



2021 – 2022

learn to  
love to  
read

Helping children  
learn to love to read

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# 01: Our vision

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## ***A local, community-based approach to helping children learn to love to read***

We are delighted to share our annual impact report, outlining the need for our work and our approach to meeting that need.

Because that need has never been greater. 'The Cracks in our Foundations' report, released in February 2023 by the Centre for Social Justice, says: 'Just 32% of teachers working in schools in the areas of highest deprivation were confident that most of their pupils would meet targets in numeracy and literacy skills development this academic year, compared to 51% in more affluent schools'. A major piece of research published by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) in November 2022 indicated that: 'schools which already face huge challenges are now faced with a large number of very low attaining pupils, particularly in reading, who have suffered most at the hands of the pandemic'. And new research from the National Literacy Trust shows the impact that the cost-of-living crisis is having on children's literacy: 'We know that experiencing poverty and financial strain impacts children's literacy – with families not being able to afford books and having less time and energy to spend reading, writing, and talking to their children at home.'

Learn to Love to Read is a local charity, working in the London borough of Wandsworth, that supports children who are finding learning to read challenging or who are at risk of starting school poorly prepared for learning to read. This year has been a time of significant change for us as an organisation, coming out of the trauma of COVID-19, with all the adaptations to our service that required, and with a key member of our staff moving on.

For this reason we felt the time was perfect to carry out a three-month strategic review of our work in early 2022 (funded by the Wimbledon Foundation), with the expert help of a consultant from the Foundation for Social Improvement. We refined our vision – 'every child a reader' – and defined our values: embedded in the local community; serving the whole family; providing continuity of support; targeting the greatest need, and committed to quality delivery and measuring impact. Through this review, we ended the academic year 2021 to 2022 with new staff recruited and significantly increased capacity, ready to develop longer-term relationships with local families and extend our reach further in the most disadvantaged areas of Wandsworth.

We are proud to be able to share the achievements of this academic year with you. If this report inspires you to think about partnering with us as we move forward, we would love to hear from you.

**TERESA HARRIS**

*Founder, Learn to Love to Read*



# 02: The need

## COVID-19 aftermath

The effects of COVID-19 were still very much in evidence throughout the year. In September 2021 we noticed that in many of our schools, the reading levels of the children referred to us were significantly lower than they had been in previous years.

Government statistics for the year 2021-22 show that while reading attainment levels have remained around the same for Key Stage 2 since measures were last taken in 2019, attainment in reading, writing and maths combined fell from 65% in 2019 to just 59% in 2022.

In Key Stage 1, pupils meeting the expected standard in their phonics screening test in Year 1 fell to 75% in 2022 from 82% in 2019, and pupils meeting the expected standard in reading fell to 67% in 2022 from 75% in 2019. This is reflected in Wandsworth's local figures, showing Key Stage 1 children meeting the expected standard in reading falling to 73% in 2022 from 80% in 2019.

The government's Disadvantage Gap Index also increased from 2.91 in 2019 to 3.23 in 2022 – the highest level since 2012 – reinforcing the fact that disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic has had a greater impact on disadvantaged pupils. It had previously reduced between 2011 and 2018 – indicating the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils was becoming smaller – before remaining at a similar level between 2018 and 2019.

# 33%

of Key Stage 1 pupils did not meet the expected standard in reading in 2022 (up from 25% in 2019)

# 25%

of children did not meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening test in 2022 (up from 18% in 2019)

# 41%

of Year 6 pupils did not attain the expected standards in reading, writing and maths combined in 2022 (up from 35% in 2019)

# 03: What we do

Our goals:

# 1

Improve literacy levels. Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world.

# 2

Develop early literacy skills so children start school ready to learn to read.

# 3

Build partnerships with local schools, children's centres and charities, to give all children the opportunity to have positive, frequent reading experiences.

# 4

Give parents the motivation, skills and confidence to support their children's reading at home.

# 5

Unlock access to ambitious life opportunities by helping children become confident readers.

# 6

Help children learn to love to read.



# 03: What we do

We strive to meet our goals by providing:



## One-to-one reading support

We offer children in Years 1, 2 and 3 weekly one-to-one reading sessions with trained volunteers.

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## Early Years classes

Our face-to-face and online classes for two to four year olds, focusing on singing, playing, chatting and reading, help children start primary school ready to learn to read.

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## Training and supporting volunteers

All our volunteers attend a half-day training session, as well as receiving ongoing support from L2L2R staff through newsletters, termly meet-ups and our virtual volunteering support line.

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## Parent engagement

We use our existing parent connections to encourage ongoing parental involvement in their children's reading.

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## Summer programmes

We offer reading-based activities for parents to enjoy with their children during the summer holidays.

# 04: Theory of change

## The need

- In 2022, 25% of children left primary school unable to read at the government's required standard.
- 33% of children finishing Key Stage 1 did not meet the expected levels in reading.
- 1 in 4 children aged 5 to 8 years say they don't enjoy reading.
- Targeted intervention with Early Years and Key Stage 1 pupils, and their parents, is key to helping children who are at risk of not meeting expectations in their reading.



## Activities



- L2L2R forms partnerships with local primary schools who identify children who are below expected levels for reading.
- L2L2R recruits and trains suitable reading volunteers.
- Volunteers read with children weekly for 20–25 minutes, either in school or virtually via Zoom.
- Face-to-face and online Early Years literacy classes are run for children aged 2 to 4 years, referred by partner schools, children's centres, local charities and social care professionals.



# O4: Theory of change

## Outputs

- Volunteers read with children weekly for 20–25 minutes.
- 66 volunteers.
- 7 volunteer training sessions run for 53 new volunteers.
- 170 children supported across 8 schools.
- 104 families attended 13 sets of Early Years classes



## Outcomes

- Children show progress in their reading skills.
- Children show increased desire to engage with reading through improved attitude and concentration.
- Children's self-confidence in their reading abilities and enjoyment of reading grows.
- Parents' understanding of the importance of their support, and confidence in their ability to help their children's learning, increase.
- Babies and toddlers are introduced to vital early literacy skills.



## Impact

- Children start school better prepared for learning to read.
- Children close the attainment gap between themselves and their peers.
- Children are not disadvantaged at secondary school and in future life by having low literacy levels.
- Children develop a lifelong love of reading.
- Parents are more confident and motivated to support their children's ongoing learning.





