

## **The Reader**

*'Reading is a form of friendship' – Marcel Proust*

### **Welcome from Jane Davis, Founder and Director**

Hello and welcome to The Reader.

We've put together this recruitment pack to provide you with information about our organisation, our mission to change the world through a reading revolution, our values and ambitions, what we offer and what we are looking for from our people.

At The Reader we believe literature is for life and that's why we're working to develop Shared Reading in old people's homes, community centres, hospitals, addiction rehab units, prisons, public libraries, children's services and many other places. We find it easy to imagine a near future where all people – regardless of background, career or personal situation – bring books to life: opening and sharing the centuries of vital information contained within them. Our purpose is to ensure that this amazingly rich content is available for everyone to enjoy. We're creating a reading revolution to make reading part of the fabric of life.

We're an organisation with national (and international) reach, based at Calderstones Mansion, in Calderstones Park, Liverpool. Calderstones, our HQ and organisational home, is about to undergo a £4m refurbishment. We've been based here since 2013 and we're building a community built on Shared Reading, which has created 30 plus jobs, hundreds of volunteering opportunities and thousands of visitor experiences.

I hope this pack provides you with everything you need to know about our vision, ethos and values, what you can expect from working at the Reader and the opportunities we will provide to support your career development.

I look forward to meeting you.

Jane Davis, MBE, Ashoka Fellow

### **About The Reader**

Supported using public funding by Arts Council England and players of the National Lottery through Big Lottery Fund and People's Postcode Lottery, The Reader is an award-winning, charitable social enterprise, which brings people together, changes lives and builds communities through sharing great literature. Through *Shared Reading*, we bring 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.

### **About Shared Reading**

Shared Reading is a simple yet powerful non-medical intervention to improve wellbeing, reduce isolation and build community. Groups take place in many settings in the community and across the region. Group members often describe Shared Reading as helping them to have insight, to recognise themselves, to build confidence, share things they often could not easily say. Shared Reading creates a safe and calm place in which people feel a sense of community and a connection to self and others. A piece of literature is read aloud and the group stop whenever to discuss their responses whenever someone has something to say. There is never any pressure to read or contribute, and participation is always self-directed.

## **About The International Centre for Shared Reading at Calderstones, Liverpool**

The Reader is at a pivotal moment in its development. With the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Liverpool City Council, Arts Council England and additional grant funders The Reader will transform Calderstones' grade II listed Mansion House into an international flagship project for shared reading – Our International Centre for Shared Reading.

We are creating a community based on reading that will help people reach their full potential through Shared Reading volunteering, training opportunities and employment. The site will include the conservation and display of The Calder Stones in a new location in the heart of the Mansion House grounds. As part of the vision for the site, post refurbishment, The Reader will be launching a number of new social enterprises and building capacity within the catering business that it already operates.

There will be readers and reading rooms, The Storybarn (our existing interactive storytelling experience for children and families), heritage exhibitions and activities, a shop, café and ice cream parlour, wellbeing activities, cultural events and special occasion spaces, the Secret Garden, the Theatre Room – all within a beautiful public park. Our social businesses will generate income for the charity, as well as buzz for the site, jobs and additional volunteering opportunities. Above all, Calderstones will be created by our people – thousands of visitors, hundreds of volunteers and staff.

We are hugely ambitious for Calderstones, the development of which is a key part of the Reader's strategic plan, and which we believe will influence the national conversation on sustainable community, health and wellbeing and the value of literature.

## **About the Storybarn**

The Storybarn is a creative and interactive book-based environment within which visitors experience the practise of imagination through story, space and objects. This creative environment stimulates expressive and inventive play and thought, and gives children powerful experiences of reading for pleasure that we hope they will remember for the rest of their lives. At the Storybarn, we aim to develop children as personal readers and to give them access to really exciting books which provide rich, high-quality reading, insight and valuable life-tools. Children will realise that they could love reading, and will begin to do so, while feeling relaxed and happy in the company of books. Our interactive reading sessions enable the life and energy of the wide variety of texts we use to really shine, and we encourage children to connect with the material and express their engagement in a number of ways.

We work with children from a variety of backgrounds and in a variety of ways, and our work with families makes us a unique visitor experience in the North West of England. A visit to the Storybarn for either a general admission session or a birthday party offers families a wide range of high-quality, book-based experiences, led by a team of talented and creative staff. A flexible mix of interactive reading sessions, imaginative drama-based play activities and quality craft workshops creates an exciting experience for families with children of a variety of ages, from birth onwards.

## **About our Catering Services**

This role will work across the catering provision of The Reader Group Enterprises, in our café, ice cream parlour, and events. They will work in a team developing and delivering a range of profitable catering offers that work in harmony with The Reader Group's ethos and vision and consistently delivers a high level of customer service.

## ***Extract from The Calderstones International Centre for Shared Reading, Business Plan - A community built on Shared Reading***

With the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Liverpool City Council (LCC) and grant funders The Reader will transform Calderstones' grade II listed Mansion House into an international flagship project for Shared Reading, a model reading community. We are creating a community based on reading that will help people reach their full potential through employment, volunteering and training opportunities and will include the conservation and display of The Calder Stones in a new location in the heart of the Mansion House grounds. We are hugely ambitious for Calderstones, which we believe will influence the national conversation on sustainable community, health and wellbeing, and we will continue to work to build partnerships to facilitate this. The development of Calderstones is a key part of the Reader's strategic plan.

As part of the vision for the site, post refurbishment The Reader will be launching a number of new social enterprises and building capacity within the catering business that it already operates. These enterprises, alongside our core charitable reading and community activity will generate sustainable income and provide valuable opportunities for people for years to come.

Heritage and social impact are at the heart of this project and have been considered in all elements of the business planning. All proposed enterprises are in line with our strategic aims and have interests of the community at their centre.

