing and cutting the biscuits.

I asked him where he had learned how to do this. He told me that he does this sort of thing at Spadework in his cookery sessions.

"Please pass on my thanks to the team for all their hard work with building Tony's confidence and skills in the kitchen."

Jamie's story

Jamie started coming to Spadework in 2013. He is an only child and has complex needs. For most of his life he has needed support from carers as well as his parents. In addition to having limited communication, he has additional needs. For example, what he eats is of major concern as it can have a significant effect on his health.

Until recently Jamie came to Spadework with his own carer. But with the current pressure on finding suitable carers, his parents had to decide whether Jamie would not come to Spadework at all or come on his own.

"When he first came to Spadework Jamie was a quiet little chap," his mother said. "But faced with the decision about whether to let him come on his own we bit the bullet - and now we can't believe the change. He never used to talk much, but now he talks a lot. He will come home and tell us what he has been doing at Spadework. We used to know very little about what he did here."

Nevertheless, Jamie's parents said the Spadework staff had always kept them informed.

His mother said: "We feel he is safe here, because it is its own little environment. It's lovely."

Both parents talk enthusiastically about the community that exists at Spadework



"We feel he is safe here, because it is its own little environment. It's lovely."

among the trainees, staff and volunteers. "It's like a family," his father said. "It's like a village within a town." When Jamie's father collects Jamie from Spadework he often speaks to other trainees. "I know one of them has been here for 38 years and I often think about where he would have gone had Spadework not been here all that time."

Jamie's parents have a network of people who are either parents or carers of adults with special needs. His mother said: "When I tell them what Jamie has been doing at Spadework, they say they wish they had something similar near to them. We are lucky because we live so near to Spadework."



spadework
sowing the seeds of opportunity

Carer Services

100%

of carers of people living with dementia feel better prepared for the future as a result of coming to Spadework

Carers of people living with dementia

We offer services to carers of people living with dementia and to parents and carers of adults with learning and other disabilities.

We understand that carers of people living with dementia need to share their feelings, problems and concerns with others in the same situation. They will often have questions and need advice and information from our knowledgeable staff.

Our carers support groups give carers the chance to do this. We can look after carers and partners in the room next door while the meetings are on so that they can speak freely in the group.

In the last year we supported:

- 19 people in the over-65s carers group
- 7 in the bereavement group
- 8 in the young onset carers group

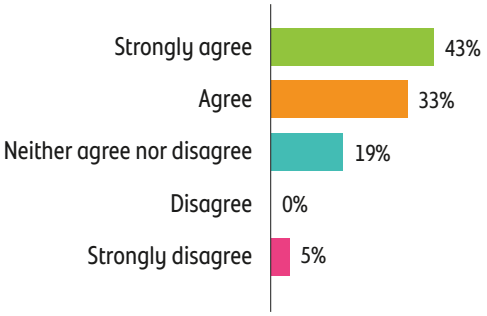
Carers of people with dementia can feel isolated. Many are caring 24/7 and often have no family nearby to help share the load. Our dementia services give people the chance to get out of the house and go somewhere they know they and their loved one will be welcomed and supported. They can meet other carers and share experiences and friendship.



"Always caring and helpful advice given in situations of coping with life with my husband's dementia"

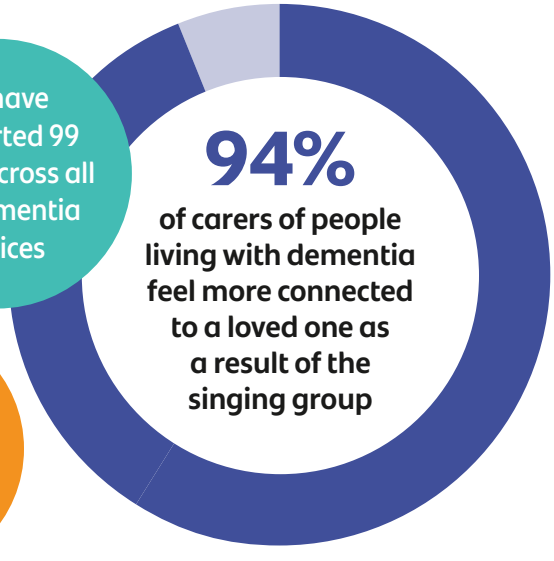
76%

of carers of people living with dementia feel less worried or anxious since coming to Spadework



We have supported 99 carers across all our dementia services

In 2024 we supported more carers than ever before



Carers of people with a learning disability

Our bi-monthly support groups for parents and carers of people with learning and other disabilities have become more popular.