# 04: Theory of change

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# 05: Moving on from COVID

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## Getting back into schools

The 2021-22 academic year was the first year since 2018-19 not to be affected by school closures and disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that over the course of the year, we were able to return to carrying out much of our work face to face, including our Early Years classes which had been entirely online during the previous academic year.

It also meant that the majority of our reading support volunteers went back into our partner schools, although a significant minority chose to continue offering their support over Zoom. This was either because they were volunteers recruited during the pandemic and therefore had other reasons why they could not go into schools (e.g. working full time) or because they did not yet feel comfortable returning to a school environment at the start of the academic year due to COVID-19's continued presence.

As always, there is a certain amount of volunteer turnover year to year, and this year it was particularly important for us to rebuild our volunteer base to pre-pandemic levels.

We ended the year with 66 volunteers, 47 reading face to face in schools and 19 reading with children virtually. In comparison, in summer 2021 we had 50 volunteers, 18 reading in school and 32 reading virtually.

At the start of the year, all our Early Years classes were being run online over Zoom as there was still a reluctance to meet face to face due to COVID-19 and schools were keen to minimise the number of visitors on site.

However, in the summer term, we decided to start running some classes face to face again in two of our partner schools. We felt that although our online classes met the needs of some of our attendees well and should therefore be continued, the appetite for virtual learning was definitely falling away. Both families and our partner schools were pleased to see us back.

## A new partner school

In September 2021 we took on a new partner school in Tooting, bringing our number of partner schools to eight. We had provided this school with limited virtual reading support for free as a taster of our work during 2020-21, and this year we were able to offer our full package for the usual subscription.

*As always we are really grateful for Learn to Love to Read and the high quality of support that the volunteers offer our children - you really do make a difference!*

*- Anna Healy, Head Teacher, West Hill Primary School*

# 06: 2021–22 highlights

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## 1 One-to-one reading support

- 170 children supported across 8 partner schools in Wandsworth, both face-to-face and virtually.
- Teachers reported 81% of children receiving one-to-one reading support from an L2L2R volunteer showed an improvement in their reading ability.
- According to their teachers, 98% of children were more confident readers by the end of the year.
- Volunteer feedback showed over the double the number of children scoring 5/6 or 6/6 for reading progress and attainment at the end of the year, compared to the start of the year.
- All parents who responded to our survey said the virtual reading sessions had made their child a better reader.
- All parents surveyed reported that the virtual sessions helped them support their child's own reading.

## 3 Volunteering

- 7 volunteer training sessions run for 53 new volunteers in 2021–22.
- 66 volunteers supporting children in school and virtually.
- 93% of volunteers who gave feedback felt their work had been fulfilling and satisfying.
- 98% of volunteers surveyed would recommend volunteering with L2L2R to others.

## 2 Early Years

- 52 Early Years classes delivered in 2021–22 across 13 sets of 4 classes.
- 104 families engaged with the sessions, with 81% of families attending half or more of their set of 4 classes.
- 88% of parents who provided feedback felt they better understood the importance of chatting, playing, singing and reading with their child in developing early literacy skills as a result of the classes.
- 75% of parents who provided feedback felt more confident helping their children learn at home.





# 06: 2021–22 highlights

## How we measured our impact

L2L2R measures the outcomes of its one-to-one reading support – both in school and virtual – by asking volunteers to complete an online child information form at the beginning and the end of the academic year. The form asks specific questions around reading attainment, comprehension, confidence, enthusiasm and parental engagement (for children reading virtually). We were able to collect start and end-of-year data from volunteers for the majority of our children, although not for children who left school part way through the academic year.

At the start of the year we also ask our partner schools to give us information about the children they refer to us – their current reading level, whether they are below, at or exceeding expected levels, if English is their first language and any other details that might be useful for volunteers. At the end of the year we ask schools to comment on the children's progress.

All eight partner schools gave end-of-year feedback (gathering this data proved challenging last year), although some did not complete the feedback forms fully, some provided feedback in their own format which did not directly map onto our own systems of measurement and one school did not provide start-of-year data so we were not able to measure the progress children had made.

Feedback on our Early Years classes, volunteer training and volunteer satisfaction is also collected via online forms. A telephone call to support with accessing the written form is the most successful way of obtaining feedback from the families we work with.



# 07: One-to-one reading support

## What we do

Our volunteers work with their allocated children once a week, for 20–25 minutes. We focus on children in Years 1 and 2, though this year we have continued to support some children in Year 3 to combat the impact of school closures during the pandemic.

Our in-school volunteers read with three children and our virtual volunteers read with one or two, depending on the time they are able to give. To ensure good relationships are built, volunteers read with the same children each week and the expectation is for them to volunteer for the entire school year.



Children are chosen for our reading support by their form teachers – they are generally not reaching the reading levels expected for their age. This might be because they are not read with regularly at home and/or English is not spoken by their family, because they have missed some schooling or moved schools often, or because they are just finding the early stages of reading challenging. This year we saw initial teacher-assessed reading levels significantly below our usual expectations.

When working with a child, volunteers follow a framework that allows the child to get the maximum benefit from the intervention time. First the child will read a book matched to their level of reading ability.

“

*I have always valued the passion and understanding that everyone at L2L2R brings to the experience of sharing stories with young children, unlocking the pleasure of and a love for reading.*

*-Abby Brady, Head Teacher,  
Ronald Ross Primary School*

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# 07: One-to-one reading support

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## What we do

The volunteer will encourage the child to talk about the book – for example, what happened in the story, how it made the child feel, what specific words mean. Afterwards, the volunteer will work on a particular sound or word the child may have found difficult. At the end of the session the volunteer may read the child a more challenging story or they may look at a factual book together. These are chosen from a box of our own books kept at partner schools, or from a more challenging section of our online reading scheme. Volunteers follow the same framework, whether reading face to face with children in school, or virtually over Zoom.



As well as improving reading levels, our volunteers are aiming to inspire confidence and a love of reading in the children they work with. We want children to look forward to their reading time, so specific praise and encouragement and a recognition of effort even when unsuccessful are all part of every session.

All our volunteers are trained, learning how children's reading is taught in schools, including the synthetic phonics system, and how to run a reading session. They are also given safeguarding training which is refreshed each academic year.



