

Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 21 October 2021 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt and by Virtual Means

Members Present	Councillor Molloy, Chair Councillors Ashton*, Black (7.10 pm), Burton*, Clarke*, Corry*, Cuddy*, Doris*, Elattar*, Hughes*, Kerr*, McNamee*, Milne*, Monteith*,
Officers in Attendance	Mr Brown, Head of Tourism Ms Linney, Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development Ms McKeown, Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Strategic Programmes Ms Grogan, Democratic Services Officer
Others in	Councillor S McGuigan***

Deputations

Empower Project re Tourettes Group
Inland Waterways Association of Ireland - Blackwater Branch
Mid Ulster Pride
Deirdre Murphy re Conflict in Gaza

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

*** Denotes Others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor Molloy in introducing the meeting detailed the operational arrangements for transacting the business of the committee in the chamber and by virtual means, by referring to Annex A to this minute.

D190/21 Apologies

Chief Executive.

D191/21 Declarations of Interest

The Chair Councillor Molloy reminded Members of their responsibility with regard to declaration of interest.

D192/21 Chair's Business

The Chair advised that questions would be taken after each completed presentation.

The Chair advised that Councillor Kerr wished to raise an issue under Chair's Business and invited him to address the committee.

Councillor Kerr thanked the Chair and members for allowing him the opportunity to raise this important matter tonight.

He referred to the survey which was being carried out by both the Secondary Students Union and the Parent Engagement Group on the affordability of school uniforms. Both organisations were seeking school students' views on uniform costs amid huge concerns on high prices and branded PE kits.

He advised that research carried out by the Parent Engagement Group found that the average price spent on post primary school uniforms was £378 and £173 on primary school levels, with one Grammar school in the north's PE kit costing up to £259. This is a huge amount and very difficult for working class families and whilst grants were available in some cases this only covered a fraction of the cost. Over this last number of years school uniform prices had dramatically increased but the impact on students and families has been hugely ignored.

With the recent School Uniform Exchange Programme carried out by the Volunteers of the Coalisland Community Foodbank and Dungannon Youth Resource Centre which was a helping hand for hundreds of local families.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr

That the Council write to all Primary and Secondary Schools within our Council area to make them aware of this survey and encourage their students to participate and to invite the Secondary Students Union and Parents Engagement Group into a future committee meeting to educate Council more on the School Uniform campaign and other pressing issues.

Seconded by Councillor Corry

Councillor Corry said that she was happy to second Councillor Kerr's proposal as she was aware of the Students Union currently carrying out a campaign on it which was a very worthwhile campaign. She agreed that the rising cost of school uniforms was a huge struggle for families to take on and the whole branding of PE kits and socks etc. was very expensive. She referred to the discussion around gender neutral uniforms where people would have a choice and very important for Council to carry this work forward.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to:

- 1) Write to all Primary and Secondary Schools within our Council area to make them aware of this survey and encourage their students to participate.
- 2) Invite the Secondary Students Union and Parents Engagement Group into a future committee meeting to educate Council more on the School Uniform campaign and other pressing issues.

The Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development advised that she would take this matter on board.

D193/21 Empower Project re Tourette's Group

The Chair welcomed to the committee Ms Josie McGuckin from Empower Project and Ms Louise and Deaglan McCallion re Tourette's Group (appendix 1).

Ms McGuckin advised that the Empower Project was a community project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund NI. The Empower Project is led by a community organisation called DADS (Dyslexia, Autism, Dyspraxia Support) which has been operating for over 20 years and was originally set up as a self-help group for parents who have children with learning difficulties.

Councillor Black entered the meeting at 7.10 pm.

She advised that the Empower Project had recently been supporting a local family whose child was being monitored for ASD. His parents became concerned about his involuntary body and vocal tics as these behaviours were causing problems for the child both at school, at home and in all social situations. The Empower Project began to suspect Tourette Syndrome and they tried to get statistical evidence about this condition in Northern Ireland. It was discovered that no statistics were actually available so it was felt that there was little/no support for these children with Tourette's. A call was made on social media to find out if there were many families locally with children who had Tourette's and to everyone's amazement, 10 families contacted the Empower Project. Tourette Syndrome is a neurodevelopmental (brain condition) which can be lifelong or children can grow out of it. Tourette's is not rare as many as 1 in 100 individuals show signs of Tourette Syndrome, most of them remain undiagnosed, misdiagnosed, and/or misunderstood. Tourette's is genetic and affects males more than females with no cure and no medical test that can tell you if you have it. These children are referred to CAMHS for intervention and are often prescribed drugs to help the condition. Tourette Syndrome begins in childhood between the ages of 2-18, with the average age of onset is between the ages of 6-8. Most people associate Tourette's with verbal or physical Tics and found that:

- Criteria for Diagnosis
- Diagnosing Tourette Syndrome is a long and difficult process
- There are few experts in this field

Environmental factors that may impact Tourette Symptoms:

Stress	Anxiety
Fatigue	Excitement
Holidays	Illness
Hunger	Life & School Transitions

Ms McGuckin advised that Deaglan and his mother Louise would like to speak to committee to outline his experience of Tourette's Syndrome.

