



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Large community grant application recipients annual budget report

As your organisation has in recent years received a regular grant from the town council, we would be grateful if you could provide information on how the grant is used. This information will be shared with the Community Committee to inform the forthcoming work on the budget for 2024-5.

Please complete the information below and return the form to democratic@abingdon.gov.uk by Friday 1 September 2023. If you have any queries, please contact andy.crick@abingdon.gov.uk.

Please note that this information may be placed in the public domain.

Organisation details

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| Organisation name | Be Free Young Carers |
| Please state briefly what the purpose of your organisation is in Abingdon-on-Thames | To enable Abingdon-on-Thames' young carers to achieve their full potential by delivering a far-reaching developmental and emotional support network of people and resources in their daily lives, their schools, and communities. |

Financial information

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| Organisation budget for 2023-24 (If your financial year runs for a different period, please provide details for the relevant year which accords with the grant awarded) | N/A – previous donation was in 2022-23 |
| Amount of grant received from Abingdon Town Council for 2023-4 | N/A – previous donation was in 2022-23 |

Please outline how the grant from the town council has been allocated within your organisation’s budget for the current financial year, including financial information. Please feel free to provide any relevant documents to support this report but it would be helpful if the essential information requested could be set out below to help the committee in its work:

(The box below will expand when typed into. If you are completing this form by hand, please add information on a separate sheet of paper.)

N/A – previous donation was in 2022-23

If you would like to request a grant for 2024-5, please provide details of the amount and purpose for this.

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| Grant requested | £10,000 |
| Purpose of grant | <p>We are applying to help with our running costs. We currently support 500 young carers throughout South Oxfordshire, Oxford City, and the Vale of White Horse. In Abingdon alone, we currently support 69 young carers.</p> <p><u>The Need</u></p> <p>In 2016, The Oxfordshire Community Foundation published 'Oxfordshire Uncovered' which estimated that on average there are two young carers in every classroom in the county and nearly 40% of them have special educational needs. It was estimated that there were 12,000 across Oxfordshire alone, however we now believe this figure has increased. According to the Spring 2023 school census, Oxfordshire is the 11th highest county for young carers in the population and we are seeing the number of young carers we support rise year on year.</p> <p>Young carers face numerous challenges that can have a profound impact on their lives. Often feeling isolated, with few or no friends, they are at a higher risk of being bullied at school, experiencing depression, and even self-harming. Furthermore, young carers are more vulnerable to substance abuse, grooming, and sexual exploitation. Many struggle to balance their caring responsibilities with schoolwork, leading to academic underachievement. Unfortunately, these challenges are compounded by the current cost-of-living crisis, which disproportionately affects young carers from disadvantaged backgrounds. For these individuals, the future can seem daunting and uncertain, with no let-up from the stresses and strains of their caring responsibilities</p> <p><u>What we do</u></p> <p>We offer a wide range of services to our young carers which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School holiday activity programme – We run respite activities throughout the school holidays, providing young carers with the mental health respite from their caring role and letting them be a child for a few hours. These can include a day out to the seaside, theme park trips and theatre visits. In 2022, 437 trip places were attended by young carers under 12 years old. So far in 2023, we |

have filled 539 places, we are seeing the demand for all of our services grow.

- **Befriending service** - Our befriending programme pairs our most vulnerable young carers with specially trained trusted adults for weekly meetings over a 6-month period. We prioritise the young carers' activity choices during these meetups, as we recognise the importance of this respite from their caregiving responsibilities. Activities have ranged from cinema trips to games of football and strawberry picking. These meetings not only offer a much-needed break but also provide a trusted space for our young carers to discuss their feelings outside the family environment. Mental health and emotional well-being are common struggles for our young carers, and our befriending service provides a safe place for open conversations and can bring attention to any potential safeguarding concerns. All of our befrienders undergo strict training to ensure the best support for our young carers as well as safeguarding and DBS checks.
- **1-2-1 Emotional Support and Counselling Service** – complex cases are referred to our youth workers who will visit the young carer in their school environment and deliver 1-2-1 emotional support. For our extreme cases, we use our trained counsellor to provide the counselling service. Each weekly session is usually for 60 minutes and is over a period of 6 weeks, however we will always extend this if the young carer needs further support.
- **Mindfulness Movement Programme** – this is aimed at our young carers aged between 8 and 11 and is a preventative measure to aid good mental health and teach wellbeing techniques. Our qualified yoga teachers attend schools and hold 45-minute sessions with young carers teaching them breathing techniques, relaxation methods and wellbeing tools.
- **13+ Youth Groups** – Our 13+ Youth Groups are user-led groups, where our older young carers can meet up to for trips or activities. We have two groups, one for South Oxfordshire and the Vale and the other for Oxford City. Each month we give the young carers the ownership of what they want to do on the next meeting. This has empowered them to make their own decisions of what they want to do with their free time in a democratic way. Our youth group enables young carers to build new social connections, which is crucial for tackling the isolation they may face. By creating a safe and supportive environment, we have been able to facilitate the formation of new friendships and foster a sense of community among our young carers. As a result, we have seen their self-confidence blossom. Our young carers have transformed from being nervous and unsure about socialising, to making new friendship groups and being independent. This not only helps them within the youth group, but also within the school environment. They are more likely to form connections with their classmates and have the self-confidence to assert themselves
- **Young carer advocacy School**– we help and support schools to set up young care clubs, we attend assemblies, offer young carer tool kits and videos to help teachers and children identify, understand, and support young carers.

Due to the cost-of-living crisis we are all currently facing, we have found that many of our young carers are facing food poverty. As a result, we have pledged to make sure they receive a hot meal on the trips and 13+

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| | <p>youth groups we run. We want to ensure they get at least one hot meal that day. We also take sanitary products for any young carer that needs them, period poverty is a rising issue that we are trying to tackle. We also provide both for those in our 13+ Youth Groups.</p> <p><u>Your Funding Support</u></p> <p>With your funding support, we would be able to continue to provide our vital services to the young carers of Abingdon. Our youth workers are at the heart of everything they do, and we could not offer our crucial support without them. The funds would go towards the youth workers' salaries and the cost of running our services. We would also use the funds to continue to identify more young carers in the Abingdon area. We know that there is more to be done, so our Youth Workers are working closely with local schools to identify young carers and to refer them for our support.</p> |
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| Signed | Kizzie Wilson |
| Date | 30/08/2023 |