# 07: One-to-one reading support



## Facts and figures

In the academic year 2021-22, 66 volunteers supported nearly 170 children with their reading across eight partner schools – approximately 120 through face-to-face support in school and 30 with virtual reading sessions over Zoom. We have sought feedback about children's progress from both teachers and volunteers.

## Outcomes

Teachers told us that by the end of the year, 81% of children receiving one-to-one reading support from an L2L2R volunteer showed an improvement in their reading ability, with 69% increasing their comprehension skills. Nearly three quarters of children were enjoying reading more, with nearly all children (98%) showing an improvement in confidence in their reading ability.

Over half of supported children improved over all four of the above measured areas and 43% of children were now reading at or above their expected age-related levels, an enormous achievement considering starting levels were lower than in previous years as a result of the pandemic.

These figures were reflected by our volunteers' feedback which showed some impressive improvements particularly around comprehension where by the end of the year 67% of children were scoring 5/6 or 6/6 compared to 44% at the start of the year, and reading progress and attainment where by the end of the year 65% of children were scoring 5/6 and 6/6 compared to just 34% at the start of the year.

# 81%

of children receiving one-to-one support from an L2L2R reading volunteer showed an improvement in their reading ability

# 98%

of children showed an improvement in reading confidence

# 3/4

of children enjoying reading more by the end of the year

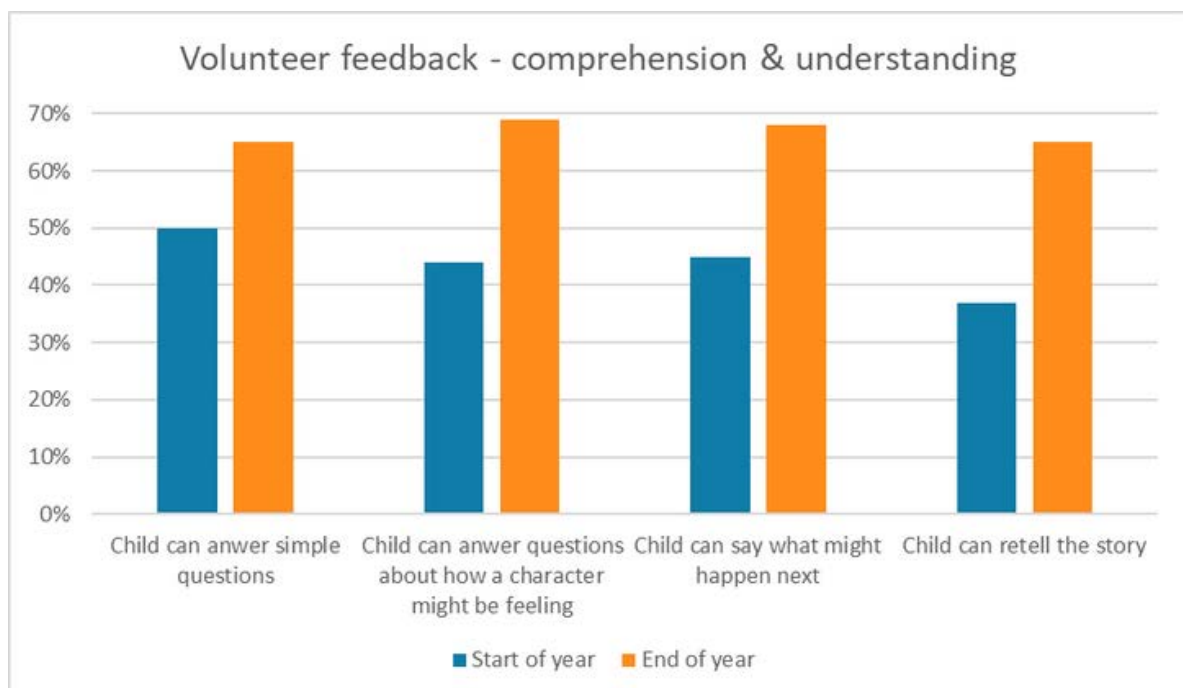
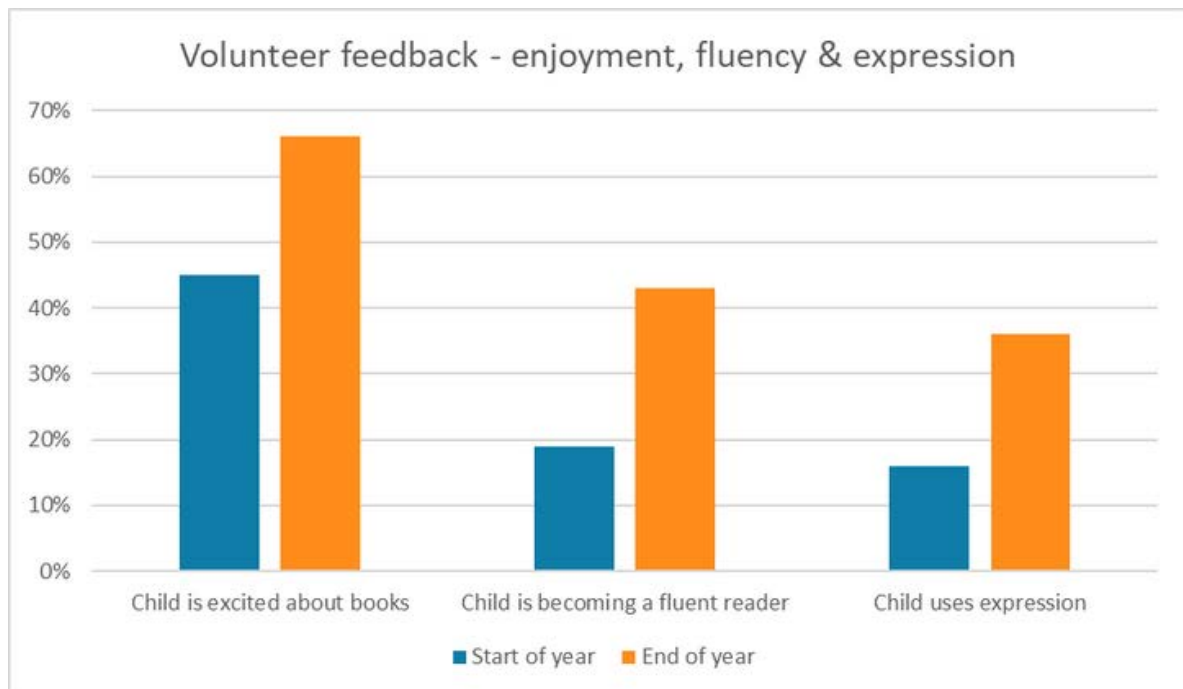
# 2x

the number of children were scoring 5/6 or 6/6 for reading progress and attainment at the end of the year, compared to the start of the year