Support groups

We hosted six support groups, which covered topics from hospital health passports and supported employment to advocacy. We also hosted a session with the Kent County Council (KCC) team for Social Care and Involvement.

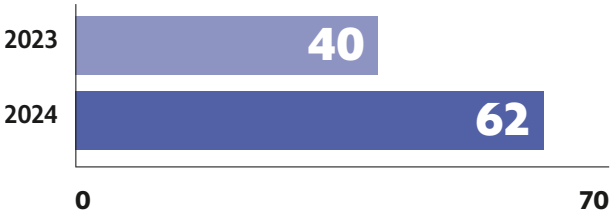
We have asked and know what topics our carers are interested in finding out more about. For example, in the future we will be hosting an event about funding for care services, specifically understanding direct payments and the decisions people may have to make in future to reflect adjusted levels of funding.

These groups are open to anyone who supports an adult with a learning disability, not just those who attend Spadework.

Social events

In 2024 we invited parents and carers of our trainees to two social events. These were hosted at the same time as separate events for our trainees. This meant that the trainees were able to enjoy their own events while many of the carers who had transported them could enjoy some time socialising and talking to members of the Spadework staff and other carers.

Number of carers supported



Attendee at carers group and regular Spadework visitor

"We attended a group at Spadework and were signposted to an organisation called Involve Kent. As a result, I contacted Involve and was offered a comprehensive assessment. This has resulted in my social worker proposing an increase in the support package we receive to get help and respite care with our son. Involve were also able to signpost us to other benefits and help we are eligible for and didn't know about, so it has been extremely useful.

"We have found the Spadework carer support groups to be a very useful source of information and a forum to share ideas with other parents and carers in a safe and supportive environment.

"We are long-term supporters of Spadework generally and feel it offers a wonderful opportunity for disabled people to learn new skills amongst friends. On a personal level, having a SEN (special educational needs) child, Spadework offers us somewhere to visit (the cafe, shop, events) where we feel he won't be judged on his behaviour. That is hugely comforting as a parent."



Carers information events

We host regular carer information events to bring local organisations together. Bringing all local support services together under one roof means people can get lots of information and have all their questions answered in one go, rather than having to contact each service provider individually.

"Thank you for inviting me to attend the carers event. I thought the event was a great success. Personally I spoke to many people about our transport and digital skills services, so would be very happy to attend any similar events. It was great to get first-hand feedback from carers about their needs and be able to take the information away and look at where we might be able to support in the future."

Amanda Sheer, Head of Services, Compaid

Carer of an adult with a learning disability:

"We met the team from the law firm Brachers at an Information event and they have been very helpful. They helped us set up a trust fund for our sons. We had thought about doing it and had met someone at the annual conference we attend about the syndrome our sons have, but as they were not local, we had not followed this up.

"We do go to other talks and events, but when you've got a lot going on, it's difficult to look for information. To come along and have someone talking about it gives you information you can do something with or put it on the back burner."



100%

of carers of people living with dementia feel better prepared for the future

100%

of carers of people living with dementia have a better understanding about the support available from other services

100%

of carers of people living with dementia have a better understanding about rights and entitlements

"I think it has opened our eyes to what great support is available for dementia clients and the benefits of being a part of the Spadework family."

Carer of person living with dementia

spadework
wellbeing services



spadework
sowing the seeds of opportunity

Wellbeing Services

92%

of people wanting to improve their wellbeing report an increase in overall life satisfaction

Our wellbeing services

Most of our activity groups are weekly. They last for a couple of hours and include a hot drink and a slice of cake. People can join these groups independently or are referred through social prescribers and organisations that promote wellbeing like Involve and The Shaw Trust. There has been increased demand for our services in 2024.

