

Annual Impact Report

2025-2026



Health & Independent
Living Support

Helping people stay happy, healthy,
and independent for longer

Welcome from our CEO and Chair



Making the world better, together...

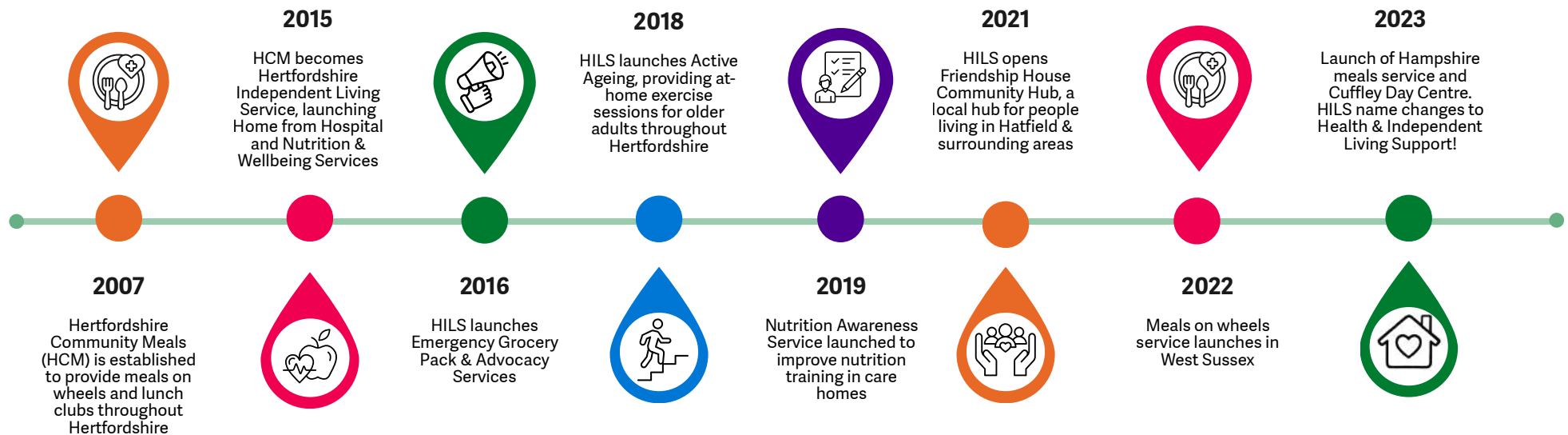
As a 365-day charitable social enterprise, HILS' teams are always busy supporting special individuals who together make up the thousands of people whom we are privileged to help each year. Although every bustling day presents new challenges and new opportunities to help, it is important that we take time to look back as well, to reflect on the difference that HILS has made to so many lives.

This is also the perfect time to look forward. Behind every statistic in this report is a person whose health, wellbeing or independence has been improved through HILS' timely support. However, there are hundreds of thousands of older and isolated people across the UK who do not have someone to help them, who have no one who cares. HILS is planning more ways that we can provide support and new communities that we can serve. If you want to join our HILS family to help increase our impact, or want to work alongside us to make the world a better place, please get in touch, because in the words of the inspirational Helen Keller - "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

The 2025-2026 Impact Report brings together facts and figures that show the breadth and depth of HILS' support, not just for our wonderful clients, but also for the wider health, social care, and VCSE system that we work within. This report contains stories of individuals who HILS has helped to recover after a difficult time in their lives, those who needed a temporary helping hand, and others who we have been honoured to support for many years. Each one of them is a part of our HILS family, alongside our compassionate teams and caring volunteers who go above and beyond to make every person feel special and valued.

Sarah Wren OBE, HILS Chief Executive & John Turk, Chair of HILS' Board of Trustees (pictured, right)

Our Journey





Our Purpose

We exist to help older and vulnerable people stay happy, healthy, and independent

Our Vision

That meals on wheels and preventative health and wellbeing services are available to anyone who needs support

Who we are

Health & Independent Living Support (HILS) is charitable social enterprise that helps older and vulnerable people stay happy, healthy, and independent for longer.

Delivering more than 18 services across Hertfordshire, as well as meals on wheels and nutrition support in West Sussex and Hampshire, HILS is a national leader in demonstrating how preventative, community-based support can transform lives.

All of HILS' services focus on helping people maintain or regain independence through practical, lifestyle-based support. This includes improving access to nutritious food (meals on wheels), making exercise accessible to frail older adults (Active Ageing), and fostering social connection (Community Hubs). Other key services include advocacy, emergency food packs, and home from hospital support - each designed to meet people where they are and help them thrive at home.