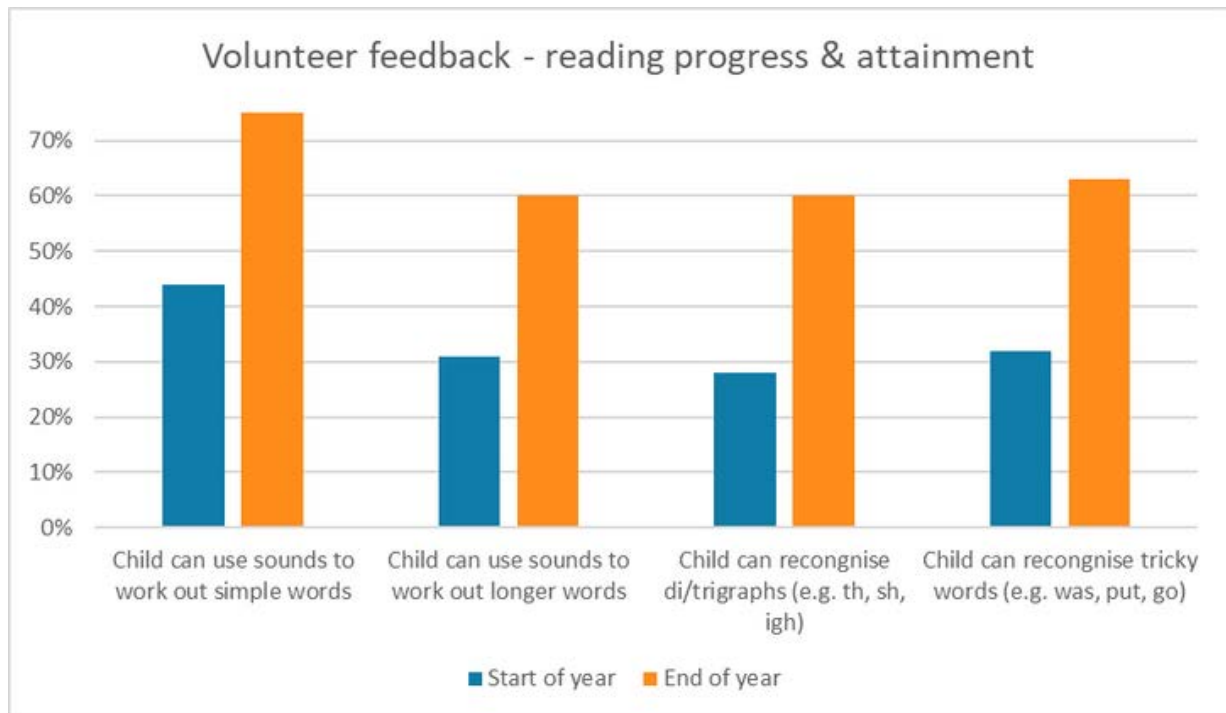
# 07: One-to-one reading support

## Feedback from volunteers

Percentage of children scoring 5/6 or 6/6 at the end of the year, compared to the start of the year:



# 07: One-to-one reading support





# 07: One-to-one reading support

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## What parents said about their children's progress

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*It has turned my child from someone who hated picking up a book to someone who actively looks to read... whether it be a road sign, an advertisement or a newspaper.*

*Our volunteer was amazing, and S looked forward to reading with her. Thank you so much for all your efforts and hard work. I learned plenty of things while S read. I have also asked for help for my five year old now as I see improvement in her reading, vocabulary, and understanding of words.*

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“

*T is a very enthusiastic reader. He now can read fluently and with expression. He can also talk about the story and shows very good comprehension. T likes to read, enjoys the stories and is always willing to read more.*

*O has improved in confidence and ability 10x this term in his reading. He started off being very shy with me and unconfident and it has been lovely to see him blossom and seemingly to enjoy our sessions.*

*It's been a delight to watch J progress massively during this term. His family is clearly very engaged, and mum is always in on our sessions and a really great support and encouragement. J now confidently approaches his reading and can work nearly all words out in his head before then speaking out loud.*

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## What volunteers said about children's progress

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# Case study

We spoke with one of our volunteers, Paul, about his experience volunteering virtually with L2L2R in 2021-2.



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**"The books we were reading had about three words on the page and we are about to start a 100-page book with proper chapters – a huge transformation in less than a year! It's inspirational!"**

Paul joined our volunteer team in September 2021. He had been helping at a vaccination centre with his partner Haddon during COVID and wanted to continue volunteering in some capacity – ‘the act of giving up some free time for a worthwhile cause is just something we both really believe in’. He came across Learn to Love to Read on the Wandsworth Volunteering website, made contact and it went from there.

Paul is one of our virtual reading volunteers, a new approach using Zoom and online reading schemes that we developed through necessity during COVID and which we now still choose to offer alongside our in-school volunteer support. Working full-time as an accountant, Paul would not have been able to volunteer in a school during the week, but as we can offer our virtual support at the weekend, this works perfectly for him. As Paul's experience shows, our virtual offer has its challenges, but it can also be hugely impactful and rewarding.

So what made Paul choose to volunteer with Learn to Love to Read? ‘The fundamentals of a child starting in the world and being able to read are just essential. It's the building blocks of everything really. I was pushed hard by my mum who loved reading and wanted to instil that in me and my sister. I guess that has carried with me in life and I think it is so important.’

Many people are surprised that we can offer reading support to a child through a computer screen. What were Paul's expectations? ‘I wasn't sure what it would be like doing it virtually. I wasn't sure whether you would have the same interaction as being next to someone. But actually it has worked really well.’

It is definitely dependent on the child having a suitable device, and a reasonably quiet environment, as well as a parent willing to commit to a regular routine. So it doesn't suit everyone. Paul now reads with two sisters, one in Year 2 and the other in Year 3, and the added dynamic of connecting with a whole family is one of the unexpected advantages of our virtual sessions. Not only can the siblings encourage and inspire each other, but the volunteer can engage directly with their parents and model how they can offer support during the week.