Deaglan thanked the committee for allowing him to opportunity to tell his story and his personal experiences of dealing with Tourette's Syndrome on a daily basis. He updated the committee on his daily challenges and said that he had one short and simple point to make "Be Kind".

Mrs McCallion said that her family would like to see more awareness and more understanding for what her son went through on a daily basis. She said that they were lucky that people were there to help like Empowerment Group and Councillor Milne who had done so much for them as a family. She said that doing normal family things like going shopping and other things makes it so much harder for them when staff members were pointing fingers, laughing, sniggering and being refused from cinemas and many other places and stressed that Deaglan had a human right to be a child too. She said that her family would really appreciate help and support with getting awareness in the public domain of Tourettes. She commended the support from Ms McGuckin and her team at Empower which they done for her family alone, which has been a lifeline for them as there was nowhere else they could turn to as there was nothing there for Tourettes Syndrome and pleaded for help for her family.

The Chair thanked Deaglan and his mother for their comments and said that he knew from their presentation that everyone which was online tonight wouldn't have been emotionally affected by this and have empathy for the family and thanked them for bringing this to members attention. He said that awareness and education will bring down barriers and was amazed at some of the statistics that 1 in 100 develop some kind of symptom and advised that a few members wished to come in and make some comments/questions.

Councillor Milne said that he was pleased to see the McCallion family again and stated that this situation was really well explained by them tonight and an excellent presentation as this was the reality of life for Deaglan and his family. He said that for 10 years this family hasn't had a break as there was no respite or nothing else and all built in around family. He referred to this Council which was very caring, supportive and recognised all the needs of people and asked that Council Officials make contact with Ms McGuckin and the McCallion family to see what they could do to further support to raise awareness from the Council and do whatever we can do to further look out. He stated that on behalf of his own party he had brought the matter to the attention of Stormont and they were currently researching and prepare statistics and said that a meeting with Ms McGuckin and the McCallion family would be coming to the fore very soon. He concluded by saying that this presentation was excellent and very heartfelt and thanked them all for coming into tonight.

Councillor Elattar thanked Ms McGuckin for the presentation and also Deaglan and his parents for their contribution including the videos and said that there definitely needed to be a lot more awareness of Tourettes Syndrome and stated what stuck in her mind the most from this evenings presentation was Deaglan's words "Be Kind" and this should be a message which should be taken away for everyone in every aspect of life. He felt that the Council and other organisations within the local community could do with having awareness raised and an education event and thanked Deaglan for his input tonight.

Councillor Monteith shared previous members sentiments and thanked Ms McGuckin, Deaglan and his family for an excellent presentation and commended Councillor Milne on his work so far in bringing this forward to the Council as some good work was going on. He said that it was an area he would have some knowledge off but not an awful lot and thanked Deaglan's parents for allowing members to see the closed videos which were made public, but felt it was important that the videos were shared to raise awareness. He felt that it was important to have Deaglan and others like him to educate and teach the Council and staff about raising awareness about the difficulties which they face and felt it may be an encompassing thing which may be worked upon as months go on especially when he heard Deaglan's mother saying that they weren't allowed into the cinema and shops amongst other things. He advised that the Council would have provided funding over the years for retail staff and felt it may be worth investigating about building this into the staff training and also building into our Economic Development funding about Tourette friendly shops and Tourette friendly staff and across our different venues and definitely thinks that this was something that could be taken forward. He felt it was important to get the bit between the teeth and take forward in conjunction with Deaglan's family and indeed the many other families out there. He commended the presentation and well done to Ms McGuckin, Deaglan and his family for all the work which was already going on and something that the Council could really take a grasp of.

Ms McGuckin thanked Councillor Monteith and said that they welcomed his comments.

Councillor Corry thanked Ms Guckin, Deaglan and his parents for the fantastic presentation and concurred with previous comments. She said what has come out of this tonight was awareness and education from what Deaglan had said on the video about when it was explained to his class about his condition their understanding and acceptance went a long way. He said if there was anything the Council could do amongst staff and leisure centres and putting the programme out further for awareness regarding cinemas and retail sectors etc. then we should try our best to accommodate that.

Ms McGuckin advised that the Empower Project can also provide training to staff and to any other members which need it.

The Chair thanked Ms McGuckin, Deaglan and his parents for coming along tonight and providing the presentation to make members aware of this condition and empowering the Council to possibly do something about it. He asked that Ms McGuckin and Council Officials to make contact to see what Council could do in the future to help out. He thanked the star of the show Deaglan for coming along and letting members know the difficulties he endured on a daily basis.

