

## **Lowestoft Rising update for the Lowestoft Annual Assembly 2021**

Lowestoft Rising was formed in late 2013 and is a partnership involving Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk District Council, Suffolk Police and Suffolk Police & Crime Commissioner, Norfolk & Waveney CCG and Community Action Suffolk/Access Community Trust to represent the wider Voluntary Sector of Lowestoft. The aim of Lowestoft Rising is to make Lowestoft a better place for everyone by joint working and supporting partners to deliver the best services and facilities for the people of Lowestoft and the Northern Parishes that abut Lowestoft. As of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 the partnership is pleased to welcome Lowestoft Town Council as a formal member of the partnership with a place on the Sponsor Group that oversees the work of Lowestoft Rising.

Lowestoft Rising normally attends the Annual Assembly for Lowestoft to update on past and future activity. This year we have been asked to provide a written report as the meeting will be a virtual Zoom meeting. Below is the Lowestoft Rising activity report for April 2020/ March 2021 year.

### **Covid 19**

Lowestoft Rising has always responded to new needs and challenges as they arise, flexing its role to best suit the needs of the Town. With the arrival of Covid 19 and Lockdown one back in March/April 2020 Lowestoft Rising joined with East Suffolk Communities team to set up the emergency community hub to support the county-wide "Home But Not Alone - HBNA" scheme. In the previous November we had held an emergency planning workshop with our Emergency planning colleagues to look at how the Community and Volunteers would best respond in an emergency situation, that exercise was based on flood but identified the importance of a co-ordinated function that Lowestoft Rising and East Suffolk Communities Team had agreed to lead.

The Hub was set up at Riverside Building with direct links to the central HBNA call takers and staffed 6 days a week until early evening in the first few weeks of the Lockdown. The hub dealt with all calls for Food Shopping, Emergency Food Parcels and Medicine collection that came via HBNA and also co-ordinated with other local Community Groups to provide the widest level of cover and support. We had some 40 Volunteers offer to assist the central team and in addition a number of volunteers worked directly for local Community Groups to provide aid. Through this system we were able to support all those who were left vulnerable as a result of the Lockdown across the wider Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community.

In addition to providing a service around shopping and meds collections we also set up a telephone befriending service to support those with limited human contact and a direct contact with Social Care Services for those that needed additional help.

This centralised hub function continued to support the Community until Lockdown was lifted and demand tailed off. During Lockdown 2 the Hub stood up again and contacted all those new Clinically Extremely Vulnerable clients added since the end of July by phone to discuss their Food and Medicine requirements in advance of formal Lockdown. This ensured that people had time to plan and took demand away from the Hub during Lockdown 2. The hub still functioned but at a very low demand level. Lockdown 3 has seen a similar level of demand although the Team have made pro-active calls to everyone who had previously needed support of any kind and those added to the CEV list since November 2020. The Hub also helped to connect transport options and building options during the set up of the vaccination phase and continues to function to support the local community.

Clearly this was a priority role for Lowestoft Rising and its wide partnership connections across both Statutory and Voluntary Sectors for Lowestoft it made sense to focus on that role in 2020.

### **Food Bank and Food Network.**

Lowestoft Rising is a key supporter of the Lowestoft Food Bank which is run by Lowestoft Community Church for the benefit of the whole Community. Up until COVID 19 it relied on a number of distribution sites across Lowestoft for food parcels to be available. Many of these were Church or VCS buildings which we all required to close under Lockdown. Subsequently, working with East Suffolk Council, the Food Bank was set up in East Point Pavilion on the sea front and opened 3 days a week 10am to 12 every Monday, Wednesday and Friday to allow good access at one central location. In addition, limited delivery in special circumstances using the HBNA volunteers took place. This interim model worked well and supported the Town during a period when Food Bank need was at its highest. In November, due to work starting on the refurbishment of East Point Pavilion, the Food Bank moved to an empty Butchers Shop in Bevan Street East where it continues to operate 3 days a week. In the 12 months to Feb 2021 the Food bank in Lowestoft has helped some 9430 people with Food, including some 6000 adults, and demand continues to be high. Lowestoft Rising and Partners have supported the Food Bank to ensure it had access to Food and Funds to provide this service through this difficult period.

