

AFIA Newsletter

July 2018

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A very warm welcome to our 2018 AFIA newsletter. Please find included developments and updates from last year's holidays as well as feedback and stories from beneficiaries. From what you have shared with us it can be estimated that for the first time more than 4000 people received some form of a break from Mothers' Union. This is wonderful news but sadly also reaffirms the need of this form of outreach. As always a big thank you from all of us at Mary Sumner House for continuing your incredible generosity, hard work and dedication to make AFIA such a successful mission of our organisation.

Ursula Kopp



News

AFIA sharing day 2018

Last year we announced we would run the next AFIA sharing day on 6 November 2018 in London. But as more and more dioceses have now taken up AFIA in All Ireland and Scotland we thought during the last year that it will allow us to meet with more of you if we deliver provincial sharing days. The provincial presidents, diocesan presidents and AFIA contacts we consulted were very supportive of this and so we are proposing the following meeting dates. We will soon be in touch with final confirmations, more details and a booking form for each province.

Province	Date	Venue	Timings approx.
England & Wales	Tue 6 Nov 2018	Mary Sumner House, London	10.00 - 4.00
Scotland	Mon 8 Oct, date TBC	St John's Perth, Scotland	10.00 - 4.00
All Ireland	Sat 27 Oct 2018 TBC	Dublin, Venue TBC, Ireland	10.00 - 4.00

Support from Mary Sumner House

- New website**

We are preparing to go live with our new website very soon. Once it is up and running we will move all the AFIA information onto this new site and hope that it will facilitate your AFIA work. We hope to further incorporate an A4 holiday application template page so that applicants coming through our website can fill in this form and we can send you a completed word or PDF document with their information rather than emails.

- GDPR**

The new Data protection regulation has been in effect since 25 May 2018. All Mothers' Union dioceses have been informed what implications these new regulations will have for the safe storage of data. For AFIA this will mean another reminder for keeping data of families that receive a holiday in a safe and secure space and only as long as it is needed.

- Incidents during the holidays**

It is crucial that you let MSH know about **any** incidents that happen on the AFIA holidays so that the central team are aware in case there are any insurance implications.



- **AFIA leaflet**

Mary Sumner House provides a generic AFIA leaflet that can be purchased from Central Services for £1 for 10 copies. This minimal charge covers the costs of design, printing and postage. On the new website we hope to store a digital copy that you should be able to print locally.

- **AFIA guidelines**

The current AFIA guidelines including adaptable generic application forms for diocesan use are available as PDFs on the members' section of the Mothers' Union website www.mothersunion.org. To access the forms please use password 'Sunshine' (case-sensitive). [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. Both the latest AFIA contact sheet and AFIA directory have been attached to this newsletter. Please email any changes you would like to make to ursula.kopp@mothersunion.org.

In light of the new website and GDPR we will make changes to our AFIA sample application and referral forms and how we circulate contact details for the AFIA network. These changes will be looked at over the next few months and we will also discuss them with you at the sharing days.

Haven discount

Haven are again happy to confirm their Mothers' Union discount for 2018 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.

There is also the possibility of a special Haven discount available for those attending our sharing days at the end of 2018!

Feedback from the annual survey 2017

Statistics Jan – Dec 2017

Actual (based on stats provided by 37 dioceses (online + paper surveys), representing a decrease of approx. 23% in responses compared to last year [48 dioceses]).

Total no of people	2549
Adults	1035
Children until 12	1294
Teenagers 13-19	220
Families	597

Projected (based on the average number of dioceses responding to the survey [37] multiplied by the number of dioceses that are listed in the AFIA Directory as offering some type of AFIA holidays [65])

Total no of people	4478
Adults	1818
Children until 12	2273
Teenagers 13-19	387
Families	1051

Actual expenditure (figures provided by 32 dioceses) approx. £ 175,790

Projected expenditure for 65 dioceses approx. £ 357,073

The average expenditure per person was around £80 per person.