# Case study

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‘Originally, I was reading with a different child. Every Saturday at 9am I would log in and invariably there would be times when the family just wouldn’t log on. So after a period of time we all agreed this wasn’t really working. And that was a little bit disappointing and frustrating, I had hoped someone would be biting my hand off to be there – it’s free and I’m reading with their child, supplementing the child’s education – but it just didn’t work for that particular family. But with the two sisters I am reading with right now it has been fantastic, and I’ve been reading with them both for nearly a year. We had the same issues a little bit at the start, but now routinely every Saturday they are there and they seem really keen to read. Even when I’m on holiday I’ve been able to log in from my holiday location to read, because they ask if we can still do our reading session and that is really nice. Really rewarding.’

‘The interactive nature of the books, with the quizzes and the sound effects and all of that on Zoom, is brilliant. The two kids really love all of that. And that is available for the parents as well. I am maintaining a word list which I send to the mum every week. As we go through the book the children spot words they don’t know. They can pronounce the words but they don’t always know what the words mean. And you kind of want both, because the story is not brought to life if you don’t know what the words actually mean. Even if the children are reading other books over the course of the week, they will bring the book and they will have highlighted a few new words. And we will just go through them, write them in the document and the definition of them and the following week we will go back to that list and I will just quiz them on some of them.’

‘When I first started the younger sister was reading very basic books, a couple of words on the page, and she really struggled. I still remember, and I tell friends the story, that it was like a lightbulb had gone off in her head mid-week and suddenly she was just reeling off every word. It was still stuttering a little bit but there was that transformation from one week to the next. And from then onwards it just got better and better. She is definitely the more distracted of the two, her older sister is more studious and loves reading and that sets a good example for the younger one. The funny thing is, the younger one will ask me what her sister is reading, in a competitive way, and then she will make me put that book on screen and she will start trying to read it. We are now at the point where the older sister has just finished a book last week, over a hundred pages and it took a few weeks, and I’m starting the same book with the younger sister because she is looking up to the older one and saying I want to read those books.’

So would Paul recommend this form of volunteering to others? ‘I wholeheartedly recommend it and I have done actually with friends who have asked about it. If you can persevere at the start with some of the issues I spoke about and turn a corner then it is super rewarding.’

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# O8: Early Years

## What we do

L2L2R runs Early Years classes in collaboration with local charities and our partner schools. Aimed at children aged between two and four, attending with a parent, these classes are designed to give parents the confidence and skills required to support their child’s early literacy learning so they are ready to learn to read when they start school. Through experiencing sounds, songs and stories, children improve their communication skills, expand their vocabulary and increase their interest in sharing books.



In the academic year 2021-22, L2L2R ran 13 sets of Early Years classes, 11 online and two face to face in partner schools. Four online classes were run in partnership with two local charities, CARAS and Home-Start Wandsworth, and nine were run for local families, mostly linked to our partner schools. Two sets of classes were held in the autumn term, five in the spring term and six in the summer term, including two in-person classes at partner schools.

Families were individually invited to attend four weekly sessions. Some families also chose to attend a second set of classes. We limit families to attending not more than two sets of classes to ensure there are enough spaces for new families throughout the year. One hundred and four families (with 115 children) attended classes across the academic year, with approximately 20 families attending a second set of classes.

88%

of parents who provided feedback after the sessions felt they understood the importance of chatting, playing, singing and reading with their child in developing early literacy skills

75%

of parents surveyed after attending the classes felt more confident in supporting their child's learning at home

# O8: Early Years

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Before each class, every family was sent a gift pack containing books, puzzles, song sheets and games to use during and between the sessions. Families attending two or more of the four sessions received another gift pack after the classes finished. Support for families also included regular messaging between classes, suggesting activities to do during the week as well as reminders for subsequent classes.



This was the first year in which we held face-to-face classes since the pandemic closed schools in March 2020. We – and our partner schools and families – were delighted to be back in person for two sets of classes in the summer term. In the 2022–23 academic year we plan to hold more classes in our partner schools, as well as branching out into local children’s centres. However we will still maintain an online presence, particularly for classes held in partnership with local charities as some attendees may feel more comfortable having control of their own camera and sound and/or find it more convenient to attend an online class.

## Facts and figures

At the end of the academic year, feedback was collected through a short survey, completed either online or via a telephone call from a member of L2L2R staff.

Our long experience in running Early Years classes, both online and face to face, has always demonstrated the difficulties firstly in persuading families to attend sessions, and secondly making sure they keep coming back, especially as we particularly target those ‘hard to reach’ families who may already feel disengaged with their children’s learning.

Thirty-four per cent of families attended all four classes in their set, with 47% attending two or three classes. This meant that an encouraging 81% of families attended between two and four classes – a tremendous achievement for these families, some of whom are very reluctant or nervous to attend educational classes.

In fact, 88% of families who attended the first class came back for at least one more class in the set of four.

# O8: Early Years

Low attendance was usually more sporadic and often because of doctors' appointments, family events, etc. Only 4% of families dropped out completely having attended the first two classes which shows a very positive retention rate.

We asked parents to rate how useful they found the classes and nearly three-quarters of those who responded rated the classes 5/5, with 100% giving a rating of 4/5 or 5/5.

Following the sessions, 88% of parents felt they understood the importance of

chatting, playing, singing and reading with their child in developing early literacy skills and over three-quarters reported they felt more confident helping their child's learning at home.

The majority of parents found the books and puzzles to be the most useful items in their gift packs, and all those surveyed had used them at home either between or after the sessions. Eighty-eight per cent of parents who responded to the survey said they would recommend the sessions to other families.

## Outcomes

After attending the Early Years classes, parents were more engaged in their children's learning, with feedback figures demonstrating parents' increased confidence in helping their children at home. The fact that 81% of families attended two or more of the four classes shows how the classes were welcoming and well-designed to suit 'hard to reach' families.

