

July 2019

Hello from Ursula

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A very warm and sunny welcome to our annual AFIA newsletter. Like every year it includes feedback and stories from beneficiaries as well as updates and developments from last year's holidays. 2018 again proved a very successful year for our AFIA scheme for families in need. From your reports we estimate that more than 3400 people received some form of a break from Mothers' Union confirming the ongoing need for family support. Please be assured of our gratitude for your continuous care, generosity, and love in reaching out to families through AFIA all over the UK & Ireland.

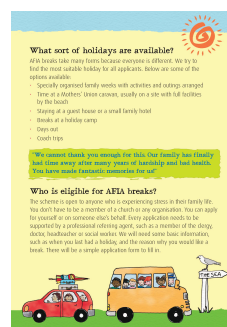
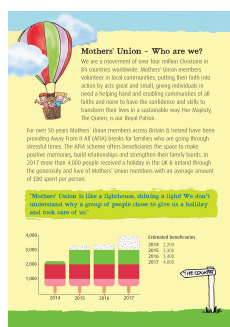
Ursula Kopp

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News

- **AFLA leaflet**

Mary Sumner House has reprinted the generic 4 sided AFIA A5 leaflet. It is now available for purchase from Central Services for £1 for 10 copies. This minimal charge covers the costs of design, printing and postage. On the website we also have a digital copy that you are very welcome to print locally through a professional printer.



- **AFLA training days**

Thank you to all of you that attended our AFIA training days in late 2018. It was great to hear your learning and developments and to plan for the future. This will further continue through the Community of Interest that will be set up in 2019.

- **Community of Interest**

Thank you to those who have signed up for the AFIA Community of Interest. Currently eleven dioceses are represented. We will soon be in touch with suggested dates for our first meeting to discuss all things AFIA and how we can develop and future-proof this wonderful initiative. If you would like to take part but haven't had time to let us know you would like to be included please email ursula.kopp@mothersunion.org

Support from Mary Sumner House

- **Website and AFIA application form**

The development of our new web presence on www.mothersunion.org is in full swing. This is an ongoing project and it will take some time before all updates have been realised. For AFIA there are two sections. The first one is a public facing one that can be accessed by everybody. Here potential beneficiaries are also able to apply for holidays through the new streamlined application form that enables quicker and more effective communication with families. This form has enabled MSH to so far receive double as many applications MSH in 2019 as we did in all of 2018.

The second AFIA section is hidden and for special access only. It contains all the relevant information for AFIA contacts such as AFIA guidelines and forms. To access this every AFIA contact will need to register as such on their personal member site. If there are issues please contact IT.Support@mothersunion.org

- **AFIA application acknowledgement emails**

Due to the increased volume of applications I will now blind copy (bcc) diocesan AFIA contacts into acknowledgements of receipt emails to applicants rather than sending a second email forwarding the application to ensure applications can be dealt with swiftly.

- **AFIA guidelines on hidden AFIA section**

The current AFIA guidelines including adaptable generic application forms for diocesan use are available as PDFs on the AFIA resources site of the members' section of the Mothers' Union website www.mothersunion.org. To access the forms please use password 'Sunshine' (case-sensitive). If you need adaptable word documents please email Ursula.

Please only share this password appropriately with those involved in the AFIA programme. It is possible to send you a paper copy of all current guidelines, but do keep in mind that changes occur frequently; making it necessary to keep checking the website for the latest version. The latest AFIA directory has been attached to this newsletter. Please email any changes you would like to make to ursula.kopp@mothersunion.org

- **Training**

One of the new developments for AFIA and Mothers' Union work in general will be the opportunity for members to submit stories and developments online. In order to help you with this there will be training opportunities on how to record stories and AFIA news amongst other topics. Angela Stead will be arranging sessions for diocesan clusters. Please refer to your DP or PP for more information.

- **AFIA Contact email group**

Due to GDPR we will not issue an AFIA contact sheet but instead set up an email group where all AFIA contacts/ email addresses are registered so that emails and updates can go to all the group. Likewise questions and discussions can be sent straight to the group so that all can see what has been discussed. Hopefully all dioceses now have been able to submit the diocesan AFIA contact details. If there have been some changes please do let us know at your earliest convenience so that everyone can be part of the AFIA email group to receive relevant info and updates.

