

Dear all,

We hope you all enjoyed the Easter holidays, albeit in a different way this year, but have managed to relax in the garden with family and friends and caught up with hair appointments! Our days have at least been brightened by some days of sunshine and many of us now have received the vaccine and are starting to get back to our usual day to day living!

It is wonderful to see so many volunteers returning to schools as well as continuing with online sessions and we hope many more of you will be able to return over the next few weeks. If your school or fieldworker have not yet made contact with you directly, then do please feel free to get in contact with them to arrange a return to school date. If you are not quite ready to return to school then please do let your fieldworker know so that we can look at the places in schools that we need to fill or recruit for.

Last term a few volunteers were asked to complete lateral flow tests before going into school. Schools generally are able to supply the tests to you, if they require you to take them before entering but for your information, you can collect rapid lateral flow self-test kits free of charge from more than 500 local regional test sites.

Find the nearest at:

[COVID Test Finder \(test-and-trace.nhs.uk\)](https://test-and-trace.nhs.uk)

Test sites are open for the collection of tests from 13:30-19:00, seven days a week.

While children have had a gap in their education, we will continue to support their recovery. We will also increase our work to help other children get the help they need as early as possible and continue with our remote support for any children who have to be absent from education. We hope to find out from schools this term whether they would like to gain our support with any of their catch-up plans and continue with our online offer of support or holiday sessions in schools.

The people who support our work have continued to be generous this year in making sure we can deliver the vital support that children have needed. Many have responded to our emergency appeals so that we are in a good position to continue our work this year. I would like to give a special thank you to our volunteer, Paul Massey, who has continued to help us with our funding applications. Writing, submitting and securing funding can be a stressful experience and Paul has been a big help to Marcia in ensuring we get across the importance of our project so that we can continue to make a significant difference in children's lives.

BOOK EXCHANGE DATES

WINDSOR - 5th May

10-11.30am—Redwood House, 9 Queen Annes Road, Windsor SL4 2BJ

READING - 4th May

10.30 - 11.30am
St. Marks Church Hall,
94 Cranbury Road,
Reading RG30 2TA

WEST BERKS. - 5th May

10.30 - 11.30am
Thatcham Town Council
Chamber, Brownsfield Rd, Thatcham RG18 3HF

WOKINGHAM - to be confirmed

We hope you will be able to visit one of our various locations to change your books and games, and meet up again face to face!

Pandemic story

Our volunteer, Chris Hamblin, is doing lots of online sessions and has put a story together imagining what the pandemic experience will look like to children in the future. We think it is a very good creative project that could be done with children both online and in school and found the story amusing...have a read on the next page!

What was it like when you were a boy?

“Can I sit on your lap grandad?”

“Aren’t you a little old for that” he replied sleepily. “What are you now, eight?”

“No I am nine and a half, you ought to remember by now”

“Come on then, you are never too old for a cuddle”

I sat on my grandad’s bony knees, snuggled up to him and listened to his heart beating away under his woolly jumper. It felt very reassuring.

“We had a history lesson in school today and we learned all about the great pandemic back In the twenties. Were you alive then?”

“Of course I was – I am only seventy five you know.”

“Seventy five! That’s pretty ancient...Can you remember what it was like back in those times? Our teacher said that some children didn’t have to go to school for about a year. That must have been really great. No lessons, no games, no church on Sundays. Just playing football or computer games (if you even had computers then) watching TV, having friends round all day.....what I wouldn’t give for a pandemic now – you were really lucky!

Grandpa huffed “Well it wasn’t quite so much fun as you seem to imagine. Many thousands died and many more have never fully recovered to this day.

Our school did close down, on and off for the best part of a year and at first we thought it was going to be really fantastic but then after a while it was just boring. I remember missing my friends most of all. We were not allowed to go out to play, no holidays, rubbish TV because they couldn’t make any new programs, only old films and repeats. But yes, we did have computers back in the old days, although not as fast and clever as the modern ones and we soon got fed up playing the same old games over and over again. We even had the beginnings of artificial intelligence and augmented reality. Very crude by todays standards but I am sure we must have found it very exciting at the time. We had to put on a ridiculous headset to watch anything, I seem to remember bumping into things and tripping over the cat.

And don’t forget that we still had to do most lessons at home which was not easy, especially with my annoying little sister (your great aunty Megan)

interrupting all the time, the dog barking and nibbling my toes and the non stop ringing of phones and the doorbell, announcing the arrival of groceries, mail, clothes from the internet (as all the shops were closed) and mum and dads regular supply of wines and spirits.

No it wasn’t much fun at all when I think back, both of my parents were working from home and getting on each others nerves. Mum was especially stressed having to look after us , provide regular meals (no restaurants open to break the monotony of course) and holding down an important job at the same time. I really don’t know how she managed it for months on end. Don’t forget as well, that in those days we had no personal and house robots to do all the work for us. I was actually made to tidy my own bedroom and brush my own teeth, amongst other chores, don’t laugh! I even had to load the dishwasher on several occasions. Your parents would be up in court if they tried to make you do those sort of things these days.