Each year we expect Calderstones to: Welcome over 40,000 visitors to site with 30,000 of those visitors experiencing heritage.

- Deliver a targeted strategy across the city to ensure that at least 10% of our visitors (4000) will come from areas of deprivation of which 100 visitors per year who participate in activity will be from our prioritised geographical areas (as outlined in this plan) and 100 visitors from priority target beneficiary groups.
- Operate 30 weekly reading groups and 15 community wellbeing groups providing opportunity for 450 participants to take up community activities such as reading, arts, gardening, yoga, craft, dance or other activities with significant proportions reporting improved wellbeing or reduced social isolation as a result

- Create or sustain 40 jobs, provide 2 apprenticeship opportunities and provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for over 100 volunteers
- Host 100 school groups and provide a broad range of learning opportunities for both Children and adults

## **Our beliefs and values**

Our beliefs and values shape our culture and guide us in our work both internally and externally. These are principles that we hope will help everyone who works for us, everyone who works with us and everyone with whom we read understand who we are, what we stand for and how we do things.

It's really important to us that we recruit people who feel they can work in accordance with these values:

- Great literature is at our heart
- We read to lead
- We are kind but bold
- We respect individuality but work as a team
- We value innovation and find ways to live with change
- We have strong boundaries and are well supported
- We celebrate success but learn from our mistakes
- We work whole-heartedly and value our wellbeing

Please read more about our purpose, beliefs and values on our website, [www.thereader.org.uk](http://www.thereader.org.uk)

## **Why this is a unique opportunity**

If you love books and believe that they offer children a way to understand the world in which they live and the worlds inside themselves, then you won't find a more dedicated, creative and inspiring workplace. The Reader exists to provide book-routes into this inner space and to develop shared understandings of both it, and the outer world.

Our café and ice cream parlour are open seven days a week and provide a quality and affordable offer for the local community in welcoming environments. You will be invited to participate fully in the development of our exciting Social Enterprise which offers many opportunities for growth and development.

## **What does The Reader have to offer you?**

Joining The Reader now is a chance to be part of a fast-paced and evolving organisation with lots of new developments in the pipeline. You will become part of making it all happen and you'll be working with team of friendly, committed and talented people.

We read! All Reader staff have opportunities to read together regularly in the workplace – if you've never experienced Shared Reading this won't mean much to you, but when you do

experience it you'll see how reading together can help provide powerful downtime as well create strong bonds in a working team. Every workplace should have it!

The Reader is committed to personal and professional development. Our staff are supported through an induction period, where procedures and policies are disseminated and expectations and values are shared. New members of staff can expect a thorough introduction to The Reader, from the physical layout of Head Office, to the staff teams, and Shared Reading groups, as well as support in identifying your own training and development needs and opportunities.

Mandatory training includes: Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity, Dementia Awareness and of course, our flagship Read to Lead training for Shared Reading leaders.

Through our Personal and Professional Development process (currently under review) you will meet with your manager regularly and have the opportunity to agree your objectives for the year, discuss your learning, your hopes and dreams and the challenges you face.

## **Location**

We are situated in an excellent location within one of the most beautiful parks in Liverpool. Our location offers a unique blend of city, suburbs and green space allowing you to benefit from the urban and rural surroundings – the best of both worlds.

- Directly situated in a beautiful park - provides the opportunity for walking meetings which generates creativity within our staff
- Liverpool City Centre is just 5 miles away and John Lennon Airport is just 15 minutes away by car.
- The park is easily accessible via the major motorway networks of the M57, M62 and is well served by public transport (bus and train networks). Regular trains run from Liverpool South Parkway to Manchester on a journey that takes just over 30 minutes.
- There is excellent shopping, restaurants, bars and leisure facilities within walking distance of the park
- Liverpool is a culturally diverse city that offers a wide ranging programme of cultural events throughout the year. 2018 is a special year for Liverpool as it commences its European Capital of Culture anniversary celebration. An exciting and ambitious programme of events will place Liverpool at the heart of the UK's cultural scene.
- Within Liverpool and its surrounding area, you can find all of the following; city, countryside, beaches, promenades, rivers & canals, culture and arts and all of the associated activities that you would expect to find in such environments

## **What our staff say**

*"The Reader is the most demanding place I've ever worked, but also the most rewarding, the most fun, and the most flexible"*

“I like that I have a clear route for personal growth, development and progression. My manager works closely with me to identify my skills and passions and we work together to set out a number of strategies to help me reach my goals.”

*“The Reader acknowledges that everybody has different styles of working, and we are encouraged to find what is best for us in order to get our job done to the absolute best of our ability.”*

‘I’ve never worked in a place that cares so much about the work they do. From finance to project workers we all are working towards a common aim – to build a reading revolution.

## **What our volunteers say**

*I feel very privileged to work with this group. The members are truly inspiring. Some of them say they love the group because it keeps them learning. It keeps me learning too, all the time.*

This isn’t something I would have imagined myself doing, and yet now, it’s become a part of my job that I look forward to and feel incredibly passionate about. I’ve learnt a valuable skill that is bringing huge benefits to people in my community.

*“The whole Read to Lead course was fantastic, the course leaders were brilliant – I’ve never been on the receiving end of such skilfully delivered and amazing training. I came away feeling that I had been given something very special and powerful to take home with me.”*

[Watch this short film](#) to hear from some of our London volunteers.

## **What our group members say**

“This group has become the highlight of my week and I clear my calendar to ensure I can make the sessions”.

*‘Mondays have taken on a completely new aspect. I’ve got something to look forward to now, for the first time in years’.*

“Without the Shared Reading group, I don’t feel that my recovery would have been possible.”

[Watch this short film](#) to hear from some of our Liverpool group members.