In the past year alone, HILS provided over 2 million caring interventions to more than 17,900 people. Over 1 million of these were hot meals delivered directly to the homes of 11,200 individuals, who would otherwise not have had access to a hot meal at all. But the value of this service goes far beyond the meal itself. For many people, it provides a vital sense of community and daily reassurance: seeing a friendly face, knowing someone will check in, and giving families peace of mind that their loved one is safe and well.

Our Funding Model

As a charitable social enterprise, we rely on a combination of contract funding from local authorities, client income, grant funding, and donations to run our services. **Every penny of these funds is used to provide community benefit, with any surplus retained for service improvements.**

Our Service Model

All of HILS' services are tailored around the client's individual needs and are designed to be flexible, depending on how much support someone may want. Whether this means occasional support, support after a crisis or period of change, or long-term support, we are here to help.

Our Goals



People remain well, nourished, and physically resilient for longer



People feel more connected to and supported by their community



Independence is sustained or regained at every stage of life



Families and unpaid carers are better supported and able to continue caring



Where does our Funding come from?

Last year, we brought in over £10 million in income, every penny of which was used to deliver benefit to our communities

£2,062,196: NHS & Social Care Contracts

£12,270: Individual Donations

£8,176,176 Client Contributions

£397,262: Donations, Grants, & Other income



£6.51
of social value* is
generated for every
£1 invested
in HILS

*Internal evaluation completed in 2025, updating Anglia Ruskin 2012 Study to account for inflation and service changes. This figure only represents the impact of meals on wheels services.



25-26 Impact in Numbers

17,900
people supported through more than
2 million
caring interventions

Support at Home

1 million

hot meals & desserts, teas,
and breakfasts delivered to over

13,600

people, 365 days of the year



4,300

one-to-one **exercise**
sessions delivered to

751

Active
Ageing clients



1,400

Pop-in visits
made to
check that people
are safe and well



5,400

nutrition & wellbeing interventions
delivered to help people
maintain weight,
and stay healthy



4,400

interventions
delivered by
our team of
advocates



In the Community

34,300

tasty lunch club meals
provided to over

3,100

people at community groups



8,000

visits to our community hubs

by 220

people across Hertfordshire



677

care home
staff trained
by our **Nutrition
Awareness Team**



In a Crisis

62,800

free home-delivered
meals provided to people
to support reablement
after a hospital stay

2,242

food and grocery packs
delivered to people
leaving hospital, or in
financial difficulty



25-26 Impact in Numbers: Meals Spotlight



We want to reach as many people as possible, and make sure our support is available to anyone who needs it. This is why we track the number of people we support each year - to ensure that our reach is continuing to grow, and that more people in our communities are receiving the support they need. But while growth is an important measure of success, it is only one part of the equation.

Equally important is understanding the **difference** our services make to the lives of the people we support. To understand this difference, we regularly evaluate the impact of our services, listening carefully to the experiences and feedback of our clients, and their loved ones.

Within our meals on wheels service specifically, each year we invite our clients, along with their friends, family members, and carers, to share their experiences with us. Their feedback helps us understand what we are doing well, and identify opportunities for improvement. Most importantly, it allows us to measure the real impact our work has on people's quality of life.

Here's what they told us this year.

Our meals clients told us, that because of HILS' service:

97%
feel happier

94% 
feel healthier

94% 
feel more independent

97%
feel better nourished

95% feel it has helped them to remain independent at home

84% visit their GP less often

Our clients' friends & family members told us that because of their loved one's service:

97% feel less stressed

99% have greater peace of mind

84% have more time for themselves, leisure, or their work

The stories behind the statistics

These numbers only tell part of the story. Behind each statistic are thousands of lives, rich with experiences. We are honoured to be a part of so many stories across Hertfordshire, Hampshire, and West Sussex, and to support people at different stages of their life. The next few pages give just a small glimpse into the lives of those we support.



An occasional helping hand

How William found a community in Friendship House

Many of the people we support lead active, independent lives, but everyone needs a little extra help from time to time. Whether it's enjoying a hot meal delivered to you at home, staying active through an exercise class, or simply having somewhere welcoming to spend the day, our services provide practical support and companionship when people need it most.

One of HILS' clients, William, is 75 and lives in Hatfield. After working for many years, his world became much smaller during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many people, the lockdowns left him feeling isolated, and the lack of regular social contact began to affect his wellbeing. "There is no good sitting at home alone - it has such a negative impact on my mental health," William told us.

