

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.

Extracts from **The Reader's Business Plan: 2017 - 2022**

1. Vision, Mission and Ambition

1.1 Our Vision is:

A world in which the Shared Reading of great literature means that the complexities of human experience are discussed in reading communities everywhere.

1.2 Our Mission is:

We will bring about a reading revolution, ensuring that Shared Reading groups are widely available, making great literature accessible to everyone.

1.3 We will do this through:

The development of national and international networks of Shared Reading practice, and the building of a large-scale, long-term Shared Reading community radiating from our organisational home at Calderstones, the International Centre for Shared Reading, Liverpool.

1.4 Our Ambition:

Our ambition is to make Shared Reading part of the fabric of life - in every care home, in every library, in every hospital, in every mental health service, in every school and in every community centre – so like the Scouts and Guides - wherever you find yourself living, there will be a group nearby. Like Scouting and Guiding, our scale will be achieved through tens of thousands of passionately committed, week-in, week-out volunteer group leaders.

Within 5 years we would see success in the following terms:

A successfully launched International Centre at Calderstones - by 'successfully launched' we mean a lively and well-used centre which is financially self-supporting and providing a Shared Reading hub for Liverpool City Region and the wider North West as well as the rest of the UK and the wider world.

A support structure in place to inspire and support a growing Shared Reading movement - by 'support structure' we mean the necessarily infrastructure (e.g. digital,

communications, training and support, Quality control for the Shared Reading movement, and a working financial structure to support its continued growth.

1.5 Our history

This plan posits a new stage in The Reader's development.

During Phase One, (1997-2008) The Reader's Founder, Jane Davis, developed the practice and underlying principles of Shared Reading and began experimenting with the taking of great literature out of her University English department. Jane worked with a number of close colleagues and began The Reader with the founding of The Reader magazine in 1997. By 2003 she was employing three colleagues and in 2008, with a turnover of approximately £400,000, span The Reader out of the University.

During Phase Two (2008-2016) The Reader grew its staff base and reach, professionalising its delivery structures, creating markets for Shared Reading, building organisational infrastructure and attracting investment. We also successfully bid for Calderstones Mansion and £1.9m heritage lottery grant to refurbish the building, transforming it into The International Centre for Shared Reading. During this period, we developed a number of large-scale projects which involved volunteers. With the loss of a large commission from a public body, we realised we needed a more sustainable delivery model for the reading revolution and began to develop the community-led model.

Phase Three (2017-2022) will see the further development of and eventual roll out of this community-led model. Like Guiding and Scouting, The Reader will depend on passionate individuals who are willing to give up their own time to run Shared Reading Groups, week in, week out. The Reader's core staff will exist to ensure (i) Sustainability (ii) Quality of Practice and (iii) Growth. During this phase we will move from being a staff-delivery-based organisation to a teaching-and-support-based organisation.

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.

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 reflect and shape our behaviour, which turn creates our culture. Our values sum up what we stand for and how we do things. 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:

- We read to lead
- We are kind but bold
- We make our own pattern in the world
- We learn new stuff and we learn from our mistakes
- We love The Reader and take responsibility for it

Please read more about our purpose, beliefs and values on our website, www.thereader.org.uk

Why this is a unique opportunity

If you love books and care about people, you won't find a more dedicated, inspiring workplace. We're changing the world one page, one poem, one Shakespeare play at a time.

We are looking for someone who has a breadth of experience working in the voluntary sector, to help significantly grow and develop the contribution volunteers make to our work. We already have a significant number of volunteers helping us to achieve our aims in different ways however we now have a major opportunity to offer a much broader range of opportunities for people from a range of life situations.

At the heart of the community offer at Calderstones will be a programme of Shared Reading and community wellbeing groups as well as a number of larger one off/ annual events which will attract larger numbers of visitors from further afield. The Reader will have a role in igniting enthusiasm and will support the development of a full and vibrant programme but we envisage that a community of willing volunteers will co-create the programme with us. This role therefore requires someone who can help to identify ideas, opportunities, skills and talents within individuals and provide the support and guidance necessary to bring out the best in people whilst at the same time ensuring that relevant policies and procedures are in place.

We need a team of dedicated Calderstones Volunteer co-ordinators who can build on our existing volunteer strategy and develop a programme of opportunities and systems that provide a high quality volunteer experience that reflects best practice in the sector. The volunteer roles we envisage at Calderstones will be many and varied. However, our initial priority volunteer roles are; Reception, Welcome and Reader Leaders.

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 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.

There are many other benefits to working at the Reader, including:

- Annual Leave – a generous holiday allowance of 30 days per year plus bank holidays.
- Flexible Working policies
- Occupational pension scheme
- Childcare voucher scheme
- Cycle to work scheme
- Occupational Sick Pay scheme
- Free on-site parking
- Walking meetings

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

“The group is the heart of my week.”

“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.

possible.”