



south ayrshire
health & social care
partnership

Connect South Ayrshire Evaluation Report May 2025



Introduction

The development of the Connect South Ayrshire model was informed by both public consultation and the ambition of the HSCP to deliver more locality-based services across all our local communities. The model for delivering Connect includes integrated and accessible physical locations in all localities, a website and a free telephone number both providing information, advice and support focussed on promoting wellbeing and access to social opportunities. The delivery of the Connect model was informed by learning from other areas and our involvement as a pathfinder in the GIRFE national programme. In partnership with VASA, we launched the Connect model in November 2025.

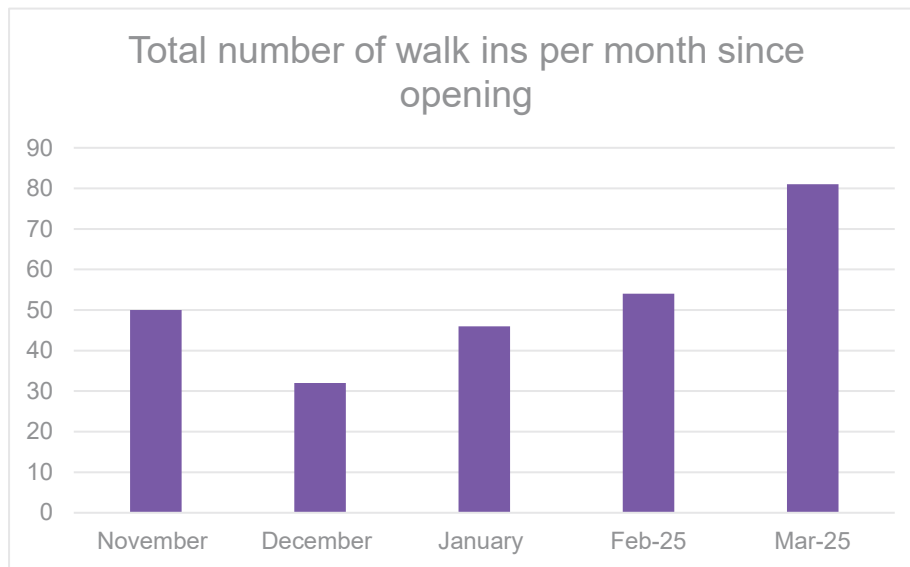
The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the wider Connect programme covering the period November 2024 through to April 2025. Providing both data and narrative, the report will cover the use of the Ayr Hub and the potential hub developments in other localities. It will also provide an overview of the website including next steps and how the telephony service is operating with regards to delivering the Connect model.

The current governance arrangements in place will also be discussed as we continue to monitor, manage and develop the Connect model. In line with both the delivery and further development of the model, the report will discuss the current contractual arrangements with VASA for managing Connect and also the challenges with regards to finance in moving forward with development. The report will culminate with discussion points and next steps.