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*The Early Years sessions have been a wonderful constant for Home-Start Wandsworth families throughout the pandemic and beyond. We have sung, read, listened and chatted together. Here's a testimonial from the sessions:*

*"I've learnt so much after having C, [especially] how important reading, chatting and singing is. She is saying a lot more words than the boys did, and at the age of 12 months she knows where her head, eyes and nose are by talking and singing to her."*

**Carey Davies, Family Groups Co-ordinator,  
Home-Start Wandsworth**



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# O8: Early Years

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## What parents said about our Early Years classes

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*Classes were really good and very organised. S enjoyed them a lot and looked forward to them every week.*

*The classes are great! I've learnt many ways to incorporate playing, singing, chatting and reading with my children into our everyday lives, without it feeling forced or boring. I learnt something new after every session. Thank you!*

*S really enjoys these classes and looks forward to them every week. She cries every time the session ends and we have to leave the meeting on Zoom. She loves singing and has developed a love for reading.*

”

“

*What a pleasure it's been working with you! I've seen you bring joy into the lives of families I work with, giving them opportunities they wouldn't have had without Learn to Love to Read ... you made the online classes interactive and fun, sending out packs of books and games that went down very well with families.*

*It was inspiring to see how parents and children gained confidence to engage in the sessions as time went on, with parents telling me it was the highlight of their week. It's been a pleasure working with you this year and I have only good things to say about Love to Learn to Read to any organisations looking for engaging family learning activities.*

**Dan Calvert, Head of Learning, CARAS**

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# Case study

We asked a local mum about her experience of the L2L2R Early Years classes that she and her daughter attended online. This is what she had to say:

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**Parents sit with their children in their laps, singing action songs, enjoying books and learning how to develop their children's language by chatting and playing together. There is a buzz of excitement, conversation, laughter. And yet all of this is happening online, using Zoom.**



Fatima\*, who lives in Tooting, first heard about our online classes when her daughter, Izma\*, was two years old. Izma suffers from a life-shortening, terminal disease diagnosed at birth, so because of her low immunity she was shielding during COVID. Izma's speech was delayed and her health visitor felt the classes would be useful for the family. L2L2R's online classes have been particularly beneficial for families in Fatima and Izma's situation.

Fatima was unsure what the online classes would be like, but once she started attending with Izma she was surprised at how easy, happy and fun they were and how helpful the teachers were to each family in the group.

So how has it made a difference to the family? 'We read more books and sing more songs because of what we have learnt from the classes. The free book packs are amazing, especially for families like mine who cannot afford to buy books and games. We use them all the time!'

'I am so, so thankful for these classes. It was a life saver for me and Izma. We needed them at the time and are so grateful. I would definitely recommend them to other parents.'

\* names have been changed to maintain confidentiality

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# 09: Volunteers

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## What we do: volunteer training

L2L2R trains all its volunteers in how best to support children's reading.

The training session takes place over Zoom and explores how reading is taught in schools today, including explanations and practical exercises to explain the synthetic phonics system. We discuss what each reading session should contain – focusing on a sound or word a child finds difficult, encouraging children to talk about the story they are reading and noting details of the session in the child's reading record, while giving specific praise and encouragement all the way. We also give important guidance on safeguarding. We run separate sessions for those considering virtual volunteering to cover the technology they will need to use to run the sessions.

When a volunteer starts work in school, our Head of Volunteering or an experienced volunteer is on hand to guide them and introduce them to the children they will be reading with. We also offer a conversation and practice Zoom session with an experienced online volunteer for those working virtually.

## Facts, figures and outcomes

Feedback is collected using an online feedback form after each training session. In the academic year 2021–22 we ran seven volunteer training sessions covering both in-school and virtual volunteering – three in the autumn term, two in the spring term and two in the summer term – with 53 new volunteers attending.

Out of those volunteers who completed feedback, all felt the training covered everything they needed to know. Ninety per cent felt there was enough opportunity to interact during the session, though 10% would have liked more opportunity to interact. This can be more difficult to achieve over Zoom compared to face-to-face training, so this is an area which we will aim to improve for future sessions. One hundred percent of attendees rated the training 8, 9 or 10/10, with nearly 80% rating it 9 or 10/10.

“

*Thanks for making everything so clear. The session was very well organised with excellent presentation slides available on the website.*

*Whilst it was over Zoom I still felt like I learnt everything I needed to and it was an engaging session.*

*The organisers took the time to answer questions and involved participants in the conversation.*

”



# 09: Volunteers

## What we do: looking after our volunteers

Our Head of Volunteering looks after all our volunteers and communicates with them regularly to keep them up to date with L2L2R's news and school information, as well as answering volunteers' queries.

For the second year running, 95% of respondents to our volunteer survey agreed or strongly agreed that they feel supported by our Head of Volunteering and other L2L2R staff. We also run termly social get-togethers – face to face and over Zoom – where volunteers can meet and exchange ideas and tips. Our end-of-year summer volunteer celebration was attended by volunteers, staff, trustees, donors and our local MP. Virtual volunteers (and families) are further supported by our dedicated helpline operating Monday to Thursday during volunteering hours.



## Facts, figures and outcomes

During the academic year 2021–22 we had volunteers working across eight schools in Wandsworth. We collect feedback from our volunteers via an annual online survey at the end of the academic year.

All volunteers who responded felt that their volunteering made a difference to the children they worked with, the vast majority (93%) agreeing that their work had been fulfilling and satisfying.

# 09: Volunteers

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read

Nearly two-thirds of volunteers felt that volunteering had given them useful knowledge and skills, as well as helping them feel part of their local community.

While 91% of volunteers rated their experience of volunteering with L2L2R as 8, 9 or 10/10, 98% would recommend volunteering with L2L2R to others.

When volunteers sign up we ask if possible that they stay for a full academic year to support their children. While most do, there is inevitably some change, particularly at the end of each year.

We were delighted therefore that when asked in July 2022, over three-quarters of our volunteers indicated they would be continuing to volunteer in the new academic year (with a further 14% not able to make a firm decision at that point).

## Outcomes

In 2021-22, 66 trained volunteers worked across eight schools in Wandsworth, supporting 170 children.

All felt supported in roles where they believed they were making a difference, with the majority of volunteers continuing to offer ongoing support into the next academic year.