Deaglan said that he found the whole experience tonight amazing as everyone on the zoom call was just so kind.

The group withdrew from the meeting at 7.30 pm.

D194/21 Inland Waterways Association of Ireland - Blackwater Branch

The Chair advised that no representation was in attendance tonight from Inland Waterways Association of Ireland - Blackwater Branch.

D195/21 Mid Ulster Pride

The Chair welcomed to the committee Ms Molly Farrell and Mr Joshua Cuddy from Mid Ulster Pride and invited them to make her presentation (appendix 2).

Ms Farrell advised that statistics provided in 2019 by Queen's University Centre for Children's Rights and Common Youth found that 60% of students who received the RSE was not useful. 73% said that they rarely or never received the RSE and even more shockingly 1 in 5 male teenagers do not think consent is required for sex.

She said that Mid Ulster Pride represented Celebration, Loving and Belonging.

She highlighted their short term and long terms goals:

Short term goals were: Training from the Rainbow Project, HEReNI and other charities; Bring that training into the community; Work with businesses or the Council in creating an LGPTQ+ Safe Space.

Long term goals were: Bring the training into schools; Establishing a Safe Space Class within schools of Mid Ulster; Working with parents to improve their knowledge.

The Chair thanked Ms Farrell for her impressive presentation and was inspiring to hear what the group were doing and how she was affected herself growing up and her development as a person.

Councillor Corry thanked Molly and Josh for their presentation. She advised that she had met Molly at Mid Ulster Pride a few times and felt it was heart-breaking that people have to leave their own homes and move to another country to be who they are and felt that this needed to change as everyone needed to be treated with equality and respect and be who there are in the place in which they live in and where they were from. She said that she was looking forward to the Coffee Morning on Saturday and said that when you were at a Pride Event it was great to see so many people together happy, the music and the buzz and stated that the group were doing brilliant and was looking forward to the events next year and wished them every success. She said that it was important that Council do everything they possibly could to support the group.

Councillor Kerr thanked Molly and Josh for their presentation and advised that he had recently attended their fundraiser in Coalisland. He referred to their annual Pride event in Cookstown and said that it was unfortunate that he couldn't stay longer due to other

commitments, but wished them every success going forward and looked forward to attending future events. He said that he was very sorry to hear that Molly had to leave home due to her sexual orientation, it's the 21st century and people needed to realise that discrimination like this was no longer acceptable as everyone was equal and love is love. He referred to comment regarding the education system and sexual consent and said that he wholeheartedly agreed with her and believed that the education system needed an overhaul as sexual consent needed to be taught in schools and also acceptance from the LGPTQ+ community. He said that there was a great focus after the devastating murder of Sarah Everard regarding sexual consent and misogyny towards women and totally agreed but said that these were conversations for another time. He thanked the group for their presentation and hoped going forward that the Council could be a progressive organisation helping the group out.

Councillor Hughes echoed her fellow colleagues comments and thanked Molly and Josh for attending the meeting tonight to update the committee. She said that on behalf of herself and SDLP colleagues they would like to do anything they could to help the group out and was a great honour to walk with Mid Ulster Pride in Cookstown in September and looked forward to the next event.

Councillor Burton thanked Molly and Josh for coming along tonight and welcomed them to the committee tonight. She advised that she wished to come across humbly and respectfully but also wanted to say about her understanding. She said that she knew that the group were seeking to have respect for their community and for their beliefs and she asked for the same as someone who believes the Bible and would put a lot of faith on what the Bible tells us about what's best for our lives and believed that it had the ultimate wisdom, guidance and truth for all our lives. She said that she would like to say that where we all wish to seek dignity and respect, she would also want to have that for people who were different from the beliefs of others with different opinions and not the popular choice in today's society which has already been said in the meeting to hold fast to what was Biblical teaching. She said that she really believed that where your life was concerned, she really enjoyed having her faith, praying and reading her Bible and really believed that the living word of God which can really change lives and from that prospective, she also believed that God created man and woman and that was the first marriage between Adam and Eve and really believed that this was like a prototype of how marriage was set up in the Lord's eyes. She felt that the Bible was a really good teaching point to come from and said that she believed that the Vatican held the same views and certainly defended the freedom of personal rights and said that the group had their beliefs and she had hers and whilst she wished to be respectful, thoughtful and really say this passionately with conviction but also with empathy as she wouldn't want to come across as someone who was harsh. She believed that too much of the past was around religion and that religion was man's attempt to reach God, but felt that Jesus and his love was God's way to reach man and thanked the committee for listening to her.