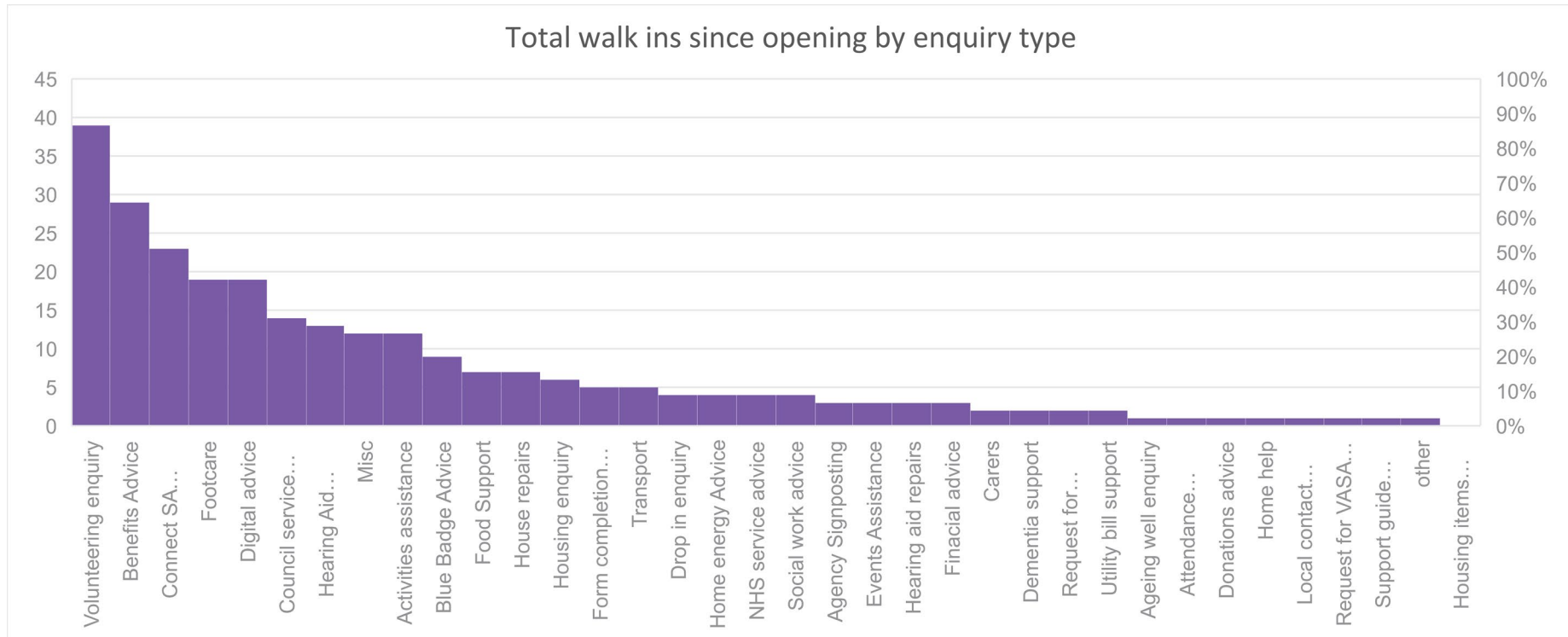
Connect Hubs

The Connect South Ayrshire Hub opened on the 4th of November 2024 at 53 Sandgate, Ayr. Opening hours are from 9am-12.30pm and 1pm-4pm, with a shop front location, the hub provides advice, information and signposting to a range of services including benefit enquiries, employment support, wellbeing information and more. The hub also has a calendar of wider partnership services utilising space and providing a drop in and appointment-based services daily. The purpose of the hub is to provide a physical space that individuals can walk in and access a wide range of information and advice around what is available in their local communities, with a range of local services working in partnership in the same space. This model has been successful in other areas, and we have taken learning from them when creating our spaces.