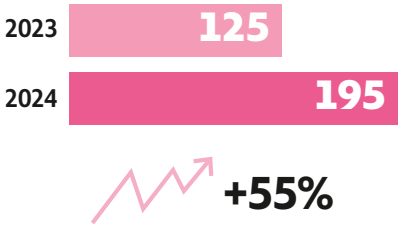
80 unique individuals attended Spadework, with eight attending more than one service.

Eighteen people also committed to attend but were unable to take up their places due to a deterioration in their mental health.

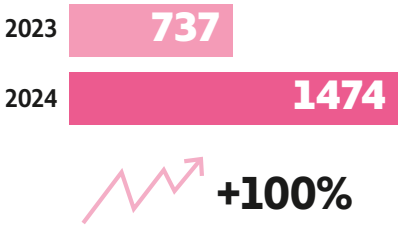
Our activities are inclusive although we recognise that men can be a more difficult group to engage with. 75% of Woodwork for Wellbeing participants were men as were 50% of our Gardening for Wellbeing participants.

Successful outputs

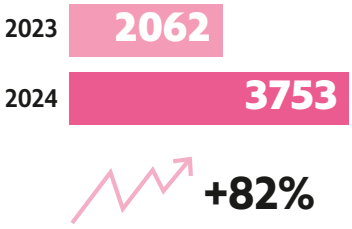
Total number of sessions



Number of attendances



Number of hours attended



The scope of our services

Service	Number of sessions	Number of attendances	Number of hours attended
Gardening for Wellbeing	41	150	450
Woodwork for Wellbeing	44	655	1965
Sewing/Craft Group	48	258	516
Walking Group	50	339	678
Book Group	12	72	144
Total	195	1474	3753

Louise's story

Louise has been attending Spadework's Woodwork for Wellbeing groups for six months. She was referred to Spadework by her GP. A single parent, she says she was struggling with managing a house, her daughter and a demanding job. She was looking for something artistic or creative to give her some time for herself.

While reasonably practical and handy about the house, Louise had never done any woodwork before. She enjoyed being presented with some pallets and a pallet breaker and got on with a project to build a wendy house for her daughter. The team at Spadework have helped her with some of the design and will be eventually using one of the trucks to take the wendy house home.

Louise lives about 15 miles from Spadework and originally attended the Saturday sessions, while her daughter was attending a club. However, that proved tricky to organise, so she was delighted to find out about the Thursday Woodwork for Wellbeing sessions.

"There is nothing like this nearer to me," she said. "I was offered it a couple of years ago when my daughter was three years old, but I couldn't come because I didn't have the childcare for her.

"It's a break from all the stresses of life. You get to concentrate on a project, and I have met a few people. Everyone's quite



relaxed and chilled and there's no one chivvying you along,"

Louise has no other time for herself apart from these groups. She has decided to set up her own business and the time she has at Spadework has been helpful for that decision.

"This gave me the headspace to think about it all," she said. "While you are working and nattering there's thinking time as well. It has been my escape, an opportunity to step away from it all, have a break. It makes a big difference and it has helped to bring down the stress levels."

Louise did not know about Spadework before she was introduced to it, but she often recommends the Garden Centre and Café to people she knows.

"It has been a great service and invaluable to me and it's a nice place to come to," she said. "I have the mundanity of life and this. That's why it's so valuable."

The outcome of our wellbeing services

"I now feel more empowered/capable to develop my hobbies and try new things. I have learned several new skills. I really appreciate the opportunity to take part."

