



Didcot Town Council Grant Report 2019/20

May 2020

Our work Supporting Young Carers in Didcot

The Town Council's grant of £5,500 has been vital in helping us continue to support young carers in the Town.

1. BE FREE YC is currently supporting 153 young carers and their families in the Town.
2. During the year we continued to provide the social activities (trips, workshops and training courses) for young carers, all of which young carers from Didcot have had the opportunity to access. We have a regular coach pick-up point for our activities in Didcot. These activities give young carers opportunities to socialise, make friends, and have time away from their caring roles, relieving stress and anxiety that so many tell us they feel.
3. The weekly individual emotional support we provided helped those young carers who were experiencing especially high levels of stress and anxiety that border on mental health issues.
4. Our volunteer based befriending scheme, which offers young carers regular weekly meetings away from the stresses of the family home with a trained volunteer, has proved to be a remarkable success. Feedback from families, young carers and the volunteers is unanimous in noticing the positive difference it is making to the lives of young carers involved. We currently have 8 volunteers trained and others undertaking the required training.
5. During the year we arranged training events in first aid and cookery, skills to increase the confidence of young carers in undertaking their caring roles.
6. We continue to liaise with schools and UTC in Didcot and local health centres to raise awareness of young carer issues and our work.
7. Young carers are referred to us by a range of organisations with schools, Oxfordshire County Council (social care teams) and families being the most regular referrers.
8. An assessment of the young carers registered with BE FREE YC has revealed that 48% are looking after a parent, 40% are looking after a sibling and a high proportion are caring for more than one person in the family. This assessment also revealed that 68% of young carers are experiencing a mental health issue linked to their caring responsibilities (stress, anxiety, depression, isolation).
9. 2019/20 saw successful migration to a new client management software system, an important improvement to better monitor our interactions and record our impact with young carers.
10. With staff changes in the later part of 2019, we began 2020 with high hopes of a continuing our good work with young carers, a newsletter was circulated highlighting a range of Easter activities. Befriending meetings were taking place regularly and planning had commenced on a summer tour of local employers aimed at those teenage young carers who would be considering their career options. However with the increasing spread of COVID-19, it was clear that these plans, and in fact all our face to face activities, would need to be postponed.

Note: With the onset of COVID-19, BE FREE YC is in the process of moving its support online and is working collaboratively with other charities and food banks to ensure that those families unable to food shop, due to their health conditions, can access food deliveries during this time. We continue to monitor and support young carers in the Town.

11. Financially during 2019/20 BE FREE YC managed to break even, reducing costs by over 10% whilst maintaining the quality of support to young carers. BE FREE YC would like to place on record a huge thank you to all the individuals, community groups, organisations and agencies that supported the charity during the year. Their spectacular support says so much about how the work we do is valued locally.

We are very grateful to the Town Council for its vital support and look forward to supporting young carers in the Town during 2020/21.

John Tabor
Director
BE FREE YC