



PROPOSAL FOR ASSET DISPOSAL

Business Case and Community Value Assessment

Prepared for: Kent County Council

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Executive Summary

Overview

Pie Factory Music (PFM) is a proven, award-winning youth service provider that has operated in Thanet for 24 years, and from Ramsgate Youth Centre, Thanet's last dedicated youth centre, for 13 years. As the district's largest employer of youth workers, PFM supported 890 children and young people in 2024/25, providing essential creative, pastoral, and life skills programmes, including music projects, counselling, food bank support, and sessions for refugees and asylum seekers.

Context and Limitations

This business case and supporting study were developed under a very compressed timeline. Work commenced with an eight-week lead time, whereas projects of this scope, requiring robust evidence of community and social value, would typically necessitate at least six months. Access to essential data, including national and local datasets, was constrained; this required Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to Kent County Council (KCC), for example, regarding the Family Hubs Compass Programme, which could not be fulfilled within the available time window. These constraints limit the depth of evidence possible, notwithstanding the urgency and rigour underpinning the study's findings.

Value of Ramsgate Youth Centre, Local Policy Constraints, and Alternative Disposal Considerations

- An independent valuation by Bradstowe Chartered Surveyors estimates the sustainable annual market rental value for the Ramsgate Youth Centre property and the MUGA at £17,990.
- The unencumbered freehold market value of the youth centre is assessed at £200,000, with the annexe valued at £68,900 (at £36.89 per ft²), giving a total estimated site value of £268,900.
- The site is protected under Thanet District Council's Local Plan (Policy CM02), which prioritises the retention of community facilities and effectively precludes redevelopment for other uses. This protection significantly limits the site's commercial prospects and its value in a commercial sale.
- PFM has also checked the designation status of the land; currently, it is not specifically designated for other purposes.
- Selling the property for non-community uses is not only unlikely due to planning restrictions but would also be detrimental: the closure of the centre would result in higher long-term social and financial costs, as quantified in the accompanying report.
- While PFM remains open to purchasing the property, this would require KCC's engagement, sufficient time for due diligence, and agreement on terms to allow for necessary fundraising and grant applications.

Statutory and Social Value

- PFM directly enables KCC to meet its statutory duty under Section 507B of the Education Act: delivering accessible leisure, support, and development for local young people.
- PFM's work generates substantial cost savings and social value. In 2024/25 alone, £580,660 was saved for statutory and non-statutory services, including youth mental

health, justice, social care, and NEET prevention. For every £1 spent, PFM delivers £1.54 in social and public sector savings.

- The return on expenditure/investment (ROI) of Pie Factory Music for the taxpayer during 2024/25 is estimated to be at least £1.21 million per year, including around £295,000 in direct wages for local people. Based on provisional budget figures, this is likely to increase to £1.745 million in 2025/26.
- Over its lifetime, PFM has brought in £6.5 million in investment through contracts, grants, and donations, underpinning core services from its purpose-built Ramsgate base.

Irreplaceable Provision

- There is no alternative like-for-like facility in Thanet: The Ramsgate Youth Centre is uniquely equipped, with a music suite, games area, garden, kitchen, flexible rooms, and offices, enabling a broad range of critical and creative youth programmes.
- PFM is the last remaining open-access youth centre after recent service cuts and the transformation of Margate's Quarterdeck Youth Hub into a Family Hub. Its closure would leave young people without a dedicated, safe space during most of their waking hours.
- The charity also has firm community support: Nearly £20,000 has been raised locally in under a year, which is remarkable given Thanet's high deprivation.

Wider Community Impact

- Beyond youth services, the centre hosts external service providers, acts as a polling station, repair café, SEND education site, wellbeing groups, and a low-cost recording studio, maximising use and benefit to the community.
- PFM is co-leading the future strategy to embed youth voice further and broaden access, evidenced by its upcoming Hear by Right 'Flagship Level' audit and National Youth Agency partnership.

Financially Responsible Proposal

- PFM proposes a long-term lease (minimum 12 years, ideally longer), securing investment for urgent refurbishment, energy-efficiency upgrades, and accessibility improvements, at no cost to KCC.
- Subletting the annexe to allied community organisations would generate rental income, further strengthen PFM and support local needs.
- This approach enables applications for substantial capital grants (National Lottery, Arts Council, government funds), all requiring minimum lease terms, not possible without secure tenure.

Strategic Opportunity

- With new government investment (£88m nationally) in youth services imminent, retaining Ramsgate Youth Centre maximises KCC's ability to attract further funds, improve facilities, and fulfil statutory duties.
- Retention aligns with local and national youth policy, community desires, and cost-effective public sector stewardship.

Conclusion

PFM's continued occupancy and stewardship of Ramsgate Youth Centre is the most economically, socially, and strategically sound option for KCC and Thanet's young people. A long-term lease secures delivery of high-impact programmes, robust financial savings, and growth opportunities, safeguarding the future for vulnerable children and maintaining a crucial community asset.

Key Recommendation

KCC should agree to PFM's proposed long-term lease arrangement, preserving the building for vital youth and community services, enabling immediate and future refurbishment, and maximising public, social, and economic outcomes for generations to come.



COMMUNITY VALUE ASSESSMENT

Prepared for: Kent County Council

Prepared by: Lizzie O'Halloran

Executive Summary

Pie Factory Music (PFM) is a vital lifeline for young people in Thanet, one of the most deprived areas in England. For over two decades, PFM has delivered targeted, creative, and inclusive youth services to children and young adults facing serious socioeconomic challenges. In 2024/25 alone, PFM supported 890 children and young people, delivering measurable impact and robust cost savings across Kent County Council's (KCC) core statutory service areas.

PFM's work is uniquely aligned with KCC's statutory obligations under Section 507B of the Education Act, delivering accessible leisure, support, and development activities to thousands of local children and young people each year.

