



NOVEMBER 2023

Compaid
VOICE

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2023 Big Give Christmas Challenge

The Big Give Christmas Challenge is the UK's biggest match-funded campaign.

For seven days, the challenge offers supporters of Compaid the opportunity to double their donations — and, in doing so, make a difference to the digital skills support we offer to vulnerable people who need our help.

You can donate to the campaign and help us reach our goal of **£12,000** from **12 noon on Tuesday 28th November 2023 - 12 noon on Tuesday 5th December 2023** here: <https://biggive.org/christmas-challenge/>



Compaid is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in England with charity registration number 1064160.

Registered Office: Unit 1, Eastlands, Maidstone Road, Paddock Wood, Kent, TN12 6BU

Our Big Give Campaign target this year will continue to close the digital divide for many vulnerable people across Kent. Digital technology is a necessity for everything we do; it's how we communicate, access medical appointments, consume our news, shop and entertain ourselves.



What's clear is that digital technology now refers to a new world of exciting opportunities, especially for young people hoping to move into work. It is becoming clear that Digital skills are not just a convenience in today's world; they are a critical necessity for vulnerable learners to

overcome barriers, access opportunities, and lead more inclusive and empowered lives.

Compaid are here for anyone who requires our support to gain basic skills, to get online or simply understand how to use their digital devices.

During this week's challenge, **your donation will be matched £ for £ at no extra cost to you.** This means that if you give £10, Compaid will receive £20. An additional £2.50 on every £10 can be reclaimed by us, at no additional cost to you, if you are a UK taxpayer and tick the Gift Aid box.

We appreciate times are financially tough for everyone now, so, whatever you can afford to donate will make a world of difference to someone in need.

For more information about our work in the community, please visit
www.compaid.org.uk

And for more information about the Big Give Christmas Challenge, which starts at **12noon on Tuesday 28th November 2023**, please visit:

<https://biggive.org/christmas-challenge/>

Volunteer and Staff News

Our HR Manager, Judith Williams, will be attending several volunteering Fairs in the near future, so please look out for our Compaid stand and come and say hello.

These opportunities are a great way to 'spread the word' about our charity, how we deliver services that support vulnerable people, and the great volunteering experiences available to people with a passion to assist others.



New Faces

We would like to welcome **John Conroy** to our transport team providing various journeys for our passengers around Kent.

Here are some words from John:

"I previously worked in the telecommunications Industry for some 30 years installing commissioning and designing wide area networks for large companies. This involved spending many hours away from home and travelling extensively. I eventually ran my own company for some 15 years.

"I decided to leave the telecoms industry and try something completely different and, after taking some time off, joined the Ambulance service to assist during the pandemic and do what I could to help.

"I started working in the Patient Transport area, taking people to and from various appointments, and after gaining the required qualifications I moved to High Dependency Units moving and helping very vulnerable and ill

people.

“The final part of my career with the Ambulance service was working with secure mental health patients. After a time, I decided that this was not for me and applied for the job at Compaid where I feel I have found my niche. I work with some lovely people, who are always willing to give a helping hand.”

We are also pleased to introduce **Tara Randell**, who has joined us to work on our new dial-a-ride bus service supporting residents living in the Wouldham & Burham Parish which runs from Monday – Thursday. This service will also provide transport to Strood, Hempstead & Chatham.

Here are some words from Tara:

“I was born in Maidstone and moved away to live in Poole, where I worked for Arriva Southern Counties for 5 years.

“Since 2017, I moved to work in education. I moved back to Maidstone at the end of June 2023 and decided I wanted to return to a driving job without shift work, so applied to Compaid.

“I love driving and meeting people, so working for Compaid is ideal.”



If you are interested in joining our teams as a volunteer, contact our HR Manager, Judith Williams directly:

Phone: **01892 351055** or Email: **judithwilliams@compaid.org.uk**

Digital Skills Training News

New Client Focus Group



Our centre clients now have the opportunity to participate in a recently established initiative, the dedicated Focus Group, allows them to share their suggestions, ideas, and input on matters important to them at Compaid. Every month, our team of trainers will work on a one-to-one basis with individuals to ensure their experience during weekly sessions is meeting their needs and fulfilling their wishes to try new activities, learn new skills or simply feeling they have a voice.

