

# Dora Brown

## Felixstowe Town Council Occasional Grant Fund report March 2024

### About Dora Brown

Dora Brown is a Suffolk based charity supporting families with children in Ipswich, Woodbridge, Felixstowe and their surrounding areas. We are a small dedicated team of part time staff and an amazing group of over 80 volunteers. Dora helps families in crisis, free of charge, where the state of the home is a concern. Our families are referred to us by social workers and health visitors and other organisations (schools, GPs, police, etc.). We prioritise families where Child Protection Plans hinge on the state of the home, homes of young carers and where new babies are due to arrive. Families are overwhelmed, living in homes which have broken down from domestic neglect, furniture poverty and hygiene poverty. The state of the homes leads to extreme stress, overwhelm and further decline of mental wellbeing of all family members, as well as poor self-care, lack of washing bodies and clothes, not cooking, eating unhealthily, sleep deprivation, reduced participation in educational or social activities, isolation and loneliness.

Dora takes a non judgemental, caring, fun and supportive approach. We have an amazing team of volunteers who roll their sleeves up and clear rubbish and clutter, deep clean, organise belongings, put in place systems for washing, cleaning and self care to help families maintain their homes after we have finished. We provide donated furniture and essential home items and do simple DIY. We often find family members are sharing beds or sleeping on sofas/broken beds with unsuitable, old bedding. A key aim for Dora is to make sure we leave each family member with a suitable bed, mattress and clean bedding.

The home lives of the families we work with are transformed. Homes are cleaner, clearer, safer and healthier to live in. There is a huge knock on impact from the physical change in the homes on the mental, physical health and wellbeing of family members. Families report that they are sleeping better and eating better. They are able to have better personal hygiene washing in a useable bathroom, clean clothes, clean bedding. They are often better engaged in school, work, social and community life. They feel less shame and more confident. Dora's work also acts as a cycle breaker, showing children and young people there is a different way to live.

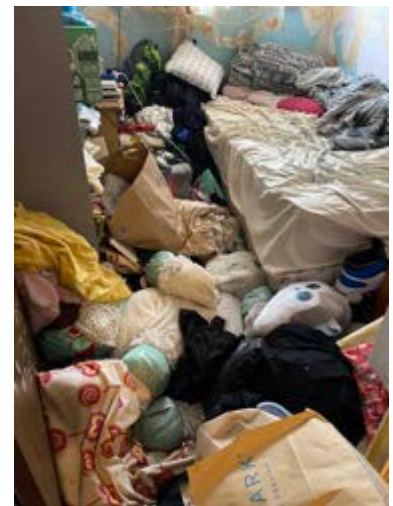
### Felixstowe Town Council funding report

The funding received from the Felixstowe Town Council enabled Dora to support two families in Felixstowe and we are delighted to be able to report that these two projects have been a success, work has been completed and two families are living in much improved home conditions. A case study about one of these families, outlining the work undertaken and the outcome, is provided below.

A family of five, two adults and three children aged 10 - 16 were referred to us by a social worker due to concerns about cleanliness and clutter in their three bedroom home. The bathroom, kitchen and some bedrooms were not fully useable. Our wonderful team of volunteers helped the family sort through all their belongings, decluttering and getting rid of rubbish. The funding we received was used to pay for waste disposal (equivalent to five 10 yard skips of waste was removed). Then volunteers undertook a deep clean and finally we provided much needed home items and furniture, including beds, mattresses and beddings sets, a slow cooker, chests of drawers, and other storage solutions. We left them with a cleaner, clearer home with useable bathroom and kitchen and more space to relax, study, cook and eat. Volunteers logged 163 hours across four shifts in this home.

Our work has had a big knock-on impact on the family's life. The family's social worker told us "as the house is much clearer, cleaner and less cluttered, elective home education services can now visit and support [the young daughter] at home". Mum told us, "the kids can have friends round now" and "I'm really happy to keep up with the housework and I'm excited to clean". At our recent family focus group session, this family told us that they feel more optimistic about their future, that they can solve problems in the home better now, they have better relationships with family and friends, they feel less stressed, less isolated and healthier, and that they feel more confident to get help from other services.

### Before and after photos



### Next steps for Dora Brown

In terms of our work in Felixstowe, we have received new referrals for 3 further families in Felixstowe (comprising in total 3 adults and 6 children). We have made the assessment for one of the families and the work in their home is scheduled to take place in April. The other two families are due to have their initial family meetings with our Head of Projects in April, to assess whether they are eligible for support. If they are eligible we plan to complete work in their homes in the summer according to our current waiting times.

We were proud to become a registered charity in November 2023 (converting from a Community Interest Company). This year two of our key aims are to further reduce waiting times for families and to develop our signposting process and partnership working in order for families to access further support from other agencies. In 2023 we supported 31 families, that's 120 people (48 adults and 72 children), and in 2024 we aim to meet and exceed this number.