



Christmas Challenge 2024

Awards Application

learn to
love to
read

About Learn to Love to Read

Working to support children's early literacy in Wandsworth

Learn to Love to Read helps children in Wandsworth become confident and enthusiastic readers.

2024 marked the tenth birthday of Learn to Love to Read. Our charity has grown from small beginnings where our founder, Teresa Harris, and her friends, approached a Wandsworth primary school, with the offer of supporting children who struggled with reading.

Our vision of making 'every child a reader' – being able to read and also enjoying reading – continues to guide us.

In 2022–2023 we completed a strategic review of the charity's work and developed our five strategic pillars to which we remain committed: embedded in the local community, serving the whole family, providing continuity of support, targeting the greatest need, ensuring quality delivery and measuring impact.



L2L2R has grown to a team of 69 volunteers reading in eight partner schools across Wandsworth and seven part-time staff. In addition to supporting 178 children with their reading in schools, we are supporting hundreds of children and their families from 0–11 years old with parental talks, workshops, events and messaging, and we are now delivering 96 early years classes a year in schools, nurseries, children's centres, community centres, libraries and with partner charities.

The challenge to achieving our vision continues but we are confident that the work we do – supporting children's reading and fostering a love of reading – is helping to change lives.

The need

According to government statistics, the number of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 6 nationwide remains similar to past years at 74%, meaning that, once again, over 25% of children left primary school last summer unable to read well. Wandsworth figures, as usual, track slightly above the national figures with 79% of children meeting the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 6 (75% in 2022–2023), but this was still below the 81% reported in 2021–2022.

At the end of Year 1, all children take a phonics screening test to assess their phonics knowledge. Last year, once again, a fifth of children did not meet the expected standard nationally (20%) with figures slightly lower in Wandsworth (16%). For disadvantaged pupils, however, the national figure increases to 32%. This gap has remained broadly similar to the year before.

In *The Benefits of Reading*, BookTrust notes that reading supports children to overcome disadvantage. Those growing up in poverty are likely to remain in poverty as adults, but a child growing up in poverty who is read to at age five has a significantly higher chance of economic success in their twenties than their peers who are not read to. Disadvantaged children who achieve highly at the end of primary school are also twice as likely to be read to at home in the early years, compared to their peers.

In recent research with early years families from low income backgrounds (*Children's Reading Habits in the Early Years & The Role of Multiple 'Reading Influencers' in Supporting Children's Reading Journeys*) BookTrust also found that although 95% of parents see reading as important for their child, over a quarter of parents (28%) don't find reading with their child easy and a fifth don't feel confident choosing a book their child will enjoy. This research is borne out in Coram Beanstalk's 2024 survey of 1,000 Mumsnet members which found that children from low income households are less likely to read by choice (64%) than high income households (76%).

BookTrust also observes that children are more likely to become independent readers when they experience reading with multiple people – including family members, teachers or other trusted people in families' lives. However, many fathers and grandparents feel they lack confidence and knowledge in supporting children's reading journeys and teachers report that they have limited time to discover new books and inspire children in their schools.

If children experience early shared reading they are more likely to continue to read as they grow up. Reading for pleasure in the early years has four times more powerful impact on a child's progress across the curriculum at age 16 than parental education or socioeconomic status.

Our Solution



One-to-one reading support

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



Early Years classes

Our classes for 0 to 4 year olds, focusing on songs, stories and speaking and listening games, help children to be ready to read when they start primary school.



Parent engagement

We use our existing parent connections to encourage ongoing parental involvement in their children's reading as well as reaching parents through regular parental talks and workshops.

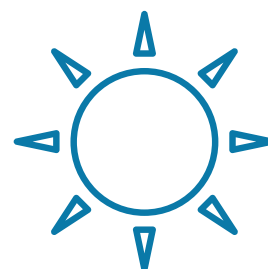


Training and supporting volunteers

Volunteers attend a half-day training session, as well as receiving ongoing support from our Head of Volunteering through regular newsletters, termly meet-ups, our virtual volunteering support line and additional training.

Summer programmes

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



Christmas Challenge 2024

Why we take part

We have been taking part in the Christmas Challenge Big Give campaign since 2022. This year's campaign was our best performing campaign ever. We are thrilled with having exceeded our target and are keen to share with others how we went about it and what we learnt for the future.

