

Children & Young Persons Champion Report

Councillor Tracy Brown

This year has been difficult for our children, younger people and families in so many ways. Being at the heart of so many controversial issues and working to find a way forward, is ongoing and challenging. This is my journey through the year...

Celebrating Scouting – Early on last year I attended a Scouting award ceremony celebrating all the wonderful work that the uniformed group achieves.

Children's Homes – I was invited to visit a children's home in Heysham to help develop an education through activities plan, to help young people find an interest and a direction in life through experience.

Anti-social Behaviour – Working with the LCC officers and police helping to develop a purposeful way forward for the youth to socialise in safe spaces.

Poverty – I was in a fortunate position to be able to open up the doors to help so many families, schools and support all voluntary community organisations with the influx of support by the means of clothing, toys, books, personal products, baby products, bedding and food.

The amount of donations and distributions in and out was an immense undertaking and clearly not a one woman task. I had fantastic support from so many members of this council and their family members, the community that needed the support over the Christmas period also came back and volunteered in organising, distributing and in turn networking to help each other within their own new support group.



Community Donations

Community Meeting - Facilitating the overwhelmingly supported community meeting where 300 people attended and everyone wanted to make a difference to other people's lives.

I would like to thank the members of this council and the community that supported people in need at this time.

Community Collective – As a result of the **Poverty** the voluntary organisations are working more collectively with joined up thinking about supporting children, families and people in need looking at mental health, health and wellbeing and offering direction to professional organisations to help resolve personal issues.

Self-help – Having the opportunity to be available to support families in need, I've been able to help children and younger people resolve some issues and help them to move forward with a purpose and direction. Help with money management and how to prioritise expenditure, to look at how families can eat

well on a small budget. I was able to help young mums become less isolated and offer inspiration to build on a plan for the future for themselves and their children.

Reading Buddies – With all the cross working with the schools and community donations I developed the reading buddies. Noticing that the amount of children’s books that we had donated and how very few parent were selecting books as a Christmas present or even just for reading for fun, I incorporated one of the “many not the few” cuddly toys that also been donated and created a bundle of 5 books with a cuddly toy and a simple label. The idea of the cuddly toy is for the child to read to the toy when no-one has the time to listen at home.

A Deputy Head Teacher at one of our local school expressed she was looking for new ways to inspire young readers, I presented to her the reading buddies and the school took all the 300 bundles of books with the buddies.

Feedback from the school is that the reading buddy scheme has been a fantastic success and has inspired the children to read even if only to their reading buddy. Reading levels are up.

Again a thank you to everyone who supported me putting together the reading buddies and distributing them to the school.



Reading Buddies.

Home Education – Something else that has come out from the **Poverty** is how many young adults are not in mainstream education and whose parents have opted for Home Education to avoid fines from school for their children’s absences. This is a major concern as now these children are now in a position where they receive absolutely no support.

Working with a particular family, the parents had accumulated over £1,000 of fines without the ability to pay and the children were not receiving any form of education as the parents were not in the position to home educate. These young people of high school age walk around town and have been involved in various illegal activities and disruptions about town.

I engaged with the education authority to help find a way forward for the children to engage in education. The result for the children is that a school hasn’t been found suitable due to the situation of previous school experiences and I have had to support the family with a home education plan until Lancaster and Morecambe College can support.

Lancashire County Councillors have been finding ways forward for this issue, has it has be identified as a real concern.

Theatre Education Programme – the education programme was written by myself to help support children in their own personal development, expression and understanding of their environment while incorporating the development of confidence, spoken work, speaking and listening and the understanding of literature. These activities have worked with the ideas of ‘stranger danger’ and how our environment can alter, also the concept of “what if”. Working with primary schools and teaching staff, the programmes have been a great success and well supported.

Summary – It has been a very busy year helping families and their children and younger people. A positive from this year, is that from a lot of despair communities are now networking and finding help from each other, we have definitely opened the conversation and are building on inspiration.