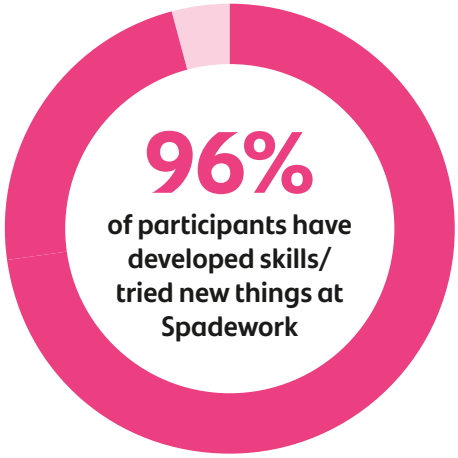
97% of participants have made new friends

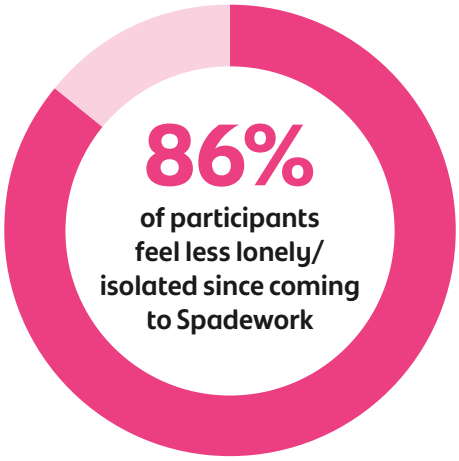


100% of participants feel satisfied with the service

100% of participants feel respected and listened to







"It is lovely to spend time with people who share an interest in reading and who are also generous and supportive in discussions of books, and life generally. I look forward very much to each meeting."

spadework
wellbeing services

What our service users say about our services

"I feel understood. It is the highlight of my week. It has given me new skills and the confidence to fix things at home for myself."

"Seeing the after project was great. It gives you a great sense of achievement."



"My wife says I'm happier when I come back from Spadework."

"Spadework has enabled me to learn a range of new skills. The service has provided structure to my week, which has given me a sense of purpose as well as providing support and is helping with interacting socially."

"The kindness of the organisers especially around my ill health has been reassuring."

"Life is difficult these days with my husband's illness and being unable to do what I used to be able to do. Spadework makes me take the car out every week rather than relying on my husband. It's so easy to stop doing things."

"I feel I have somewhere to come to escape my anxieties. I feel listened to and included."



"It has given me a sense of purpose and something to look forward to at the weekends"

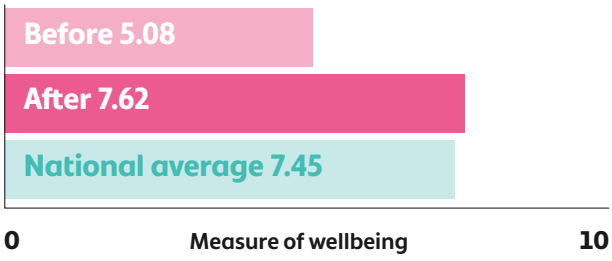
"I feel relaxed and calm during and after the wellbeing walk."

Specific wellbeing services

Our wellbeing services (including our walking, book, sewing and woodwork groups) show a good increase in wellbeing, using all four ONS* measures of wellbeing. Data is based on 41 participants (out of 80 who attended wellbeing groups in 2024) as below:

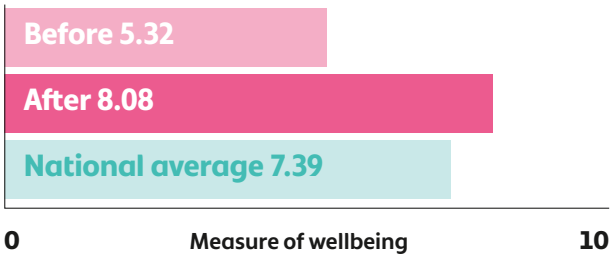
- **Life satisfaction increased** from an average of 5.08 (out of 10) before attending a group compared to 7.62 after, with 91% reporting an increase in life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction



- **Happiness yesterday increased** from an average of 5.32 (out of 10) before attending the group compared to 8.08 after, with 89% reporting an increase in happiness.

Happiness yesterday



*Footnote: The ONS measures of wellbeing comprise four 0-10 scales that measure life satisfaction, happiness yesterday, doing things in life that are worthwhile (recorded above as purpose) and feeling anxious yesterday. Respondents were invited to complete these scales before and after attending the respective wellbeing groups.

