

Thank you for being a South Reading Community Information Ambassador

You're helping to improve the lives in your community!

In this fifth newsletter, we've included information on our brilliant Community Health Champions, and the fantastic Compass Recovery College. We've also included exciting upcoming events from Reading Borough Council, and organisations we work with we hope will be of interest.

We want to help make sure everyone across South Reading has access to good quality information, especially support, services, and events on from Reading Borough Council, the Government, and importantly, yourselves, our vital community partners.

We need and value your help as a South Reading Community Information Ambassador in sharing key information to your friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues when you're chatting, on WhatsApp, email or Facebook or through the community groups or organisations you represent. We want all residents in South Reading to be included in everything we do, and we really appreciate your help.

Did you see the Council's recent Just One Thing information on Facebook and X, 24 things for 2024 sharing ideas of what to do across the town. Even Whitley's Ricky Gervais gave it a Like on social media!

Here's a couple of the ideas and a reminder of the great things about our town:

- You could do your own walking tour of some of the famous sites in Reading, including Banksy's Great Escape artwork from 2021, the Royal Berks Hospital where HRH The Princess of Wales was born in 1982 and Huntley and Palmers where the bar scenes of Bugsy Malone were filmed in 1975.
- Jump on a bus and go to a part of Reading you've never visited or don't know very well. Have you seen all the activities at Prospect Park? There's archery for adults and children, coconut trees to climb, Reading landmarks mini golf. <https://www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/outdoors/parks-outdoor-facilities-open-spaces/prospect-park/>

Find all the 24 tips for 2024 here www.reading.gov.uk/news/just-one-thing-kickstart-a-positive-2024-in-reading/

What's a Community Health Champion?



Community Health Champions are residents who help the community, ensuring residents are aware, understand, and up to speed on the information, services and activities important to their health and well-being.

It's a voluntary role so anyone who lives in the town can become a Community Health Champion. It doesn't matter if you're a young adult, parent, or retired, all you need is to want to help improve your local community!

There's an amazing group of Community Health Champions, and other partners, who share their health experiences, and learnings. Community Health Champions can make communities even better by helping residents find the best health services for them.

Training, a certificate, and ongoing support is provided plus this could be a great boost towards your career!

For information about the Community Health Champions, please watch this [video](#). If you're interested in becoming a Community Health Champion we'd love to hear from you, please fill out this short [form](#), and the team will be in touch.

Would you or someone you care about benefit from some mental health support?



Compass Recovery College is a mental health and wellbeing organisation based in Reading.

They provide free workshops and social groups for anyone in the area aged 18 or over who may be affected directly or indirectly by mental health or wellbeing challenges.

They start from a place of hope, learning about our mental health and wellbeing with the right support can give us more control for the future. They believe self-management and making the most of our strengths can help us recover from challenges and become experts in our own wellbeing.

There are a variety of workshops delivered by staff and people who have real life experience of mental health challenges, they can help to look at things a little differently.

To find out more about their free mental health and wellbeing support please visit the Compass Recovery College [website](#) or email or call compass.opportunities@reading.gov.uk 01189 373 945.

Compass Recovery College are commissioned by Reading Borough Council.

Other useful information

Free cuppa. Whitley Wood Pantry

Run from the Whitley Wood Community Centre, every Tuesday 1 – 3pm. Come along for a free cuppa, and to chat to others. Subsidised food is also available for £5.

Could you help a child to read? Assisting Berkshire Children (ABC) to read – need volunteers

ABC to read need more volunteers, could you help local children find the fun in reading. Volunteers need to be DBS checked and will receive full safeguarding training, and support, as part of their training.

If you'd like to find out more email info@abctoread.org.uk or call 0118 9511336 and visit the ABC to read [website](#).

And if you know a school that would like help to raise reading standards, please get in touch too.

Award winning charity, ABC to read, aim to help as many children as possible improve their reading to enable them to achieve success in education and confidently meet the challenges of adult life.

Now open Saturday mornings. Whitley CDA Community Café

In addition to weekdays, Whitley CDA's community cafe will reopen its doors on Saturday mornings. From 9am to 12pm, they will be offering affordable breakfasts in

a family friendly environment. Look out for what's going on each Saturday on the [Whitley CDA Facebook page](#).

Apply for £125 payment. Household Support Fund open for applications

Residents on low incomes and those who are struggling to meet the rising cost of living, are eligible to apply for a £125 one-off payment (per household). Please see the [press release](#) for further details, and the [application portal](#) to start your application.

Advice, information, and support services

For free, impartial, and confidential specialist advice to help with a wide range of problems including benefits, debt and money, cost of living, and online support, please contact [Citizens Advice Reading](#), [CommuniCare](#), or [Reading Welfare Rights](#).

If you would prefer an in-person informal chat, or assistance with online applications, please visit the [Whitley CDA Community Café](#), in the [South Reading Community Hub](#), on a Monday, Wednesday, or the first Saturday of every month to speak with the organisations.

For debt advice, please contact [Frontline](#), who provide expert assistance to those who are in debt. There is no judgement and they can help lift the burden and worry. They also specialise in offering independent, expert benefit advice.