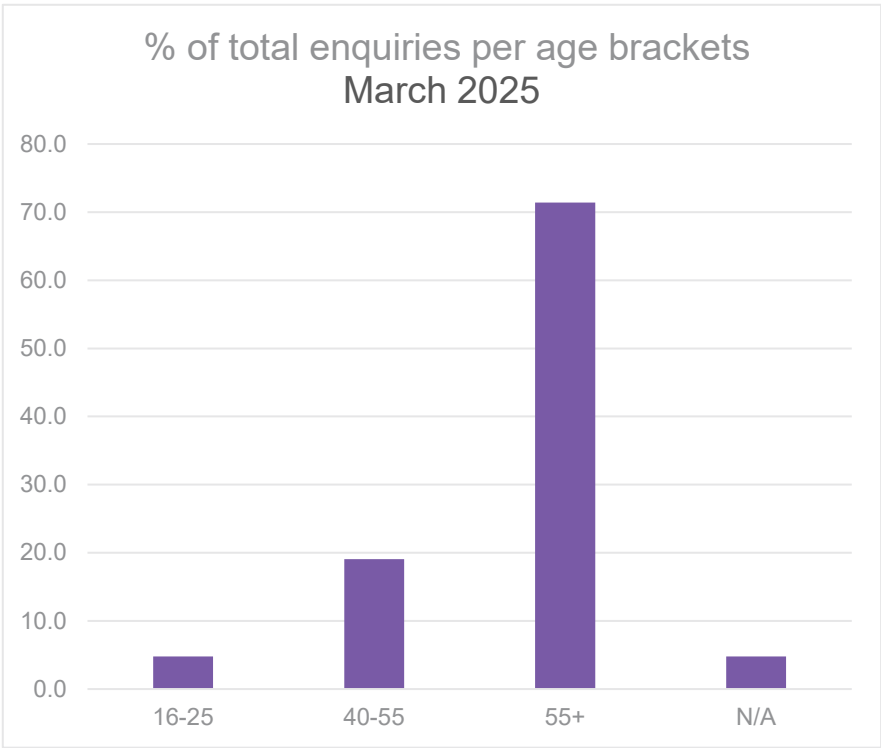
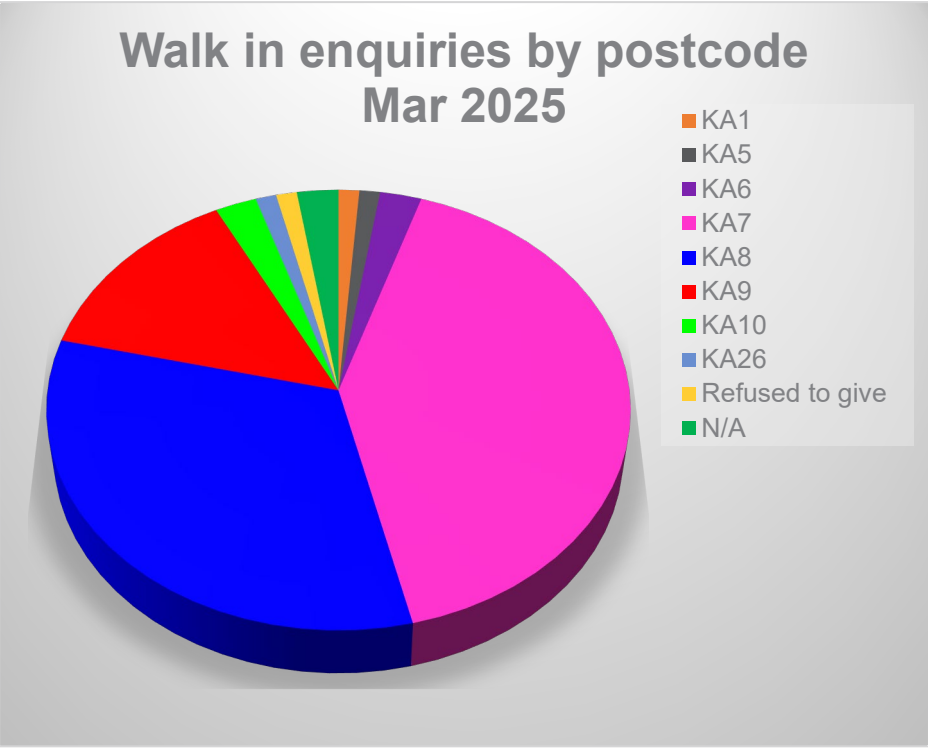
The footfall in the hub has been lower than we would have expected although there has been a steady increase throughout 2025. We hope this trend continues and it is notable that March has seen the largest foot fall following the Connect leaflet being included in all S.A.C. Council tax reminders. Moving forward, marketing and communications along with ongoing project management input from the HSCP will be fundamental to the growth and success of the Connect model.



Throughout 2025 the Ayr hub has seen an increase in enquiries for services such as benefit support and Volunteering opportunities. All enquiries span over 36 enquiry categories. The highest enquiry categories include volunteering opportunities, benefits advice and the Footcare service that is a stand alone service and has been established for some time. The following graph provides a breakdown of the 263 walk in enquiries so far:



Consideration was given to how we would gather and evaluate the use of the Hub. In a bid to keep this as straightforward as possible during the opening quarter of the hub, general data collection was agreed and included the age band of those accessing the services, the postcode area in which they resided, and their experience of the Hub. From the graphs below, it can be seen that the majority of service users are from the postcode areas for Ayr and Prestwick, with around 74% of walk ins coming from the age range of 55 and over.



