

THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS

National Excellence in Community Action Award for friendship calls to local people during pandemic



During the pandemic, many more of us have been feeling lonely and isolated as result of staying indoors and being unable to see family and friends.

Rotherham Council have been carrying out a range of initiatives to tackle loneliness and isolation in our local communities. As part of this work, our partner organisation Rotherham Federation has been providing 'friendship calls' to local people from all backgrounds who are feeling lonely and isolated.

The project, launched in April 2020 following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, offers free weekly calls by a team of dedicated and friendly volunteers to any adult living in the borough who feels isolated or alone.

In December 2021, the project reached a total of 500 referrals, meaning the team have been able to support 500 people in Rotherham who have felt lonely and isolated since the launch of the project.

The huge impact of this work on both volunteers and those receiving the calls has been captured in **a series of case studies** featured on the Rotherham Federation website:

'I loved my weekly chats with Tina, we had a laugh and Tina really helped by listening to my worries, I will miss her calls. I wish I could have adopted her!'

'I cannot wait to get the call every week and I cannot thank you enough for giving me my volunteer, as I said it has changed my life and I now feel a lot more optimistic than I have ever done'

'An hour passed in a blink of the eye and the dreaded Covid was not mentioned once, which was a blessing, was nice to just talk to someone normally'

The hard work of the volunteers and team was also recognised at the Annual Tpas Awards in October 2021, with the friendship calls project winning the 'Richard Crossley Excellence in Community Action Award'.

As well as this, Rotherham Federation have secured funding to extend and expand their befriending service. As well as continuing to provide the friendship calls, they will work with partners to provide more opportunities for people to engage in local activity, including training courses.

If you or someone you know would like to receive a weekly friendship call or become a befriending volunteer, details on how to sign up can be found on the **Rotherham Federation website**.

BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

£150,000 Public Health funding to support school children's mental health and wellbeing

The Council's Children and Young People Services have secured £150,000 funding for a targeted prevention and promotion programme from Public Health England (PHE Prevention and Promotion Fund for Better Mental Health 2021/22). This funding is now being used to develop a novel Team Around the School (TAS) model of working. This involves working with schools and creating new resources based on their needs, with a focus on mental health wellbeing, transition and including recovery from the impact of Covid on pupils' wellbeing. The project began to work with identified schools in early November 2021, following the half term.

A wide range of teams within Children's Services (Attendance, Inclusion, SEND, Early Help, Educational Psychology, Data and Finance) are working together with partner organisations, such

as Rotherham Parent and Carers Forum and Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR).

Schools were selected using existing information, for example those with a high percentage of most vulnerable pupils, and the TAS group have created an offer which will support young people and families to promote mental health and wellbeing, particularly at times of transition. The offer supports children, young people, families and schools this academic year whilst also aiming to leave a sustainable legacy.

A tailored offer and approach has been agreed with each school, which includes, depending on requirements:

- Fearless parent support (online support materials) focusing on anxiety and wellbeing, led by Early Help
- Digitalisation of sleep, an online support tool on sleep hygiene and sleep strategies, providing specialist videos newly created by Early Help, tailored to Rotherham parents, primary and secondary age pupils



BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Remote workshops for school staff to access support from the Educational Psychology Service within Children's Services to address individual or cohort needs in a timely manner, as well as providing bespoke training for school staff. The following workshops have been offered or are being planned: emotion coaching, staff wellbeing, trauma informed practice and bereavement support
- Access to an NHS and Ofsted endorsed wellbeing and healthy relationships programme for Year 6 pupils and a bespoke transition resource provided for Year 7 pupils, both of which have a parent app
- Weekly workshops provided by the Specialist Inclusion Team to promote awareness of mental health, wellbeing and relationships through transitions, which will be delivered in all target schools to the school lead and cohort of pupils
- Opportunities for the school lead and selected pupils to create a wellbeing and transition project (peer mentor scheme, video support/ toolkit/parent resource), with regular support from the specialist Inclusion Team.
- Opportunities for the TAS school project to be presented in the 2022 summer term and shared across school network to promote wellbeing and best practice.

Through the curriculum resources provided to schools, 421 pupils will be impacted.

So far, informal feedback from schools has been very positive:

'Coleridge Primary School has benefited immensely from the TAS programme and it's really supported our children, staff and families. The work conducted with our Y6 children with the My Happy Mind programme has really started to support our children's wellbeing and mental health and seeing themselves in a positive light. We have witnessed some marked improvements with some social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) children with their self-esteem and confidence. The TAS programme has been well organised and is going to have a long-lasting impact on our children over the next six months.'

CASE STUDIES

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Business cases being developed following successful £31.6m Towns Fund bid to carry out ambitious regeneration projects across the town centre, Eastwood and Templeborough

The Council submitted a bid to the Towns Fund in January 2021, following a public consultation, and it was announced in June 2021 that the town has received one of the largest awards, totalling £31.6 million.

The overarching aims of the Towns Fund are to drive the sustainable economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth.

Rotherham was one of 101 areas invited to produce a Town Investment Plan for economic growth, in order to access up to £25m of government funding, with the possibility of additional funds for exceptional and particularly credible plans.