Find out about funding for new projects. Reading 4 Community (R4C)

R4C is a free online funding search tool which helps Voluntary Organisations, working for the benefit of our residents, to find grants, awards and other funding to start new projects. Please visit the [R4C website](#) for further information.

Is your community organisation looking for space?

If you are part of a community or voluntary sector organisation that is interested in renting or sharing space in a Reading Borough Council-owned building, please complete this [online form](#).

The Council will strive to match organisations to suitable premises wherever possible. If we are unable to fulfil your request we can provide useful feedback to help you in your search going forward.

Whitley Wood Playgroup

Do you have a child aged 0-4? Then come long to the Whitley Wood Playgroup, on Thursdays from 10 to 11:30 am at the Whitley Wood Community Centre.

For more information, please contact e.walker@reading.ac.uk and r.puno-levett@reading.ac.uk

Are you a parent or a carer living in Church, Norcot or Southcote Wards in Reading?

Healthwatch Reading would like to hear about your positive or negative experiences looking after your children's teeth.

- Can you tell them about your experience of helping your child / children (10 years and under), you care for, look after their teeth?
- What has been your experience of going to, or trying to go to, a dentist with your child in the past two years?
- What support have you had in understanding more about how to keep your child's teeth healthy?

As a thank you for sharing your views, you will receive a £20 gift voucher, and goodie bag.

For more information, please call 0118 214 5579, or email info@healthwatchreading.co.uk

Help achieving academic potential and job prospects. University of Reading regional PhD bursaries

The University of Reading is delighted to offer PhD bursaries to support residents of Reading and the surrounding area to achieve their highest academic potential, enhance their professional prospects and pursue research in an area they are passionate about.

Applicants must permanently live in Reading or within 25 miles of the University and demonstrate a connection to the area. Please apply at least six weeks before the closing date of 3 May 2024.

For more information, please visit the University's [website](#).

Get moving whilst sitting down. Chair-based exercise group

At St Pauls Hall, Whitley Wood Lane, RG2 8PN. Every Monday at 10:45am, run by the Parish Nurse, chair-based exercise group for all ages and abilities, followed with free refreshments.

From 1pm, health advice is offered, and simple well-being checks by a qualified, registered nurse.

Every first Monday of the month 12pm free hot homemade soup and a roll.

No booking necessary, just turn up! For more information, please email parishnurse@readinggateway.church.

Other events

Whitley Orchard Planting Day (Saturday 24 February)

From 11am to 4pm at the Whitley Orchard, Lexington Gove entrance to the South Whitley Recreation Ground, RG2 8UG. Help turn Whitley Orchard into a space for all residents from Whitley Wood to enjoy, by planting trees and enhancing the local landscape. Refreshments and cake will be available.

You will have a chance to hear from tree experts and learn about nature in the area and be able to get involved in maintaining and looking after the area in the future. For more information, please contact Rob on 07885750430 or email robert.stirling@reading.gov.uk

Living Well with Chronic Pain (Monday 26 February)

Led by Compass Recovery College, from 2pm to 3:30pm, online. A workshop investigating persistent pain, its effect on our mental health and coping strategies.

Please register [here](#).

Love Your Neighbourhood Community Event (Thursday 29 February)

From 2pm to 4pm at Hexham Community Centre, RG2 7UD. A chance for residents to speak with organisations including Citizen's Advice Reading, Reading Borough Council teams and many more, find out what is happening at Hexham community centre, and have a say in future activities and events at Hexham.

The event is free, including hot dogs, veggie options, hot drinks and fruit. There is no need to book, everyone is welcome to just pop in on the day. If your organisation would like to attend future events, please let us know!

Living Well with Chronic Pain (Monday 4 March)

Led by Compass Recovery College, from 2pm to 3:30pm, South Street Arts Centre, RG1 4QU. A workshop investigating persistent pain, its effect on our mental health and coping strategies.

Please register [here](#).

Autism and Mental Health (Wednesday 13 March)

Led by Compass Recovery College, from 2pm to 3:30pm, Greyfriars Church, Friar Street, RG1 1EH. A workshop aimed to help autistic adults understand how their Autistic Spectrum Disorder affects their mental health, while discussing ways to cope with common mental health challenges in everyday life.

Please register [here](#).

Autism and Mental Health (Wednesday 20 March)

Led by Compass Recovery College, from 2pm to 3:30pm, Greyfriars Church, Friar Street, RG1 1EH.

Please register [here](#).

Managing Emotions (Thursday 21 March)

Led by Compass Recovery College, from 10:30am to 12pm, Greyfriars Church, Friar Street, RG1 1EH. A workshop exploring emotions and how we express can impact many areas of our lives such as work, relationships and our self-identify.

Please register [here](#).

Managing Emotions (Thursday 28 March)

Led by Compass Recovery College, from 10:30am to 12pm, Greyfriars Church, Friar Street, RG1 1EH.

Please register [here](#).

For a full list of what's on in Reading – please visit the [Reading Directory](#)

If you have any information you would like to include in the next newsletter or wish to unsubscribe and opt out of being a South Reading Community Information Ambassador, please email Ollie Cassells, Community Project Officer – oliver.cassells@reading.gov.uk - with your request.