The Ayr Hub has a timetable of services who utilise the space. The Hub itself has staff from VASA working on the site on a full-time basis. The timetable relates to the two closed office spaces, which provide confidential opportunities for engagement with the public. The service providers are a mix of HSCP, wider Community Planning Partners and some third sector agencies.

At the outset, it was made clear to services that they needed to have available time during their 'slot' for people to be able to drop in and seek advice or support. Notionally, for the 3 hours slots made available to services, half of that time could be used for scheduled appointments, and half for drop in. It was also made clear to all services prior to the Hub opening, that they had a responsibility to market through their own social media when their service would be available at Connect on the Sandgate. And there was an expectation that they would gather data to allow monitoring and evaluation of the use of the Hub. Feedback from the services can be found by service in Appendix 1.

The feedback from services is a mixed response from the service providers, and given the model being implemented is a new approach locally, there was no way of anticipating how this would work for services. The central locality of the Hub is positive, and is sited on a busy bus route, and walking distance from Ayr train station and parking. Some services have reduced the sessions that they have within the Hub, and some have withdrawn given the lack of footfall of the drop in approach of the Hub. By end of April 2025, a review of services utilising space has meant there is the opportunity for new services to make use of the Hub, and the calendar is currently being reviewed. Fortunately, there are services who are waiting to make use of the space, so there will be no gaps in the timetable moving forward. Case studies have also been requested and two of them are included in this report.

The timetable is included below to reflect the range of services provided in the Sandgate. A further request was made to services for case studies to be included as part of the evaluation. Two case studies are outlined below.

Service	Organisation	Frequency	Time
ADULT WELFARE	Social Work Response Team	Tuesdays Weekly	1.00pm-4.00pm
BENEFITS	Social Security Scotland	1st & 3rd Tuesday of month	9.30am-12.30pm
CARERS	Carers Gateway	Mondays Weekly	10.00am - 12.30pm
			1.00pm - 4.00pm
DISABILITY SUPPORT	Community OT	Wednesday weekly	9.30am-12.30pm 1pm -4pm
			1.00pm-4.00pm
HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT	Community Links	Wednesday Weekly	1.00pm-4.00pm
HOUSING	Ayr Housing Aid centre	Mondays Weekly	9.00am -12.00pm
POSITIVE AGEING SUPPORT	Staying Ahead of the Curve	Thursdays Weekly	9.30am-12.30pm
SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING POWER OF	HSCP – Social worker	Fridays 2 weekly 1st and 3rd Friday	9.30am-12.30pm New as of May 2025

ATTORNEY AND GUARDIANSHIP INFORMATION			
EMPLOYABILITY /SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT	Skills development Scotland	Thursdays 3 weekly 2nd , 3rd, 4th Thursday of month	1st and 3rd Fridays 9.30am-12.30pm New as of May 2025
SENSORY LOSS SUPPORT	Sensory team	1st Thursday Month	1.00pm-4.00pm
VOLUNTEERING	Volunteering team	Wednesday Weekly	9.30am-12.30pm
WELFARE MONEY AND BENEFIT ADVICE	Information and advice Team	Thursdays Weekly	9.30am-12.30pm

Case Study 1

Client made initial contact at Connect on 9th January 2025.

Client's daughter had been assessed for the Limited Capability for Work Related Activity but was refused as she did not meet the criteria. The daughter's employer was unable to offer more hours due to her condition and capabilities.

Our Advisor was able to discuss the eligibility criteria and establish the individual circumstances of the daughter's condition as to why she was unable to work more hours and subsequently prepared a written tribunal appeal & gathered relevant evidence to support the submission to the Tribunal service on behalf of the client. Further contact made by client at Connect on 23rd January 2025 having received the hearing date from the tribunal service, our Advisor was able to prepare the client by providing details of what to expect at the appeal hearing.

