

**ITEM No ...8.....**

**REPORT TO:** CITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 19 JANUARY 2026

**REPORT ON:** FAMILY EMPOWERMENT AND WHAT MATTERS TO YOU UPDATE

**REPORT BY:** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES SERVICE AND  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

**REPORT NO:** 6-2026

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide a report of the progress and achievements of Dundee City Council's partnership with What Matters to You (WM2U).
- 1.2 To invite committee to endorse the proposals for sustaining and scaling Dundee's voice-led system change approaches, family empowerment work, including the WM2U partnership.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
  - a Note the progress and achievements to date of the partnership with WM2U summarised at Appendix 1
  - b Endorses the proposals for sustaining and scaling Dundee's voice-led approaches where evidence has found that the approaches support Dundee's strategic objectives.

**3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the agreement of this report.

**4 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 WM2U is a voice-led community-based systems change approach which works alongside families and practitioners to achieve change. The aims of WM2U are aligned with Dundee City Council's aims to transform services for children and families to ensure they are fit for the future and delivering the change required. WM2U aim to support DCC to understand:
  - what matters to families,
  - what families need from others, including services,
  - what families can do for themselves, given the right support.

- 4.2 Officers were remitted to submit an annual report on WM2U activities, Report 297-2024, Article III of the Children, Families & Communities Committee of 28 October 2024 refers.

**5. WM2U CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024 – 2025**

- 5.1 WM2U has been fully funded by The Hunter Foundation and BBC Children in Need. It will have invested over one million pounds in its partnership with Dundee City Council by the time it's work is concluded in June 2026.
- 5.2 The WM2U coordinator supports the Community Empowerment Team in Dundee four days a week, helping develop and share effective practices. A small back-up team provides learning, facilitating and communications support, as required. Up until June 2025, Columba 1400 led for our leadership development support for Local Community Planning Partnerships, and the development of the local decision-making panels for the Make it Happen Fund.

- 5.3 Since then, the Community Empowerment team has transitioned to lead on building local community leadership with the continued support of WM2U and its learning partner, Animate.
- 5.4 Oversight has been provided by the WM2U Oversight and Enabling Board which includes senior leaders from DCC together with police, health and third sector leaders all of whom are committed to embedding this way of working.
- 5.5 The local implementation is sited within the Local Community Planning Partnerships and improving outcomes for children and families using a WM2U approach appear in each Local Community Plan.
- 5.6 WM2U's specific contributions have included investment in a Values Based Leadership programme and place-based community (Café) conversations to deepen local relationships; focus on identifying and implementing actions to follow through on the changes that communities are identifying and saying will make a difference.
- 5.7 WM2U have also introduced the 'Make It Happen Fund' (MIHF), and decisions in six of Dundee's localities are being made by a panel comprised 100% community representation. Each of these will have awarded grants by February 2026.
- 5.8 Evaluation and grant management of MIHF will continue until January 2027 paid for from WM2U funding alongside a further four independent Scottish funders.
- 5.9 The learning from WM2U over the past five years has been analysed using a co-produced learning framework and documented by the learning partner. This can be found on the WM2U website.
- 5.10 This learning has been shared throughout at local and national events and continues to gather interest from researchers, independent funders and policy makers.
- 5.11 The Dundee WM2U learning and evaluation programme has been boosted by the Senior Information Analyst within the Children and Families Service who has been seconded part-time to WM2U until June 2026.
- 5.12 Their work is to review and identify improvements in how data and evidence collected by the Council and its partners becomes more streamlined and focused to support preventative approaches and inform any shift of investment of time, people and potentially funding to more community and family-based support.
- 5.13 Early learning of the impact on community members of being involved in cafe conversations, Make it Happen Fund and values-based learning experiences is that they feel more empowered, connected to their communities and that their contribution makes a difference. The independent evaluation commissioned by WM2U will report in detail on the impact on children, families and systems, including the Make it Happen Fund and financial costs and benefits. Interim reports will be available in 2026 with a final report published by February 2027.
- 5.14 Dundee's approach to Family Empowerment through partnership with WM2U was awarded the COSLA Excellence Award for Strengthening Communities and Local Democracy recognising the investment in families and young people as local leaders.
- 5.15 A summary of the 2024 – 2025 activity is provided at Appendix One

## **6 WM2U DUNDEE EXIT STRATEGY TO JUNE 2026 AND BEYOND**

- 6.1 The focus on supporting Communities teams to support local communities in local grant decision-making through the Make it Happen Fund will continue. In addition, discussion with

independent funders who have contributed to the Make it Happen Fund are ongoing to look at continuing the Fund in some form, with local community-based decisions at its heart.

- 6.2 The partnership between WM2U and Dundee City Council and partners, in support of strengthening voice-led community engagement in the LCPPs, will continue and WM2U will prioritise support for the Locality Leaders; the Enabling and Oversight of Family Engagement Board; the supporting of young people's engagement and reviewing and evaluating impact.
- 6.3 Beyond 2026, voice led, family empowerment work will be mainstreamed and embedded into work across the city. Oversight of this implementation will sit with the Child Poverty and Income, Attainment and Health Inequalities Board of the Dundee Partnership. The work will underpin activities such as Local Community Planning and Whole Family Support work, Report 344-2025, Article IX of the City Governance Committee of 1 December 2025 refers.

## **7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate Senior Manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

## **8 CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **9 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 None.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Audrey May<br>Executive Director of Children and Families Service | Tony Boyle<br>Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services |
|---|--|

28 November 2025

*This page is intentionally left blank*

## SUMMARY OF WM2U ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS November 2024 – December 2025

### 1. The Development of the Make it Happen Fund

- 59 newly established and existing community groups have been funded to date.
- £91,236 awarded to date.

76% of the funded groups had an annual income of under £10k. The average grant was £1,412 and the smallest £300. This suggests that the Fund is reaching very local, small-scale, community-led groups and succeeding in encouraging newly formed and community-led groups to become established and self-directed.

43 community members are members of the 6 decision-making MIHF panels and have given an estimated 1,032 hours free as volunteers for their community within the last 6 months.

### 2. Support for Strengthening the engagement of communities in LCPPs

To achieve Dundee City Council's goal of strengthening community empowerment and engagement and making LCPPs more inclusive and accessible, a "café conversation" methodology has been introduced.

This has resulted in the following changes to attendance at LCPP's:

| Month/Year  | Total Attendances | Community Members |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| August 2024 | 86                | 20                |
| August 2025 | 206               | 61                |

### 3. Young People's Engagement

Following successful events involving Dundee's young people, a café conversation method will be piloted in early 2026 to engage those not reached by traditional approaches.

### 4. National Recognition

Dundee's approach to Family Empowerment through partnership with WM2U was awarded the COSLA Excellence Award for Strengthening Communities and Local Democracy recognising the investment in families and young people as local leaders.

### 5. Evaluation

Data, together with stories of impact, is fundamental to identifying approaches that practitioners can use to develop a more preventative approach to providing whole family support for families living in poverty and improving outcomes. Impact stories can be found on the WM2U website [wm2u.org.uk](http://wm2u.org.uk). This learning is being shared and combining with other voice-led system change approaches in Dundee, such as The Linlathen Partnership and through Dundee's Crichton Street approach.

*This page is intentionally left blank*