

# Imagination Library Programme

Engaging children in Bracknell Forest in reading and improving literacy, ready for starting school.



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| Version | Amendment  | Date       | Officer  |
|---------|--|------------|----------|
| V1.0    | As approved  | March 2021 |          |
| V1.1    | Added in clarification that siblings of a child who meets the eligibility criteria can also register. Provided they are under five and live at the same address. | 17/06/2021 | K. Flint |
| V1.2    | Amended registration form URL  | 28/9/22    | K. Flint |

## 1. Overview of the programme

- 1.1. The Imagination Library is an international programme founded and launched by Dolly Parton through The Dollywood Foundation. It aims to inspire a love of reading, increase literacy and promote the relationship between child and caregiver.
- 1.2. Each month, enrolled children from birth to age five, receive a high quality, age appropriate book in the post, free of charge. Books include traditional stories and rhymes, books by beloved authors and illustrators, non-fiction content, and newly published titles.
- 1.3. There is no cost to the families in receiving these books.
- 1.4. In the UK, the programme runs with over 200 affiliate partners and delivers more than 40,000 books every month to children.
- 1.5. Organisations (affiliate partners) can choose to set up local schemes under this programme, the nearest programmes to Bracknell Forest Council are currently the West Berkshire Council programme, reaching around 1,000 children and the Slough Virtual Schools programme for approximately 55 children.
- 1.6. In Bracknell Forest, we have considered the children where this targeted support could make the greatest difference and have committed to setting this programme up. More details are provided in subsequent sections for who the eligible cohort are, how the programme will be resourced and how we will measure the success.
- 1.7. There are multiple goals in setting up this programme, broadly falling within two categories that address current needs within the borough.
  - a) Improving literacy rates and school readiness.
  - b) Increasing engagement and enjoyment in learning.

The programme also aims to directly support the Council Plan objective to increase the percentage of children (age 0 - 5) achieving good levels of development in communication and language.

- 1.8. Currently the borough has a higher than average level of Early Years literacy skills across the whole cohort<sup>1</sup>. However, for pupils eligible for free school meals (a cohort highly similar to the target group for this project), Bracknell Forest pupils fair lower than the national average and substantially lower than the average for non-FSM pupils. This suggests a particular disparity and a need for providing targeted resources to support low income and vulnerable families.
- 1.9. Locally there will be two separate arms to the programme, to reflect the opportunity to be part of the fully funded Children Looked After scheme. Therefore, there will be a main programme, to which most of this policy applies, and an additional programme specifically for Children Looked After which is described in more detail in section seven.

## 2. Eligibility

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<sup>1</sup> [Early Years Outcomes Dashboard \(shinyapps.io\)](https://shinyapps.io)

- 2.1. The Bracknell Forest programme will primarily target four groups of children:
  - a) Children in Need, as defined under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
  - b) Children with a Child Protection plan under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
  - c) Children in families receiving targeted (tier two) Early Help support.
  - d) Children eligible for two-year-old funding or early years pupil premium (EYPP).
- 2.2. The child must live within the borough of Bracknell Forest to be eligible for the main programme.
- 2.3. If a child, meets any of these four categories (2.1) and lives in the borough (2.2), they will be eligible for enrolment onto the programme and can remain part of the programme until their fifth birthday.
- 2.4. Siblings of a child who meet one or more of the criteria listed in 2.1 are also considered eligible for the programme, provided that they are also under five and live at the same address.
- 2.5. Additional children may be registered, on a case by case basis, if it can be demonstrated that the family would benefit from the extra resources provided by this programme. Examples of families who may meet these criteria include:
  - Those receiving targeted support from Home Start
  - Siblings of young carers
  - Children referred to and receiving support from the Child Development Centre
  - Children receiving speech and language support from the NHS
- 2.6. Based on these criteria, it is estimated that there will be approximately 450 children eligible for the programme. Numbers may increase slightly over multiple years of the programme, however, the annual total would not be expected to change substantially as children finish the programme when they turn five.
- 2.7. Eligible families will be contacted either through the Council or their early years provider to explain the programme and invite them to register for the programme.

### 3. Registration

- 3.1. Invited families who would like to be part of the programme will be directed to register via a Bracknell Forest Council [online form](#). A paper registration form is also available. Registration can be supported by settings or caseworkers, where permission is granted by the guardian.
- 3.2. Applicants who sign up online must declare that they meet the eligibility criteria (see section two) and they may have their details cross checked against the list of eligible families from the Council's records.
- 3.3. In registering to the programme, guardians are required to confirm that they accept the data sharing terms and conditions.
- 3.4. Families may not receive the first book until approximately six to eight weeks after registration.
- 3.5. Guardians are responsible for informing the Council if a registered child moves to a different address. They can inform the Council either by contacting [Early.Help@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Early.Help@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) or by completing the [online form](#).

