



# The Abingdon Bridge

Registered Charity Number: 1160080

19 Bridge Street, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 3HN

Tel/Fax: 01235 522375  
Email: [tabcentre@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tabcentre@yahoo.co.uk)  
Website: [www.theabingdonbridge.org.uk](http://www.theabingdonbridge.org.uk)



28 years of commitment to young people

21/12/2022

Dear Mr Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk  
Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Dear Councillors, I hope this finds you and your families in good spirits and good health. I would like to take this opportunity in thanking you for your continued support. Your funding has allowed us to support the most vulnerable young people of Abingdon. Below is the summary of our general work you have supported. This does not include the work we have been doing in conjunction with DAMASCUS (AIYSP) we will report on this project at the March council meeting.

Without your grass roots yearly grant we would not be able to draw down national funding. TAB would like it recorded that this would not be possible without the amazing and generous support the Town council has continually shown our charity. The need for our services has never been so great. The support you give us will go a long way in demonstrating the local need and grass roots support when we target other national funders to support us. As the need grows, so do the costs, we are projected to have a significant deficit in the next financial year, any support you can give us would be greatly appreciated.

We are delighted to have the opportunity to send a brief report showcasing the impact our work has on young people and the community. It has been a tough year for all. TAB has remained resolute and raised to the challenge the pandemic has brought. Our work has never been so needed. This is the time we step up and ensure we are there to continue to support local young people to overcome life's challenges.

**As you may know:** TAB is an Oxfordshire registered charity (**CIO**) which supports young people aged 13-25 in challenging circumstances. Our services are free for young people to access. We offer

- 1 to 1 Counselling
- Healthy lifestyles support groups
- 1 to 1 wellbeing support
- Educational workshops (in the community and local schools)

Our organisation receives referrals from GPs, mental health services, schools and social workers. Young people can also self-refer to the service and TAB is clear that wherever the referral comes from they are led by the needs of the client. TAB has good relationships with local schools and speaks regularly to pastoral directors in the schools that they work in. This ensures that the referral processes are smooth, and services are not being duplicated. Young people accessing this service have often never accessed services before. Crucially we offer services for young people aged up to 25 – most other young people's mental health services stop when the young person turns 18.



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TAB has become a valuable community resource; we pride ourselves on supporting those most hard to reach or disadvantaged. We also provide training and education to other community groups struggling to engage with the more disengaged young people.

We know through our outreach work that there are several core groups hanging around the town centre, the charter, Abbey and other local hot spots, we know there has been ASB and criminal damage to town councils' services. Our aim over the next year is to do more targeted work with these groups to reduce this and in turn support them to become positive contributors to our community.

TAB have identified we need to do more preventive, early intervention work so we can educate these young people how to become proactive residents.

## The need

We currently receive around 20 referrals per week, we only have capacity to take on another 6-8 young people per week. Our current waiting list has 56 young people who have been assessed and waiting to start counselling. Our waiting time to start counselling is now in excess of 8 weeks.

The need for our services has never been so great. Young people are witnessing the world as they know it change around them; they are witnessing their parents becoming anxious and worried; they have had to struggle with the lost connections of relationships and meeting with peers. They have been bombarded by news and headlines across social media for the last 19 months. So many young people are struggling to readjust and adapt to change.

We are working in conjunction with our client advisory group (made up of local young people) who are helping us understand what the needs are. They have listed four areas they feel has had the greatest impact on their wellbeing:

1. Anxiety about the implications of missing school, examination results, returning to school in September.
2. Domestic stress within the family because of unemployment, decline of income, unmanageable debts, and parental mental wellbeing. At our recent AGM one of our Youth ambassadors talked about the guilt he feels when he leaves the house to study as he is leaving his mum at home with younger siblings.
3. Young people learning to be witnessed again – they have spent a year on social media or locked on their phones, many have forgotten how to communicate, many have increased anxiety about leaving the house and being seen by peers again. This is one of the biggest reasons young people are self-referring now. "it's the first time I have had to worry about what I look like again, what I might wear, how my make up looks. I had a panic attack when I was due to go and see friends for the first time"
4. Risky behaviours – we have seen a huge increase in referrals in young people who have been self-harming by cutting, or misusing drugs and alcohol to "cope". We have



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28 years of commitment to young people also seen an increase in young people who have formed unhealthy online relationships. "I just felt so lonely, I wanted to feel wanted, I wanted to be noticed"

## Our Impact with young people is what matters....

**The numbers: (We will not no final numbers until the end of March – this is based on what we do know)**

### Through our counselling team:

- We supported **224** different young people through our 1-1 programme. In total we delivered **1500** counselling sessions.

### Our healthy lifestyles team:

- We supported **94** young people through our 1-1 programme
- We supported **130** individuals in our group work initiatives
- In total we provided **914** sessions
- We have also supported **1100** through our educational workshops

A further **700** young people have increased digital reliance through our SMART program. Our outreach team have also engaged **136** different young people on the streets of Abingdon

## The Impact

**We work hard to carry our indivial evaluations. Each young person completes a pre and post evaluation of their work with TAB.**

- **91% of our clients have a greater sense of their emotional wellbeing and are less anxious and stressed.**
- **71% of our clients have improved aspirations and are more confident about their futures.**
- **79% of our clients who were previously engaged in risky behaviours or self-harm now show increased resilience and participate in less risky behaviours or self-harm.**

Subsidiary outcomes include:

- An increase in confidence to contribute positively to the local community
- A greater understanding of their own emotions and feelings
- A tool kit to manage emotions and behaviours before they become problematic
- More resilient in making informed life choices
- Greater confidence to take up training; employment; education or voluntary opportunities.
- Knowledge and expertise that they are willing to share with other members of the community



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We are immensely proud of our work. There are so many amazing individual stories of courage and determination in the numbers above. I am sure you can all imagine there is also some heart wrenching cases that proved to be incredibly challenging to work with.

The team at TAB are dedicated to the young people of Abingdon. Without doubt our team saved lives last year. You should all be proud as councillors for supporting our work. We really hope you can find it in your hearts to continue to both financially support TAB and carry on the amazing dedication you have shown to our charity. Your contribution is already making a huge difference.

We appreciate the Town council have a tough job balancing the books next year due to the impact of Covid -19. You kindly awarded us £5,300 in last year's Budget meeting. Any additional funds would be greatly appreciated.

We would like to leave you with a quote from a young person who used our Charity:

*"the last few months have been the hardest of my life. It got to the point where I was cutting and drinking on a daily basis. I felt so guilty, I come from a good home, both my parents work hard and provide for us. I was so confused on why I was feeling the way I was. The shame got so bad I attempted to take my own life. it was at this point I was referred to The Bridge. Over time I have made more sense of how I was feeling and how to manage my intrusive thoughts. More importantly I have learnt to communicate my feelings without harming myself (so far) The bridge also supported my parents better understand, we all feel in a better place now. Thank you so much for supporting the Bridge with funds. Its helped me and my family so much. (Beth 17)*

Yours sincerely

Gary Hibbins



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