Client contacted us on 28th January to advise the appeal was won on the detail of the submission prepared by our Advisor and she did not have to attend the appeal hearing.

Client's daughter is entitled to an additional £167.97 per week in universal credit and a £3527.37 lump sum. Total financial gain £12261.81.

Case study 2

Mrs B walked into the CSA Hub, looking for some help for her son who lived in Girvan. He had suffered a stroke a while ago and she had been traveling up and down from Ayr to care for him. He requires help with day-to-day things like admin, housekeeping etc. She was finding it increasingly difficult to make the journey up and down so frequently and would like him to have more independence. She mentioned that money was not really an issue, so private care companies were suggested. The CSA team liaised with Girvan community social work team and arranged an appointment for Mrs B. Signposting to Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland was given. A final enquiry for apply for a bus pass was signposted to our digital support officers Girvan library drop in as her son struggled with online admin. The lady gave very positive feedback.

The focus of physical space has been on the initial Hub in Ayr. However, the ambition of Connect South Ayrshire is to have a physical space in each of the five main towns across South Ayrshire. In addition, each Locality will hope to have 'spoke' sites considered. These may be in already existing sites such as Community Centres, or other buildings accessible in local communities. Within the Central Locality, discussions are underway to consider having a smaller scale provision within Lochside Community Centre as the first 'spoke.' In the narrative below, the North and South Localities have outlined their progress for physical space within their respective areas.

Girvan and Maybole Hub Development

Connect Physical Hubs Update – South Localities

In the South Localities we are looking to use a 'hub and spoke' approach to delivery of physical hubs in the locale cognisant of the rural demographic and number of villages. Discussions are taking place in the respective locality planning partnerships with regards sites with an aspiration moving forward to align some of this work to community assets and community led action plans.

Girvan

In Girvan, a number of sites have been considered but these have not progressed due to viability re costs.

Maybole

A potential site on the Main Street has been identified. A walk round of the site is scheduled for w/c 21 April with a view to quickly establishing the possibility of moving forward with deeper proposals. If the site appears appropriate a report will be submitted to senior colleagues for strategic discussion and planning to ensure synergy across council plans and priorities.

Surrounding villages

The Senior Manager and Partnership Engagement Officer have contacted key individuals with regards access to community spaces/assets in the Dailly, Colmonell, Barr, Crosshill and Ballantrae areas. Discussion is ongoing and the aspiration is to test our 'spoke' approach in their community spaces with a view to learning and evolving what is available in the Hubs based on feedback from the local population. This approach will ensure a human learning factors approach and recognise that the priorities and needs of villages may be very different.

North Localities Update

In North Locality the main focus for the forthcoming months will be to establish 2 CONNECT sites, one in Prestwick and one in Troon.

Prestwick

The main area is to establish co-location of disciplines and open the Connect hub in the Freemans Hall. This will be the main single point of contact for citizens of Prestwick and outlying villages to access not just Health and Social Care Partnership disciplines, but to have the opportunity to have appointment-based visits calls, with colleagues from the Council, i.e., Customer Services, Thriving Communities.

Like the Ayr model, Freemans Hall will have the Connect hub which will provide advice, information and signposting to a range of services including benefit enquires, employment support, etc. It is proposed Connect in Prestwick will also have a calendar of wider partnership services utilising space and providing a drop in and appointment-based service on a weekly basis.

The first tranche of establishing services/disciplines in Freemans Hall is well underway, with social work colleagues moving in the next few weeks, followed by Community Nursing Colleagues. Vasa and Customer Services have committed to supporting the Connect site opening 3 days per week as this stage and further discussions are being progressed with the Partnership's Business Support Senior Manager as to how our own Business Support teams can contribute.

Thereafter, a short-life working group with Council and Vasa colleagues will be established to start to develop the Connect hub. This will include the upgrade of the “office” area to mirror the Connect signage and colours in order to identify and promote Connect within the Prestwick locality.