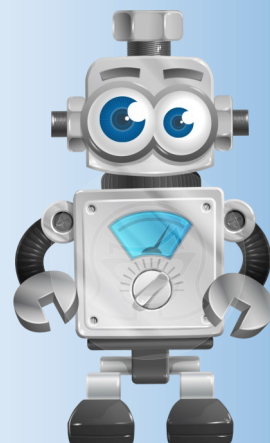
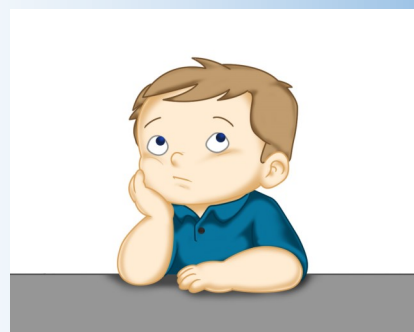
Looking back though, life was very basic and simple then before the “Great Patriotic Cyber Wars” of the thirties and forties, that nearly put us back in the stone age. But that is another piece of history that you will probably be learning all about next year.”

Grandpas eyes slowly began to close and he was soon snoring quietly in his favourite arm-chair.

“There you are you see” sneered my elder brother from behind the curtain.

“I told you he wouldn’t realise he was talking to your alter ego robot!”

“Lets go and try the same trick on grandma.”



Useful tips for online sessions

Our volunteer, Valerie Dunk, has kindly forwarded some useful links that she has been using in her online sessions; one is a random letter generator and the other a dice. She is using them with great success. The crosswords could also be printed off to use in face to face sessions:

Crosswords for children [Online Crossword Puzzles at Fun Trivia -- 4,100 Crosswords to Play!](#)

Random letter generator <https://pickerwheel.com/tools/random-letter-generator/>

Dice throw <https://www.online-stopwatch.com/3d-dice/full-screen/>

Similar organisations covering different regions

As you know, the service ABC to read provides to Berkshire primary schools is unique in this county. There are other charities offering a similar service in other parts of the country with whom we meet regularly and share stories and challenges; for example, Arch in Oxfordshire, Dorset has Dorset Reading Partners and other areas of England are covered by Coram Beanstalk (formerly Volunteer Reading Help). We all provide fully vetted, trained and supported volunteers to schools.

Some volunteers have come across an organisation called School Readers and asked us about their work. Their offer is entirely different as they make it the school's responsibility to carry out DBS checks, training, support and do not provide resources for their volunteers who listen to children read as opposed to supporting struggling readers or those children that need extra support. So, to avoid confusion, please make sure you always wear your ABC to read lanyard and badge when you are in school.

Thank you to those of you who have shared the volunteering opportunity that we offer to others. Nick and Wendy have done an amazing job this term as they have had a mammoth task in recruiting and training new volunteers all in the online world! We have been so lucky to be able to recruit a large number of volunteers this term and welcome them all to our wonderful team.

Left: Newbury Town Community Champion!

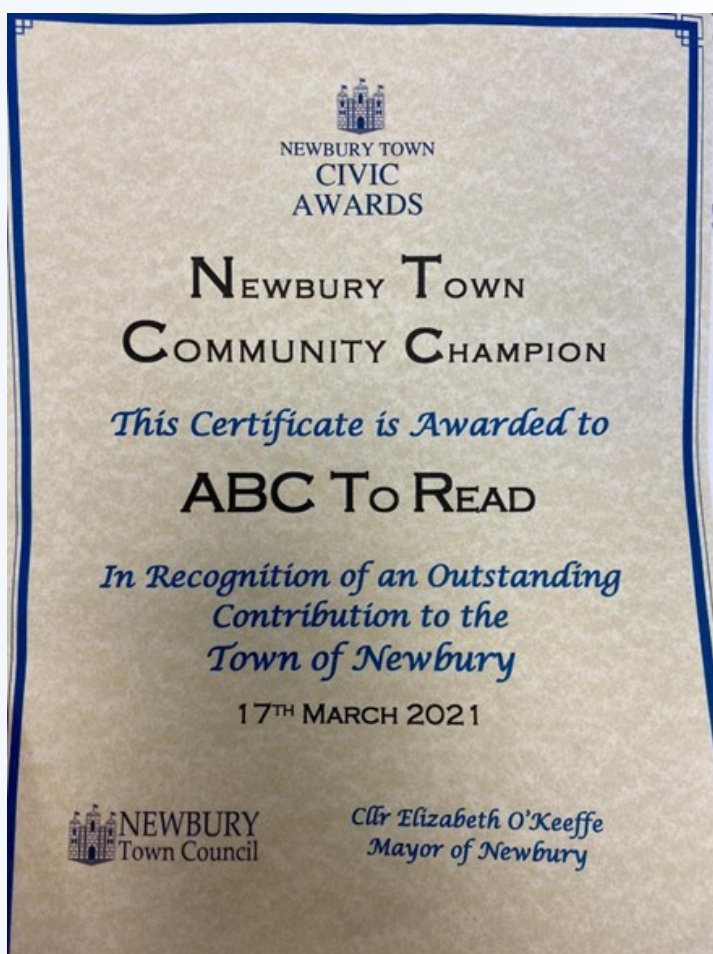
We have received a certificate to recognise ABC to read as a Newbury Town Community Champion as part of the Newbury Town Civic Awards. This one-off special award was introduced by the Council specifically for 2021 to recognise the fantastic efforts of those who have given back and supported their community throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic.