When restrictions eased, William discovered Friendship House, one of HILS' Community Hubs. What started as a place to meet new people soon became an important part of his weekly routine. Today, he attends a few times a week and describes it as "a special place where everyone feels welcome."

Although William continues to live independently, Friendship House provides the little extras that help him stay well. He enjoys chair-based exercise, bowling and games, keeping both his body and mind active, whilst sharing a nutritious hot meal, a cup of tea, and conversation with friends. The welcoming environment gives him something to look forward to each week and provides the reassurance that he is eating well and staying connected to his local community.

For William, it is the people who make the biggest difference. He says the staff and volunteers "go the extra mile" and make everyone feel valued, treating them not simply as clients, but as individuals. Their warmth, encouragement and genuine interest have helped William rebuild his confidence and feel part of a community once again.

"Friendship House feels like family," William told us.

William's story is a reminder that maintaining independence doesn't always mean doing everything alone. Sometimes it is the occasional helping hand that makes all the difference. By being there when people need us, we help them stay connected, active, and independent for longer.

99%
of meals clients
said that they feel
their life is easier
as a result of HILS'
services

94%
of meals clients said
that they feel more
independent as a
result of HILS'
services



Support with recovery after a crisis

How meals on wheels supported Peter to recover after an infection resulted in a hospital stay.

For many older, disabled, or frail adults, a sudden health event can quickly lead to crisis - a fall at home can lead to a broken hip, or a short illness can snowball and require a hospital stay. Our preventative services help minimise the risk of health events escalating. However, when they do, we are also there to help.

One of our clients, Peter, came to HILS after a sudden infection resulted in a stay at Winchester Hospital in January 2026. For older people living with frailty or long-term health conditions, time in hospital can unfortunately lead to further decline. Reduced mobility can quickly result in muscle loss, while delays in returning home can make recovery more difficult. Too often, people remain in hospital after they are medically fit for discharge because the right support is not yet in place at home.

When Peter was ready to leave hospital, a physiotherapist referred him to HILS' 'Hampshire Hospital Discharge Scheme' to receive seven days of free hot meals and daily wellbeing checks. The nutritious meals helped support his recovery, while regular visits provided reassurance and enabled us to identify any additional support he might need. Having worked as a postman for more than 50 years, Peter had always led an active and independent life, so returning home was especially important to him. He told us:

"The meals were a lifesaver - they meant that I could have a hot meal while I recovered from my illness. With no local family members nearby, it meant I didn't have to worry about shopping and cooking for myself. It meant I was able to return to the comfort of my own home."

After the week of free meals Peter decided to continue with the services. He enjoyed chatting with the Community Team Members and needed the service to help his further recovery.

"The Community Team Members helped to plate up my food and got my cutlery for me as I had limited mobility after my discharge from hospital. I loved having someone visiting regularly to have a little chat with and keep an eye on me."

Helping people recover at home is better for individuals, their families and the NHS. By providing nutritious meals, wellbeing checks and practical support, HILS helps people recover quicker and regain their independence sooner.

A photograph of a man with white hair and glasses, wearing a green jacket and a yellow high-visibility vest. He is standing outside a house with a white door, holding a tray with food. The background shows a brick wall and a black downspout.

84%

of meals clients said they were able to recover more quickly following a period of ill health, or personal difficulty

62,000

free hot meals, teas, and breakfasts delivered to support recovery at home

Dependable long-term support

How HILS' meals service supported Dorothy as her life circumstances changed

Dorothy grew up in Motspur Park before moving to North Cheam after marrying her husband, Walter. Together they raised four children before relocating to Epsom Downs in 1967. Dorothy began her career as a typist at Brook Motors. After moving, she took on a role as a "bed maker" in Epsom District Hospital and as her children grew older, progressed to become ward receptionist.

Over time, Dorothy and Walter began to need more support, particularly with meal preparation. Their daughter, Christine, stepped in, batch-cooking meals for her parents to store and reheat in the oven. However, this quickly became difficult to sustain. Following Dorothy's fall and hip fracture, it became clear that additional support would be needed to enable them to remain safe in their own home.

After researching local services, Christine contacted HILS and arranged for daily deliveries for both her parents. Christine said:

"What I liked most about the service was the wellbeing check. It gave me peace of mind knowing someone was checking in on them daily and making sure they were okay - especially when we were away and needed that extra support in place."

Sadly, Walter passed away in March 2025 following a fall. Since then, our meals service has become even more of a lifeline. Dorothy now lives with memory difficulties and is unable to safely use the gas hob and oven.

