

## Petition - **Off the Record - support to continue to receive funding (summary)**

- Overview

Lead petitioner:	Name: Ray Standish
Received:	Date: 1 May 2014
Confirmed signatories:	363
Officer response:	Preeti Sheth as Head of Integrated Commissioning
Council meeting:	n/a

- Statement

Off The Record is a free and confidential counselling and support service for young people based at 250 Fratton Road, Portsmouth PO1 5HH. It is under threat of closure due to cut backs in funding. Please sign this petition to show your support and endorsement that this vital service should continue to receive funding. This petition will be presented to Portsmouth City Council.

- Officer response (14 May 2014)

Due to unprecedented public sector cuts the Council had had to make tough decisions in reducing the grants program substantially over the past few years.

Portsmouth City Council has historically provided only a small amount (£3000-£5000) of grant funding to Off the Record through the Education portfolio from April 2008 to March 2013. In addition provision of accommodation for a cost to council for £4,000 was in place for a number of years until it was withdrawn in March 2013.

The Council and the CCG awarded the organisation £7,000 for a further one year for 2013-14 following an appeal from the trustees. It was intended to be one off funding to support the organisation to develop a business plan for sustaining the organisation, including identifying other sources of funding. However as a result of further appeals the Council liaised with the CCG to secure a funding of £10,000 for 2014-15.

The Council has always made it clear to the trustees that these are short term funding arrangements and that the organisation needs to develop a sustainable business model and options for their service to continue.

Due to continued budget pressures and significant savings targets to be met by Public Sector authorities, officers have been working with organisations to enable them to position themselves differently and explore alternative solutions to grant funding.

To this end, a number of meetings have taken place between Senior Council Officers and the Trustees of the organisation over last three years to support them to seek solutions for the service going forward. In April 2014 the Head of Service for Integrated Commissioning Unit specifically tasked Community Action Portsmouth

(Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Support Organisation) to provide bespoke and intensive support to the Trustees to explore options to sustain the service. A meeting was held with the trustees by the Council Officers to introduce and offer this support. The trustees expressed their desire to work with Community Action and Officers believe that steady progress is being made. The Council is hopeful that as a result of this joint working Off the Record will be able to develop a business plan that provides longer term sustainability for the service.

- Council response (if debated at meeting of the Council)

Not applicable