Councillor Monteith welcomed Molly and Josh to the Development Committee and commended them for their presentation which was very well spoken and a daunting process which took a lot of courage. He said that it was great to hear the experiences the group has had but also distressing to hear some of the other experiences which had been expressed very eloquently and was saddened to hear that Molly felt the need to leave her home because of who she was, but thankfully she was back now and hoped

that she felt a little bit more comfortable and hoped that events which were being run help towards that. He advised that when he spoke to Josh on the day of Pride he was very complimentary of the Council Officers already about working closely with them which he was glad about and hoped that this may continue in the future. He referred to the previous presentation from the Tourettes Group and said that this also needed to be a process rather than a one-off as relationships needed to be built on compassion and working together to get the message. He referred to the presentations here tonight and summed up the words described by Deaglan earlier which epitomised as “Be Kind” and felt this was very appropriate to the experiences of what the group was going through. He said it was fair play to the group which has been a beacon as he was aware of a number of people within the group’s community locally which did not feel in a position at this stage to attend Mid Ulster Pride events as he had been talking to a few of them in the run up to the event but were appreciative that these were taking place. He said that these people hoped that possibly next year may be the year for them and said that it was a great thing that they were doing and wished the group all the best.

Councillor Elattar wished to thank Molly and Josh for coming along to the committee meeting tonight to make their presentation. She said that like the other speakers, she found it very sad that young people including Molly had to move away for their local community because they cannot be who they are within their own local areas. She commended to group on the work they were doing and hoped to attend the next event organised by Mid Ulster Pride and was unfortunate she was unable to attend this year. She enquired where the group’s events were advertised.

Ms Farrell advised that events were advertised on Facebook and Instagram. She said that the group were slowly getting the hang of Twitter and hoped to start looking at formulating a newsletter to provide updates as often as possible.

Mr Cuddy also added that Mid Ulster Pride had a website – midulsterpride.com – which was up and running but not fully populated with events yet but was a good place to go to get all the relevant information.

Councillor Cuddy congratulated the group on their fantastic presentation and said that they were young people coming through this part of the outside world and was aware that they were following their passion and wished them well. He said if Mid Ulster Council could help them in any way then they would.

Mr Cuddy thanked Molly for providing the presentation and let the committee know how pleased the group were to have had great help from Mid Ulster Council, especially from Good Relations Department who were very good to them and hoped that this could continue going forward. He reiterated with what Molly had said about the group providing training and hoped that this would be a bit better sorted for the group also. He commended Councillor Burton and said that it was a hard thing for her to say and did it very well with a lot of eloquence and everyone at Mid Ulster Pride respect everybody’s views and encourage people to go even when there was protests, everyone was entitled to their views and entitlement to be existence and hoped that a favourable arrangement can be reached without stepping on each other’s toes. He advised that the group was founded by a member of the Church of Ireland Andrew Rawding and he thought the message that Jesus left us was “*do unto others as you would have them do unto you*”

which was a message of love and acceptance and that was one of the group's guiding principles were; belonging, love and celebration. He said that everyone was entitled to their views and everyone at Mid Ulster Pride had great respect for that and had a broad diverse range of people with religious views on their committee and can be a very divisive issue, religion and LGPTQ+ matters, and this was left for people to make up their own minds. The group just wants to make the world a bit safer and habitable for people who were living this life as it was not a choice that the person gets to make and a hand which has been dealt, much in the same way as any other form in which life takes which there was no choice in and were just here to try and make it more easy and comfortable as possible for everyone.

Ms Farrell advised that she left this country when she was 19 to go and live in a foreign country that didn't speak English and that was the first country she felt safe and comfortable enough to hold a girl's hand as she walked down a street. She advised the committee that she was of a very strong faith which she had a deep love and compassion and she felt that through that love she was able to come back to this country and do what she was doing and not be as scared as she had been. She said at the start it was not easy to do Mid Ulster Pride and often a long night of wanting to hide due to shame and that burning desire for nobody to know you and thought to herself if this was how she was going to feel, then how do people feel who have not lived as she has and said that this was something she wanted the committee to think about. She said she wished to feel comfortable living in her country but still couldn't bring herself to hold a girl's hand, but would support anyone who wished to try and thanked the committee for listening to her and being so courteous.

The Chair thanked the group for their presentation and their words and hoped in time there would be a situation where a person can walk down a street with whoever they love in this country very soon and would fully support the group on that. He thanked the group for coming along tonight and wished them all the best for the future.

Representatives from Mid Ulster Pride left the meeting at 8 pm.

D196/21 Deirdre Murphy re Conflict in Gaza

The Chair welcomed to the committee Ms Deirdre Murphy re Conflict in Gaza and invited her to make her presentation.

Ms Murphy advised that in 2015 she visited Palestine as part of a Trade Union delegation to witness the situation first-hand. The group met with a variety of people in Palestinian society from teachers and farmers to doctors, as well as members of the Bedouin community. She said what shocked her with all of these people was the lengths to which Israel goes to make their lives impossible i.e. stopping an ambulance and holding it up for hours, likewise holding doctors and nurses at some of the numerous checkpoints which you find around the Occupied Territory.