- 3.6. A child only needs to be registered once to continue receiving books over the course of the programme. When the child turns five, they will automatically be removed from the database. Children will continue to receive books once registered when they are no longer in receipt of social care or early help support.
- 3.7. Information is provided on the [Council's website](#) to answer any questions. If there is a further need for guardians or professionals to get in touch, they should email [Early.Help@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Early.Help@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

#### **4. Roles and resources**

- 4.1. The programme requires collaboration across the council and from key partners to ensure that families can make the most of the resources. The role of a child's guardians is also vital to promote the engagement with the books.
- 4.2. The programme coordination will sit within the Early Help team. This will include management of the Imagination Library database, payment of invoices and accountability for overall delivery of the programme. Administration of the programme has been assessed as less than 1 day per month so fairly minimal.
- 4.3. Informing newly eligible families and updating details will require the input from multiple services within the People directorate of the Council including Children's Social Care and Early Years Education. Each of these services will have at least one nominated lead who can access the database to update the details of any children, for example to change addresses. When new children are added to their caseload, enrolment to the programme should be offered, for example as part of the assessment process. The database can be accessed to check if a child is already registered, before sending out the programme information.
- 4.4. The Imagination Library provides the resources to fulfil the book orders, including selecting the books, sourcing, packing and posting them. They provide the database and conduct relevant maintenance to this as required. There is a regional director to provide direct assistance to our local programme as required.
- 4.5. Wider partners will be essential in maximising the impact of these resources. A broader wrap around offer is being developed in collaboration with Home Start, the Library Service and the Adult Community Learning Team.
- 4.6. In signing up to the programme, families commit to supporting their child to engage with the books. This could include reading with them or discussing the stories. Guardians must also inform the Council if their address changes or if they do not wish to be part of the programme any longer.
- 4.7. Beyond the first year of the programme there may also be a need to find a funding partner(s), this could be business sponsorship or a third sector grant. More information on funding is included below.

#### **5. Funding**

- 5.1. The programme is subsidised by the Dollywood Foundation, meaning that the remaining cost is £25 per child, per year.

- 5.2. The total cost of the programme depends on the number of children enrolled and invoices are provided for the books ordered, meaning there is no overpayment.
- 5.3. Based on the estimated cohort size, the maximum funding needed is anticipated to be approximately £11,250. This could be lower depending on family uptake.
- 5.4. As an initial pilot year, the programme will be funded by the Council, as part of the pandemic recovery welfare funding. Longer term, however, the aim is to seek a funding partner (or partners) for the programme and this is an appealing programme to sponsor.

## **6. Measurables and outcomes**

- 6.1. As described in section one, the main goals of the Bracknell Forest programme are to target families who would most benefit from the programme and help the community by increasing the literacy ahead of starting school for under-fives, and to increase the engagement in reading. Therefore, the following indicators are proposed to measure the success of the programme.
  - a) Reach – number of children registered for the programme
  - b) Reach – percentage of eligible cohort that have registered for the programme
  - c) Engagement – Number of children on the programme signed up to the Library (There will be a dedicated membership category for these families)
  - d) Engagement – Number of library activities attended by children on the programme (measured based on the library card membership)
  - e) Literacy and communication and language are further areas where indicators should be included. However, the current Early Years Outcome Framework is being redeveloped and so it is not clear what these new indicators will be.
- 6.2. These measures should be reported quarterly in the first year and may be reduced in subsequent years once the programme is established.
- 6.3. The Council also intends for the programme to deliver further outcomes that are more difficult to measure. These are focused on recovery of learning and support from the pandemic, increased trust and relationship with council services and improved relationships between child and caregiver. Any qualitative research for the programme should consider the progress of these aims.
- 6.4. A survey will be sent via email to guardians registered for the programme to gather feedback on their engagement and satisfaction with the programme. In the initial year of the programme, this will take place after six and 12 months.

## **7. Children Looked After programme**

- 7.1. For Children Looked After (CLA), the Imagination Library programme is fully funded. Therefore, the remaining responsibility for the local authority is to register the relevant children and keep this updated each month.
- 7.2. The coordination of this part of the programme will be resourced within the Children's Social Care team.
- 7.3. A child will be eligible to be part of this programme if they are under the care of Bracknell Forest Council.

- 7.4. Appropriate guardians will be invited to join the programme and following their permission they will be registered by the Children's Social Care team.
- 7.5. If a child stops being under the local authorities care, they should be encouraged to remain on the programme, however their record should be terminated under the CLA system and re-registered with the main programme.
- 7.6. In some circumstances it may not be appropriate to send a book to a child's address with their name and address on it. In these circumstances, the books can be posted direct to the Children's Social Care team and then the book can be delivered by hand by a case worker or other adult as appropriate.

## **8. Data protection**

- 8.1. Both Bracknell Forest Council and the Imagination Library are data controllers of personal information. Sharing this information is covered within the agreement signed between the organisations.
- 8.2. Families who sign up to the programme must consent to the data sharing terms and they can request to be removed from the programme at any time.
- 8.3. Any data incidences will be dealt with according to the organisations policies data protection and information security policies.

## **9. Reviewing the programme**

- 9.1. Amendments to this policy may be required as the programme becomes more established and feedback is gathered. Therefore, changes can be made at any point, with the approval of the Assistant Director for Early Help and Communities (or the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care Operations for the CLA programme).
- 9.2. Should the Council wish to cease running the Imagination Library programme, only 60 days' notice must be given to the Imagination Library.