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MEDIA RELEASE – Strictly embargoed until Friday 17 February 2017

## The Reader secures funding to tackle mental health and social isolation in North Wales

The Reader today announced a new outreach project, funded by Big Lottery Fund, which aims to tackle mental health problems and reduce social isolation across three areas of North Wales. With this ambitious *Shared Reading* project, the Liverpool-based charity hopes to reach over 850 people and create more than 130 volunteers opportunities, all of whom will receive full training and ongoing support.

*Shared Reading* is a simple, innovative model which improves well-being, builds resilience and reduces social isolation by bringing individuals together to read aloud a story and poem and share their thoughts on what's been read. The Reader currently run over 300 *Shared Reading* groups in a range of settings across the UK, including schools, prisons, community centres and libraries, in workplaces, mental health wards and in care homes.

As one *Shared Reading* group member puts it: *“the reading groups are a different kind of medicine, and it’s through them that I’ve found a way back to life.”*

The Reader’s founder and director Jane Davis said: *“We are thrilled to receive a Big Lottery Fund grant for our Feel Better with a Book project in North Wales. This funding will help us build on the brilliant work our team of dedicated volunteers achieved during our previous Big Lottery Funded project and secure a sustainable future for Shared Reading in the area.*

*“This project will make a real difference to people living with mental health issues and help us reach and support some of the most vulnerable and isolated people across Gwynedd, Conwy and Anglesey.”*

Rona Aldrich, Wales Committee Member for the Big Lottery Fund said: *“Programmes like this are making a difference to the lives of so many people in communities across Wales. It delivers on our promise to use National Lottery funding to regenerate and revitalise communities, tackle disadvantage head on and leave a lasting legacy.”*

The Big Lottery Fund previously supported The Reader's *Makes Friends with a Book* project launched in 2012, which brought *Shared Reading* to communities across six counties of Wales, training over 60 volunteers to read one-to-one with socially isolated older people and deliver groups in local libraries, many of which continue to be volunteer-led today.

For more details about the *Feel Better with a Book* project in North Wales visit The Reader's website [www.thereader.org.uk](http://www.thereader.org.uk). If you are interested in volunteering please email [volunteer@thereader.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@thereader.org.uk).

ENDS

#### NOTES TO EDITOR

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#### SOCIAL

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#### About The Reader [www.thereader.org.uk](http://www.thereader.org.uk)

The Reader is an award-winning, charitable social enterprise which brings people together, changes lives and builds communities through sharing great literature. Our unique *Shared Reading* model brings small groups together each week to read aloud a story and poem with group discussion led by a trained Reader Leader.

For over a decade The Reader has been working in partnership with CCGs, Public Health Bodies and NHS Trusts across the UK to support thousands of people with a wide range of health and social issues including, mental health conditions, dementia, chronic pain, isolation and recovery from substance misuse.

Whether delivered by volunteers or Reader staff, *Shared Reading* offers people a practical way to improve well-being, build confidence and connect with others.

#### About The Big Lottery Fund [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It puts people in the lead to improve their lives and communities, often through small, local projects. It is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised by National Lottery players for good causes. Every year it invests over £650 million and awards around 12,000 grants across the UK for health, education, environment and charitable purposes. Since June 2004 it has awarded over £8 billion to projects that change the lives of millions of people.