The farmer, for instance, had guns trained on him constantly while he was trying to grow his produce and at night the army would come in, wreck everything he had and pull up all his produce, but still he persevered.

One night her group went at 2am to a large area of wasteland where Palestinians queue for hours to enter what could only be described as cattle cages to enter Israel for menial badly paid jobs. This process, which involves them being fingerprinted, searched and delayed, can take up to three hours. Were it not for the arrogance of the Israelis in charge, from countries around the world, whose role is to make this experience as unpleasant as possible for the workers, this process would take just minutes. These workers barely see their children in the week.

That was one of the images that could never be forgotten. The other image was while visiting Hebron, a once vibrant Palestinian city, now a ghost city where it's impossible to see a Palestinian in its commercial centre as they are being ethnically cleansed from there. The Israeli Defence Force clear them from their homes and move the settlers in instead, thus ensuring the city's economy is destroyed.

She advised that during this visit, they encountered settlers who denied there had ever been a place called Palestine, their guide, a Palestinian university professor, was not allowed to escort them in certain parts of Hebron, although it has always been a Palestinian city. She said that her group had to be led by young Israeli guides, ex-members of the IDF, who had left the IDF as they refused to continue persecuting Palestinians. When they met back near the coach, the guide was frogmarched away by the IDF and had to take a taxi to meet them later. He had been walking a few metres on a road that Palestinians were not allowed to use and the image of that gentle man's face as he was dragged away will forever encapsulate Israel as an apartheid state in her mind.

She stated that the group also visited a reservoir that used to supply the Palestinians with their water and is now redirecting it to the many illegal settlements so they can have swimming pools and lush green grass. What was most shocking was to see that they had employed a Palestinian to oversee the reservoir knowing he could never avail of this water for himself and his people and this was the only way he could earn a living. Palestinians have to buy their own water back from the Israelis where it is stored on the roofs of their homes in tanks.

She referred to another memory while staying in Bethlehem the group asked a taxi driver if he could drive them to Jerusalem, a twenty-minute drive away, were it not for checkpoints, he said he was unable to do so and broke down as he told us why. Even though his wife had cancer he could not take her to hospital in Jerusalem as only men of over 65 could travel there, he had family in Jerusalem and could not visit the city, but our group which came from thousands of miles away could. The illegal settlers have their own apartheid roads connecting them directly to Jerusalem, while Palestinians travelling to work or to study or to visit family or hospital might take up to six hours to travel through the network of checkpoints.

Ms Murphy said that like everyone who visits the Occupied Territory and East Jerusalem (it is impossible to visit Gaza) she was traumatised by the inhumanity of the occupation and the casual cruelty of the way Palestinians were treated. This is something will stay with her forever and is impossible to forget. In Ramallah there is a mural that says, 'now you have seen, you are responsible.' That is true for everyone I know who has been to

Palestine, and there are many. When you return you feel an obligation to tell the truth of what you saw and would urge people to visit for yourselves and to tell that truth.

The Chair thanked Ms Murphy for her presentation and her personal experiences which made it all the more heart-rendering, especially when it was witnessed with her own two eyes. He said that this took us back to the previous presentation regarding humanity and people coming back here and nothing changes. He referred to people from all around the world observing this but this still continues to go on and have to ask yourself why nothing has changed.

Councillor Kerr thanked Ms Murphy for providing the committee with her very emotive account of her business to Palestine. He agreed with comment regarding the deliberate dehumanisation of the Palestinian people from the Arabs and the account Ms Murphy has portrayed does not be mentioned by the mainstream media and a one-set narrative where it was self defence against Palestinian militant groups but more to do with dehumanisation, it's supremacist, fascism and the exact same way a certain state treated other people in the 40's and just textbook tactics and nothing has changed.

He wished to thank Ms Murphy for carrying out her humanitarian work and for outlining her account and it may be the case that some Councillors saying that as a Council in the North of Ireland how could we help the Palestinian people, he said that this was done by challenging the mainstream narrative and educating people and letting people know about the horrific events and the living hell the Palestinian people endure on a daily basis. He said that in Gaza, missiles and fighter jets swooped overhead and was aware that previously Council had passed a motion supporting the BDS Movement as a corporate position and hoped that engagement could take place with Council Officers on how they maximise that motion and also to help Ms Murphy and other activists on the telling of the Palestinian peoples cause.

The Chair thanked Ms Murphy for coming along to the meeting tonight to provide her personal experience and said that awareness and education was key to make people aware of the situation on the ground and wished her and other activists the best of luck.

