



November 2020

Dear all,

This half term is always a busy one, without the extra challenges we have to face.

You may have questions about your volunteering since the Prime Minister has announced new national restrictions in England this week.

Volunteering can carry on outside of the home if no-one has symptoms of coronavirus.

Voluntary and charitable activities are exempt from a number of the new restrictions. This means that, where volunteers are able to volunteer outside their home they can:

- meet in groups of any size indoors or outdoors while volunteering
- travel to volunteer or while volunteering

As always, it should be a volunteer's personal choice whether they wish to volunteer, including outside their home, and they should not be compelled to do so by their organisation or group.

The Volunteering Team at the Office for Civil Society do suggest that although there are no formal restrictions to volunteering, those that are clinically extremely vulnerable people can volunteer from home; however, they are advised not to volunteer outside their home

If you have any questions regarding the information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with your fieldworker or the office, we would like to reassure you that ABC to read will carry on with business as usual following safety guidelines for the workplace.

We understand the impact that the global pandemic is having on children and education and are working hard with recruiting new volunteers to support literacy in schools and we would like to welcome all of our new volunteers who joined us in our virtual training. Thank you for joining us and supporting children improve their reading ability, confidence and learn to love reading.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your amazing continued support during these challenging times. We are very lucky to have such a dedicated team of volunteers!



Virtual reading programme via Zoom!

Thank you to those of you who have offered to try out your sessions in the online world!

We are now communicating with your schools to find out if they are interested in the programme and will be in touch as soon as we have had confirmation from the school.

Once we know how many schools would like to participate we will be able to match them with volunteers. We will then provide an online session for top tips and how to manage the sessions.



Left: our Recruitment Manager, Nick, carrying out our latest new volunteer training via Zoom. Welcome to you all, we hope you enjoyed your virtual training!

Icebreaker



New ABC Fieldworker!

We have recruited an additional member of staff who will be replacing our West Berkshire fieldworker, Mike Edwards. Mike will be retiring from his role as a fieldworker at the end of December but will be staying with ABC to read as our Lead Safe-guarding Trustee so you will still see him around! Kay Markides will be joining Mike during November and will be introducing herself to the West Berkshire team as soon as she is able to do so. We thank Mike for his huge support to our team and, on behalf of us all, welcome Kay onboard!

ABC communications

Our staff and trustees are spending this term putting together a Communications plan so that we are able to ensure that we communicate our aims about ABC to read's mission and key achievements effectively. Amongst other things, this will involve updating our website and gaining new images to ensure our audiences understand our vision of "every child a reader, with the self-confidence and skills to make positive life choices and contribute to their wider community". We will be able to demonstrate the impact of the pandemic on children's reading and that our work is needed more than ever so that we remain in schools' and volunteers' minds.

Buddy workshop

We have rolled out our 'Buddy Workshop' - a programme which partners students with their younger peers to help improve reading skills and confidence. The scheme is very simple and after some initial training all the volunteers are ready to start hearing the Year 7 students read. The Year 12 students feel they are making a difference to the lives of the young people they mentor. What greater gift can you give to a young person than that of being literate. So far this term, we have carried out the workshop to two schools, one face to face and one via Zoom with great feedback from both schools.



Please remember that we are still offering storytelling via our website and would welcome more volunteers to record themselves reading a short story. Please contact the office for instructions on how to upload your stories.

We also have our 'Books Rock - Pebble painting' activity from the summer which we would like to carry on, so do please join in the fun!

Painting rocks and hiding them for others brings a wave of cheer to our communities and something that is very much needed at the moment. Help us to fill the empty streets and parks with some "ABC to read" book character rocks and make people smile!

And of course, if you feel very creative, we do have our Story sack challenge!

<http://www.abctoread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/story-sack-challenge.pdf>

We are very fortunate that despite the challenges we are facing, we are in a strong position compared to a lot of small charities and are gaining regular support from funders and building on strong relationships with other organisations. For those of you that use social media, please keep up to date with our posts and follow us:

- ◆ <https://www.facebook.com/abctoread2>
- ◆ @abctoread Twitter

Office closure - Christmas holiday

The office will close for the Christmas break on Thursday 17th December and re-open on Monday 4th January