Troon

Due to the ground floor of Municipal Buildings no longer being available, we are progressing a scoping exercise to understand accommodation, as well as scoping any partnership opportunities with community groups in the area to promote and establish the CONNECT approach and principles. A few conversations have taken place with local community groups, but these require to be developed further, to understand any availability and potential costs.

Outlying Villages

Once the CONNECT hub models have been established, a spoke model approach will be considered to support the villages of Symington, Dundonald and Monkton. Some preliminary conversations have taken place in Dundonald and Monkton, but this is an area that requires further development and consideration.

Connect Website

The Connect South Ayrshire website was launched in tandem with the hub in November 2024. The fundamentals of the site transferred over from South Ayrshire Life, a website developed and delivered by VASA, which had been established for seven years, hosting activities, events and support services available in South Ayrshire.

Currently the Connect site hosts 967 activities (established groups or clubs offering learning/social opportunities) and 397 events (one off or recurring events in SA), 24 themed support guides (local information and advice on services/topics such as bereavement, dementia etc) and also direct links to public services, local contacts and consultations. In the VASA contact they are responsible for updating the website on a daily basis, adding new activities and making any changes to existing entries.

A summary of site traffic since launch is as follows:

November: The first month of Connect South Ayrshire website saw 3277 new users visit the site viewing 21919 pages and spending an average time 112 seconds.

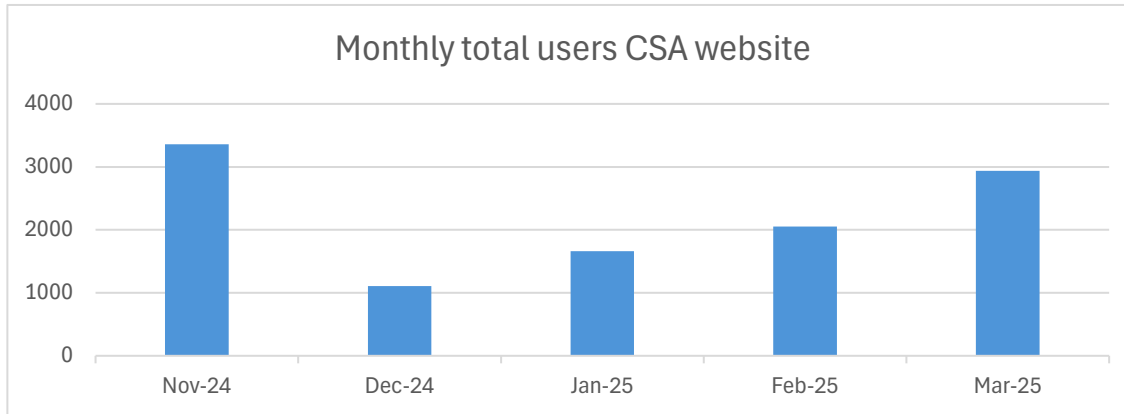
December: There was a significant drop in users and page views down by an average of 68%. This could be reflective of the previous month being marketed due to the launch of the Connect South Ayrshire brand.

January: Total users and page views increased on average by 47% from previous month with new users up by 55% which accounted for 90% of total users this month.

February: proved to be consistent with January data.

March: Traffic grew by 42% this month with the home page was the most visited, contributing 11% of total page views.

Similar to the footfall in the hub we will be required to continue to promote and market the website and would want to see an increase in users' month on month.



Phase 2 of the website will include the introduction of three additional buttons covering 'start well' 'live well' and 'age well' and also a subscription and user feedback section.