These can range from activity ideas, areas of learning they would like to see introduced into training sessions, transport queries and any celebration ideas. This feedback will enable our staff to introduce new programs, software, and research destinations suggested for potential outings. Using a communal noticeboard in the centre, we will gather and share feedback from the meetings to provide information including anyone unable to attend meetings.

With help from Paul Sheppard, a client himself and client representative on our board of Trustees, we will in addition use this group to feedback relevant information from our board meetings to keep clients informed about what is happening across the charity. This is an exciting new initiative that we hope will attract a lot of ideas and feedback from the people who directly use our services.

Cripps and Chips!

We would like to thank **Cripps** for continuing to support our charity by their offer to cover the cost of a Christmas Fish & Chip lunch for all our clients, enabling everyone in our centre to spend time with friends & celebrate a festive lunch together.

For many, the festive period may be spent alone, so this opportunity gives them a special time together, before the centre is closed over the Christmas week.

We hope to have some volunteers from Cripps to join the clients, enjoy a festive game of bingo, and pull crackers together. We are extremely grateful for this continued support from Cripps to enable us to provide a little cheer for our clients.

Christmas Crafts & Creations

The production of Christmas gifts has begun!

Our clients have been excited to once again use our laser cutter to start the production line of Christmas gifts. The constant buzz of the machine can be heard around our centre as it's in full swing creating designs for coasters to gift to friends and family. A second project producing and decorating wooden Christmas tree ornaments, is already under way as well.



Music Sessions & Collaboration

When music is a passion, and you've been told you have no musical ability, will never play an instrument, let alone compose a piece of music, being encouraged to join a music project would simply be beyond your dreams!



Thanks to the Morrisons foundation, we have been awarded a grant to start a new project which will give vulnerable learners the opportunity to use music to express themselves & explore their creativity, boost their confidence & sense of self-worth.

Learning how to play an instrument, or even simply playing it as an activity, can have tremendous emotional and psychological benefits for people with cognitive difficulties, brain injuries, and learning disabilities. Alongside the instruments we have available and will be purchasing, there are accompanying software and programs that make the learning process even more accessible, and our upcoming music project will give even more people the opportunity to learn, create and share their music.

Tailoring the music-making to individual's abilities, interests & goals whilst allowing them to have a say in the type and style of music that they have an interest, will keep them engaged. In addition, music-making groups encourages social interaction, skills sharing and will boost motivation and engagement.

We will be reporting more about this project as it progresses and hearing from our budding musicians, as they discover their creative talents.

Pottery Project with Paul & our clients

The variety of new projects to inspire and enthuse our clients, are getting under way with our newly started pottery sessions, led by Paul Sheppard.

As a budding artist himself, Paul is inspiring others to meet new challenges through artistic designs.

Pottery offers a unique and therapeutic outlet for self-expression, creativity, and personal growth. Vulnerable learners can use clay as a medium to convey their thoughts, emotions, and experiences, which can be especially therapeutic for those who may struggle to

communicate in other ways.

By designing ideas on the computer before applying tools to the clay, allows the designer to experiment without the fear of making mistakes. Successfully creating a piece of pottery can boost individual's self-esteem and confidence, which can be particularly important for individuals who struggle with self-worth.

Allison has been working with Paul and has really enjoyed being taught how to make her own coasters, add a design and paint in her favourite colours. She is looking forward to her next session when she will be varnishing her designs. She is so pleased with her gifts that she said she may even keep one for herself, rather than give them all as Christmas gifts.



Save the Date!

Please take note the opening hours of our digital skills training centre over the Christmas and New Year period:

Final day open:

Friday 22nd December 2023, 9am – 3pm

Closed:

**Monday 25th December 2023 – Monday 1st January
2024**

Centre reopens:

Tuesday 2nd January 2024, 9am



Transport News

Flair and Fun with Farrah our Driver

The vibrancy of our transport team is not limited to their personalities, as brilliant as they are.

Driver, Farrah, is well known by our passengers for her beautiful multi-coloured hair that changes every day! Her marvellous wigs and dazzling leggings brighten the office and bring smiles to all our passengers as she transports them out and about throughout the week.

Thank you, Farrah, for making every journey a little more colourful!



