



City of Doncaster Council

Winner of the Family Learning to Support Health and Wellbeing Award

[City of Doncaster Council](#) delivers a wide range of public services to support the wellbeing, prosperity and resilience of local residents, communities, and businesses. Its work spans education, public health, housing, social care, culture, economic development and environmental sustainability.

Within the council, the Work & Skills Service plays a key part in adult, community, and family learning – delivering programmes in schools, family hubs, libraries and community settings. The service supports residents of all ages to build skills, confidence, improve quality of life, and access pathways into further learning or work.

The service works closely with schools, voluntary organisations, employers, and community groups to ensure learning is inclusive, accessible, and relevant. It has a strong focus on reducing inequalities, supporting multilingual communities, and engaging people who face barriers such as low confidence, unemployment, or language needs.

"The project made me feel like it mattered...there's a product they can point to and say, 'I did that.'"

Family Learning to Support Health and Wellbeing: Food for Thought

The Food for Thought: Cultivating Communities through Cultural Cuisine programme was developed to respond to significant health and wellbeing needs in Doncaster. Over 45% of households experience or are at risk of food insecurity, with almost 1/3 of primary-aged children not consuming vegetables regularly.

Food for Thought was funded by Remake Learning's Moonshot Grants in Pittsburgh, making Doncaster the first international recipient. The programme was jointly delivered with [Gro Box Ltd](#) and [Doncaster Skills Hub](#). It was also supported by a range of departments within the City of Doncaster Council.

The programme was delivered in two primary schools: Lakeside Primary Academy and Townfield Primary School. It brought families, schools, and partners together to strengthen food confidence, boost free school meal uptake, and build community connection. A key delivery site was Townfield Primary School, one of Doncaster's most culturally diverse settings, with families speaking 43 different languages, making it a powerful environment for exploring inclusive approaches to nutrition.

Food for Thought delivered growing and cooking workshops every two weeks, embedding hands-on intergenerational learning in the school environment. Gardening sessions invited families to plant, grow, and harvest produce using self-watering raised beds. Children and parents experienced the full journey from seed to plate, growing their understanding of food systems and encouraging children to try new foods.

"Before children not eating vegetables... after this session, children like spinach and carrots." – Parent



Cooking sessions fostered culturally inclusive, shared learning through teach-ins and skills swaps. Participants shared dishes from their heritage, exchanging spices and demonstrating cooking techniques, with one commenting, "We describe everything to each other...how you cook, how I cook." This peer-led model positioned families as informal educators, creating a welcoming environment that strengthened confidence.

The programme was designed to be inclusive and engaging for multilingual families. Materials were translated and recipes co-designed with families. Activities were based on practical, hands-on participation rather than written instruction. Food acted as a universal connector, helping families take part regardless of language barriers.

What made Food for Thought distinctive was its emphasis on co-creation, cultural inclusion and accessible learning. It strengthened links between home and school, developing lasting resources, such as a community recipe book.

Impact and next steps

The programme led to clear improvements in confidence, skills, and wellbeing. Parents reported increased confidence in cooking, stronger social connections, and reduced isolation. Children showed greater willingness to try vegetables and developed curiosity about growing and preparing food.

Schools reported improved parental engagement, with the co-created recipe book being adopted into the school menu, supporting wider uptake of free school meals. Attendance data showed consistent engagement across sessions, and qualitative feedback highlighted positive changes in behaviour and attitudes to food at home.

The Food for Thought programme, delivered as a test and learn initiative, enabled partners to refine the model based on their insights. The initiative is now expanding to two additional schools, using a tested model based on co design, cultural inclusion, and hands on learning.

Future plans include strengthening communication pathways, embedding research earlier to enhance evaluation, and supporting schools to deliver the programme independently.



"I've now got friends... before I didn't know who they were. Now I recognise them in the playground." - Parent