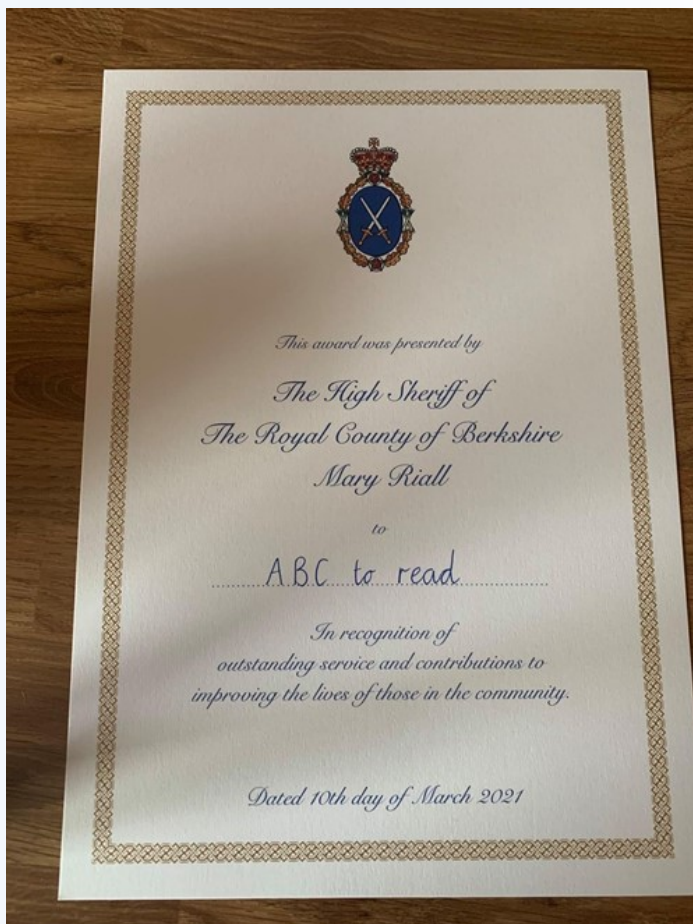
We can only accept awards such as these because of the wonderful work that our volunteers do. Well done to our Newbury team.

Condolences

We send our condolences to the Royal Family and pay tribute to the Duke of Edinburgh and his many decades of loyal service to the Queen and country.

We also reflect on how he has supported and inspired many generations of young people.





Left: We are proud to have received a certificate from The High Sheriff of The Royal County of Berkshire, Mary Riall, in recognition of the wonderful contribution that ABC to read and our volunteers have made to the support children and schools in our community during this last year so thank you all for joining our team!

Annual report 2021

We know ABC to read makes an enormous impact on the lives of both children and the volunteers who support them, and we are looking for more inspiring stories to include in our publicity materials. How has becoming an ABC to read mentor had a positive impact for you? What impact has it made on the children you are working with? Do email us with your stories please. We can anonymise them if you wish.

We are finalising this year's accounts and will soon be producing our annual report. The aim of the report is to show a summary of the charity's activities for the preceding year, and these will be available to view online as well as at our AGM.

World Book Day

We may not have all been able to celebrate [#WorldBookDay](#) in schools, but we had lots of fun seeing all of the photos coming in from activities happening in the community. The best photo shows Ranikhet Rainbow Pre-school receiving a gift from us for their bookshelves @ranikhetrainbowspreschool (right)



To celebrate World Book Day 2021, and to recognise parents' enormous roles in providing so very much of the 1-2-1 foundational learning when it comes to teaching children how to read, we put together and ran a workshop during World Book Day Week to West Berkshire Baby Bank with the aim to run more sessions throughout Berkshire.



"I just want to say a huge thank you from R and I for your help and support with his reading. He has thoroughly enjoyed it and we have seen his confidence continue to grow. If there is an opportunity to continue that would be fantastic?"

- Comment from a parent of a child receiving virtual reading sessions with an ABC volunteer



Beautiful walk along the Thames in Reading on a sunny evening

Office closure - May half-term

The office will close on Thursday 27th May and re-open on Monday 7th June