Ms Murphy advised that every single person could help the Palestinian people by just being human beings and said that this was not about religion but more to do with pure inhumanity and genocide of the Palestinian people. She said that everyone could help by reading all the Jewish/Israeli authors like Ilan Pappé, Abby Stein, Gideon Levy and Mikhal Dekel. If members wished to read about Palestine or to know more then she would encourage everyone to read a book by Miko Peled called 'The General's Son' which was a brilliant book and really easily read as this was about Miko's father who was a General in the Israeli army and this can also be listened to on YouTube or audio. She said that everyone can all help by boycotting Israeli produce and boycotting Hewlett Packard, Puma and McDonald's who were all huge contributors and all these companies were keeping the occupation and the absolute inhumanity towards these people who had done nothing other than being born and reared on their own land. She advised that no-one was saying that Israel cannot occupy piece of the land as it was given to them by the British state, but when Israel was committing genocide in such a dreadful, blatant way and being supported by America with \$4 billion a year then this was the issue. She concluded by quoting the Reverend Bill Shaw from Belfast as she went to a talk that he

done a few years ago after he went with a cross community delegation of people years previous to Palestine and he said *'I saw and it was my duty to come back and speak'*.

Ms Murphy thanked the committee for listening to her presentation and inviting her along tonight.

The Chair advised that this concluded the presentation for this evening and thanked everyone for their attendance this evening.

D197/21 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 8.22 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

I specifically welcome the public watching us through the Live Broadcast. The Live Broadcast will run for the period of our Open Business but will end just before we move into Confidential Business. I let you know before this happens.

Just some housekeeping before we commence. Can I remind you:-

- If you have joined the meeting remotely please keep your audio on mute unless invited to speak and then turn it off when finished speaking
- Keep your video on at all times, unless you have bandwidth or internet connection issues, where you are advised to try turning your video off
- If you wish to speak please raise your hand in the meeting or on screen and keep raised until observed by an Officer or myself
- Should we need to take a vote this evening please raise your hand in the normal way and keep raised until advised to lower it
- When invited to speak please introduce yourself by name to the meeting
- For any member attending remotely, if you declare an interest in an item, please turn off your video and keep your audio on mute for the duration of the item
- If referring to a specific report please reference the report, page or slide being referred to
- Lastly, I remind the public and press that taking photographs of proceedings or using any means to enable anyone not present to see or hear proceedings, or making a simultaneous oral report of the proceedings are not permitted

Thank you and we will now move to the first item on the agenda.

DADS/Empower Project & Tourette's Support NI

Presentation to Mid Ulster District Council
Development Committee

Thursday 21st October 2021



DADS & Empower Project Manager

Josie McGuckin



DADS & Empower Project Manager

Josie McGuckin





Empower Project is a community project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund NI. The Empower Project is led by a community organisation called DADS (Dyslexia, Autism, Dyspraxia Support) which has been operating for over 20 years and was originally set up as a self-help group for parents who have children with learning difficulties.

During this time, we have touched the lives of thousands of families all over Northern Ireland by supporting them, being the listening ear, teaching families new skills and strategies to help them with their children and acting as an advocate for families working with statutory agencies



In 2015 DADS in partnership with the NRC (Northern Regional College), Magherafelt was successful in developing a 5-year project called the Empower Project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund NI where parents, the wider family circle, and professionals were offered information sessions, training sessions, parent and professional conferences, activities for the children and siblings, coffee mornings/support meetings for parents.



Recently we have been able to offer parents and professionals the opportunity to achieve a CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Autism and OCN Level 2 in ADHD. Since 2015 11,000 participants have engaged in Empower Activities.



Since January 2021 we have moved into a 2 year extension programme piloting a Social Enterprise concept by introducing a small cost for some or all activities to allow the DADS group to try and sustain its current activities after the funding ends in December 2022



The Empower Project has recently been supporting a local family whose child was being monitored for ASD. His parents became concerned about his involuntary body and vocal tics. These behaviours were causing problems for the child both at school, at home and in all social situations. We began suspect Tourette Syndrome.



The Empower tried to get statistical evidence about this condition in Northern Ireland. They discovered that no statistics were actually available so it was felt that there was little/no support for these children with Tourette's

A call was made on social media to find out if there were many families locally with children who had Tourette's and to our amazement we had 10 families contact the Empower Project



What is Tourette Syndrome?



Tourette Syndrome is a neurodevelopmental (brain condition) which can be lifelong or children can grow out of it.

Tourette's is not rare; As many as 1 in 100 individuals show signs of Tourette Syndrome- most of them remain undiagnosed, misdiagnosed, and/or misunderstood.

Tourette's is genetic and affects males more than females

There is no cure and no medical test that can tell you if you have it. These children are referred to CAMHS for intervention and are often prescribed drugs to help the condition.

Tourette Syndrome begins in childhood between the ages of 2-18. The average age of onset is between the ages of 6-8. Most people associate Tourette's with verbal or physical Tics.



So, what are Tics?

Tourette's
SUPPORT N.I.



Here for You

Tics are an involuntary, repetitive motor movement or vocalization

Sometimes children shake their heads every few seconds or blink their eyes or twist their wrists which makes learning in school very difficult. They may also use curse words or other socially inappropriate phrases.