- **Incidents during the holidays**

It is crucial that you let MSH know about **any** incidents that happen during AFIA holidays so that the central team are aware in case there are any insurance implications and we can impart relevant learning to the group.

Haven discount

Haven are again happy to confirm their Mothers' Union discount for 2019 bookings. Details of the offer are available on the AFIA section on the website. For general updates and information on other Haven offers please also sign up to their online newsletter to avoid missing out on any other ongoing deals! Visit www.haven.com for more information.

Feedback from the annual survey 2018

Statistics Jan – Dec 2018

Actual (based on stats provided by 43 dioceses (online + paper surveys), representing an increase of approx. 16% in responses compared to last year [37 dioceses]).

Total no of people	2312
Adults	1086
Children until 12	955
Teenagers 13-19	250
Families	534
Sole Parents	247
Adults >55	163

Projected (based on number of dioceses responding to survey [43] multiplied by number of dioceses listed in AFIA Directory as offering some type of AFIA break [65])

Total no of people	3494
Adults	1674
Children until 12	1443
Teenagers 13-19	377
Families	807
Sole Parents	373
Adults > 55	246

Actual expenditure (figures provided by 41 dioceses) approx. £ 204,003

Projected expenditure for 65 dioceses	approx.	£ 323,420
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The average expenditure per person was around £92 per person.

New initiatives dioceses have planned for 2019

- Durham Diocese will continue making contact with schools and refuges to further their work.
- The diocese of Manchester will continue to promote day trips/transport funding while also extending applications outside their clergy connections to eg head teachers/those with professional responsibility.
- Cork Diocese will introduce feedback forms.
- Lincoln Diocese have consulted with Women refuges to offer assistance with coach trips.
- In Southwark Diocese beneficiaries don't often use feedback forms but are more likely to give verbal appreciation to their referrer who might not pass this on to the AFIA team. Families have also phoned in to thank Mothers' Union for their break. In response to this the AFIA team are thinking about potentially phoning families after their return, though many families are vulnerable, and might not answer phones or respond to messages, unless they feel they have to.
- The diocese of Bath & Wells are going to consider weekend or four day breaks in order to continue providing the same number of holidays.
- The diocese of Coventry are thinking of how to help carers and older people who would benefit.
- York diocese will provide a feedback book.
- Hereford diocese are considering credit cards as cheques are inefficient for reservation timescales.
- The diocese of Leicester will provide a pack containing information leaflets about Mothers Union, the holiday site and anything else appropriate.



Feedback from Beneficiaries

Bath & Wells

Feedback from Home Start:

We are so grateful to MU for enabling both families to experience such lovely holidays. From speaking with both of them we know that they really enjoyed the opportunity to spend time away together as a family and create some very special lasting memories. Both families are currently experiencing stressful life events and have had many difficulties over recent years. As a family support charity working with vulnerable families, we are only too aware that many families are struggling even to buy food, never mind non essentials.

Cork, Cloyne & Ross

You have no idea the difference this holiday has made to us creating memories together because we never had a holiday before and my time is limited with end stage cancer.

Durham

A major grant this year was to a school in a deprived area taking pupils to the Somme battlefields - we received very moving letters and photographs of the visit - very appropriate this year.

Down & Dromore

The Mothers' Union enabled myself and my two children to go on holiday with family. My husband suffered a brain injury two years ago and can no longer go on holiday due to the severity of his conditions. The children had a wonderful time away with their cousins. Thank you again for your contribution.

Swansea & Brecon

The family of a child suffering cancer was able to escape the hospital ritual for a week, the boy later said he had the best time ever.

Another family was able to use the holiday as a means of reconciliation and are now in a better place.

Pilgrimage to Holy Island with the Diocese of Newcastle

Three parishes from St Mary's Church went on a pilgrimage to Holy Island. It enabled the three communities who are served by one clergy team to come together and enjoy a day of friendship and fellowship. Beneficiaries came from a deprived area and most of them would have struggled to pay to go on the trip themselves. Before setting off the coaches were blessed with Holy Water by Rev Sue. Upon arrival there was low tide so some members of the group walked across the bay to Holy Island.

