

Every Family Counts OBA

Feb/March 2023

Health and Wellbeing Team

There are 103,400 children in Northern Ireland living in poverty, almost 1 in 4 (NICCY, 2022). During the Covid pandemic parents have lost jobs, been on reduced hours, on furlough etc. In recent times with the cost of living increase families who were already struggling have been pushed further into poverty.

Children in poverty are twice as likely to leave school without 5 good GCSEs (NICCY, 2022). They are also more likely to suffer poor mental health and have fewer years of good physical health.

As prices of groceries and toiletries increase, families are finding it increasingly hard to provide for their children. The cost of living is rising faster than people's income. (The Children's Society 2023)

Background

In the Northern Area Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Locality Planning Groups (LPGs) poverty and money management has come up as an enduring issue. We had carried out a number of actions over the last three years to alleviate this need including offering emergency grants, sourcing digital devices to alleviate loneliness and support school work and staff and parent training around money management. During the current cost of living pressures this became a more pressing priority for families.

The Antrim Ballymena CYPSP LPG decided to create a task and finish group to carry out to support families with the cost of living crisis. This group decided to run a cost of living event with a focus on staff in the morning with speakers around cost of living topics and a cost of living information fair for parents in the afternoon. This was carried out in Ballymena and in Antrim in February and March.

This activity aligned with CYPSP Outcomes, in particular:

- Economic and environmental wellbeing

How much did we do?

We organised cost of living information fairs for parents called Every Family Counts held in Ballymena and Antrim in February and March

Info stands:

- Antrim & Newtownabbey Council
- Mid and East Antrim Council
- AN Community Advice
- MEACAS
- Impact Network NI
- NICMA
- Family Fund
- Libraries NI
- CAP
- Northern Connections- Start 360
- Parentline NI
- A Safe Place to be me
- Barnardos
- Women's Aid ABCLN
- Employers for Childcare
- Department for Communities
- NHSCT Health and Wellbeing Team
- NHSCT Dietitians
- Ballymena Baby Basics
- Ballymena Hygiene Bank
- Antrim Ballymena Surestart
- Ballymena South Community Cluster
- Sensory Kids
- Slemish Braid Credit Union



40 public attended the cost of living fairs

15 information stands at each information fair



How well did we do it?

Public feedback

100% members of the public completing the evaluation rated the event as good or very good.

What could have been better?

"Nothing"

"Location for footfall"

"Time- earlier or in the evening"

"More time"

"(Better) information and signs on how to enter the building"

What was good about the event?

"Location, facilities"

"The staff were all very kind and helpful. I got lots of useful information"

"Wide range of Stalls. Friendly people"

"A great variety of practical support available and a wealth of information"

"Learning how smoking impacts your body and what help there is to quit"

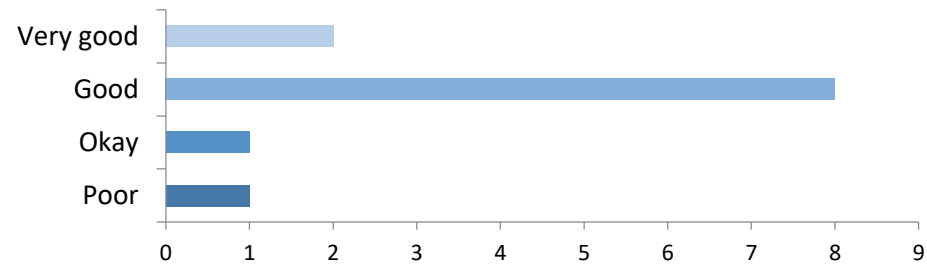
"The stalls had lots of information"



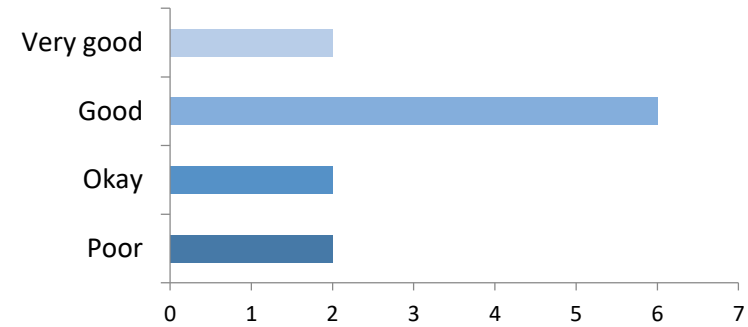
How well did we do it?

