

Shape

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Liverpool charity The Reader calls for a national reading revolution as it reaches 500-group milestone

North West communities are at the forefront of the Shared Reading  
movement – now The Reader wants more people to be part of this success story

The Reader, a national charity based in Liverpool’s Calderstones Park, has hit a major milestone this month, supporting 500 Shared Reading groups to happen across the UK every single week.

To build on this momentum, it’s now seeking local volunteers to support its national reading revolution, offering new opportunities to read great literature with elderly people in 14 care homes in Liverpool.

With crucial support from funders including the players of the People’s Postcode Lottery, Arts Council England, The Second Half Fund from innovation foundation Nesta and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the players of The National Lottery, more than 600 volunteers now read in libraries, prisons, care homes and hospitals up and down the country, bringing people together and books to life. Over 200 of those groups take place in the North West, with the help of more than 50 local partners.

Research from the University of Liverpool has shown that these Shared Reading groups can improve wellbeing, reduce social isolation and build stronger, more supportive communities. As one local group member said: “*The reading groups are a different kind of medicine and it’s through them that I’ve found a way back to life”.*

*“There are more than 2 million people in the UK suffering from chronic loneliness, which is known to have a detrimental impact on health and wellbeing,”* explains The Reader’s founder and chief executive Jane Davis. *“Shared Reading brings people from all walks of life together and helps them to build social connections. We believe a reading revolution is needed now more than ever in our increasingly isolated digital world.*

*“It’s an incredible achievement to reach this milestone and it belongs to the volunteers on the ground who make them happen,”* Davis continues. “*Behind every one of those groups is a trained Reader Leader who brings something meaningful into the lives of their group members, whether it’s a poem that provides comfort, a new friendship or just a friendly face and a cup of tea.”*

The Reader, which is celebrating its 10th birthday this year, now reads with over 3,300 people a month in friendly and inclusive adult Shared Reading groups.

*“There are lots of live opportunities for people to get involved, so if you love people and love books, and could help us bring a weekly Shared Reading group to places like John Lewis in Liverpool ONE or Anfield Stadium – then we want to hear from you,”* Davis adds.

By reading with purpose, and sharing thoughts and reflections, many group members find personal meaning in the literature and form strong social connections with others.

Rachel, a volunteer Reader Leader, has been running a Shared Reading group in a care home for three years. She said: “*Reading with different people gives you some insight into their lives, reading with older people especially shows you a personal history. These people have lived full, rich lives and Shared Reading shows that person is still very much there.”*

Groups are free to attend and open to everyone regardless of age or background, whether they’re hardy readers or just starting out. Weekly sessions are led by a trained Reader Leader who brings something – a short story, poem, play or novel – to be read aloud and discussed by the group.

Founded in Birkenhead, the charity wants to thank volunteers and supporters from across the North West for leading the national Shared Reading movement.

To learn more about volunteering with The Reader, visit [www.thereader.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.thereader.org.uk/volunteer) for a list of upcoming Volunteer Recruitment Events across the North West.

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

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**About The Reader www.thereader.org.uk**

Supported using public funding by Arts Council England, 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 poetry, short stories, novels or plays with informal, personal 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.

The charity also gets crucial support from the innovation foundation Nesta, alongside the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport through [The Second Half Fund](https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/second-half-fund-sharing-time-and-talents-life/), and a growing family of commissioning partners across every geography and sector in the region.

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

SOCIAL - @thereaderorg #SharedReading

The Reader - Charity Number 1126806 (SCO43054 Scotland)