We take part in The Big Give as being a small charity with limited resources it gives us a fantastic opportunity to connect with a champion funder and secure vital matched funding.

Our small team of 7 face huge time pressures and simply would not be able to deliver this type of large campaign without the support of The Big Give. The webinars, the marketing materials and indeed the deadlines provided by the team at The Big Give are instrumental in being able to deliver this type of public campaign.

We have found being part of a larger public campaign is motivating to our donors and prospective donors. The messaging of The Big Give facilitates conversations with our community and gives a real focus to our fundraising efforts as well as providing a sense of urgency when we are appealing for support. This, along with the prospect of match funding helps us to engage the wider community and not only raise funds, but also awareness and engagement.



Application Process and Campaign Aims

Applying

Our application this year was to raise money for the core costs of delivering our literacy support across Wandsworth.

All funds raised would be used to support the ongoing mission of our charity – ‘to give children in Wandsworth the opportunity to become confident, enthusiastic readers by introducing toddlers to early literacy skills, supporting young readers in schools, and encouraging and equipping parents to engage with their children’s reading at home’.

We know that becoming a confident reader changes a child’s life and continuing to fund our core costs was identified as the priority for enabling our work to continue.

Our fundraising targets are higher for 2024–2025, than ever before, due to the level of need and this comes against a backdrop of increasing competition for grants and so the necessity to diversify fundraising activities and increase our engagement with donors and potential donors.

Pledgers

With this in mind and our work in developing relationships throughout the year we were confident that we could reach a higher target than in previous years and so set our target at an ambitious level. It was double that of 2023!

With the support of our founder we were able to secure pledges from an existing funder and a local business who was supporting us for the first time.

Both of our pledgers were from organisations that fundamentally believe in the importance of education and so have values that are aligned with our charity.

Application Process and Campaign Aims

Campaign Aims

Increasing local
awareness of
Learn to Love to
Read

Raising funds to
support ongoing
delivery of core
programme

Reaching new
donors and
building
engagement

Building business
contacts and a
network of local
businesses

Campaign Planning Timeline

July

- Big Give Application submitted

August

- Champion funds secured
- £3500 secured from 2 pledgers
- £3500 secured from Childhood Trust as our Champion Funder

September

- Fundraising Manager met with local businesses to secure support and plan initiatives
- Event planning meeting held - approach agreed with team
- Communications plan developed

October

- First social media post announcing Sip to Support Campaign and The Big Give Week Wreath Making Event
- Tickets for Wreath Making Event went on sale
- Newsletter included details of The Big Give Week events
- Learn to Love to Read featured as charity of the month by local business partner
- Meeting with potential school partners re fundraising events

November

- Volunteers Coffee Morning invite sent for The Big Give week
- Tickets for Wreath Making Event went on sale
- Blog post for Wreath Making Event
- Previous donors contacted personally
- Social Media push for The Big Give week and Sip to Support
- Fundraising Manager and Director spoke at local business networking event and established business mailing list and secured two potential donors

December

- Communications sent to volunteers, mailing list and business mailing list
- Partner school fundraising events run
- Daily Social media collaborative posts with partner businesses, community group and authors during The Big Give Week
- Reminders and payment instructions sent to those who expressed interest in donating
- Successful Wreath Making event and Volunteer coffee morning held
- Post campaign thank you cards delivered and social media posts uploaded

Campaign Strategy

We had a 3 strand approach to fundraising for this year's campaign

Business Partnerships

Big Give Week Events

Online Campaign

Each of these elements worked together to raise the profile of our campaign and enable us to exceed our target



Business Partnerships

Sip to Support

What was Sip to Support?

- Wandsworth based juice and sushi bar agreed to donate a percentage from all drinks sold to Learn to Love to Read's Big Give Campaign
- We worked in collaboration to promote the campaign across the Tooting and Balham areas
- We were able to boost business for Squeezed by sharing the campaign and asking our other local contacts to do the same
- The collaboration was featured on local social media news outlets boosting the profile of both parties
- We created a custom large wreath for their window to attract attention and included our donation QR codes during The Big Give Week

How this linked to the Christmas Challenge

- In store posters included The Big Give week information and a donation QR code
- Social media posts referenced The Big Give and through collaboration we were able to increase our reach across the community and increased social views by 40% enabling us to reach more potential donors
- During The Big Give week the Sip to Support campaign concluded and it directly raised £950 (including matched funds)



Business Partnerships

School Partnership

A small private school in South West London with whom we had connected earlier in the year chose us as their charity of the term. They held an own clothes day during The Big Give campaign week and asked the families to make a donation. The amount raised was then very kindly matched by the PTA.