In 2024/24 alone, PFM's interventions enabled KCC and local partners to avoid an estimated £580,660 in costs this year, broken down as follows:

- Statutory services: £366,353 avoided
- Non-statutory services: £214,307 avoided

Examples of Key Savings by Service Area:

- Youth Mental Health Services: Early intervention and counselling avoided £5,993 by preventing escalation to statutory mental health services.
- Youth Justice: Open-access youth programmes prevented anti-social behaviour and police action, saving £56,737.
- Social Care: PFM's food bank and family support prevented crisis referrals and child protection plans, generating £129,412 in savings.
- Education & Employability: Targeted music and creative skills development reduced NEET risk, translating into £166,320 in avoided costs.

These figures reflect a conservative, evidence-based approach, showing only a fraction of the actual long-term value PFM delivers by preventing crises, reducing reliance on overstretched statutory services, and helping young people achieve positive outcomes.

As KCC faces asset disposal decisions, PFM's quantifiable social and financial value vastly outweighs short-term commercial returns. Retaining the youth service building ensures KCC meets statutory duties, prevents rising public sector costs, and maintains an essential hub for Thanet's young people.

Practical Recommendations:

- Prioritise retention of the youth service building for ongoing delivery of PFM's proven, high-impact programmes.
- Formalise strategic partnerships and shared funding agreements to strengthen third-sector youth provision and maximise cost avoidance.
- Implement regular, joint monitoring of local needs, service outcomes, and youth voice to evidence impact and secure funding.

PFM is a cost-effective solution to entrenched deprivation; its continued presence safeguards futures, saves public money, and supports the county's most vulnerable children and young people.

1. Introduction

Pie Factory Music (PFM) is a well-established and responsive youth charity based in Thanet, East Kent, dedicated to empowering young people through creative expression, social inclusion, and targeted support. Since its founding in 2001, PFM has recorded over 60,000 attendances from children and young adults aged 8 to 19, with an extension of up to 25 years for individuals with additional needs, equating to an average of 2,500 attendances per year over the 24 years of its operations.

Thanet consistently ranks as the most deprived local authority in Kent and is 34th out of 317 local authorities in England for overall deprivation (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019). During 2023–24, 22.1% of children aged 0–15 in Thanet were living in absolute low-income households (i.e., approximately 1 in five children aged 0–15), including 22.8% of those aged 11–15 (i.e., nearly 1 in 4) (Kent Analytics, 2023). As of June 2025, 5.8% of local young people aged 16–17 were classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), with 60% of this group under the supervision of the Youth Offending Team and 28.4% identified as Children Looked After (Kent County Council, 2025a).

Deprivation sharply increases the risk of mental health problems; 58.9% of patients in contact with secondary mental health services in England were from the most deprived areas as of 2024 (Mind, 2024). In Kent, an estimated 100,463 children and young people (ages 5–17) are likely to have a mental disorder, with prevalence particularly high in districts like Thanet (Kent County Council, 2024). In line with national trends, referrals to children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) in Kent and Medway have continued to rise, creating additional strain on support systems in deprived communities (Children’s Commissioner’s Office, 2025). Thanet has also historically reported higher-than-average rates of suicide and self-harm compared to the national average, reflecting the significant and disproportionate mental health burden faced by its population (Kent County Council, 2025b).

Against this backdrop and in the light of current local government and public services finances, **the provision of comprehensive, accessible, effective and efficient youth services support provision is essential**. Such services are crucial for those facing complex challenges within a coastal region that experiences “persistent socio-economic and infrastructural deprivation” (Keating et al., 2024).

KCC is currently undergoing significant organisational change in response to ongoing financial pressures and a shift in how youth services are delivered across the county. Two key developments define the context for the decision to sell the current building: the Council’s broader property disposal policy and the recent decommissioning of commissioned youth services (Kent County Council, 2023).

The decision to dispose of a community asset, especially one previously used to deliver youth services, involves more than assessing open market value alone. According to its disposal policy (Kent County Council, 2022), KCC requires that a robust business case must support any case for community or social value. This includes:

- An estimate of the financial value of the outcomes of community return
- Clear supporting evidence of how these outcomes meet KCC’s statutory service requirements

So that these benefits can be objectively verified and directly compared with any alternative commercial bids, the Council will consider community benefit only where it is quantified and

aligned with its priorities, allowing for an informed decision alongside and potentially in place of the highest financial offer.

This report is intended to comprehensively assess PFM's service delivery, with a particular focus on monetising its contribution to KCC's savings and longer-term objectives in line with the Council's asset disposal policy. Alongside this financial assessment, the report identifies, evidences and quantifies (where possible) the wider socio-economic benefits and impacts of PFM's services for the local community. This enables direct comparison of the value generated by PFM, both financial and social, against potential alternative uses, ensuring that social value is robustly evidenced and aligned with KCC's statutory service requirements and priorities.

The report is broken into the following:

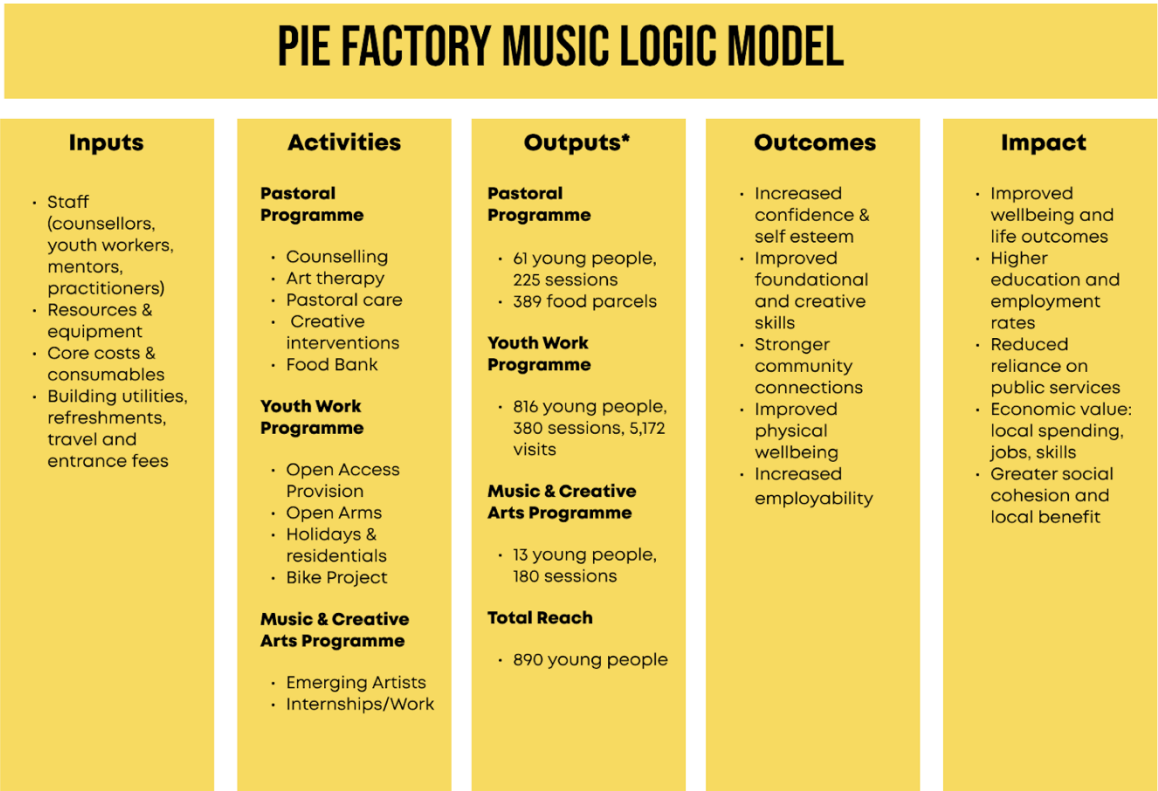
- Section 2: Provides a summary of PFM youth services, mapped to relevant KCC cost centres.
- Section 3: Outlines the key policy and regulatory frameworks shaping local youth service provision.
- Sections 4 & 5: Detail the methodology and present a robust assessment of PFM's activities, including estimated cost avoidance for KCC and local partners.
- Section 6: Amplifies the perspectives of young people, stakeholders, and community organisations.
- Section 7: Concludes with a critical summary and delivers practical recommendations.

2. Overview of PFM services

PFM delivers a range of services in support of young people, as shown in Figure 1. The young people who come to PFM include many facing such challenges, such as youth in foster or residential care, asylum seekers and refugees, young carers, neurodivergent individuals, young offenders or those at risk of offending, and those not in education, employment or training (NEET). PFM also supports young people who are home-educated and those from supportive families, many of whom are seeking connection whilst navigating growing mental health pressures, with one in five young people nationally now experiencing a mental health difficulty (NHS Digital, 2023).

PFM delivers a comprehensive programme that not only fosters creative and artistic expression and supports personal development but also provides essential early intervention for young people facing significant challenges. By stepping in where local statutory services are overstretched or unavailable, PFM fills crucial gaps in support. This timely help is vital in preventing the escalation of mental and emotional difficulties, such as self-harm and mental health crises (YoungMinds, 2022). Without such preventative services, these young people are more likely to require costly statutory interventions. Some are also at risk of contributing to broader societal problems, such as youth offending and antisocial behaviour, as well as youth unemployment (Cattan, Farquharson, & Warwick, 2025; Worcester County Council, 2024).

Figure 1: Pie Factory Music Logic Model



*Outputs for FY 2024/25

By providing early and targeted support to these diverse groups of young people, PFM's work directly contributes to key areas within KCC's remit. The preventative nature of its programmes reduces the demand on core cost centres such as Youth Mental Health Services, Youth Justice, Social Care, Education, and Employability. There is strong evidence

that youth provision delivers positive short-term outcomes, such as improved wellbeing, increased pro-social behaviour, and better educational attainment, and that these benefits are sustained over decades (SQW, 2024). As a result, PFM's approach not only alleviates immediate pressures on statutory services but also enhances long-term outcomes for local young people, further reinforcing its alignment with KCC's priorities and demonstrating tangible, lasting value across these vital service areas.

Figure 2: KCC Cost Centres and Provision of PFM Services



2.1. Youth Mental Health Services

In response to the growing mental health challenges faced by young people, PFM offers a range of services, including one-to-one counselling and pastoral care, as well as various creative interventions, enabling them to access support as they navigate significant personal and social challenges.

In 2024-2025, 61 young people engaged in over 225 sessions, including 31 who took part in counselling.

Notably, one third of all counselling referrals originated from Early Help and Prevention (see Appendix One), designating these cases as 'high risk'. Without timely support, these young people could escalate into more costly statutory interventions (YoungMinds, 2022).

Furthermore, providing accessible pathways to support is especially significant for young people who are unable or unwilling to engage due to structural barriers, stigma, or trust issues with statutory mental health services (Anderson, 2017; Duncan et al., 2020).

The emphasis on early, accessible interventions is vital given the ongoing shortfalls in statutory mental health provision. In 2023-24, only 31% of the 15,105 children and young people referred to Kent and Medway CAMHS began treatment, with many left waiting or having their cases closed, and median wait times in the region (43 days) exceeding the national average (35 days) (Children's Commissioner's Office, 2025).

In Thanet, the absence of Family Hubs provision, specifically the Compass Programme for 11 to 19-year-olds, further exacerbates the lack of local support for young people. By directly

addressing these gaps, PFM offers a crucial bridge for young people who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

Research suggests that Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) counselling services can achieve outcomes comparable to CAMHS and are often perceived as more accessible and trustworthy by underserved and marginalised youth (Duncan et al., 2020). In filling this critical gap, PFM not only supports vulnerable young people but also reduces pressure on overstretched statutory services, enabling Kent County Council and its local partners to avoid additional costs associated with crisis intervention and reactive care.

2.2. Youth Justice

Youth work provision also plays a critical role in not only improving positive outcomes for young people but also in decreasing their involvement in the youth justice system (National Youth Agency, 2023). PFM has continued to offer universally accessible open-access provision, despite KCC's recent decommissioning of locally funded youth services (Kent County Council, 2023).

The core programme provides three weekly sessions (delivered 49 out of 52 weeks of the year), which are led by youth workers and Creative Practitioners. Activities include studio sessions, formal workshops, as well as opportunities to play games, cook, socialise and work on self-directed projects.