New initiatives dioceses have planned for 2018

- The Diocese of Lichfield is exploring contacts with refugee communities in the Stoke-on-Trent area (as a result of members attending the Hat-tê-bāh training).
- In addition to receiving regular feedback from clergy and/or beneficiaries the AFIA team in Down & Dromore will introduce a formal feedback form.
- For the past two years the Birmingham AFIA team have been organising pampering days and meals out through a voucher system instead of day trips as requested by cancer patients and will continue to do so.
- Members in Hereford diocese are working with the Crisis Intervention Fund that provides furniture etc for families in need and are hoping to accept AFIA referrals via the agencies which work with these families.
- In team in Chester diocese are hoping to work with another charity that provides temporary accommodation for homeless young women and babies.
- The diocese of Blackburn will research how Away Days could be provided as an alternative to a week away.
- The AFIA team in the diocese of Southwark will continue to offer as much help as they can under the scheme to people of all ages and problems.
- The diocese of Llandaff are implementing the safety policy on knitted teddies. They feel that it may be necessary to discontinue this gift, which would be a great shame, but they are working on this problem. The knitters always use new suitable yarn and stuffing, and the teddies are checked before being issued.
- The diocese of Manchester would like to encourage more day breaks.
- The AFIA team in Worcester wants to encourage more general take up of AFIA.



Feedback from families

Bath & Wells

A family support worker shared that a family were very overcome when given the news that their first ever holiday had been granted. They have been on a difficult journey and the worker has seen them make changes to become a better family despite huge pressures from other services. The worker wants to thank everyone for the difference they make in people's lives. *"This family now have 'hope' for a brighter future and you are part of creating that future. Thank you again for all the good works you continue to do through Mothers' Union."*

Canterbury (family week)

"Without this break my family wouldn't have been able to have a holiday. We loved staying here. My partner has enjoyed the puddings the most, as our budget doesn't cover daily puddings!!! Thank you so much for the opportunity. We are very grateful."

Down & Dromore

Letter from rector of a parish: "The church greatly appreciates the work of Mothers' Union and this very practical assistance enabled a family who had a very stressful time to have a little break. On my own behalf and on behalf of the church thank you most sincerely for making this possible."

Durham

In the diocese of Durham the women's refuge were very grateful for an annual ticket for the Beamish Museum, as this enables them to take groups to visit throughout the year.

Llandaff

The following comment was written in the visitors book: *"I was really overwhelmed by the welcome gifts and the food pack. My children love the teddies & will treasure them. Thank you for the generosity & care you put into us having this special holiday. You've shown us there really is love & faith in others & we will never forget the fab family time you've given us."*

Manchester

Sponsored by Mothers' Union year 6 pupils from St. Mary's C of E Primary School in Davyhulme went on a four day residential trip to Elterwater and Lake Windemere in the Lake district. All the children were able to build close relationships with their peers. Additionally, they developed team skills, experienced outdoor activities that are not available in their local area and acquired independence and true life changing skills in preparation for secondary school.

Southwark

On the day trip to Margate by a group of lonely elderly people, one man was over the moon as he hadn't been to the seaside for over 30 years.

A daughter and grandchild went to support the mother, who had lost all confidence through illness. The daughter said *'my mum's confidence in getting out and travelling again has been restored. It has given her a new lease of life.'*

St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

One family have a life limited daughter and they are trying to make happy memories for the other children to remember after the sibling has gone. Mothers' Union supported them by providing a week near Christmas at Centre Parcs, which is what the family has asked for.

Rochester

One parent wrote: *'I can't believe someone has done something so nice for us. The kids are over the moon, and I can't wait to see them just being kids on holiday, with no worries. It means so much.'*

One of the visits I was privileged to make in 2017 was to the family holiday week led by the Mothers' Union team of "Yellow Shirts" volunteers in the diocese of Salisbury. Taking place at the Sidholme, a Christian Guild hotel in Sidmouth, the team of volunteers looked after the group made up entirely of single mums; altogether 22 adults and 24 children, one being 17 years old.

