



MEDIA RELEASE – Monday 3rd September 2018

‘Never Grow Up, Always Down’ North West charity urges Cheshire residents ahead of Roald Dahl Day event series

The Reader arrives in Chester with an evening of Roald Dahl for big kids at The Storyhouse

Local charity [The Reader](https://www.thereader.org.uk/) is launching a Shared Reading campaign in Cheshire on [Roald Dahl Day](https://www.roalddahl.com/create-and-learn/join-in/roald-dahl-day) with an evening at [Storyhouse](https://www.storyhouse.com/) celebrating the magic of reading aloud with adults.

The ‘[Evening of Roald Dahl](https://www.storyhouse.com/event/shared-reading-with-the-reader)’ event, from 6pm to 8pm on Thursday 13th September, will showcase some of the author’s lesser-known adults’ stories, including *The Umbrella Man*.

Well known for his enchanting and enduring tales for children, Dahl also wrote 51 short stories for adults, collected in four books, some of which might not be suitable for small ears, they are: Over to You; Kiss, Kiss; Someone Like You and Switch Bitch.

The event is part of The Reader’s Cheshire roadshow, created for October’s Voluntary Arts and Age UK [Age of Creativity festival](http://ageofcreativity.co.uk/), which is designed to get more older people involved in creative activities.

The roadshow will see The Reader popping up for ‘An Afternoon of Roald Dahl’ in Northwich Library on 1st October and at Ellesmere Port Library on 3rd October, both from 1pm to 3pm. It will then head back to Storyhouse on 7th October to celebrate [Silver Sunday](https://silversunday.org.uk/event/love-later-life/), with Shared Reading sessions at 2pm and 3pm, in collaboration with Brightlife as part of Age UK Cheshire’s Love Later Life festival.

The Reader was founded in Liverpool a decade ago and is [now supporting](https://www.thereader.org.uk/liverpool-charity-the-reader-calls-for-a-national-reading-revolution-as-it-reaches-500-group-milestone/) 500 Shared Reading groups up and down the country every single week, including more than 200 in the North West.

The Storyhouse already hosts two of these groups. The Cheshire campaign will see the launch of 10 more, led by 20 new local volunteers, in a variety of community, dementia and mental health centres across the county.

“Isolation among adults has been shown to be a [public health problem in Cheshire](http://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/GetFile?fileUrl=/keystatistics/lonelinesspredictionsolderage.pdf&extension=PDF), as it is across the country, with more than 2 million people suffering from chronic loneliness,” said The Reader’s founder and chief executive Jane Davis.

“We’re now appealing for the people of Cheshire to join the reading revolution – particularly those who are keen to build Shared Reading communities in Chester, Northwich, Ellesmere Port, Weaverham and Tarporley. As Roald Dahl said in his final children’s book, The Minpins, ‘those who don’t believe in magic will never find it’, so come along to one of our roadshow events to experience it in action.”

This project is supported by [Brightlife Cheshire](http://www.brightlifecheshire.org.uk/), a coalition of organisations working together to help reduce social isolation among people aged over 50 in Cheshire West and Chester, as well as the NHS [West Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group](https://www.westcheshireccg.nhs.uk/), responsible for commissioning health and care services across the area, with a particular focus on dementia and mental health for this project.

Evaluation carried out by The Reader and the University of Liverpool has shown that Shared Reading groups can improve wellbeing, reduce social isolation and build stronger, more supportive communities.

Groups are free to attend and open to everyone regardless of age, ability or background. 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.

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.

“It’s fantastic to see The Reader taking part in Brightlife’s Silver Sunday celebrations at Storyhouse in Chester,” said Chris McClelland, Head of Brightlife. “This project is a wonderful example of how the arts, culture or just a shared interest can really bring people together to help combat loneliness in our borough.”

The Reader is also looking to support children across Cheshire West through its First Page project, offering collaboration with any groups or partner organisations currently working with families with kids aged 8 and under. Funded by the Steve Morgan Foundation, First Page aims to give families a love of reading for pleasure. With this in mind, there are opportunities for partner staff and volunteers to receive Storytime training, workshops and fully funded trips to The Reader’s [Storybarn](https://thestorybarn.org.uk/) interactive reading experience.

Please contact firstpage@thereader.org.uk if you think that this may be on interest to your organisation.

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 and players of The National Lottery 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. 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.

@thereaderorg #SharedReading

The Reader - Charity Number 1126806 (SCO43054 Scotland)

**ABOUT BRIGHTLIFE CHESHIRE**

Brightlife is a partnership led by Age UK Cheshire (Registered Charity Number 1091608). It has been awarded £5m as part of the Big Lottery’s Fulfilling Lives, Ageing Better fund, which has given a total of £82m to 14 areas throughout England to improve the lives of people aged 50+.

The Brightlife partnership includes: Age UK Cheshire, Older People’s Network, Cheshire West and Chester Council, West Cheshire CCG, Vale Royal CCG, Cheshire and Warrington Social Enterprise Partnership, Chester Voluntary Action, Deafness Support Network, Rural Community Services, Sanctuary Housing and West Cheshire Inter Faith Forum.

Over the next five years, Brightlife aims to work closely with people aged 50+ to identify, design and implement a wide range of innovative solutions to address loneliness and isolation across Cheshire West and Chester.

Nationally, over 1 million older people say they are always or often feel lonely, and two-fifths say the television is their main form of company. With the numbers of older people aged 65 or over in the UK predicted to rise by nearly 50% in the next 20 years, loneliness is an urgent problem.

**ABOUT NHS WEST CHESHIRE CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP**

NHS West Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group is responsible for commissioning – or “planning and buying” – health and care services for the people of West Cheshire to ensure high-quality, sustainable healthcare for a population of 263,755. It is the clinical commissioning group’s responsibility to ensure that the local health budget is well spent. [www.westcheshireccg.nhs.uk](http://www.westcheshireccg.nhs.uk/)