

**COUNCIL  
2 MARCH 2005**

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**ANNUAL REPORT BY THE CHAMPION FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE – “EVERY CHILD MATTERS” CORPORATE PARENTING GROUP  
(Councillor Miss Haydon)**

**1. CURRENT POSITION**

1.1 The following are some of the areas of work already being undertaken by Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

- Recognising Birthdays and Christmas for young people – Members contribute to presents.
- IT/Computers for all the looked after children.
- Work placements for care leavers.
- Free access to sports facilities.
- Helpline for children and young people.
- The IT Project for young people started two years ago. It was initially funded by the Quality Protects Grant but is now mainstreamed. There are security measures in place with regards to internet safety. Bracknell Forest Borough Council currently has 70 looked after children, 40 of these are aged 10 and over.
- Young looked after children have access to supported lodgings through a supported lodgings scheme. This scheme has recently been enhanced with Housing and Social Services coming together to broaden the scheme to incorporate not only looked after children, but also vulnerable young people.
- The Edge Card provides free access to sport and leisure – this has helped with foster care recruitment as free access to sport and leisure is a benefit.

**2. CORPORATE PARENTING GROUP**

2.1 On 24 January 2005, the Corporate Parenting Group of Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Corporate Parent Panel had a meeting which was of great interest for both Councils. The Wokingham District Council's terms of reference are in draft form at present. These are a few of the points discussed.

- The corporate parenting role and the link to the Children Act 2004.
- Discussion around what are vulnerable children. Need, as Members, to be clear about what the issues are and to identify how Members can support the rights of vulnerable young people.
- The point was raised about how, in general day-to-day life, young people living at home can rely on their parents and often continue to rely on their parents for support, both emotionally and financially, for many years past their teens. This is often not an option for looked after children and is where corporate parenting is important.
- “If we don’t install the sprinklers, we have to fight the fires.”
- The point was made that it is important to scrutinise performance data and activity on the Child Protection Register.
- The Quality Protects Programme was seen as a good piece of policy. The education of looked after children was discussed. In Bracknell, there is a strategy for the education of looked after children. This strategy is based on the outcomes of the Social Exclusion Report, “A Better Education for Children in Care.”
- The Total Respect training programme was discussed. Participation of children and young people is key to any Member involvement.
- Incentives for young people were discussed – do we have agreements with young people to reward them?
- Bracknell Forest has a book token and gift voucher system.
- Bracknell Forest had a looked after children event, a celebration with children and young people in Bracknell Forest. This was a successful event attended by a large number of Members, looked after children, Care Leavers and Young Carers.

### **3. EVENTS ORGANISED BY BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL**

3.1 The following events were organised by Bracknell Forest Borough Council during the past year for looked after children.

- The Fun Day at Oakwood  
This is still being talked about by the children and their carers.
- The Trip to Planet Hollywood for the Care Leaders
- Halloween Party for the Children of the Foster Carers
- Christmas Party for All the Looked After Children and Foster Carers  
This was a tremendous success, enhanced by the presents from The Giving Tree in conjunction with the Wokingham News and Tesco.

#### 4. OTHER AREAS OF WORK

4.1 The following are other areas of work for which I have responsibility for.

- The Adoption Panel

As an adoption agency, every local authority must have an Adoption Panel and Bracknell Forest Borough Council join with Slough Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to form the East Berkshire Adoption Panel. The Adoption Panel meets monthly and all Members have an equal role and responsibility. They are expected to have read the papers prior to the meeting. Panel Members must attend 75% of meetings and are also required to attend training at least on an annual basis.

Membership of the Joint Adoption Panel is prescribed in legislation. Each Agency has to have an elected member representative and a Social Work representative. Additionally, there are three independent Members, a medical adviser and an independent Chairman. The Panel considers cases brought before it and makes recommendations which are subsequently considered by the adoption agency in reaching a final decision.

The Panel considers whether children should be adopted, whether prospective adopters should be approved as adoptive parents and the matching of children with specific adopter(s). The Adoption Panel also has a role in contributing to agency policy and procedures. The process of presenting cases to the Panel forms an intrinsic part of the planning process in respect of children in the looked after system. It is a legal requirement that any potential plans for adoption are considered in this way, thus the Panel has a key role and responsibility.

- The Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel is very similar, as both take an exceeding amount of reading of reports and serious thought, as the decision affects the future lives of these vulnerable children.

- The Dialogue Group – “Don’t Leave Me Out”

This Group focuses on exclusion, through disability, of children and young people in the South East. It sets out to obtain social inclusion partnerships in the South East. The “Children with Special Needs Resource Guide” was launched in 2004 after a lot of co-operation and hard work by Members and Officers and is much appreciated by the users.

4.2 There are, of course, many other activities with which I am involved in, including:

Education  
Health  
Housing  
Sport and Leisure

4.3 All of which are of great importance in the development of the children and young people of Bracknell Forest.

Contact for further information

Councillor Miss Haydon, Champion of Vulnerable Children and Young People – “Every Child Matters.”

Document Reference

Committees/council/2 march 05/champion’s report (item 7)