Other students may tease, make fun of and imitate the tics because they don't understand.



Criteria for Diagnosis

Diagnosing Tourette Syndrome is a long and difficult process

There are few experts in this field



To get help a child must:

Have at least 2 motor tics

Have at least 1 vocal tic

Tics do NOT have to be concurrent

Childhood onset before the age of 18

There has to be at least one year since the onset of first tic in most circumstances.

This creates major problems for both the children and their parents



MOTOR TICS

Simple Motor Tics: Eye blinking, grimacing, nose twitching, leg movements, shoulder shrugs, arm and head jerks, etc.

Complex Motor Tics; Hopping, clapping

Complex Motor Tics; Hopping, clapping, throwing, touching (self, others, objects), funny expressions, sticking tongue out, kissing, pinching, tearing paper or books, echopraxia (repeating actions), copropraxia (obscene gestures)



Vocal Tics:

Simple Vocal Tics: Whistling, coughing, sniffing, screeching, animal noises, grunting, throat clearing.

Complex Vocal Tics: Linguistically meaningful utterances such as – “I’ve got it”, “Oh boy”. “Now you’ve seen it”.

Speech Atypicalities: Unusual rhythms, tones, accents, intensity of speech, stuttering



Other types of Vocal Tics:

Echolalia: Involuntary repetition of someone else's words

Palilalia: Involuntary repetition of one's own words

Coprolalia: Involuntary utterance of curse words or other socially inappropriate phrases or sentences.



Other Tics: (Not everyone with tics has Tourette Syndrome)

Transient Tic Disorder of Childhood: One or two tics that last from a few weeks to a few months, don't change and eventually disappear.

Chronic Motor and Vocal Tic Disorder: One or two tics appear in childhood never change and never go away.



The nature of Tics:

Naturally wax and wane

Change in appearance and frequency

Change in severity and intensity

Can sometimes be suppressed for short periods of time

Can be suggestible

Can appear to be purposeful

Tics seem to worsen during pre-puberty and puberty



Environmental factors that may impact Tourette Symptoms:

Stress

Fatigue

Holidays

Hunger

Anxiety

Excitement

Illness

Life & School Transitions

Tourette's
SUPPORT N.I.



Here for You

Suppression of Symptoms can result in:

Worsening symptoms

Inability to concentrate on task at hand

Shutting down

Fatigue and/or worsening of symptoms at end of day

Classroom meltdowns

Often explosion of symptoms at home



How has the Empower
Project helped these
children with Tourette
Syndrome?



Promoted Tourette's Awareness month (15th April – 15th May) with a video from a local child –Deaglan McCallion

The National Lottery Communications Team made contact with BBC to take a short video with Deaglan, his parents and Manager of Empower emphasising the need for more research and support

A What's App group has been developed for parents to support each other and share experiences.

A get together was organised for parents and children in Seamus Heaney Centre Bellaghy.



Set up a community group called Tourette's Support NI
Formed a Facebook page with Deaglan McCallion
designing the logo

With the help and support of Cllr Ian Milne met Deputy
First Minister Michelle O'Neill

Attending an awareness and promotion evening in
ASDA Cookstown on Tuesday 26th October to try and
make staff and customers aware of Tourette Syndrome
and promote acceptance.



Tourette's Support NI aim to offer the following:

Regular support meetings for parents

A range of activities and outings for children with Tourette's and their friends

Awareness and promotion campaigns in local communities and with statutory agencies

A Facebook page for sharing information

Social media platforms for engagement and interaction between parents and children



As you can see Deaglan and all the children who have Tourette Syndrome need help and support. Their childhood has been damaged and they feel isolated and often humiliated. Deaglan's message to society is short and to the point.

“Be Kind”



What are we asking for?

We want the Council to understand the nature of neurodiversity. One in 4 of the population has a learning difficulty. Apart from Tourettes we have ASD, ADHD, OCD leading to depression, anxiety, aggressive or explosive behaviour, lack of social or emotional skills. Very often accompanied by an inability to communicate their pain.

We want the Council to let us train both their members and their staff to understand these conditions.



We want the Council to push learning difficulties and support families as they would for children who have obvious physical disabilities

We want the Council to understand that there is no difference between being blind, being deaf and being mentally challenged.

We want the Council to work with us, continue to support us and help to fund into the future the work we have begun.



Contact Information:

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Facebook: @tourettessupportni



Mid Ulster Pride Presentation



-
- **Good evening, and thank you.**
 - **My name is Molly Farrell, I am speaking on behalf of Mid Ulster Pride.**
 - **Address a short term and long term plan for Mid Ulster.**
-

Shame

“Shame feels like an exposure - another has seen what I have done that is so bad and hence shameful - but it also involves the attempt to hide” (Sara Ahmed, 2016)

The statistics

- 2019 by Queen's University Centre for Children's Rights and Common Youth found that 60% of students who received the RSE was not useful.