Christine explained: "Using the gas hob became a danger as Mum left the gas on after making coffee. Without the daily hot meals, she would have been limited to cold food and may not have received the nutrition she needs to stay well at home."

"It's also reassuring to know Mum has daily interaction. Since losing Dad, that regular contact is something she really looks forward to. Without meals on wheels, our situation would be very different. The service has helped Mum remain safe and independent in her own home."

Dorothy, who recently celebrated her 94th birthday, shared her own thoughts: "I like that the meals come nice and hot, and I enjoy all the meals and puddings the lovely drivers bring. Seeing them brightens my day, I enjoy having a chat, and they always ask how I am and help plate my meal."

Dorothy's story highlights the vital role meals on wheels plays as a long-term support service to help people to live safely, independently, and with dignity in their own homes.

87%

of meals clients said their services have **reduced their need for other help & support** (e.g. care visits)

95% 

of meals clients said their service has helped them to **stay living at home.**



We're here when you need...

An occasional helping hand

Many older adults, or people who live with a level of vulnerability (e.g. disability, mild cognitive impairment), only need occasional support. HILS' services are designed to be flexible, allowing people to choose the right support for them, whenever they need it.

Support with recovery after a crisis

A health event, such as a fall or hospital stay, can have a significant impact on a person's independence, and can often accelerate frailty. Whether it's through home delivered meals for a few weeks, or short-term pop-in visits, we are here to help people to get back on their feet and prevent further decline.

Dependable long-term support

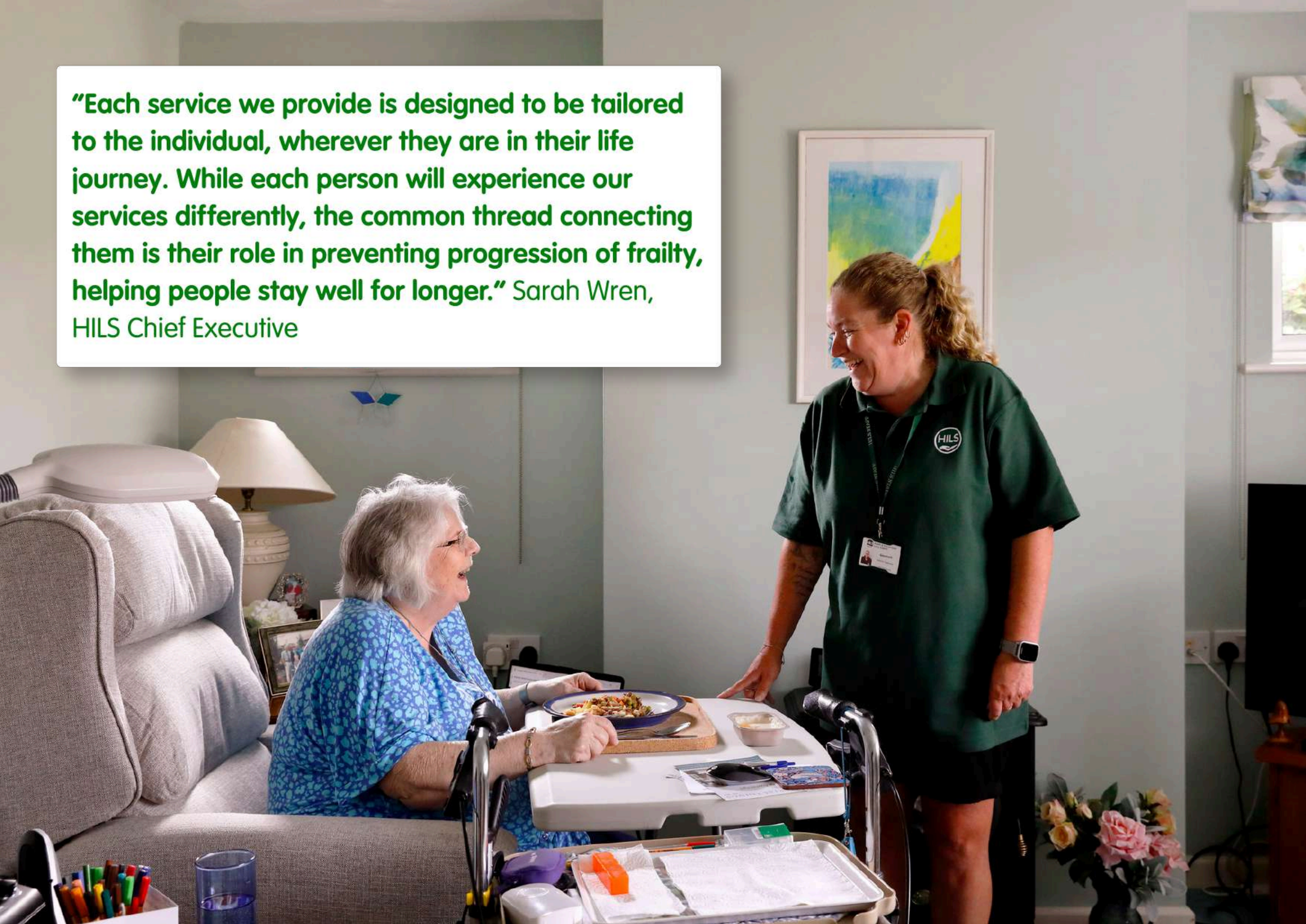
For people who live with a long-term disability or health condition, HILS provides an important lifeline of support that people can depend on for however long they need it. Within our meals services in particular, we are here for people 365 days a year, come rain or shine, to help ensure they are nourished, safe, and well.