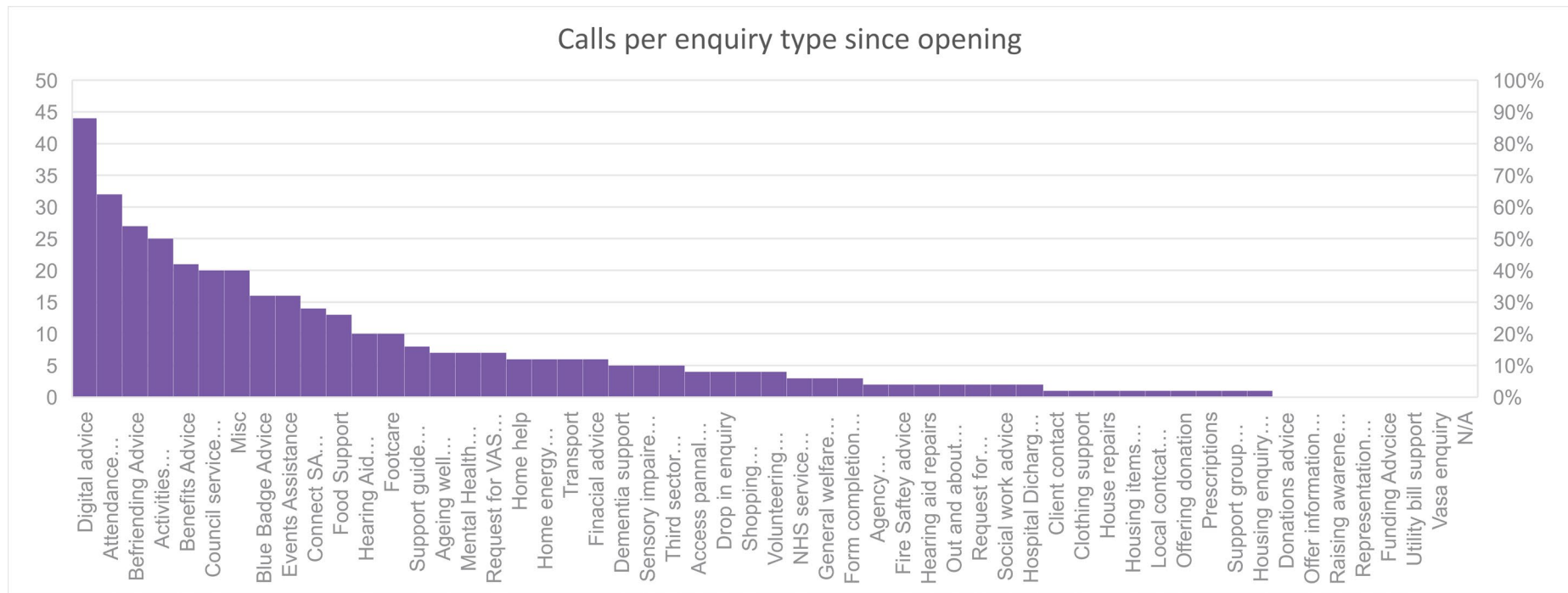
The work to complete phase 2 of the website has commenced with some challenges around both scope and identification of dedicated resource becoming an issue. With regards to scope, we need to ensure the content management topics included in the three additional buttons is coordinated with the HSCP website and does not duplicate what is already available. This work needs dedicated resource to plan, organise and identify relevant subject matter working with a various range of stakeholders. The work in developing and delivering phase 2 of the Connect Website will need to be carried out utilising dedicated HSCP project management resource moving forward.

Telephony

The Connect South Ayrshire phone line is available on weekdays from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM and features an answering machine during out of hours. The phone line continues to provide support and guidance to a range of public and charitable services and members of the public who prefer not to or cannot navigate the website. The number of calls to the free 0800 number have been as follows:

Month	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Totals calls since opening
Total calls	55	24	53	60	141	333
Weeks open	4	3	4	4	4	19

Calls into the Connect service have seen a significant rise in March and this could be linked to the marketing of the flyer included in the February Council Tax bill to all South Ayrshire residents. Enquiries by type are set out as below:



The telephony aspect of the Connect model is firmly established and moving forward it will only require ongoing monitoring of calls but no further development.

