

Mothers' Union, Peterborough Diocese, Away From It All (AFIA)

Report on how AFIA money is being used in these strange days of 'coronavirus lockdown'.

Initially, Margareta and I thought we would have a very quiet year but we decided that although we could not provide holidays, we could still use the AFIA money to support and encourage marriage and family life. We contacted those who had made a referral to us previously and indicated our desire to offer support. Thanks to our Trustees who supported us in this.

These were two clergy, a health visitor, Wellingborough HomeStart, Wellingborough Young Carers, a C of E Primary School and a Food-bank. To date, we have received applications from Young Carers, HomeStart, and a C of E Primary School. We did have two applications for a holiday at Hemsby. One went ahead successfully but one unfortunately we had to cancel at the last minute due to an accident, but this is on hold until next year.

Case 1.

A 7 year old boy caring for his father who, due to cancer, is waiting for facial reconstruction. He is poorly, suffers with anxiety and struggles to leave the house because of his face. His son is isolated during school holidays as he has no contact with his peers and cannot access groups due to financial hardship.

We agreed to fund attendance at school holiday clubs until the summer and then review his needs. Unfortunately he only attended one such holiday club before Covid 19 struck, but the funds are secure until such time as he can attend.

Case 2.

A 15 year old boy caring for his mother and partly for his 5 year old brother. Previously he was living with his father but the relationship broke down and Dad refused to let him back even to collect his belongings, including clothing. He is being as supportive as he can, and trying hard at school, preparing for his GCSE's. Being a teenager, he is very aware of what others think and wanting to fit in. He has been given school clothes from the school's lost property but has none of his own. This situation has affected his confidence and self-esteem.

We agreed to provide funds towards the cost of leisure clothes.

Case 3.

An 11 year old boy caring for his mother, who has anxiety and is very low, and two younger brothers, 4 and 2 who have health and developmental needs. The family fled domestic violence and so have very little local support. Being unable to go out has impacted on them; they play indoors but the house has minimal home comforts and is dark. They are in desperate financial need and so unable to replace their television. They cannot get a break from each other due to insufficient lighting.

We agreed to pay for a television, two table lamps, some Lego wheels for the car mad younger boys, and an investigative nature activity pack for the young carer.

Case 4.

This young carer, now 24, has been caring for her mother since her early teens, after her father left. Mum has problems and was frequently admitted to psychiatric care which meant this young carer had to go into the care of social services. Her early experiences had an effect and she herself has had to be admitted to a psychiatric unit on occasion over the years. She has always been responsible for caring for the home and paying the bills but since starting at university she has had to juggle her time between university, home, her mothers worsening condition, and her aggressive behaviour towards carers coming into the home. This has all taken a toll on her and she is now in psychiatric care. Her only connection with the outside world is her phone and she has run out of data with which to submit assignments, check in with her mother's GP, co-ordinate care for her mother and keep in touch with friends.

We agreed to pay for a 90 day plan for a mini wifi and additional data to alleviate some of the pressure she is under.

Case 5.

An 11 year old boy caring for his mother who has many problems with her physical and mental health. They fled domestic violence but the young carer witnessed a lot of the domestic abuse.

Although the abuser is in prison and they have a panic button, he is fearful the abuser will be released and find them and so he won't leave his mother. He has other issues and is doing well at school but struggling emotionally and has no outlet to let off steam. He has always wanted a trampoline but Mum cannot afford this.

We agreed to pay for a trampoline.

Case 6.

An 11 year old girl, the registered carer for her two brothers, aged 8 who has ADHD and severe challenging behaviour, and a 3 year old who has Downs Syndrome, additional health needs and is non-verbal. She helps Mum a lot with housework and cooking, caring for and occupying her brothers; she also offers Mum emotional support. A difficult situation made worse through lockdown with no support from schools. The 8 year old broke the television and the laptop. The school lent the girl an old laptop for school work but without a television, she cannot do her school work as the children are using the laptop to watch tv and films etc.

We agreed to fund a new television.

Case 7.

A 10 year old boy who suffers various disorders, also ADHD, helps his single grandmother to care for his severely disabled sister 12years old. She is wheelchair bound and needs 24 hour care. These children's disabilities resulted from parental abuse and Grandma has adopted them. She does not drive and they have had to shield since lockdown.

We agreed to fund a special swing seat to enable them to both swing together, and several books as he is an avid reader.

Case 8.

12 year old twins who help Mum care for 19yr old disabled, non-verbal brother. A holiday was felt to be beneficial to all the family. They had the week in August with really good weather.

We funded a week in a caravan at Hemsby.

Case 9

A 17 year old who, since older siblings left home, has been in a caring role for younger siblings and particularly for her 12 year old sister who has very serious and complex health needs requiring 2:1 and sometimes 3:1 care. There is no positive outcome for her. They have had to shield, Dad was furloughed, Mum spent a month in hospital with the 12 year old.

We agreed to provide a 'pamper hamper' in recognition of the needs and struggles of mother and daughter.

Case 10.

An 11 year old boy whose parents have applied for universal credit and who needs a complete school uniform to start secondary school in September. Mum is partially sighted and Dad's contract has ended.

We agreed to fund the school uniform.

Case 11.

An 11 year old boy who also needs a full school uniform to start secondary school in September. Mum has physical problems involving regular hospital visits, Dad has suffered a reduction in income due to Covid19 and having several children not at school has strained the family budget.

We agreed to fund the school uniform.

Case 12.

Application from a C of E Primary School for the monthly community Lego club which supports families who have experienced considerable stress recently. They received a craft kit or a Lego set to take home and share. The shared activity reduces stress, offers quality 'down' time and strengthens family relationships.

We offered some funding for this purpose.

In addition to the cancelled holiday which is on hold until next year, we have also received two further enquiries regarding an AFIA holiday next year.

Margareta Hallam and Anne Touchin
AFIA Co-ordinators
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