The day on Holy Island started with prayer in the island church centre that served as base camp for the day. Small groups then went out to explore Holy Island enjoying games on the beach, walks and beautiful vistas, visits to the Castle, shopping and inspiring conversations. The afternoon continued with a service where pilgrims were invited to share what they felt God was saying to them throughout the day through the readings, the location and surroundings. It was quite a moving experience as everyone had enjoyed it so much.

The day ended with a hot roast beef sandwich (the roast had been prepared during the day) and a vegetarian option with some coffees and teas before making our way back before the tide came in.



Layla and her daughter Zahara 17

Layla and her daughter Zahara, 17, from Iran arrived in the UK in 2017 and joined the AFIA pilgrimage trip to Holy Island that was organised by Mothers' Union in the diocese of Newcastle. They became Christians when living in Iran and attended secret house churches. Layla shared she became a Christian because she couldn't relate to the things she had to do in Islam, the rules, having to feel guilty whenever she was forgetting something. Being a Christian made her feel more alive. Her husband, Ali, a Muslim on paper, didn't object to her decision, however he pointed out that this development would put the family in danger.

One day the mother was arrested, put into prison for one day and questioned. Iran has three different types of police forces so there are different responses. Converted Christians will either be executed, send to prison for life or ostracised. This time Ali managed to free his wife but if the police came a second time to the house it would be a sign that his wife will be executed. Ali has a good business so had means to arrange for his wife and daughter to leave Iran with fake passports. They were helped by someone to get to Turkey and flew to London where they explained all this to the UK Home Office and claimed asylum.

They now live in a two-storey semi-detached flat and Ali rings them regularly. It is devastating for mum and daughter to think that Ali is still back in Iran, but he wanted to save both of them and made this decision. Iran has now been embargoed by the US; there are many protests, the economy is very bad. It is hard to send money right now, but will be impossible after Brexit. Layla and Zahara hope that Ali might be able to come legally someday.

Zahara shared that people often think that immigrants are poor, but they had a very good life in Iran. She had private schooling, speaks several languages, enjoyed lots of sports. They had the perfect life but were going to be executed. So there was no future there. This is why they left for another country.

Layla and Zahara like Britain a lot: *"There are opportunities and care for people. People are free to make their own choices, and travel where they would like to, which is nothing one can experience in an Eastern country"*. Zahara is relaxed and at peace now, compared to Iran where she was under a lot of pressure. Both of them enjoy coming to church and enjoyed their pilgrimage to Holy Island.

Ian and his church friend Debbie

Ian became a Christian five years ago after suffering a breakdown when his marriage of 20+ years ended. It was also discovered that he has M.S. and suffers from memory loss which means he is no longer able to work as staff nurse on Intensive care. Growing up in an atheist family with an alcoholic father wasn't easy but Ian shared that God was already speaking to him then as he was always interested in God and learning as he kept visiting churches, reading books about faith and changing things for the better. Ian's wife was controlling during their marriage and wasn't interested in church or him attending church so when his kids attended Sunday school he would always take them and stay on as he liked it so much. When Ian became a Christian he followed the Alpha course and others to really learn more about his faith.

Ian shared that he was very arrogant and macho in the past but couldn't see it back then. Everything he went through was for his benefit and brought him closer to God: *"Now I have MS I sometimes feel useless as I can't use my practical skills anymore, but with my faith I can listen to people and be there for them. I get a lot out of spending time at church being a friend for someone which is amazing."* Ian now only has contact with his son who lives away but not with his daughter or wife. Having turned 50 recently he is quite happy not being in another relationship as he feels that God has provided him with another family at Church where he has good friends. When I went to church I felt there was people who cared about me, I received a whole new family at church who care about me in good and bad. My life is a lot richer and I feel a lot happier."

Ian's friend Debbie also enjoyed herself on this outing. She lost her son five years ago due to some complications to pneumonia and has been struggling ever since. *"Debbie's been a Christian for a long time, was a care assistant and has a heart of gold"* says Ian, *"but sadly is stuck in time. No matter how much she tries she is in the same situation; who knows where she would be without God"*.



Pilgrimage to Holy Island Newcastle Diocese August 2018



It is wonderful that Mothers' Union is able to make what would otherwise be only a dream of a family holiday come true!

If there is anything you like to chat about feel free to get in touch with me.
With much gratitude, prayers and best wishes for a wonderful holiday season,

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