PFM also provides other diversion activities, including the Bike project, previously funded by the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit. As part of a wider early intervention approach, the project provides constructive alternatives to criminal involvement. It supports the VRU's goal of reducing anti-social behaviour in the community.

In 2024-2025, 816 young people engaged in over 380 sessions involving a range of diversion activities at PFM.

These sessions directly contribute to the provision of sufficient youth services as required by Section 507B of the Education Act 1996, providing accessible options that strengthen protective factors for local youth. Research strongly supports this view: teenagers in areas affected by youth centre closures perform nearly 4% worse in national high-school exams and are 14% more likely to commit crimes (Cattan et al., 2025).

2.3. Social Care

PFM also operates a food bank which provides food parcels to its young people and their families as well as the broader community in Thanet. Rising food insecurity in areas of deprivation continues to put families under immense pressure, with the Trussell Trust (2025) reporting that nearly two-thirds of emergency food parcels are now distributed to households with children, a staggering increase that reflects growing need nationwide.

In Thanet, this crisis is intensifying: PFM responded by delivering 389 emergency food parcels in 2024/25, a 48% rise from the previous year alone. Demand peaked in May and August, and almost 7% of recipients disclosed having 'no fixed abode', underlining the concerning link between food poverty and housing instability in the local area.

Lack of adequate food is a recognised trigger for statutory child protection action, with insufficient nutrition routinely cited in child protection orders (Daniel et al., 2012). PFM's provision of food parcels acts as an essential preventative measure, helping to address food insecurity before situations escalate to the level where statutory intervention, such as child protection proceedings or social care involvement, becomes necessary.

2.4. Education and Employability

Local youth in Thanet continue to face pressing socioeconomic challenges, with the area holding the highest rates of youth unemployment and NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) status in the South East. As of May 2025, 11.4% of young people aged 18-24 in Thanet were unemployed, more than double the national average (Kent Analytics, 2025), and NEET rates among 16-17-year-olds remain disproportionately high at 5.8% (Kent County Council, 2025a). The consequences of youth disengagement are profound and long-lasting, with an estimated cost of between £84,000 to the public sector and £156,000 to the wider economy for each NEET over their lifetime.

While statutory services typically provide broad employability and training, PFM offers targeted training and development in creative and musical skills. Investing in creative skills development not only equips young people with technical capabilities for a career in the music, performing and visual arts industries, worth £11.2 billion to the economy (House of Lords, 2024), but also enhances wider employability through the development of transferable skills, including confidence, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving (Carey et al., 2024). Recent research highlights that young people who engage in the arts are more likely to aspire to higher education and sustainable employment. It also helps tackle inequality, as students from low-income backgrounds who participate in the arts are three times more likely to earn a degree and achieve outcomes on par with peers from higher-income families (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017).

During 2024/25, 13 young people participated in over 180 creative sessions at PFM, with six receiving intensive mentoring in the development of musical skills across 29 sessions. This hands-on, tailored approach has demonstrable impact, beyond employability statistics, by developing young people's personal, professional, and creative capacities.

3. Policy and Statutory Context

3.1 National Legislation

Section 507B of the Education Act (updated in September 2023) imposes a duty on KCC to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, “sufficient leisure-time activities and facilities for young people aged 13-19, and those up to 24 with disabilities or learning difficulties.” The statutory framework emphasises not just sufficiency, but also regular assessment of local needs, consultation with service users and partners, and a focus on inclusion, early intervention, and access for disadvantaged groups. KCC must document how its service decisions satisfy these criteria and, while not required to fund services directly, must remain proactive in supporting and coordinating third-sector provision.

At the time of writing, it is noted that KCC is yet to undertake their statutory youth assessment for its Family Hubs offering, and to our knowledge, is currently not offering services to young people. PFM has reached out to the local Family Hub for confirmation regarding their current provision of youth services.

3.2 Local Policy Requirements

Under KCC’s Freehold Disposals Policy, properties are retained primarily to deliver statutory functions or generate income. A building may be declared “surplus” if it is no longer required for these purposes. However, the policy recognises the importance of wider social and community outcomes and allows these to be considered, provided they do not conflict with KCC’s capital or service investment priorities. If PFM demonstrates that its ongoing operations deliver statutory or significant community benefit, such as youth provision covered by Section 507B, there are grounds for the building’s continued use. Social value impacts, particularly those aligning with key cost centres such as youth justice and mental health, should be part of the evaluation. Despite previous requests from PFM, an Equality Impact Assessment on the proposal to dispose of Ramsgate Youth Centre had, at the time of writing, not yet been undertaken. We understand now that this report will inform an EQIA, which should contribute to a final decision about the disposal of the building.

3.3 Alignment with Statutory Duties

PFM’s ongoing use of the premises substantiates KCC’s fulfilment of Section 507B obligations by maintaining locally accessible, inclusive, and high-quality youth activities, especially for vulnerable and underrepresented groups. This arrangement enables KCC to demonstrate it is supporting and facilitating sufficient third-sector provision in line with statutory requirements, without being solely responsible for direct delivery or funding. Leveraging PFM’s established role strengthens consultation outcomes, ensures continuity, and evidences a pragmatic, partnership-based approach to early intervention.

3.4 Local Asset and Disposition Policy

The intended sale of the youth service building must be carefully balanced against the risk of service disruption and statutory non-compliance. While financial considerations are important, the asset disposal policy explicitly acknowledges the value of community benefit and encourages avoidance of negative social impacts. Prioritising commercial sale over proposals that sustain youth service provision risks diminished capacity, loss of inclusion and accessibility, and potential gaps in sufficiency, contravening both policy principles and Section 507B duties. Local consultation and feedback indicate substantial community reliance on continued youth activities, underscoring the necessity for decisions to reflect not

Section 507B duties. Local consultation and feedback indicate substantial community reliance on continued youth activities, underscoring the necessity for decisions to reflect not only property management objectives but also statutory and social responsibilities. A transparent assessment of opportunity costs, service needs, and community outcomes is essential for demonstrating good governance and mitigating potential compliance challenges.