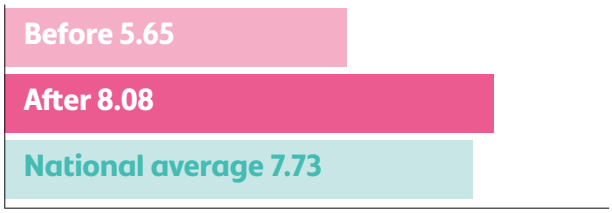






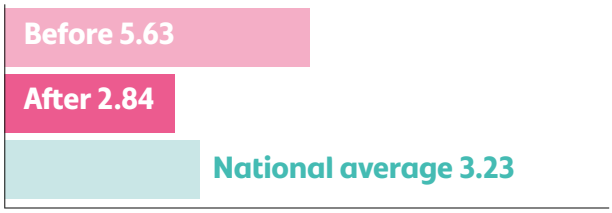
- **Purpose** (doing things in life that are worthwhile) **increased** from an average of 5.65 before attending compared to 8.08 after, with 92% reporting an increase in doing things in life that are worthwhile.

Doing things in life that are worthwhile



- **Feeling anxious reduced** from 5.03 before attending compared to 2.84 after, with 76% of participants reporting a reduction in feeling anxious yesterday.

Reduction in feeling anxious



Against these four measures, the scores for Spadework are below the national average at the start of attendance and above the national average after attendance. (ONS March 2023)

When looking at the breakdown by activity, we see that people who participate in our walking group have a higher increase in life satisfaction and purpose than other groups. As this is based on just seven respondents, we will continue to monitor which groups make a more significant difference as we gather more data.







Understanding technology

Throughout 2024, we have listened to people who come to Spadework and tried to provide activities that can contribute to improved wellbeing.

One of the needs we identified was the increasing number of people who were unable to engage with technology, from being unable to use a mobile phone to navigating websites.

We introduced a service we called Tech Busters. It enables people to talk to someone about the problems they are experiencing with technology.



As with all of our wellbeing groups, there is no fixed charge to attend and we rely on donations to run these services.

Jane's story

Blue Badges help people with disabilities or health conditions to park closer to their destination. Jane, whose husband attends Spadework's dementia services, needed to apply for a Blue Badge.

She found the government website difficult to use and had reached out to various organisations for the elderly to see if they could help her with her application. Most said they did not have the resources to assist her.

So Jane came to Spadework, where a staff member sat with her and guided her through the Blue Badge application process. Eventually she was able to make the application.



"I wouldn't have managed without Spadework," said Jane, who was delighted when the Blue Badge was delivered soon after the online application had been submitted. "I'd recommend it to anybody," she said of Spadework's Tech Busters service.

Our Volunteers and Staff

Volunteers

Providing 4,908 hours of volunteering

43 Volunteers

- 16 volunteering with our trainees
- 1 volunteering in our office
- 13 volunteering in the CIC
- 10 volunteering with our dementia services
- 3 volunteering with our wellbeing services

Estimated annual value of volunteering £65,080



Corporate volunteers

Providing 826 hours of corporate volunteering

216 people from local businesses







Promoting local skills and employment

Providing 1,421 hours of employment a week

73 people from Kent are employed at Spadework

(31 Full time equivalent)







Achievements against objectives

How we performed against our 2024 objectives

2024 objectives	2024 achievements
Dementia services ● Provide an additional music and movement session and singing group, so there are two of each a month.	**Dementia services** ● Music and singing groups provided ● We also started a new peer support group for people with young-onset dementia (under 65 years old)
Wellbeing services ● Evolve the spaces where the groups are held for continuity of practice, establishing permanent bases, with appropriate equipment.	**Wellbeing services** ● With help from corporate volunteers, we upgraded an external wooden structure to create a space for the additional Thursday woodworkers and for gardening groups. ● Trainees helped to create an annex to the main woodwork space, which is now used on Saturdays, along with the Brown Room. ● Received funding for the new woodwork room and got a useful start-up kit, a mitre saw and replaced the old mitre saw in the main woodwork room.
Bereavement ● Launch bereavement service to support people struggling with bereavement, grief or loss.	**Bereavement** ● Late in 2024 we held our first bereavement group. Monthly groups are scheduled throughout 2025.
Serving the community ● Explore the possibility of extending our services so we become a central part of the community.	**Serving the community** ● Analysis and research have been undertaken into the need for and feasibility of extending our services. Given the increased demand we have seen in 2024, a formal planning proposal to create the space required to deliver those services will be submitted in 2025.