Staff feedback

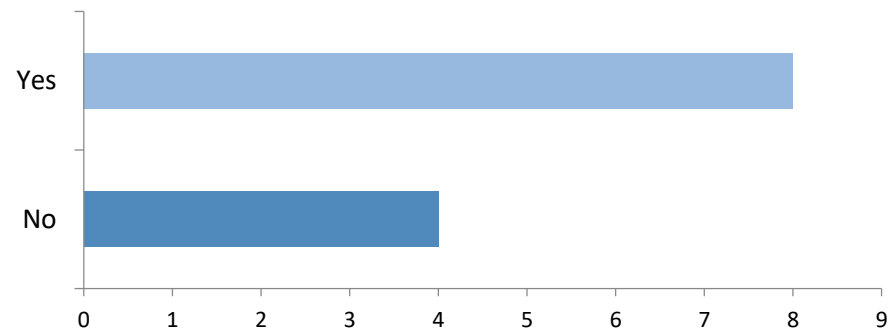
What did you think of the venue?



What did you think of the event?

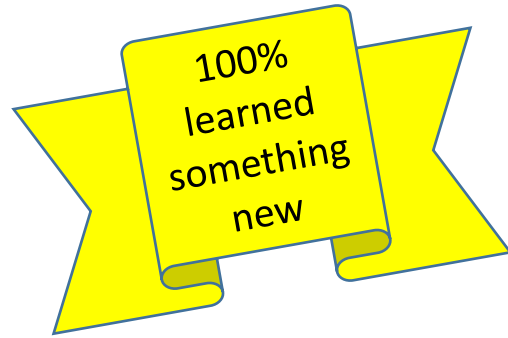


Did you learn anything new?



Is anyone better off?

Public feedback



“Had a lot of helpful advice about benefits, groups and things to do in the area”

“Benefit Advice, Environmental Health, UC Advice, Community Advice”

“Learnt about Services”

“So many ideas for saving energy and recipes”

“Range of services available for support and signposting”

“Help for Stop Smoking”

Staff feedback

Did you learn anything new, if so what?

- Great opportunity for networking, finding out more about services to signpost families to, and little pockets of money available in funds we were not aware of.
- Spoke to other organisations to learn more about help they offer and places we could refer clients to
- Although I had heard about voluntary organisations, such as the Baby Bank this event provided an opportunity to find out more about their services and what they do.
- I learnt that you can make a smoothie with a bicycle!
- It was great meeting everyone and networking with other groups
- Meeting and networking with other groups, putting a face to a name after Zoom/Covid
- Was able to network with other organisations and made links with our work that can be built upon.
- The public are not aware of the access to the Des Allen Suite. Also not too many attended and of those who did some had difficulty finding where the event was situated
- About various Agencies that I can refer and signpost local vulnerable families to

Staff feedback

Will you change anything in your work as a result of something here today?

- Increase to signposting resources
- Consider more organisations I could signpost clients to.
- We always strive to get useful information out to the people who need it the most, however, there is so much to be gained by speaking to someone directly about the services they provide. This reminds us to seek out more opportunities to speak to people face to face and link in with public events.
- Personally no, my role doesn't involve providing direct support though.
- Networking contacts
- Hopefully open up some new partnerships with other organisations.

What went well

The wide range of organisations involved in the event. Networking opportunities

What could have been better

It's possible a different venue with more footfall or different activities or at a different time of day may have attracted more people to attend.

Thanks

Thanks to the Antrim Ballymena CYPSP LPG Cost of Living task and finish group, the chairs, the speakers, the information stand staff and all involved in the day.