4. Community Value Assessment: Analytical Approach

4.1 Methodology Overview

Recognising that many of PFM's outcomes and impacts are long-term (typically emerging over three or more years), the approach to assessing the financial benefits of PFM has focused on quantifying the contribution of PFM to the reduction in reliance on public services. For this assessment, the study undertook a cost avoidance analysis to estimate the savings generated for the public sector as a result of PFM's activities. This approach directly supports KCC's cost savings and strategic objectives.

The methodology included the following steps:

- Review of KCC Cost Centres: Relevant KCC cost centres with potential for cost avoidance were identified (see Appendix Two).
- Mapping of PFM Service Delivery: PFM's services and outputs were mapped to the appropriate cost centres (see Appendix Three), with a specific focus on:
 - Youth Mental Health Services
 - Youth Justice
 - Social Care
 - Education and Employability
- Application of Financial Proxies: Established financial proxies were used to estimate the value generated by PFM's services. Conservative assumptions were made regarding attribution and additionality to ensure robustness (see Appendix Four).
- Estimation of Cost Avoidance: Based on the above steps, the costs avoided by statutory services as a result of PFM's interventions were estimated (see Appendix Five).

This approach ensures that all savings are robustly evidenced while recognising the long-term nature of PFM's impact.

See Appendix Six for an overview of data sources, proxy and benchmark data, and GDPR compliance.

5. Quantifying Value: PFM's Cost Avoidance for Statutory and Non-Statutory Services

5.1 Total Estimated Costs Avoided

Our analysis shows that PFM's work has helped KCC and its local partners avoid spending an estimated **£580,660 in 2024/25**. This total comprises of:

- Cost savings related to statutory services: £366,353
- Cost savings related to non-statutory services: £214,307

In terms of KCC's cost centres, this can be translated using the following examples:

Youth Mental Health Services

PFM's counselling services have led to significant savings for KCC within youth mental health services. Specifically:

- By providing early intervention and counselling to young people with mental health needs, PFM has helped prevent cases from escalating to statutory provision, such as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services).
- We estimate that in 2024/25, KCC and its local partners avoided spending £5,993 in this cost centre.
- This saving is based on PFM's internal referral data, which shows that one in three (33%) referrals to PFM's counselling service originate from Early Help and Prevention teams. These referrals are typically deemed 'high risk' and, without timely intervention, are more likely to require escalation to statutory mental health support such as CAMHS.

Concrete Example:

If PFM had not provided counselling, it is highly likely that 10 out of 31 young people (33%) would have needed support from CAMHS. By intervening early, PFM prevented this additional cost for KCC, resulting in a direct cost avoidance of £5,993 for that cost centre.

Youth Justice

PFM's open access provision has led to significant savings for KCC and its local partners within the Youth Justice cost centre, primarily by reducing antisocial behaviour and subsequent police involvement. Specifically:

- By delivering universal open access youth provision to local young people, PFM has helped prevent incidents of anti-social behaviour from escalating to levels that require police involvement.
- We estimate that in 2024/25, KCC and its local partners avoided spending £56,737 in this cost centre.
- This saving is grounded in well-established data showing that, in areas without youth centres, young people are 14% more likely to commit crimes that require police intervention (Cattan et al., 2024).

Concrete Example:

If PFM had not provided open access youth clubs, 14% more local young people would likely have committed offences that involved police action, resulting in higher costs for KCC. By actively engaging young people and offering a safe, supportive environment, PFM prevented these additional costs, resulting in a cost avoidance of £56,737 for the Youth Justice cost centre.

Social Care

PFM's food bank has generated significant savings for KCC and its local partners within the Social Care cost centre by reducing crisis interventions through Social Services.

- By providing food parcels to local families with children, PFM actively prevents situations of chronic food insecurity from escalating to the point where child protection plans might be needed, interventions that require Social Services and lead to higher costs for KCC.
- In 2024/25, we estimate that KCC and its partners avoided spending £129,412 in this cost centre.
- This estimation is based on reliable data showing that 63% of families receiving food parcels have children (Trussell Trust, 2024). Among these, we calculate that one in ten families could have been at risk of needing a child protection plan due to extreme food insecurity, had PFM's support not been available. This estimate takes into consideration other local food bank providers.

Concrete Example:

If PFM hadn't provided food parcels, approximately 10% of families with children facing food insecurity (one out of every ten families supported) might have required costly crisis interventions and child protection plans through Social Services. By addressing these needs early, PFM has directly helped KCC avoid £129,412 in costs for the Social Care cost centre.

Education and Employability

PFM's Emerging Artists programme has created significant savings for KCC and its local partners by reducing the risk of young people becoming NEET.

- By delivering accessible pathways to creative and musical skills development, PFM actively engages young people, supporting their progression into further education and sustained employment. This targeted intervention lowers the likelihood of NEET status, which is associated with high long-term costs for local authorities.
- In 2024/25, we estimate that KCC and its local partners avoided spending £166,320 in this cost centre.
- This saving is based on robust evidence regarding the cost of youth disengagement: in 2010, the calculated cost per NEET individual was £56,500 to the public sector and £104,300 to the wider economy. Adjusted for inflation (Bank of England calculator, 2024), these figures are approximately £84,000 (public sector) and £156,000 (wider economy) per individual.
- We have used the lower, public sector estimate to demonstrate direct savings and proposed that one in three individuals who engage with PFM would be at risk of NEET.

Concrete Example:

If PFM's Emerging Artists programme had not supported local youth, one in three participants may have disengaged from education or employment. By helping just two out of six young people avoid NEET status, PFM's intervention corresponds to a direct cost avoidance of about £166,320 for KCC and its local partners.

These figures are based on a cautious and careful approach, described below.

5.2 Overview of Calculation of Estimates

Using Realistic Unit Costs

To calculate these figures, typical annual costs incurred by local and national public services to support each child or family were used. For example:

- The average annual cost of supporting a child's mental health (via NHS Kent & Medway ICB)
- The cost to put a child on a protection plan
- The cost when the police are called about anti-social behaviour
- The public sector cost when a young person is not engaged with education or employment (NEET)

(See Appendix Six for details and sources for these costs).

