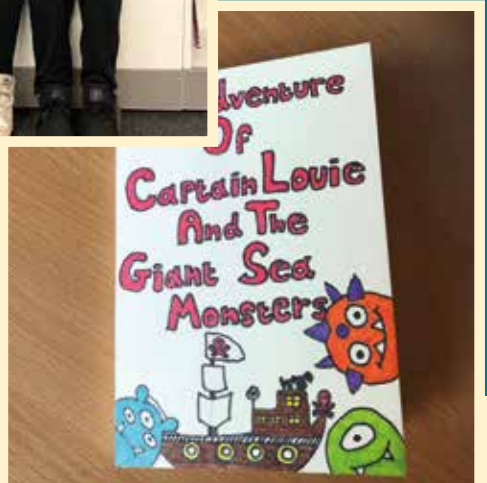




Annual Review 2020

www.giveabook.org.uk

Registered charity number 1149664



Because Reading Matters

Give a Book is a charity that promotes books and the pleasure of reading in the hardest places. Our core belief is that to pass on a good read – to give a book – is a transaction of lasting worth. Our main areas of work are in prisons, schools and with disadvantaged children & young people throughout the UK.

Research consistently shows that reading for pleasure not only has a positive impact on educational attainment and literacy skills but can also enhance other life skills such as confidence, communication and empathy.

Give a Book provides creative ways of leading to reading. Current projects include: Prison Reading Groups (PRG is part of Give a Book), Whole School Reading, Prison Family Reading, Books for First Nighters, School Breakfast Book Clubs, Pupil Referral Units, Book Clubs in Schools as well as various other school and literacy projects.



In this difficult year of 2020 I feel lucky to have seen the best in people. The time has never felt tougher for those we serve- the children who have had months away from school, and the teachers who have striven to help them; the prisoners locked up for 23 ½ hours a day and the staff who keep them safe. They all deserve our heartfelt thanks.

We are immensely grateful to new supporters who have helped us during the emergency, and to existing ones who have been unfailingly loyal. We have found a wonderfully generous friend in the Copyright Licensing Agency. Our advisory board and board of trustees, including the recently welcomed Selina Walker from Penguin Random House, could not have been more supportive. Our inimitable Patron, Antonia Fraser, continues to find exhilarating new ways to propagate the pleasure of reading.

At the start of the lockdown when everything changed, Give a Book's magnificent team showed spirit, dedication and plenty of sheer graft, never wavering from our core activity of spreading the pleasure of reading in the hardest places. Those places seemed harder than ever to reach this year, but the team was active, quick to adapt, inventive, imaginative and effective in finding new ways of keeping contact around reading.

We look forward to working in new and different ways in the New Year and, we hope, to restoring some of the old ways of joining together around reading and books.

Victoria Gray, Executive Director



2020 in numbers

What you helped make possible...

Children with a parent in prison often have poorer outcomes in education and health.

(NICCO Children of Prisoners Report 2019)

21,200+

books sent out to various projects

Working with

78

prisons

27

schools

25%

of children left primary school in 2018 unable to read at the expected level and it is estimated that there are nine million working aged adults in England with low literacy or numeracy skills or both.

(Dept of Education 2018 and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2016)



Breakfast Book Clubs – provide books for hungry children to read with their healthy breakfast

‘Children are often seen reading to each other at the breakfast book club, and seeing their confidence grow is fantastic.’



Whole School Library – creating a reading culture within a school alongside a library space

‘Children, parents and staff have all been really excited to come and see the new reading space and the fantastic range of books. We are absolutely delighted with our new library.’



Mother & Baby Units – encouraging women to bond with their babies over books

‘The board books have gone down a treat with the babies, encouraging the mums to sing along with the song books it’s lovely to see!’



Books for First Nighters in prisons – for those spending their first night in custody

‘Having a book when I first came in saved me.’

Whole School Reading Project

Brimsdown Primary is in one of the most deprived areas in North London where children started school at a much lower level than the national average. More than half of the children are on free school meals. They often have little or no access to books at home. The local library has closed and the nearest bookshop is some distance away.

When we first visited the school in 2019, we found no library space and the only books available were a trolley or two of books. In 2020, thanks to generous support from the Marks Family Charitable Trust, this has been transformed!

Brimsdown has become a reading school-- with a regular Breakfast Book Club, lunchtime reading clubs, a year group reading club, author visits and now a wonderful, calm, relaxing, imaginative new library space. We have had fantastic feedback from the school.

“We are passionate about giving our children a great education and the evidence is clear that reading for pleasure is associated with better outcomes. The children are thrilled with the new library and so are we, and we’re looking forward to enjoying it for many years to come.”

Headteacher

“Children, parents and staff have all been really excited to come and see the new reading space and the fantastic range of books. We are absolutely delighted with our new library and incredibly grateful to Give a Book for making it happen.”