The Town Investment Plan focuses on a number of schemes deliverable within five years. These include creating a Riverside Residential Quarter and better access to enjoy the waterfront, regenerating the Guest & Chrimes heritage site to provide attractive public spaces and leisure

facilities, creating a new heart for the business community in Templeborough by making under-used sites productive again, improving travel connections and creating new spaces for hospitality and meetings, and carrying out regeneration projects in Eastwood.

This funding will also enable work to go ahead to create attractive public spaces and transform derelict heritage buildings on High Street and Corporation Street – creating a gateway from the Minster Gardens across to the new Forge Island leisure development.

Throughout the Plan, the vision for Rotherham is that Rotherham will be an attractive, desirable place to live, at the forefront of the new advanced manufacturing economy in the North, with high quality neighbourhoods connected to economic opportunities across the borough and the wider city-region.

Following the successful funding bid, business cases are now in development for the Towns Fund schemes, with summary versions due to be submitted to Government by June 2022.

The Town Deal Board, which is chaired and attended by the private sector, guided the development of the Town Investment Plan and subsequently oversees the project delivery and monitoring of the funding.



WAYS OF WORKING

New bulky waste collection service introduced to improve customer experience

The Council provides a bulky waste collection service to help with the removal and disposal of unwanted larger household items from Rotherham residential properties. Examples of items that can be collected include furniture, electrical appliances and DIY waste, such as bathroom suites, window frames, and doors. Items are collected from a customer's property and responsibly disposed of or recycled.

This is a popular and longstanding service but one which until recently, lacked the ability for customers to choose a date for collection when completing the online form. A date could only be agreed once someone from Customer Services called the customer back, which could take time and cause inconvenience to the customer.

A review of customer feedback also identified the need to communicate better with customers before, during and after the collection process.

In November 2021, a new and improved bulky waste collection service was introduced.

After confirming which items need to be collected, customers are now able to choose and book a collection slot online for a day of their choosing (Monday – Friday).

Once payment has been made and the online form has been submitted, the customer receives an immediate acknowledgment which includes details of their collection request and information about how to make any changes at a later date; for example, if the date of collection becomes no longer suitable.

Customers are sent another email the day before their collection is due, together with a reminder of all the important information previously shared.

Once the items have been successfully collected, the customer receives a confirmation email. If for any reason, the collection request cannot be completed, the customer is also advised of the reasons why and given the ability to rearrange.

The new web form went 'live' on 9 November 2021, and as of end December 2021 there were 596 bookings.

[Click here to book a bulky waste collection online.](#)



HOPE AND CONFIDENCE

A welcome return for the Rotherham Show



The Rotherham Show, the biggest cultural event in Rotherham's calendar, saw a welcome return in September 2021 after a year away in 2020 due to the pandemic. Held at the award-winning Clifton Park, the Rotherham Show is an annual celebration of local culture, and includes circus, food, music, dance, art and performance.

The free event saw residents and visitors welcomed back together and marked the relaunch of the borough's cultural offer.

The hugely missed show's return followed the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and increasing numbers of fully vaccinated people, but organisers also worked hard to ensure that additional COVID safety measures were put in place. These included the addition of an extra day for those who wanted to avoid large crowds and the spreading of stalls across the showground, as well as introducing sanitising stations and open marquees.

The show saw a packed programme of performances, events and things to do. On the Main Stage, there was a diverse programme of music and performance, including West African rhythms, modern British folk, jazz, funk, rock, brass, dhol drummers and bhangra dancers. Elsewhere, the Made in Rotherham Area of the show celebrated the creativity, vibrancy, resilience and diversity of our town, showcasing flavours from across the world through locally made food, art, music and performance.

The programme also saw a wide range of activities for children and families, including entertainment and interactive play.

For the first time, the programme also extended to shows, events and exhibitions at Clifton Park Museum and the newly refurbished Rotherham Civic Theatre – where visitors were able to see the new-look venue and experience some exclusive performances.



HOPE AND CONFIDENCE

The show welcomed an estimated audience of 100,000 over the three days (20,000 more than in 2019) with the following headlines from the post-event evaluation:

- The gender balance shifted from 2019 to 2021 – in 2019 75% of the audience were female which changed to 59% in 2021
- The audience was more diverse, rising from 7% to 10% BAME communities
- Recognition that the show is organised by the Council rose from 64% in 2019 to 80% in 2021
- For 72% of visitors Rotherham Show was their first event or cultural experience since lockdown restrictions were removed in June 2021
- The satisfaction rating rose from 96% in 2019 to 98% in 2021
- A COVID-19 vaccination bus was also present at the show, at which 300 people received a vaccination.

The Show took place between 3rd – 5th September 2021. Many of those who attended shared their positive experiences:

‘Absolutely loved it! We come every year but this year topped them all. Really, really well thought out.’

‘We have been to the Rotherham Show today and it was AMAZING! Made some wonderful memories.’

‘Went to the show for the first time ever, it was huge, well organized over the whole park, so although there were plenty of people, one didn’t feel crowded.....will definitely visit again next year.’

A massive thank you goes out to everyone who visited the Rotherham Show 2021, and to all the performers, artists, stall holders, exhibitors and judges whose expertise, talent and enthusiasm made it such a great day out.

We’re already looking forward to the next Rotherham Show and we hope you’ll join us – follow the Rotherham Show page on Facebook to make sure you’re in the know first.