5.3 Attribution and Additionality

To ensure a fair and realistic estimate, only a proportion of the potential avoided costs was attributed to PFM's interventions in each area, rather than the full amount (recognising that other factors also play a role in achieving these cost savings). This approach recognises that positive outcomes may be influenced by external factors, or by young people's actions, and cannot be entirely credited to a single intervention. For example, across interventions, only one-third (or less) of the possible avoided costs have been included, reflecting the understanding that not all outcomes are solely attributable to PFM's work.

Therefore, rather than stating that PFM is directly and solely responsible for all the £3.7 million in (gross) avoided costs delivered through activities PFM has been involved with, this approach arrives at £580,660 in estimated avoided costs directly attributed to PFM.

5.4 Realistic Examples/Scenarios

Scenario 1: Avoiding escalation to intensive mental health services

- If a young person at serious risk received timely counselling from PFM and no longer needed to be referred to specialist NHS services, this usually saves a significant amount.
- However, we haven't counted all these cases. Instead, we assumed that only one in three young people who got PFM counselling would have otherwise needed NHS support.

Scenario 2: Avoiding social care involvement through family support

- If a family received a food parcel from PFM and this helped prevent a referral to Social Services, this would avoid the high cost of a child protection plan.
- But not every family in need would have needed that level of social care. We therefore assumed that only one in ten families supported in this way would have escalated to that point.

This methodology ensures that the estimated “costs avoided” are realistic, conservative, and not overstated.

5.5 Conservative Approach

Throughout this analysis, a cautious approach has been adopted by:

- Using the lower end of available cost estimates
- Attributing savings to PFM’s interventions only where there is reasonable evidence of impact
- Omitting any areas where the effect is uncertain or indirect

These estimates should therefore be regarded as careful, lower-bound figures for the savings generated by PFM’s work for KCC and its partners. The true value may likely be higher.

A detailed breakdown of the unit costs, underlying assumptions, and data sources is provided in the appendix for complete transparency.

5.6 Limitations

While every effort has been made to ensure this cost avoidance analysis is robust, several limitations should be acknowledged:

- **Data Availability and Granularity:** The analysis mainly relied on existing public data, summary reports, and previously conducted consultations. More detailed or recent service use and financial information (such as specific NHS costings or statutory service budgets) was unavailable or not released in time. As a result, some estimates were based on national or regional benchmarks rather than local, real-time figures.
- **Limited Primary Stakeholder Consultation:** The short project timeline and resource constraints prevented us from conducting fresh consultations with a wide range of stakeholders or young people. Instead, we drew insights primarily from previous qualitative work and existing consultation reports. This may limit the depth of locally specific perspectives included in the analysis.
- **Attribution and Additionality Uncertainties:** While conservative proportions were applied to reflect only the value reasonably attributable to PFM’s interventions, it remains challenging to determine the exact impact attributable to PFM as opposed to other providers or external factors. Some beneficial outcomes may have occurred anyway, or as a result of multiple services working together.
- **Assumption Reliance:** The cost avoidance estimates depend on several key assumptions, such as the percentage of individuals expected to require higher-cost interventions. These assumptions, though grounded in published research and consultation, involve a degree of judgement and generalisation.
- **Long-Term Impact Recognition:** Many of PFM’s intended benefits, particularly in preventing or reducing future service use, will only become fully apparent over a

number of years. The current analysis provides a snapshot for the year 2024/25 and may understate longer-term financial savings or broader social value.

In summary, **while the findings are supported by the best available data and a careful, evidence-based methodology, they should be interpreted as indicative, lower-bound estimates.** Further evaluation, with more comprehensive data collection and primary consultation, would enhance future analyses of PFM's cost avoidance impact.

6. Young People, Stakeholders and Community Voice

The following quotes from young people, parents, staff, and partner organisations illustrate the wide-ranging impact of our programmes, highlighting how they foster personal growth, community connection, and positive change in the lives of those we support.

Counsellor: *"The programme has made counselling much more accessible for young people who may otherwise struggle to afford private therapy... The opportunity to have counselling in a space that is not a school setting is also useful in that it can help reduce the shame that may come with the stigma among peers if a young person is seen or known to be seeing the school counsellor."*

Referral partner: *"Great news: G has got himself a JOB! Considering how close he came to prison, this is wonderful. His link with Pie Factory has opened up his creative side, and in the medium term, he might like to go into social care where he can use that as a way to connect with young people. Thanks for all the support you gave him."*

Open Arms participant (our young refugees programme): *"You can meet new people, new cultures, different languages, you can hear, you can learn something...It is a good and enjoyable place. They are lovely people, yeah. If they were not lovely people, people wouldn't be here. They're respectful, they're kind."*

ACT participant (young volunteers programme): *"ACT has taught me the value of time. Even the smallest bit of my time can really help other people...Pie means being myself and having my voice heard. I know that everything I say will be put into the project. It's fun, light-hearted and a nice community"*

Parent: *"[Pie] has played a vital role in the life of all four of my children - and therefore our family - encouraging skills in music, sociability, communication, confidence and community action. Learning to fundraise, volunteering to help others, sharing knowledge and skills is a win-win situation, raising self-esteem and commitment to our community."*

Neighbouring community organisation: *"We know guided and supported young people have better adult outcomes, so having a presence is vital, preferably as an expanded and growing centre. Continue doing what you do and having those that are thriving performing and celebrating their achievements and progression."*

Cultural organisation: *"When I work with Pie, I genuinely feel as though I am getting up in the morning to make a difference in the world. No matter how small or insignificant that difference may seem. Zoë and her team are so organised and optimistic, and it makes me feel more than ever like we can overcome challenges that young people face in this area when it comes to engagement with music-related learning and first-hand experience."*

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

PFM has established itself as a vital contributor to the well-being and development of young people in Thanet, a region facing severe social, economic, and mental health challenges. By delivering creative, supportive, and preventative youth services, PFM not only meets a substantial local need but also generates demonstrable savings and cost avoidance for KCC and its local partners across mental health, youth justice, social care, and employability cost centres. The quantifiable socio-economic impacts of PFM's work directly support KCC's statutory obligations and broader community objectives, substantially outweighing the benefits of asset disposal for solely commercial purposes. The evidence underscores that PFM's continued operation is not only beneficial but essential for maintaining service sufficiency, reducing public sector spending, and fostering positive, long-term outcomes for some of the county's most vulnerable young people.