# 93%

of volunteers who provided feedback agreed that their work had been fulfilling and satisfying

# 91%

of volunteers surveyed rated their experience of volunteering with L2L2R as 8, 9, or 10/10

# 98%

of volunteers who responded to our survey said they would recommend volunteering with L2L2R to others

# 09: Volunteers

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## What our volunteers said about reading with the children

## What our volunteers said about working with L2L2R

“

*I really enjoy feeling as if I am having a positive impact on my local community and I have really enjoyed getting to know the children and watch their confidence in reading grow.*

*The children are a delight and it's fun getting to know them better and see their confidence in reading grow.*

*[I] really enjoyed connecting with the child and hopefully have made a small difference in terms of learning and development.*

*The support from L2L2R is second to none. I always make the effort to come to the volunteer meetups as it really helps to share experiences.*

*I enjoy meeting up with other volunteers informally and sharing experiences. The staff development/support from the L2L2R team has been excellent and much appreciated.*

*I'm so glad I found out about L2L2R and only wish I had sooner!*

”



“

*[I] have been with LTLTR for approximately four years ... the best part for me is enjoying the company of my readers and the uniqueness of their personalities. It is so important to celebrate the small achievements that are made week to week because these are the little steps that lead to the ultimate goal of the children loving to read.*

”



# Case study

L2L2R parent volunteer Riz shares what inspires her to volunteer.

.....

**"I thoroughly enjoy the regular get-togethers with other volunteers as I get the chance to chat with like-minded people."**



Riz first heard about Learn to Love to Read when her eldest son was in Reception and she saw a flyer on her children's school gate, asking for volunteers. Around the same time she was invited by the school's Head of Early Years to attend Learn to Love to Read's weekly Early Years literacy classes held at the school with her youngest child.

She decided to become a reading volunteer in 2019. Her oldest child had previously had a speech delay and was later diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Her younger child is neurotypical and she soon realised that if they had very differing support needs when it came to learning to read, other children would too.

She attended the initial volunteer training which she found provided practical information on how children are taught to read in schools and how Learn to Love to Read works with the children it supports. "Learn to Love to Read gave me confidence by teaching me useful reading strategies," she says – and she uses these both with the children she works with in school and her own children.

She says: "Throughout my life I have always made a point of volunteering in my community. This is something I learned from my mother. I have always loved reading and when I joined Learn to Love to Read, I remember looking forward to the challenge of reading with different children to my own!"

Riz rose to the challenge as she fully understood that each child would have individual needs – perhaps they might be reluctant readers or come from families speaking multiple languages. "This is what makes it so interesting, spending time with these children," she comments.

She reflects on a particular experience with a Year 1 boy, who she was told was quiet and shy. During her sessions with him, she soon felt he might have a speech delay making him reluctant to talk. "My experience with my son's own speech delay and the reading strategies taught by Learn to Love to Read meant I could develop his speech confidence and his reading fluency. His comprehension quickly improved."

# Case study

.....

Speaking more generally about her experience, she continues: “The ‘biggest’ little step in the reading journey which I get excited about each time is when I can encourage a reader (when they are ready) to do the blending without sounding out, and then get the reader to read the whole sentence without doing any sounding out. This is a monumental milestone and usually the child has a smile once they have done it!”

As well as seeing the improvement in the children’s reading abilities and confidence, Riz also values volunteering with an organisation which she feels is fully committed to its cause, as well as supporting its volunteers:

“Learn to Love to Read has really grown over the years with a presence now in eight Wandsworth primary schools. It’s successful because it has a clear purpose: measurable success and total support for its volunteers. I thoroughly enjoy the regular get-togethers with other volunteers as I get the chance to chat with like-minded people. Staff are also always available if I have a question. I have always felt, as a volunteer at Learn to Love to Read, that I am having a positive effect.”

.....



# 10: Working with parents

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## Virtual volunteering: what we do

Our virtual volunteering programme started as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we've continued it as it means we are able to involve a wider range of volunteers – including those who are working full time – and we have been excited by the unexpected outcome of being able to engage directly with the parents of children we support.

When we support children with reading in school, we do not usually get to meet their parents. However, children supported virtually read with their volunteer after school hours when they are at home. We ask that a parent or carer is there to greet the volunteer and close the session, and sometimes they are able to sit with the child throughout. This gives us an opportunity to engage with parents and allows us to ask them what they thought of our reading support programme. Families are further supported through our virtual helpline which is open from 4–6pm Monday to Thursday. It offers session reminders and trouble-shooting support. Feedback was collected via an online form and through telephone calls to parents.

In the academic year 2021–22, L2L2R supported nearly 20 children virtually through weekly Zoom reading sessions. This was lower than the figure for 2020–21 (approximately 50 children) as it reflects the fact that many of our existing volunteers chose to go back into school, having volunteered virtually during the pandemic and also that most new volunteers were choosing to volunteer face-to-face in schools.

## Facts and figures

Our volunteers always aim to make sessions a fun experience for the children we support. In our feedback this year, this element was highlighted by parents, and many commented on how enjoyable volunteers made the sessions, which in turn made reading something to look forward to each week, both in and out of the session.

“

*Thanks to whole team. Very organised and helpful team members especially [volunteer] S - my children love her. My daughter has started reading at bedtime regularly... Love you all!*

*[Volunteer] J has been brilliant and so patient with C maintaining his concentration.*

*A loves to read with [volunteer] C. They are already good friends and he feels very comfortable with her. Reading ends up being fun.*

”



# 10: Working with parents

One hundred per cent of parents who responded to our survey reported that their child enjoyed the Zoom reading sessions, rating the sessions a 4/5 or above. Of these responses, 80% families gave us a score of 5/5

Crucially we found that all parents said they felt that the virtual reading sessions had made their child a better reader, rating the sessions 4/5 or above. Of these responses, 87% of families gave us a score of 5/5. All parents also felt that the sessions had improved their child's comprehension skills, scoring 4/5 or 5/5, with 78% of those scoring 5/5.

One of L2L2R's goals is to inspire and encourage a lifelong love of reading. To measure this, we asked parents if reading with a volunteer made their child want to read more on their own. All parents agreed that it had up to a point, with 61% strongly agreeing that our sessions had achieved this aim.

All parents who responded also reported that the sessions helped them support their own child's reading, with three quarters of parents giving us a score of 5/5 in helping them feel more confident about reading with their child at home. As a result, 100% of parents said they would recommend L2L2R's volunteer support to other parents.

## Outcomes

For the second year in a row, we have been able to see how highly parents value the work our volunteers do in supporting their children, as well as how much the children enjoy the sessions. We were pleased to see that three quarters of parents felt that just by observing sessions, they felt more confident in supporting their child's reading at home.

# 100%

of parents who responded would recommend L2L2R's volunteer support to other parents.

# 100%

of parents surveyed felt that virtual reading sessions had made their child a better reader.