How this linked to the Christmas Challenge

Funds were directly raised for The Big Give Christmas Challenge during the week of the live campaign

Learn to Love to Read was able to introduce ourselves and our work to the parent community of the school and start what we hope will be an ongoing partnership



Business Partnerships

How we created partnerships

Learn to Love to Read works only within Wandsworth and it is a priority for us to be part of the community we support. This enables us to make meaningful partnerships with local businesses and other community groups as we are all motivated to support the children of Wandsworth.

Our partnerships are developed over time and with the idea of being mutually beneficial to both parties. Each partnership is different and is built based on genuine connections and understanding of what both parties are looking to achieve.

Partnerships are not just about raising funds. Connecting with local businesses and community groups enables us to reach more potential volunteers and raise our profile amongst the wider community.

An example of this is with our work with our partner Howden Insurance Tooting. They made us their featured business of the month in October boosting our local presence and raising awareness. They then held a networking event in November and invited us to speak. At this event we were able to create a business specific mailing list that we then followed up with prior and during The Big Give week to encourage donations



Business Partnerships

How this linked to the Christmas Challenge

As direct result of the Howden Insurance Tooting networking event a local community action group FACE made a donation to our online Christmas Challenge campaign

Howden Insurance Tooting attended our wreath making event and made a donation to our online campaign

Winkworth Tooting also made a donation online

BASI UK was also instrumental to our success by being a pledger



"We were excited to support Learn to Love to Read during The Big Give week, especially with the wreath-making workshop. It was a wonderful evening that helped the charity reach their fundraising goals. Learn to Love to Read is an amazing local charity working to support children's early literacy and reading in a friendly and fun environment. Our longstanding partnership makes us proud to advocate for such a great cause."

Julita Reszkiewicz
Marketing Executive at Howden Insurance Tooting

Events

Wreath Making Night

The event

- On giving Tuesday we held our very first Wreath Making night
- We had some 40 attendees who all donated through QR codes directly to the online campaign on the night of the event
- During the event each participant was given everything they needed to make a beautiful Christmas wreath for their front door
- The participants were taught how to make the wreath and then the whole team supported them as they had a go.
- The space for the event was donated to us
- The cost of the tickets covered the materials
- The majority of attendees were not previous donors

How this linked to the Christmas Challenge

- When purchasing tickets participants were told that the cost of the ticket covered materials and that they would be asked to donate to The Big Give online campaign during the live event.
- In addition Howden Insurance Tooting sponsored the event and made a donation to The Big Give online campaign
- In total the wreath making night raised £1785



Events

Volunteer Coffee Morning

The event

- On the Friday of The Big Give week we held a coffee morning for our volunteers
- We hold these regularly, but in this instance we also extended the invite to prospective volunteers
- During the event volunteers were given coffee and mince pies and had the chance to shop for books, cakes and Christmas decorations
- This event not only raised funds, but was a morning full of joy and excitement around The Big Give

How this linked to the Christmas Challenge

- All purchases were made via links to the online campaign
- The morning raised £415 towards our target and it was during this event that we reached the target



Communications Strategy

In advance of The Big Give week we contacted all volunteers and mailing lists to highlight the upcoming campaign and asked not only for donations, but also for sharing of our social media

As a small charity with only 7 part time employees communications also involved everyone reaching out to those that might be able to donate informally whether through class or street What's App groups or whilst chatting to friends

Having connected with local press we issued a press release and were featured on Tooting Newsie which has a following of 40k and regularly reaches over 20k people with it's social media posts

Planning in advance was an essential part of the communications strategy.

