



POP's Annual Report

FY 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

FY 23/24 has been yet another busy and exciting year, with many highlights. The charity benefited from an enhanced profile after being chosen as the “charity of choice” by the Bracknell Town Mayor. We were extremely proud, and this helped acknowledge and cement the support we are able to give local foster children and care leavers.

In addition, it should be noted that we increased our charitable activities by 18% and our income increased by 38%, ensuring that we can offer more support in the coming year.

CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Maths and English Tuition for Foster Children



The educational data in 2024 still paints a bleak picture. Children looked after (CLA) were half as likely to achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and compared to the overall pupil population.

So, we made providing Maths and English tuition one of our priorities this year and in partnership with Explore Learning, we worked closely with Bracknell and

Wokingham councils to deliver this to as many children as possible. In addition to higher attainment levels in English and Maths we have seen improvement in children’s self-esteem, confidence, and willingness to engage at school. A marked difference to their attitude before the tuition.

In summary the children have access to 9 sessions per month, the centre is open 6 days per week and the children work in groups of up to 6 per tutor or an online option is available. Each child has an individual learning plan to match their ability level and speed of learning.

Post 16 Educational Support

There are several issues that can affect the educational support of foster children after age 16, including:

- *Funding*
Pupil Premium Plus funding is cut off when children turn 16, which can disproportionately affect children in residential care.
- *Gaps in education*
Disruptions and gaps in education can lead to lower attainment at GCSE level.
- *Special educational needs*
CLA are more likely to be classified as having special educational needs than their peers.
- *Mental health*
CLA are more likely to have mental health conditions than their peers.
- *Trauma*
CLA may have experienced significant trauma, which can impact their ability to form positive relationships and transition to adulthood.

Once again, we have supported several post 16 learners, either with additional support prior to upcoming exams or college/university entrance. The feedback we receive shows why our support is so essential in changing children's outcomes.

This is a project which we will continue to expand in future years, we are now also working with Wokingham Borough Council and hope to add Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead to our working partnerships in the next 12 months.

University Bursaries



One of POP's aims is to provide further education bursaries for foster children. Only 6% of fostered children go on to further education, compared to a national average of nearly 50%. This year we have been highly successful in supporting a number of students as they either start or continue their journey towards their degree.

We have supported students at Kent, West London, Leeds, and Open University providing packages which include, accommodation deposits, fresher's week support and weekly food payments. Our aim is to help them live independently, engage in

learning from the start and, perhaps most importantly, enjoy their university journey without financial worries.

Some of the students are already in their 2nd, 3rd and final year of support from POP and are very enthusiastic about the help POP has given them and the difference it has made to their university experience. Please see some of the fabulous comments below:

“I know I can come back to POP at anytime, even when I get into difficulties.”

‘I could concentrate on my studies and not have to worry, the support from POP was invaluable.’

Sporting Activities



Our sporting support continues; we have supplied ice skates, football boots and paid for club subscriptions so that children can establish social connections whilst learning new skills. Next year, we hope to once again be able to offer swimming lessons, so that CLA can benefit from this most important life skill. Research has shown that children who learn to swim by the age of five experienced more rapid physical and cognitive skill development than might otherwise would be expected.

Christmas Hampers for Families in Need



2023 continued to bring hardship to many, with record numbers of food parcels distributed. Christmas can be such a challenging time for many, leaving nothing spare to provide a special time for children.

Once again, Power of Parenting stepped in to help those struggling and delivered a record number of 18 amazing hampers to some lucky families, to make Christmas a little easier. Two local schools identified families in crisis for us and we provided hampers at Christmas time to allow those families to enjoy a more normal Christmas.

Not only a hamper to provide Christmas lunch but also some vouchers to allow the families to buy presents.

Mum of three; *'The hamper was amazing; it had the biggest turkey in it I have ever seen!'*

Mum & 9yr old son; *'Oh my goodness, it was so amazing, there was everything in there, I was able to cook my first ever roast dinner, the turkey was so big we had some the next day too. We enjoyed it so much I've done another roast since too.'*

Parents of 4; *'Really lovely, a great help, thank you very much'.*

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

The annual Christmas Ball, London Marathon Event and Sky Dive were all amazing events bringing in particularly good profit.

POP Christmas Ball – December 2023



with gifts of flowers and wine.

The 2023 POP Children's Charity Christmas Ball was held at Coppid Beech Hotel and was the biggest yet with 256 guests. As previously the ball was run as a thank you to our wonderful foster carers but also to raise the profile of the charity and finally to raise funds so we can continue to help Children Looked After in the local area.

The Foster Carers were thanked not only throughout the evening, but also

Sky-dive



Brian Murphy from Storry Homes took part in a sponsored skydive and raised over £2,000 for the charity. After various cancellations due to weather, he was finally able to compete his dive and very grateful we are to him.

The Bracknell Town Mayor runs the Virtual London Marathon for his chosen Charity POP.



We are so grateful to Simon Carter for all the work he undertook this year to promote our charity, he has worked so hard for us and has been a wonderful ambassador for POP. Simon has trained extremely hard, in

all weathers to run the Virtual London Marathon in April 2024 and we wish him all the best and thank him for the funds he has already raised for POP, even before the race has taken place!

Grants / Significant Donations

Donations remain a significant source of income for the charity, with £10,000 from the Greenslade Family Foundation and a donation from the National Landlord Investment Show who made us their chosen charity for their end of year awards ceremony.

Overall, another successful year, where we can clearly see the difference POP makes to foster children and care leavers of all ages.