Even more shockingly 1 in 5 male teenagers do not think consent is required for sex.

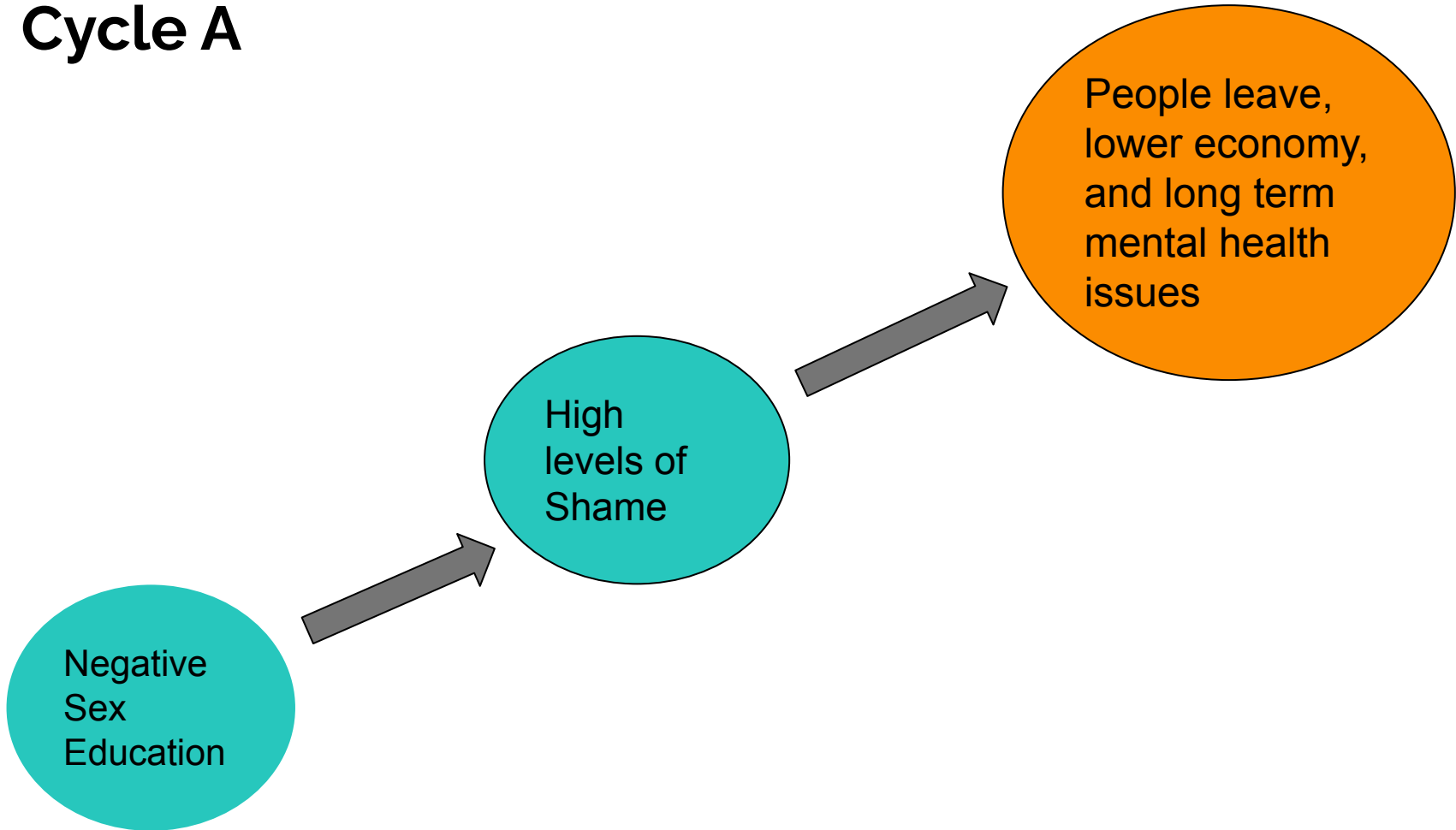
- 73% said that they rarely or never received the RSE
-

Mid Ulster Pride

- Celebration
- Loving
- Belonging



Cycle A



Cycle B

Improve the
Sex Education



Reduce the
shame felt within
LGBTQI
Community



LGBTQI People
stay in Northern
Ireland as they
feel safe



The economy of Northern
Ireland thus, grows.
People feel safe, and
don't feel as ashamed to
be themselves.



People stay, invest
in business and
bring more creative
ideas to the sector

Short Term Goals

- Training from The Rainbow Project, HERe NI, and other charities
 - Bring that training into the community
 - Work with businesses or the council in creating an LGBTQ Safe Space.
-

Long Term Goals

- Bringing the training into schools
 - Establishing a Safe Space Class within schools of Mid Ulster.
 - Working with parents to improve their knowledge
-

THANK YOU