Practical Recommendations

1. Retain and Secure the Premises for Ongoing Youth Service Delivery

KCC should prioritise social value in its decision-making around the building's disposal, recognising PFM's key role in delivering statutory youth provision and preventative services. Retaining the premises for PFM ensures cost-effective delivery of essential outcomes, mitigates the risk of non-compliance with Section 507B, and preserves a trusted, inclusive hub for Thanet's young people.

2. Strengthen Strategic Partnerships and Shared Funding

KCC should formalise partnerships with PFM and related third-sector providers through service agreements that recognise cost avoidance and social impact. Co-commissioning or shared funding models will enable KCC to better meet its statutory duties, support innovation, and maximise return on investment while reducing duplication and gaps in service.

3. Regularly Review Needs, Impact, and Community Voice

KCC and PFM should jointly implement ongoing needs assessments, impact measurement, and consultation with young people and stakeholders. This will ensure services remain responsive to evolving local challenges, evidence compliance, and help secure future funding by showcasing robust, community-driven results.

Appendices

Appendix One: Souncheck Counselling Referral Sources and Reported Issues, 2024/25

Counselling Referral Sources	Reported Issues
School - 13 Early Help - 10 Parent(s) - 5 Involve Kent - 1 Thanet Health CIC - 1 Self Referral - 1	<p>The most commonly reported issues were relationships with parents (7), managing emotions (6), and friendships (6), indicating key areas of concern.</p> <p>Other notable issues included domestic abuse (4), anxiety (4), and low mood (3), while bereavement, school, and transitioning were less frequently mentioned (1 each).</p>

Appendix Two: Mapping of PFM's Services against KCC's Statutory Services

KCC Cost Centre	PFM Service/Program me	KCC Statutory Service	Source
Young People's Mental Health	Soundcheck Counselling	KCC Therapeutic Support Service (was Kent Children and Young People's Counselling Service)	The current model offers up to six sessions per young person. The new model aims to move away from one-to-one counselling and offer group counselling to reduce wait times. However, individual sessions will still be available for young people who won't benefit from a group setting. This change will also separate the Therapeutic Support Service from the Kent School Public Health Service so that it will be standalone - https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s129848/25+00011+Decision+Report.pdf .
	Art Therapy	Non-statutory	The new model aims to provide "creative methods" such as drama and sport. However, KCC currently doesn't provide creative interventions such as art therapy - https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/cyp-wellbeing-support
	One-to-one pastoral care	Non-statutory	KCC's statutory provision is focused on professional counselling, rather than broader forms of mentoring or pastoral support.
	Creative interventions	Non-statutory	These are occasionally commissioned (sometimes through schools or partnerships), but there is no standing statutory service equivalent to routine creative group interventions provided by external community organisations.
	Open Arms	Not part of statutory or standard offer	KCC statutory services offer basic support (accommodation, legal, educational access), but not open-access youth hubs or non-statutory life-skills enrichment programmes routinely.
Social Care	Food Bank	Non-statutory	Public sector intervention focuses on crisis support via supermarket vouchers or short-term crisis grants. At the same time, long-term provision of food parcels, including toiletries and menstrual products, is primarily delivered by voluntary and community sector food banks.

Youth Justice	Open Access Provision	Early Help and Preventative Services (not universal)	Open Access Provision has been dramatically reduced due to funding cuts. Early Help and Preventative Services offer targeted support for at-risk young people and those referred by schools/police, etc - https://www.kelsi.org.uk/special-education-needs/integrated-childrens-services/early-help-and-preventative-services
	Bike Project	Non-statutory	Kent & Medway VRU, coordinated by KCC and partners, has funded community-led diversion projects like bike workshops in some districts as pilot or short-term schemes. Statutory youth justice services focus on out-of-court disposals, early help, and family-based interventions rather than bespoke creative or skills-based diversion projects - https://www.kelsi.org.uk/support-for-children-and-young-people/youth-justice-service
	Holiday activities and residential trips	Non-statutory	Holiday activities are targeted to FSM-eligible children. Residential trips are not a routine, statutory KCC countywide offer. Organisation and provision are devolved to schools.
Education and Employability	Internships/Work	Kent Training and Apprenticeships, Community and Learning Skills, The Education People	KCC statutory employability and training offers are broad, inclusive, and supportive, but not specific to musical skills or creative industries.
Education and Employability	Emerging Artists	As above	KCC statutory employability and training offers are broad, inclusive, and supportive, but not specific to musical skills or creative industries.

Appendix Three: Overview of PFM's Delivery of Services and Outputs during 2024/25

PFM Service/Programme	Statutory Service?	Unique Participants (A)	Outputs Delivered	Unique Visits
Soundcheck Counselling	Statutory	31	93 sessions	-
Art Therapy ¹	Non-statutory	-	-	-
One-to-one pastoral care	Non-statutory	18	60 sessions	-
Creative Interventions	Non-statutory	12	72 sessions	-
Food Bank	Non-statutory	-	389 food parcels	-
Open Access Provision	Non-statutory ²	498	184 sessions	4,720
Open Arms	Non-statutory ³	248	89 sessions	-
Holidays and residential trips	Non-statutory	12	61 sessions	130
Bike Project	Non-statutory	58	46 sessions	322
Internships/Work	Statutory	7	151 sessions	-
Emerging Artists	Statutory	6	29 sessions	118
Total		890		5,172

¹ Due to funding constraints, this programme was paused during 2024/25

² KCC offers targeted support, rather than open-access support as it stopped funding youth work.