The Fundraising Manager and Communications Officer developed a content plan for social media well in advance

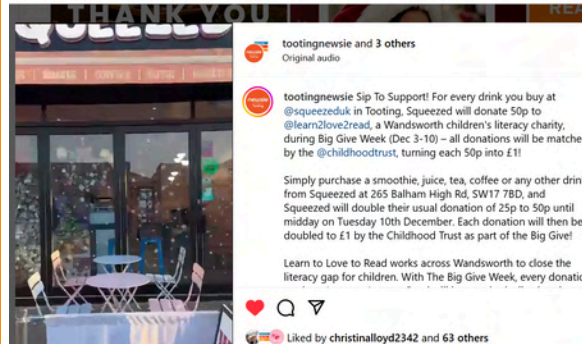
Reaching out to previous donors to see if they could help again. Our Founder, Director, Trustees and Fundraising Manager were all involved in this and they made a huge difference raising £2500 on the first day of the Christmas Challenge

Direct Mails to particular groups both before and during the live campaign

Collaborative social media posts to boost reach and to raise awareness amongst new groups

Communications Examples

The majority of our social media posts were short form video and we used a variety of styles to engage differing audiences



From our first post to our last (including thank you posts) we made 21 Instagram and Facebook posts relating to the Christmas Challenge along with many stories and Linked In posts

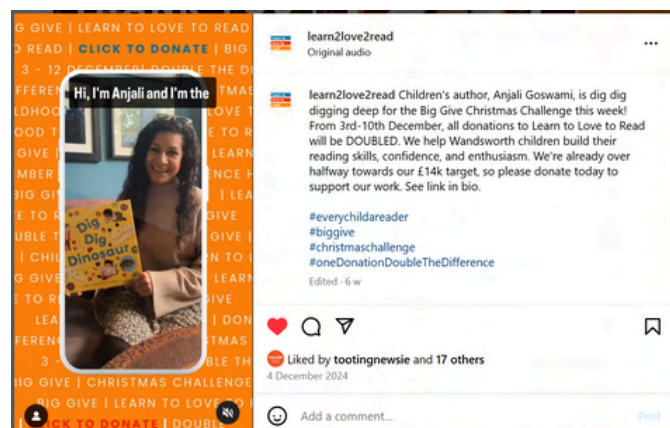
We also thanked everyone on our socials and made sure to additionally send personalised cards and impact reports to our large donors



We created posters for local cafes and included our QR code. We even created a giant book themed Christmas wreath for the window of Squeezed to get our message across

We were mindful to not only communicate to ask for donations, but also to share the need

Amazing authors that we worked with in 2024 were kind enough to film content for us



Communications began as early as October

Results

We are delighted to say that we exceeded our target!



*Our online
campaign and
events raised*

£16,033

*including gift aid and
fees*



A further £7,000 was donated during The Big Give week by an individual donor unable to donate online. This was motivated directly by our Christmas Challenge campaign and so in total we raised

£22,867  **63%
above
target**

*62% of donors
were completely
new supporters*

*Average donation £100
with donations ranging
from £3 - £1500*

*Our social media posts on
instagram had 21,911 views,
reached 29% more accounts
and we had 14.7% more
profile visits and increased
our followers by 5%**

**measured from 1st November
to 17th December when we
were posting about The Big
Give*



*We tried out
running new
events and these
raised £2200*

Lessons Learnt and Tips



It is never too early to start

Post application in July we started our planning and engaging with possible partners in earnest in September, but the groundwork for that was really going on all year as we built and maintained relationships.

We hope to be part of The Big Give again for 2025 and so we have already begun planning or at least thinking through what worked, what didn't and what we would like to try this year.

January may seem very early to be thinking about December, but in our experience partnerships take time to develop and often charitable donation plans are made far in advance.

Try new things

As part of our campaign we tried three new things; Sip to Support, Wreath Making and a mini Christmas sale at our volunteer coffee morning. Without the addition of these three new things we would not have been able to reach our target.

It felt quite daunting having events to arrange and organise during The Big Week and of course we didn't know if they would be a success since they were new to us, but it worked really well and gave us confidence for the future

Be prepared

Having the majority of our social media posts ready in advance makes a difference to The Big Give week itself when we were preparing and delivering events.

Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate

Working in collaboration with some of our supporters to create and share social media posts made a huge difference to our reach.

Be ambitious

We were worried about having set such an ambitious target, but perhaps the challenge helped us to think more widely about how we could achieve it... Ultimately we reached that target 3 days before the end of The Big Give Week

Thank you

We'd like to thank everyone who supported us with the 2024 Christmas Challenge whether that was through making a donation, sharing a post or attending an event.

Thank you for making 2024 our most successful Christmas Challenge to date.

HOWDEN



Winkworth

for every step...