Update on our Bearsted & Detling Bus

Route

Following cuts by Kent County Council due to cost-saving measures, this new community bus route has been put in place by Bearsted Parish Council along with support from Detling Village Parish Council!



Compaid were approached by Cllr David Hall, Chairman of Bearsted Parish Council, asking if the parish could source funding, could Compaid incorporate a service for the elderly residents of both Detling and Bearsted, as they too had been left without a village bus service following the cuts.

We are delighted to report that both Bearsted & Detling parishes applied for a Community Bus Grant together, which was successful and resulted in Kent County Council awarding a community bus grant along with future use of an existing bus.

The new bus route is an extension of the old Detling Shoppers bus service which now starts in Cross Keys, Bearsted. This route helps residents access the Post Office, Chemist, Doctor, shopping at Tesco's in Grove Green, and the shopping Complex at Eclipse Park, through to Maidstone Town Centre.

David Hall, Chairman of Bearsted Parish Council, said:

"I am delighted that the Parish Council in partnership with Compaid and Kent County Council, has been able to restore a bus service to our community which is of particular value to those without access to a car."

Wouldham & Burham Community Minibus

Another bus cut that has resulted in more partnership working between Compaid and Parish councils is Wouldham & Burham. Again, both Parishes applied to Kent County Council for a community grant, and our transport department were approached to enquire whether we could deliver a service to their communities.

We are pleased to report that a new service will be delivered at the start of December, once the new vehicle is received. Our new driver Tara has been employed to operate this service **Monday – Thursday** . This bookable service will support residents living in the Wouldham & Burham parish offering transport to Strood, Hempstead & Chatham .

First Community Transport Week Celebration

This October marked the first annual Community Transport Week, hosted by Community Transport Association, when we joined with hundreds of other charities across the UK in highlighting the importance of accessible community transport for vulnerable and isolated people across our counties.

The theme was “***Bridging the Gap; Connecting Communities***” and through a social media campaign, we highlighted how our accessible and affordable transport connects remote areas, provides volunteer and collaboration opportunities, and strengthens social bonds for residents who use our buses to get out and about safely.

We are so grateful for the opportunity to provide a reliable mode of transport to hundreds of older, disabled, isolated and vulnerable residents of Kent.

Save the Date!

Please take note the opening hours of transport service over the Christmas and New Year period:

Closed:

Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th December 2023

Open:

Wednesday 27th – Friday 29th December 2023, 9am - 4pm

Closed:

Monday 1st January 2024

Transport reopens:

Tuesday 2nd January 2024



Can we help you get out and about?

We strive to provide a personalised and adaptable transport experience for each of our passengers.

Our journeys are tailored to meet the specific requirements of everyone who travels with us, whether they require wheelchair accessibility, extra assistance, or a calm and understanding environment.

If we can help you or someone you know, call our Transport Team to book a journey:

01892 832447 from Monday to Friday, 9am - 4pm.

Fundraising News

Since our last newsletter, we would like to thank the trusts who have once again generously supported our work. **The Iron bridge Trust and Kent Reliant provident Society, Big Lottery, Thomas J Horne, Bruce Wake, and the Morrisons foundation.**

In addition, our training centre now has brand new LED lighting panels, all made possible by a generous grant from Screwfix Foundation. This upgrade not only improves energy efficiency, but also provides a softer and more comfortable light in our training room.

Consequently, our service users can now enjoy extended periods on their computers and other devices without encountering headaches or any discomfort attributable to the previously harsh lighting.

The grants we receive from these Trusts are vital if we are to continue reaching the many hundreds of disadvantaged people who require our services. Their grants allow us to maintain and enhance the services offered through both our digital skills training and accessible transport.



For more information:

Would you like to know more about Compaid, and the services we provide?
Do you know someone who could benefit from our digital skills training or accessible transport?

Scan the QR code below to visit our website or find us on social media to find out more.



How to get started to become an easyfundraiser for Compaid

Three simple steps are all it takes to support Compaid with a donation whilst shopping for your Christmas gifts

1. Copy this link into your web browser to add [easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) to your web browser: **<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/donation-reminder/>**
2. Select Compaid as your chosen charity
3. Click 'Give a free donation' when notified by easyfundraising while shopping online.



Thank you so much for your support!

Compaid

Removing barriers Improving lives

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