In addition, Lowestoft Rising has been working on a Food Network for Lowestoft, bringing together all the organisations that provide food for the community (e.g. Food Bank, Salvation Army, Churches, Community Groups etc) with those who can supply food (e.g. Fair share, supermarkets and other organisations that help supply food). This network ensures that any spare or surplus food from supermarkets is directed to the best place and has the highest impact. As part of this work we have helped set up a Community Fridge at St Andrews and in December 2020 opened our first Pantry at Kirkley Church. This Pantry model allows families to shop in the Pantry that is stocked with a wide range of essentials and donated food for a small fee but provides a substantial shopping return. This allows families to budget and make food go much further and gives supermarkets and shops a place to donate to support the Community. Our plan for 2021 is to try and open these types of Pantries in a number of

Community settings so we have coverage across Lowestoft. Longer term this should move some demand from the Food Bank to a more sustainable model. Lowestoft Rising continues to work across the Food Network to ensure we maximise food distribution and reduce waste to landfill.

In addition, the Food Network has helped the Church Community provide FISH (Food in school holidays) which for the February half term saw a provision available across Lowestoft for collection of a hot meal by any family in need every week day. FISH will continue to expand in 2021 providing that Free School Meals cover during holidays in a co-ordinated way.

## **Schools**

Clearly Covid 19 has had a huge impact on what work Lowestoft Rising could do with schools, our normal engagement around Careers aspiration and cultural activity had to be suspended for this year. However, we have continued our support to schools and School Heads, offering information and advice where we can. The Cultural Education Partnership for Lowestoft worked with the other 6 LCEP's across East Anglia to come up with on-line activity and a hard copy activity pack for children. Lowestoft Schools were offered these activities through the close relationship with Cultural Leaders in Schools and the LCEP. There was good take up of both On-Line workshops and the activity packs. The schools have also asked for good quality CPD for Teachers and Staff during this time and the LCEP has been able to fund a number of high quality CPD events around Cultural activity that will assist teachers dealing with children when returning. The continued work of the Lowestoft Cultural Education Partnership under the Arts Council model has ensured that we will be ready to support schools on their return. Indeed, a project called "Young Benjamin" looking at the early life of the composer is already in the research phase ready to engage with local schools once they are ready.

Working with the 21 Primary Head Teachers across the Lowestoft Schools Lowestoft Rising has also funded The Princes Trust Institute to come to Lowestoft to deliver 4 High Quality CPD days, 21 Teachers can attend one of each of the 4 days, which will focus on key subjects. In addition, as being part of the Princes Trust Institute Scheme school now also have access to their wide range of resources held on their website. This will allow all Teachers to access additional resources as part of the deal and create a lasting bond with the Princes Trust Institute for Lowestoft. The most pleasing thing is that all 21 Primary Schools have agreed to be part of this work, showing a real joined up approach across our schools.

Lowestoft Rising has also worked with the CCG and partners to bring a new Schools Mental Health support project to Lowestoft. This is part of the Governments scheme to provide mental health support in schools. Lowestoft has been chosen as the next location across Norfolk & Waveney to roll out this scheme. Ormiston Families will lead the scheme which will have 4 dedicated mental health support workers embedded in our schools to assist low to medium level mental health concerns amongst children. The project started in January with the 4 selected staff currently undergoing training at UEA who will then start placements in selected schools in Lowestoft. We need some 8000 children to be part of this scheme and again working in partnership we have 18 schools, included all 4 High Schools, signed up to be part of this new project. The 4 workers, whilst based locally in schools, are supported by a

much wider team of professionals and part of their role will be to encourage a whole school approach to mental well-being across the participating schools. This is a major step forward for Lowestoft schools and will be truly needed following the COVID 19 pandemic and its effect on children's well-being.