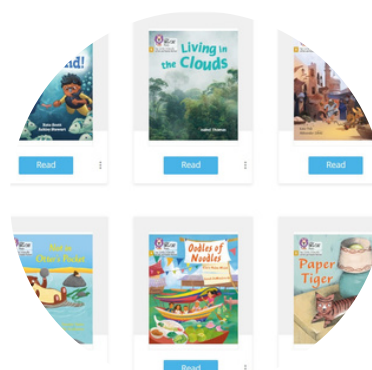
# 61%

of responding parents strongly agreed that reading with a volunteer had made their child want to read more on their own.

# Case study



A home-schooling parent describes how L2L2R's volunteer support has increased her own confidence in supporting her children.



## 'It's helping the whole family.'

Faiza\* has four children, the oldest now in Year 7 and the youngest just three years old. The school-age children were previously pupils at an L2L2R partner school, with two of them referred for our virtual one-to-one volunteer reading support by the school. 'I did not expect a volunteer, I thought it would be a teacher,' Faiza says. 'But I was very happy and very satisfied with the volunteer. Initially I thought 30 minutes will not be enough, but it is the perfect time slot.'

Faiza later made the decision to home-school her children. She had already seen the impact of our reading support and asked if we could continue the sessions. As reading was being done online, we were able to keep offering support despite this change in circumstances. 'I have been home-schooling them all since COVID. I saw the progress in my daughters. They improved in their reading so I decided Learn to Love to Read is the best thing to keep in mind.'

So what does she find most useful about our virtual support? 'The free access to the e-books. They read them usually before bed, and sometimes they wake up early and read. Being home-schooled, it is helpful that they have access to so many books. The volunteer always gives suggestions about which one to read for the week.' The fact that the same volunteer provides long-term support, building a relationship with the children and the family, is also important: 'One day Madeeha\* did not want to read, so her volunteer asked her to choose the book, and as she had the choice to select, she loved it. The volunteer is so patient with the girls. Madeeha is very shy but she is so used to [K]. We can't imagine doing the sessions with anyone else.'

Faiza was able to access advice from our staff team when she was concerned about her oldest daughter's reading – we directed her to support at the local library. She has been able to join our online Early Years classes with her youngest child and we were also able to provide a box of age-appropriate books for the family to enjoy at home. Whole family support in action! Engaging parents in their children's learning has always been a key focus of our work. And Faiza herself has learnt a lot by seeing how our trained volunteer engages with the children: 'I have learnt to have patience with the kids. Now I let them break down the word and try to read it. Before I used to say the word for them. Reading with them, I have learnt how to help them myself.'

\* names have been changed to maintain confidentiality

# 11: Summer programmes

## What we did

L2L2R has long recognised that the summer holidays can be difficult for many families. In the past we have run a variety of programmes during the summer to encourage reading. This summer we produced our own online reading magazines, one for 0–5 year-olds and one for 5–11-year olds. These included age-appropriate language-developing games and activities which parents and carers could do with their children over the summer break. We were also able to distribute a range of magazines to children in our partner schools which were kindly donated by publishers, including 80 online subscriptions to National Geographic for Kids.

## Facts and figures

Our summer reading magazine was distributed to all our partner schools and other local school contacts. It was not possible to collect individual feedback from families who received the magazines as they were mostly distributed online by our partner schools.



## Outcomes

Our summer magazines contained useful resources to help families keep their children engaged with reading and stories over the long holidays. We are now planning to develop one for each school holiday in the future and will work hard to increase take-up and reach of this initiative.



# 12: Looking forward

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As a small organisation, we are always looking at ways in which we can maximise the impact of our work. We do this by reflecting on the past year, looking at what worked well and where we can improve.

Here are some highlights of what we've learnt over the past year and how that impacts key aspects of our work going forward.

## A strategic review of our work

In 2022, we were able to take some time to work with a consultant from The Foundation for Social Improvement to develop our charity's strategy for the next three years. This included developing our extended offer of support for children aged from the age of 0 to 11 years.



Work on this will start in the academic year 2022-23 with:

- the development and delivery of additional parent workshops including Key Stage 2 workshops focused on how to keep older children reading;
- collaboration with our partner charity, Learning with Parents, to increase our ability to provide ongoing messaging;
- and specific opportunities for Reception-aged children.

This will be followed by expanding our work with children's centres and local social care professionals to develop and offer interventions for children aged 0 to 2 years.



# 12: Looking forward

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## Early Years: a return to face-to-face classes

Although we are continuing with our online Early Years classes in 2022-23 as it suits some of our families particularly well, we have seen the enthusiasm for online learning dwindle over the past few months. We are therefore aiming to run the majority of our Early Years classes in person going forward, both in our partner schools and at venues, including children's centres, in different areas of the borough.

This will allow us to reach more families, including those in areas where we don't currently have partner schools such as Battersea.



## Expanding our summer projects

The challenge of summer reading slide is something we are keen to address, but this needs to happen in a way that our existing staffing and funding can sustainably support.

We hope to be able to offer regular messaging and online resources and are considering running a one-off summer event.



# 13: Our thanks

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We'd like to thank everyone who has financially supported our work, and especially those grant-making bodies that have maintained that support across a number of years. Without your funding we could not achieve any of the work described in this document.



We are also extremely grateful to the individuals who support us on a monthly basis. Their regular unrestricted donations give us the security and flexibility to continue to develop our work.

# Get involved

## Donate

If you'd like to make a donation to help us continue to support children's reading in Wandsworth, please visit [www.learn2love2read.org.uk/pages/11-donate](http://www.learn2love2read.org.uk/pages/11-donate) or contact Matilda Tuke at [matilda@l2l2r.org](mailto:matilda@l2l2r.org).

## Volunteer

If you're interested in becoming an L2L2R reading volunteer, you can find information and apply online here: [www.learn2love2read.org.uk/pages/4-volunteer](http://www.learn2love2read.org.uk/pages/4-volunteer) or contact Matilda Tuke at [matilda@l2l2r.org](mailto:matilda@l2l2r.org) with any questions.

## Partner with us

If your organisation would like find out more about how we might work together please visit: [www.learn2love2read.org.uk/pages/3-partner-with-us](http://www.learn2love2read.org.uk/pages/3-partner-with-us) or get in touch with Tara Coffin at [tara@l2l2r.org](mailto:tara@l2l2r.org).

If you work with disadvantaged families in Wandsworth in any capacity we would love to hear from you!

Find us: @learn2love2read



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