School Reading leader



“The former classroom is now unrecognisable. It is filled with hundreds of books for the children to choose from, as well as comfy spaces for them to sit and read. There is also a whiteboard for the children to leave feedback on the new space. Comments include: “It’s aspirational”, “I feel really optimistic” and “It makes me calm”.



Schools in Lockdown 2020



The schools that we work with are often in areas of high deprivation. These communities have been particularly hard hit in the Covid-19 crisis period. With libraries as well as schools closed, some families have had difficulties accessing learning support – with few or no books in the house, poor internet access, limited IT equipment.

At the beginning of lockdown, we contacted all our schools. Many were acting as distribution centres for food and other resources. We sent over 1800 books to schools, many for food parcels going to vulnerable families and children on free school meals. We also helped **Heathmere Primary** with Roehampton Community Boxes – books going out weekly to 200 local vulnerable families, **Pimlico Toy Library**, who work with families struggling to access local services, **Doorstep Library**, **Learn to Love to Read** and **Pupil Referral Units** – the aim always to encourage reading for pleasure.

We were able to move quickly and efficiently and adapt our services to continue to reach our beneficiaries. Not only have we achieved our outcomes of getting books to those children who may not have them at home, we have also created and built upon new relationships with more schools. Schools continue to work in challenging circumstances. We have now started this year's whole school reading project as well as planning new **Breakfast Book Clubs** in 2021.

“Since returning to school I have had several children find me at the gate or during the school day to ask when reading club would start again and talk about the reading they had done during lockdown, this for me is one of the biggest successes to date as English lead; getting a love for reading culture!”

Assistant Headteacher



A year in the life of Prison Reading Groups (PRG) - 2020

Literacy levels and reading experience vary widely in prisons. Many prisoners struggle with basic skills but there are also higher level readers for whom there may be few formal learning opportunities inside. Reading initiatives need to be flexible and PRG groups adapt to meet the needs of different memberships.

PRG sets up and supports reading groups in prisons across the UK. The groups are voluntary and informal. They encourage reading and develop discussion skills and sociability. They work through prison libraries and rely on the commitment and dedication of library staff who organise things inside and sometimes also run the groups. Where possible external volunteers also help to run the groups.

In January 2020, PRG had 56 groups running in 43 prisons on a regular basis, with a volunteer and member of prison staff to facilitate them. The groups are a chance for up to 15 prisoners to meet and discuss a book they have all chosen and read. With the introduction of prison lockdowns in March, groups were unable to meet in person. But some of the facilitators found innovative ways to make groups work remotely, setting up virtual book groups, using a set of discussion questions and sharing responses among members. Where possible, groups picked the books themselves and there were some terrific choices, from Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* through to Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*.

To encourage more groups to follow suit, PRG created **Book Talk** to suggest new books each month and provide accompanying resources. There are now 37 reading groups running remotely, reading books such as *The Nickel Boys* and *Small Island*. While we know groups miss the vital contact and open discussion a meeting provides, we hope that this will carry them through until they are able to meet again.

“In the reading group everyone is given a voice, all have an equal say. For one hour a month I feel that my opinion is valid, that others care what I say.”

Reading group participant

“What an important part books have played in the wellbeing of the men during these difficult times.”

Prison Librarian





2020 Lockdown – what happened in prisons?

“It has provided a positive distraction and a talking point for new prisoners with staff.”

Prison Staff member

When the lockdown was upon us in March, prisons were closed to outsiders and most usual activity including our regular prison projects were paused. We sent boxes of books to 40+ prisons for distribution on wings while libraries were inaccessible. PRG created **Bookstuff**, a weekly book related newsletter which is available throughout the prison estate.

‘Things in the prison aren’t great right now but donations like the ones from Give a Book will help the inmates through this tough time:’

Prison Librarian

There have been few or no in-person family visits since March. Give a Book has provided children’s books for prisoners to share with their families over the phone or video, copies of which can then be posted out.

With the support of the partnership with **Penguin Random House** we were able to provide audio files and hard copies of books to be broadcast on the radio at HMP Wandsworth.

“The selection of books suited readers of all ages and abilities and helps provide a bit of escapism from the situation they find themselves in.”

Prison Librarian

Making it Up is a family reading project with workshops to help prisoner parents feel more confident about reading and enjoying books with their children while discovering the joys of storytelling themselves. With prison consultant David Kendall, we devised a special in-cell pack for parents in prison to use to create a book for their child.

‘I went to B Wing yesterday and got shown the most incredible book that one of our men had made – all based on the minions from Despicable Me.’

After an initial pause, with help from prison staff, we are again sending in books for **Books for First Nighters**, with the aim of offering some comfort and mental release to the new arrivals.

‘I can’t tell you how happy I am to have this book.’



Interested in finding out more about Give a Book? Do you want to volunteer or fundraise for us? Get in touch on info@giveabook.org.uk



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