
MEDIA RELEASE – Tuesday 14 November 2017

Major investment announced to improve the lives of children in the North West

The Reader, a national charity based in Liverpool, today announced a £373,000 investment from the Steve Morgan Foundation. The charity was thrilled to confirm that the investment, supporting their families programme, will significantly improve the life chances of children living across the North West.

Working with a range of partners across the region, The Reader aims to create engaging and enjoyable opportunities for children and families by building positive and rewarding relationships with books and reading. The Reader will forge vital partnerships with trusted organisations such as Home Start, who work directly with families and children in early years across the North West, The Reader will create a culture of ‘reading for pleasure’ by training and supporting partner staff, parents and parents-to-be in their pioneering *Shared Reading* model.

Jane Davis, director of The Reader said: *“UNESCO tells us that ‘Reading for pleasure is one of the most important things that will make a child successful in life. If parents don’t read for pleasure themselves, perhaps facing their own literacy barriers, they are less likely to encourage their children to do so. Through our easy-to-access workshops, The Reader builds parents’ trust and confidence and helps them develop a new connection with reading, this in turn allows them to share reading with their families. We’ve seen what an incredible impact this can have for families, particularly those from disadvantaged areas, and now, with the support of the Steve Morgan Foundation, we can reach even more parents and children across the North West.”*

Jane Harris of the Steve Morgan Foundation said: *“The focus of the Steve Morgan Foundation is to ensure that we are making a difference, this is exactly what our new partnership with The Reader will achieve. By investing in a three-year project we will enable The Reader and its partners to bring the joy and life-changing benefits of reading for pleasure to over 2000 families across the region”*

The Reader has a wealth of experience delivering *Shared Reading* in family settings such as children’s centres, foster homes and nurseries, and has repeatedly demonstrated that the informal, safe and inspiring approach of our model can inspire parents and improve the quality of families’ lives. As Amelia, a teenage mother from Birkenhead who attended The Reader’s *Stories for You and Yours* programme said: *“Before I came here I wouldn’t even speak to her [daughter] if someone else was there. I love reading aloud to Kim now because I never used to.”*

Academic research has found that the reading skills of school leavers from disadvantaged backgrounds is, on average, two and a half years behind those from the most affluent homes. Research from the University of Oxford also found that adults who are out of work are twice as likely to have literacy problems and more likely to experience health problems such as depression. Considering this, the concentration of health and employment deprivation in the North West is a great concern for families in the region. Through this project, The Reader aims to get right to the root of the problem and significantly improve the quality of life of families in the region.

Throughout the three-year project, The Reader hopes to bring *Shared Reading* into the mainstream provision for children and families experiencing disadvantages, creating a legacy of opportunity that will benefit those who need it most for years to come.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR

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SOCIAL - [@thereaderorg](https://twitter.com/thereaderorg) #SharedReading

About The Reader 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 Steve Morgan Foundation www.stevemorganfoundation.org.uk

The Steve Morgan Foundation (previously The Morgan Foundation) was created in 2001 by Steve Morgan CBE. Since then it has committed over £300m of funding.

For more information contact Jane Harris, Administrator, tel: 01829 782808.

About Steve Morgan CBE

Born in Liverpool, Steve Morgan, 64, is the founder and Chairman of Redrow plc.

Steve is also Chairman of the Bridgemere Group of Companies, which has significant land and commercial development interests.