

Dora Brown

Felixstowe Town Council Occasional Grant Fund report March 2025

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 three families in Felixstowe in 2024/2025 and we are delighted to be able to report that these three projects have been a success, work has been completed and three families are living in much improved home conditions. Across the three projects we did 13 shifts working in the family homes. 107 volunteer shifts were delivered by 52 volunteers (many attended more than one shift), logging a total of 424 volunteer hours.

Case Study 1

A family of three, one adult and two children aged 10 - 16 were referred to us by a Family Support Practitioner following concerns about clutter in their three bedroom home and the threat of eviction by their landlord due to this. The family felt overwhelmed and stressed, unable to know where to begin to tackle the situation. Our amazing team of volunteers helped the family sort through all their belongings, decluttering and getting rid of unwanted items and any rubbish. Then volunteers undertook a deep clean and finally we provided much needed home items and furniture, including a chest of drawers, bedside tables, various other storage solutions including tubs, baskets, drawers and shelving, and a mattress and bedding, a heated airer and other items. We left them with a cleaner, clearer home and more space to relax, study, cook and eat. Volunteers logged 60 hours across four shifts in this home.

Our work has had a big knock-on impact on the family's life. The family told us there had been an overall positive impact on family well-being including a positive impact on sleeping, eating, personal hygiene, mental health and confidence. The family felt less stressed and more confident

to maintain their home. Mum told us the best thing about working with Dora was *“the amount that was achieved in such a short time, particularly in organising everything.”*

Case Study 2

A family of three, two adults and one primary school aged child were referred to us by a Family Support Practitioner following concerns about cleanliness and large amounts of clutter and belongings in the home. The family were overwhelmed due to caring responsibilities, a bereavement and working full time, and wanted help. This home was one of our largest projects to date and we worked 7 shifts, with volunteers logging 264 hours work clearing, sorting and cleaning and whole home. Separate sleeping spaces were created for family members who had been sharing previously, to improve sleep quality for all. Mum said *“There has been a weight lifted over how much time it would take for me to do it myself. I am better and keeping tidy... I will be forever grateful.”*

Before and after photos