Awards 2024





In 2023 we were proud to be named **Kent Charity of the Year.**

In 2024 we were delighted to be recognised for the following:

Third Sector Awards (National Awards)

Charity of the Year - Highly Commended
Chief Executive of the Year- Highly Commended (Kris Healey)

Charity Times Awards (National Awards)

Sustainable Charity of the Year (finalist)
Chief Executive of the Year finalist (Kris Healey)

National Care Awards

Ancillary Worker of the Year - Highly Commended (Ashleigh Smith)

Wilder Kent Awards - Gold

Taste of Kent Awards

Café/ Coffee Shop/Tearoom of the Year - Silver
Community of the Year - Bronze



Thank you





The dedication of our trustees, staff and volunteers has got us through a challenging year, when simply delivering the service has not been easy. To have these outcomes is testament to their unwavering commitment to providing high-quality person-centred care. To everybody who visits our Café, Farm Shop or Garden Centre, you bring life to the site and contribute to the wonderful community that exists at Spadework. Every item you purchase helps support our charity.

We are grateful to the following organisations for their support:
The Cobtree Charity Trust, Nationwide Community Fund, Cala Homes Community Pledge, Tesco Stronger Starts, Kent Community Foundation working with The High Hilden Fund, Green Family Fund and the Gatwick Foundation, The National Lottery Community Fund, The Foyle Foundation, The Hollands Warren Fund, The Age UK Dementia & Me Innovation Fund.

Our lead corporate partner Fernham Homes have been supporting us for two years. In 2024 their support enabled us to celebrate our 40th anniversary as a community. Thank you to Sean Ellis and the entire team at Fernham Homes for your amazing support from mending drains to hosting wonderful fundraising events.

Fairdeal Windows have supported us to provide Christmas lunches for our trainees and with holding our Easter Egg Hunt.

Thank you to New Wave Electrical, A & N Plumbing, Arkas and Kent Cabin Craft Company for your on-going support, for being there when we need you.

We are grateful to all the local businesses that support us, particularly through October and our PYO Pumpkin event: Amey, Banijay Entertainment, Cala Homes, Commercial Services Group, Cantium, Fidelity, Howdens



None of these outcomes would have been possible without the help and support of many individuals and organisations

Insurance, Logistics UK, MHA, Marsh, MidKent College, Rolex, Seasalt Sevenoaks, SUEZ, Tyl by NatWest, Unigloves, Westfalia. And all the businesses that purchase hampers from us at Christmas, creating meaningful opportunities for our trainees.

Our thanks also to the many individuals, community organisations, schools and special interest groups that invite us to give talks, visit us and show us how much they care about what we do and offer their support.

Thanks also to Offham Parish Council, the Offham Village Hall Committee, the Offham Society and to everyone from Offham Village. Our patrons George Harvey and Stephen Betts have been very active helping us in 2024. Without Stephen's tractor our PYO pumpkin event could have been in jeopardy!

We are fortunate to have the support of a wonderful family at Spadework.

Without your support we would not be able to achieve our mission of enabling people to be more independent, less isolated and live happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives.

Thank you.

Celebrating 40 years of Spadework































spadework
sowing the seeds of opportunity

@spadework.offham spadework.offham @spadeworkoffham

Spadework, Teston Road, Offham, Kent, ME19 5NA • Tel. 01732 870002
Spadework.org.uk • info@spadework.org.uk

Spadework Ltd. • A company limited by guarantee • Registered Charity No. 291198 • Registered Company No. 01820460
Spadework Social Enterprises CIC • A Community Interest Company • Registered Company No. 13099464