Help with caring for someone

With 79% of unpaid carers feeling stressed or anxious as a result of their caring role (CarersUK, 2023), support for carers is vital. Services such as meals on wheels, or dementia day services, provide much needed respite for carers and relieve some pressure from the caring relationship.



"Each service we provide is designed to be tailored to the individual, wherever they are in their life journey. While each person will experience our services differently, the common thread connecting them is their role in preventing progression of frailty, helping people stay well for longer." Sarah Wren, HILS Chief Executive



Impact on our wider communities

How HILS' services support our health and care systems alongside local communities

For our Health Systems

Reduced attendance at GP appointments

Each hour of GP time costs the NHS £142 [1]

Preventing falls through free strength & balance programmes

Hip fractures from falls cost the NHS over £2.3 billion per year [2]

Preventing malnutrition

Malnutrition costs the health & care system over £22.6 billion per year [3]

Supporting people to recover after a hospital stay with free meals following discharge

£6.51

of social value generated for every

£1 invested in HILS

For our care sector

Reducing the number of home care visits

£186 average cost per person for weekly home care [1]

Delaying the transition to residential care

Average cost of £640 per week to local authorities [1]

Reducing safeguarding & crisis intervention costs through earlier detection of hidden issues

For our community

Over 450 local people provided with meaningful employment

Over 110 safeguarding cases raised and resolved, preventing further escalation and worsening of harm



Delivering Excellence

Quality Statistics, 2025-26

Every year, we send out surveys to thousands of clients, asking for feedback on our services. We use these surveys to find out where we are doing well, and to identify areas for improvement. We are always aspiring to be better for our clients, and to continue to meet the needs of our communities as they evolve.

99%



of meals clients told us that the service from their community team member is excellent or good

Food Hygiene



5/5 stars

Rating at all HILS meals distribution sites

97%



told us that the service from their telephone support team is excellent or good

100%



said that they trust HILS team members to treat their loved ones with respect

Awards 2025-2026



Public Sector
Catering Award
Winner 2025



Social Business
Pioneer Award
Winner 2025



Team of the Year
Award Winner 2025

Excellent services rely on excellent people

Our people are the heart of our impact. Every day, our teams build trusted relationships that change lives, helping people stay independent, healthy and connected. Prevention doesn't happen by chance, it happens because of the compassion, expertise, and dedication of our incredible teams. **Thank you to each and every one of our team members for going above and beyond every day.**



We need your help!

