



Wednesday 20th March 2024

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Dear Parents and carers

Re: Funding cuts and the impact on our services

I am writing to let you know of substantial cuts to funding of our services and the significant impact on our work as a consequence.

Following a re-tender process and subsequent discussions with Oxfordshire County Council, they have decided that from 1st April 2024 they will stop funding our youth groups and our family support work - our advice and support to parents/carers and young people. This means that from 1st April 2024, Oxfordshire County Council will only fund our Summer and Easter Activities, also known as short breaks.

We have met with Oxfordshire County Council to attempt to secure alternative funding for our youth groups and family support work, but sadly no funding has been forthcoming. Oxfordshire County Council have explained that their action is due to their budget constraints.

This is further compounded by the loss of our current office premises, and we are looking for alternative arrangements that meet our family's needs.

This situation has led us to make some tough decisions and changes to our services, to preserve the future of the organisation.

Youth groups

We run three youth groups, and each group has a team of dedicated staff and volunteers as well as an excellent venue and facilities. We have introduced a solution to keep our youth groups open. From 1st May 2024, families will pay a membership fee to cover the full costs of the service. If we are successful in raising additional funds for the youth groups, then we will reduce the membership fee accordingly.

We have contacted families affected by this change and early responses from families are very supportive and indicate that the solution will work.

Please note that new applications for youth groups will remain closed until further notice.

Family support service

The lack of funding from Oxfordshire County Council means that our current family support work will no longer continue from April 2024. Therefore, with much regret, we have made the difficult decision to make our two Family Practitioner roles redundant. We are devastated to lose Vicky and Claire and the nurturing and inspiring work they do with families. We know many of you will be deeply saddened to lose support from them both.

Between now and 12th April 2024, Vicky and Claire will focus on ending their work with families and will not respond to requests for family support.

We will continue to fundraise for family support services to maintain and hopefully rebuild the service. However, in the meantime, we will provide a much-reduced service only consisting of monthly *Online Q & A* sessions for parents/carers led by Becky Loveless. Please be mindful of our limited capacity while we continue to maintain our remaining services.

Our immediate plans

We appreciate this news may be unsettling, but we assure you that we are working hard to secure funding to sustain our services. At this stage we intend to:

- Continue to host monthly *Online Q & A* sessions.
- Continue to run our existing three youth groups.
- Continue to run holiday activities from Summer 2024 onwards.
- Review our training offer.
- Explore different ways to raise funds.
- Recruit volunteers to help us run services and events.
- Continue to review our service offer and keep you updated.

How you can help

We rarely ask you for help – but we now kindly request that you get involved and support our work. There are many ways to help – you could donate, fundraise, volunteer at a youth group or event, volunteer your admin or technical skills, write to your MP, or feature in a radio or TV interview. We have created resources to get started:

[CLICK HERE](#) to download resources to get involved and support us.

[CLICK HERE](#) to donate to the Emergency Appeal 2024

Questions

If you have any queries about this letter, then please contact us by email at hello@afso.org.uk.

We are hopeful that, with your support, we can keep AFSO and our services going and continue to make a difference to young people's and families' lives.

Yours sincerely



Gita Lobo
Chief Executive Officer