Governance

From an oversight and governance perspective, development of Connect South Ayrshire was discussed and agreed via support from the DMT of the HSCP. For the purposes of Connect, the DMT was extended to include the Chief Executive of Voluntary Action South Ayrshire. The three Senior Managers responsible for Localities were tasked with progressing the physical hubs, website and telephony, with all activity co-ordinated by the Hub Development Lead officer and undertaken in partnership with VASA colleagues.

An implementation plan for the model has been developed to keep track of progress. It was agreed at point of launch of the website and first physical space, that an Implementation Group be formed, and to include staff from the HSCP, VASA and Thriving Communities. This group provides strategic and operational direction to the development and implementation of the model. And from this group, we continue to provide updates to the DMT on a monthly basis.

Connect South Ayrshire Budget

When embarking on the ambition to develop Connect South Ayrshire, there were already strong working relationships between the HSCP and VASA. A refreshed service level agreement has been drafted to cover the next three-year period and includes aspects of supporting the roll out of the Connect programme and this will require to be signed off by the Chief Officer.

The revised agreement incorporates the management and maintenance of the following aspects of Connect:

1. Operation of the Ayr Hub including staffing/rent/utilities and promotional and marketing activities.
2. Scope within the contract to provide a member of staff to provide front door support at the Prestwick Hub two days per week.
3. Management and maintenance of the Connect Website ensuring all activities are added/monitored and kept up to date on a weekly basis.
4. Ongoing management and staffing of the Connect 0800 freephone number which is South Ayrshire wide.

There have been additional costs incurred for the first of the physical hubs. The HSCP agreed to a contribution of £15k to start up the Hub, and this money was spent on television screen and furniture.

Looking to replicate the model in 4 remaining towns needs to give some consideration to cost. As a minimum, the branding of Connect South Ayrshire will need to be replicated. Given the likelihood of different spaces being utilised (for example SAC or NHS premises), it is difficult to cost each space. VASA paid for the signage for the Ayr hub, which would need to be added to HSCP costs in other areas. It would be prudent to suggest the HSCP contribution to Ayr would be required for other area as a minimum of £20k.

In addition to the branding aspect of the model, the remaining spaces will not have the **support of VASA** staff to the same extent as Ayr. This will be a cost that also has to be considered. Discussions will progress with the Senior Manager for Business Support within the HSCP, considering opportunities for support staff to be utilised in the Locality spaces.

In line with the earlier discussion about the South Locality, there are specific costs to be considered with regards to access and use of the Wave Hub in Girvan as it is not a SAC site. Discussion regards cost are ongoing, and VASA are providing support and advice with regards this. It is estimated the cost will be £15-£18 per hour and as such for 7 hours a day looking at potential cost of £105-£126 per day. There may be scope to test this approach to ensure value for money and impact.

When considering setting up Connect in Maybole, there has been an SBAR to be discussed at the premises workshop to access the premises at 70 c High Street in Maybole. In summary cost implications for use of the site appears to indicate a revenue of approximately: £8000 per annum and capital of approximately: £30,000 should a clinical room be provided.

Moving forward, consideration also needs to be given to the 'spoke' approach. Although this may look different in each locality, it still needs to be identifiable as the Connect brand, so resources will be required, and on a smaller scale, branding and digital opportunities. This will require to be costed and considered as each spoke is identified.

Discussion Points and Next Steps

This report provides an overview of the three aspects of the Connect model and includes baseline data since the opening in November 2024. Moving forward the following areas require discussion:

Marketing and Communications- although there has been a concerted effort to date within existing resources; we have been limited in what we have been able to deliver and moving forward we need to increase marketing and communications to include radio, tv ads- perhaps short service user videos etc. This will require resource and planning to move forward.

Governance - current governance arrangements is working effectively and will move to monthly meetings - **Lesley**

Project management and coordination of monitoring and reporting schedule. We need to ensure there is HSCP resource specifically for 'doing the doing' with regards to delivering on phase 2 of the website and for monitoring and reporting on both the Connect programme outcomes and the VASA SLA into the relevant governance structure.

Budget available for locality Hubs- as has been set out in this report - **Lesley**