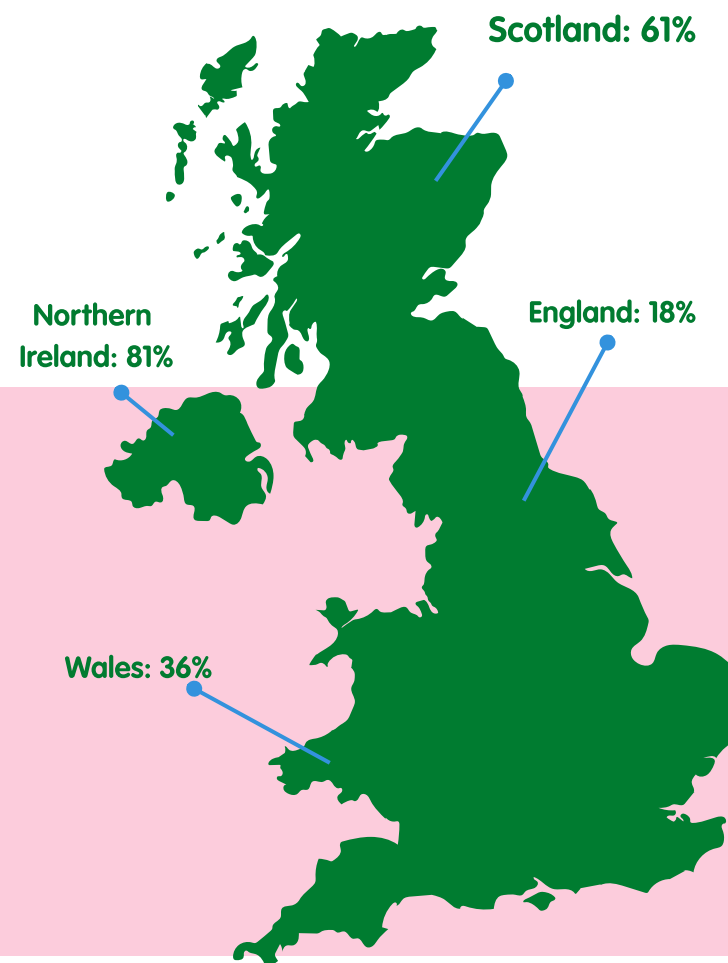
Scan QR to
support HILS



Meals on wheels services are one of the simplest and most effective ways to help people live independently, yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Rising food, fuel, and staffing costs, growing demand, and continued pressure on local authority budgets mean that many providers are struggling to keep services running. **Today, fewer than a third of UK local authorities still provide a meals on wheels service, leaving thousands of older and vulnerable people without access to the support they need to stay safe, well and connected. We believe this can change.**

Our vision is for a future where everyone in the UK who need meals on wheels can access it, regardless of where they live or their financial circumstances. With your support, we can protect this vital service where it already exists, reach more people who are currently excluded, and demonstrate that investing in meals on wheels is an investment in healthier lives, stronger communities, and a more sustainable health and care system. Together, we can ensure that no one is left without the lasting impact that nutritious food and a caring visit can provide.

How many UK local authorities currently provide meals on wheels services?



How can you support HILS?

- **Donating to us** by clicking the 'Donate Now' button on our website (www.hils-uk.org).
- **Fundraising on our behalf** – let us know if you would like to plan fundraising activities by emailing comms@hils-uk.org so we can support and thank you on social media!
- **Leave a gift in your will** - any legacy, no matter how large or small, will make a difference to people in our community.
- **Spreading the word about our services** and fundraising activities – **follow us on Facebook and Instagram**, or join our mailing list via our website.

Thank you to our partners

Without our partners, we could not have supported the thousands of people who rely on our services every day to stay happy, healthy, and independent. Your support has helped us to continue providing excellent service to our clients, teams, and the wider community. We sincerely appreciate your continued support.



Hampshire County Council has provided help and guidance to us throughout the continued provision of the meals on wheels service. We are extremely grateful for all their invaluable support, particularly from their Adults' Health and Care Team.



Hertfordshire County Council has provided unwavering support to HILS, recognising the value of meals on wheels and community-based service provision. We would particularly like to thank colleagues in Adult Care Services' Community & People Wellbeing Team, and Public Health Hertfordshire.



We would like to extend a special thank you to **Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust** for supporting our Nutrition Awareness Service which brings excellent nutrition training into care homes so they can make sure their residents stay healthy and well.



Social Business Trust has helped HILS to grow by connecting us with experts in the field and providing invaluable knowledge and expertise, making it possible for us to reach more people with the support of corporate volunteers.



West Sussex County Council has continued to be by our side throughout our growth in the area. We want to thank them for their help, guidance, and financial support. We would particularly like to thank the Catering Services Team.

Our work would not be possible without the support of our partners and colleagues across Hertfordshire, West Sussex and Hampshire. We are particularly grateful to **St Albans Old People's Trust, Hatfield & District Age Concern, Quantum Care, Age UK Hertfordshire, and Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove** for their invaluable support in developing and growing our community services.

We would also like to thank **HertsHelp, the National Association of Care Catering, the Malnutrition Awareness and Prevention Network, the Malnutrition Task Force**, and our many partners across the Voluntary Care and Social Enterprise sector. Through our common commitment to supporting older and vulnerable people, these organisations help us make a lasting difference in the communities we serve.



Visit our website: www.hils-uk.org