³ The type of support offered does not form part of KCC's statutory offer

Appendix Four: Rationale for Attributions/Additionality

PFM Service/Programmes	Relevant Statutory Outcome	Statutory Service Cost (£)(B)	Attribution (%) (C)	Rationale
Soundcheck Counselling/One-to-one pastoral care/Creative Interventions/Opens Arms	Avoided CAMHS/NHS Counselling demand	£580	33%	As we cannot access the NHS Collection Costs, we are relying on the average cost per child for Kent & Medway ICB's children's mental health access, 2023-2024. Based on internal referral data for PFM, we understand that 1/3 of all referrals for counselling come from Early Help and Prevention and therefore could be deemed 'high risk.'
Food Bank	Avoided crisis interventions by Social Services	£8,124	10%	Unit cost of child protection plan (Conti et al., 2021). The original figure was 2014-15 pricing (£5,721 x 1.42 = £8,124). The attribution is based on an estimate of 65% unique households and 63% of families with children receiving food parcels (Trussel Trust, 2024). A conservative estimate of 1 in 10 families 'at risk' was then applied: (389 x 0.65 x 0.63 x 0.1 x £8124)
Open Access Provision/Holidays and residential trips/Bike project	Reduced youth crime/anti-social behaviour	£814	14%	Anti-social behaviour (cost of police dealing with the incident) - Updated to 2024/25 pricing - £814. Teenagers in areas affected by the closure of youth centres became 14% more likely to commit crimes (Cattan et al., 2025) — counterfactual from a robust 2023 London study; generalisable proxy.
Internships/Work, Emerging Artists	Reduced NEET risk	£84,000	33%	A 2010 estimate placed the cost of youth disengagement at £56,500 per individual to the public sector and £104,300 to the wider economy. In 2024 terms, according to the Bank of England's inflation calculations, this equates roughly to £84,000 and £156,000 respectively (Worcestershire County Council, 2024).

Appendix Five: Application of Financial Proxies and Estimation of Cost Avoidance during 2024/25

PFM Service/Programme	Relevant Statutory Outcome	Statutory Service Cost (£)(B)	Gross Avoidance Costs (£) (A x B)	Attribution (%) (C)	Estimated Avoided Costs (A x B) x C
Soundcheck Counselling	Avoided CAMHS/NHS Counselling demand	£580	£17,980	33%	£5,993
One-to-one pastoral care	Avoided CAMHS/NHS Counselling demand	£580	£10,440	33%	£3,840
Creative Interventions	Avoided CAMHS/NHS Counselling demand	£580	£6,960	33%	£2,320
Food Bank	Avoided crisis interventions by Social Services	£8,124	£2,055,372	10%	£129,412
Open Access Provision	Reduced youth crime/anti-social behaviour	£814	£405,262	14%	£56,767
Open Arms	Avoided CAMHS/NHS Counselling demand	£580	£143,840	10%	£14,384
Holidays and residential trips	Reduced youth crime/anti-social behaviour	£814	£9,765	14%	£1,367
Bike Project	Reduced youth crime/anti-social behaviour	£814	£47,199	14%	£6,608
Internships/Work	Reduced NEET risk	£84,000	£588,000	33%	£194,040
Emerging Artists	Reduced NEET risk	£84,000	£504,000	33%	£166,320
Total		-	£1,109,800	-	£580,660

Note: The breakdown of estimated avoided costs in terms of statutory services is £366,353; non-statutory services are £214,307.

Appendix Six: Key Data Sources, Benchmarks and GDPR Compliance

This analysis drew on a blend of documentary evidence, previously conducted qualitative consultations, and publicly available benchmarks to underpin its findings. Due to the project's tight timeline, stakeholder engagement relied chiefly on existing data sources and recent consultations, rather than new fieldwork.

1. Stakeholder and Youth Consultation

- Contact was established with key officials at Kent County Council (KCC), particularly from Family Hubs and Real Estate Services, to enquire about statutory service delivery costs and clarify available budget information.
- Direct interviews with a broader range of stakeholders were not feasible within the project's scope and time constraints. Instead, we reviewed qualitative data from PFM and the 2023 KCC consultation on the decision to stop the commissioning of youth services. We also reviewed the original Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), which demonstrated the negative impact of this decision.
- No fresh youth consultations were undertaken; however, insights from existing reports and PFM's annual outputs were reviewed using a logic model framework to ensure alignment with local priorities and young people's needs.

2. Reference to Policy Requirements

The methodology is based on relevant statutory and policy frameworks that demand evidence-based practice:

- Section 507B, Education Act 1996: Duty relating to youth provision.
- KCC Freehold Disposals Policy: Pertinent for infrastructure and service base considerations.
- Section 123, Local Government Act 1972: Concerning the disposal of council assets.
- Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA): Ensures equity, diversity, and inclusion compliance in decision-making.

3. Overview of Data Sources

- KCC Budget Documents: The analysis referenced the KCC Budget Books for 2023-24 and 2024-25, extracting relevant data on youth services funding, service delivery costs, and operational realignment following recent structural changes. A request for more granular data on youth counselling provision was submitted via Freedom of Information, but no response was received by the project's deadline.
- Local Authority Contracts: Prior contract documentation for commissioned youth services (pre-2023) and the proposed contract for the new Family Hub model were reviewed.

4. Proxy and Benchmark Data

- Mental health proxies reference the Children's Commissioner's (2025) latest data on Kent and Medway ICB spend per child.

- Benchmarks for youth service impacts utilised published external estimates, such as:
 - Child protection plan unit costs (Conti et al., 2021)
 - NEET costs (Worcestershire County Council, 2024)
 - Anti-social behaviour incident costs (public datasets (Cattan et al., 2025; Greater Manchester Combined Authority, n.d.)
- NHS Cost Collection figures were not available at the time of reporting, which was mitigated by using national and regional published figures where possible.

5. GDPR Compliance

Throughout this analysis, strict adherence to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles was maintained. No personal data relating to service participants was collected, processed, or shared during this study. The data used for the cost avoidance analysis was exclusively at an aggregate, non-identifiable level.

- Only high-level information was analysed, such as summary data on service outputs, broad outcomes, and overall referral numbers.
- No self-identifying, sensitive, or case-specific details were included in the data reviewed, discussed, or reported.
- All findings and reporting focus on trends, totals, or proxies, ensuring the privacy and anonymity of individuals were fully safeguarded.

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