Assisted by a host couple who stayed at the hotel in exchange for working with groups, the team put on activities for the families throughout the week. These ranged from excursions and trips to the beach, arts, crafts, competitions, pool sessions to opportunities for worship and reflection. The team of "Yellow Shirts" were made up of seasoned volunteers and some new ones providing a good mixture of experience. The hotel offers great facilities and an excellent menu and everyone expressed how happy they were with their stay. Some of the families shared their stories with me:

Visit to the family holiday in Salisbury diocese

Marissa with children Ocean, 6, Sahara, 5 and Indigo, 16.

Marissa was born in Thailand. She was adopted by her gran who is from Germany but fled from there and ended up in Wembley. She then moved with her English mum and dad to Salisbury. Marissa and her sister had some bullying back then, so she gets upset if her kids get bullied for their ethnicity now. Originally, she went on an AFIA holiday to the Isle of Wight in 2015 as a lone parent. When she was invited back in she felt she wanted to be with different people so went in 2017 instead.

Marissa found her real mum in 2016 and she paid for her to go over. Meeting her real mum was healing for her because she felt like a tree without roots before. Marissa always had this pain thinking 'why do I have the pain' and wanted answers. Now she doesn't feel so bad anymore and feels lucky to have found her mum. At the same time she has realised, though, that meeting her mum wasn't the answer to everything. It is still a slow unfolding for her.

Her family's house in Salisbury is in the Friary Council Estate, which used to be high raised flats but now it's better although a few people let it down sometimes. Generally, there has been a big problem of drinking in Salisbury especially for people who are not working but are on benefits and she is happy that her oldest child has the mentality of working.

Marissa lives with her partner who comes and goes, so it's hard to maintain the relationship. They are not well off financially and looking after five children (18, 16, 15, 6 and 5) is not easy.

Marissa used to work with special needs but now she's at Noodle Camp. She says she usually can't afford to take anyone to the restaurant so she really likes the fact that she doesn't have to cook when she is on holiday. What really struck her about the AFIA holiday was that *'everyone is so giving. It is so refreshing that this sort of kindness still exists.'*

Alexandra (mid twenties) and Sebastian (one year)

Originally from Romania, Alexandra came to the UK in 2014 to work in the New Forest. She fell pregnant with her then English partner. It wasn't her plan to have a baby. She found out two months late and wanted an abortion. Her boyfriend pledged to help but he didn't so she had the baby. She was with her partner for three months but had to leave him due to his domestic violence and gambling problems and social services helped her. She could go on maternity leave and received benefits until June 2017, but didn't receive anything after that.

At the time of our meeting Alexandra had been in a refuge for one year where she lives with five women with children and six single ladies. The room there costs £540 per month which has been paid by some donations or she borrowed the money. She has been unable to return to her work as a waitress as it is just not worth the effort when she has to pay for childcare at the same time. Additionally she needs training in more skills. She has lived in Germany before and was contemplating returning there to work in a restaurant to get some money together.

She has also been thinking about returning to Romania and has even written to PM Teresa May for help. She is unable to leave the country, however, as her son can't get a passport without the father's birth certificate. Even if the court allowed the child's UK passport she can't reach the father as he changed his identity a few times due to CAFCASS reports where he did beat his mother. Consequently it is hard to track him down. The Home Office can't support her at this point but she has access to a solicitor through legal aid who is trying to do something for her though the Romanian courts.

Alexandra recognised that it is her first time on her own as a mother and she feels "stressed".

The refuge staff told her about the AFIA holiday and she was accepted. She shared that she found the holidays very helpful for her.

"God bless your continued work in this very important ministry."

New Friendships

Fellowship
The love shown to each family

You accepted us as we are!



We left with our stomachs full every day!

**Being able to share stories and realising
you are definitely not the only one.**





**Mothers' Union is like a lighthouse -
shining a light!**



"We don't understand why people choose to give us a holiday and a group takes care of us."

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

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