Lowestoft Rising had managed to continue the CYP Cluster Network, a network of all organisations in Lowestoft that work with Children or Young People, to ensure joined up working and information sharing. The network has managed to meet virtually during Lockdown and has continued to send out emails to all members about relevant information.

### **Mental Health.**

Lowestoft Rising has mental health as its number one priority to reflect the importance of that to everyone's health. We did oversee Tod Sullivan as the Mental Health Ambassador for Lowestoft but he has left the area to pursue his career options. Consequently, Phil Aves as the Lowestoft Rising Change Manager has now taken on that role to keep the focus on mental well-being.

Lowestoft Rising sits on the Norfolk & Waveney Suicide Prevention Group and is deputy chair of the VASP (Voluntary and Statutory Partnership) for Mental Health. The Waveney VASP is a strong network of various voluntary groups and the statutory providers coming together to form a cohesive network. The group continues to meet regularly, virtually at present, and the network shares information and new projects and offers that are available. In addition, the Waveney LEAF (Lived Experience Advisory Forum) that is led by Access Community Trust is the voice of those people with lived experience of mental health to ensure that voice is heard across the system. The VASP and the LEAF work hard to promote the offers and ensure that people who need help can find support be it Statutory or from the voluntary sector.

Covid 19 will have had a huge impact on mental well-being especially around isolation and Lowestoft Rising continues to work in partnership to create more opportunities. Working with the Lowestoft & Northern Parishes Community Partnership Board we have been looking at creating the "Voice of a friend" Befriending service into a long term offer and prior to lockdown we were looking at doing Sunday afternoon Walks in the Park to help those who were isolated - a kind of Park Run but for walkers who could come together and rotate the walks around different parks. As an interim piece of work the Communities Team are having created a series of Virtual Walks that can be followed on-line to promote activity at home and prepare for when walking can start again in groups.

As already mentioned Lowestoft Rising has been a key part of the development of the School Mental Health Programme, preparing for that to go live this year in schools and continues to support schools in their work around mental health and well-being. We believe this will be a testing year for school children returning to a full school programme and they will need lots of support from a range of sources.

## **Homelessness and Vulnerability**

Lowestoft Rising set up and still chairs the multi-agency Interventions process to tackle the most demanding cases of Homelessness and vulnerability across Lowestoft. This multi-agency process manages cases that are high risk or high demand across the system. Our work with East Suffolk Council and Partners to secure Government funding to deliver our Homelessness support services have been instrumental in reduced the level of Homelessness across Lowestoft. Currently, in February 2021, we only have 2 cases of rough sleeping, with our 8 bedded assessment hostel full but coping with demand. This assessment hub allows new potential rough sleepers to go straight into accommodation to be assessed and moved on. In the coming year Lowestoft will hold an additional 7 bedded unit for the more high-risk cases in addition to beds funded out of the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) beds that are provided in winter. The clients who access these services are supported by a whole range of support services to ensure that benefits are in place, they access appropriate health care, and that they engage with services that can help them overcome rough sleeping and/or addictions. Whilst it is recognised that this is multi agency working at its best, the role Lowestoft Rising plays in co-ordinating the response is vital to this working effectively. To date Lowestoft has helped some 180 people through this system helping them to return to a more normal life.

Again COVID 19 has a huge impact on how we have been able to work in this field, but the early work to try to get everyone indoors back in April 2020 was extremely successful and we have managed to keep numbers extremely low. The risk for 2021 will be the large numbers of people facing potential eviction following the end of the current ban. This will put a new pressure on services and we are looking at that issue right now.

That concludes the report for Lowestoft Rising activity for the year 2020/21 and if anyone has any further questions, they can contact Phil Aves Change Manager at Lowestoft Rising who will give further information and clarity.