

## Trustee Recruitment Pack

“You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.”

James Baldwin

**We are looking for people who understand what James Baldwin was talking about when he wrote that books ‘connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.’**

**We are seeking experienced leaders, readers, communicators or socially minded business people who want to ‘shine in use’ as Tennyson said, by joining our exceptional board of Trustees.**

**We’re looking for people who can bring any of the following experience:**

- **the literary world (publishers, writers, readers)**
- **communications**
- **movement-building**
- **business**
- **social business or the third sector.**

**Thank you for your interest in the role of Trustee at The Reader.**



**Jane Davis**  
**Founder and Director, The Reader**



## About The Reader

The Reader is a national charity bringing about a reading revolution. Our headquarters are located in the Mansion House in Calderstones Park, Liverpool, which is also home to our social enterprises, including the Café and Ice Cream Parlour, and our immersive reading centre for children and families, the Storybarn.

We want everyone to experience and enjoy great literature, which we believe is a tool for helping humans survive and live well.

For over a decade, we have been changing lives across the UK and beyond by bringing people together through Shared Reading aloud, a simple, non-clinical yet powerful intervention which is proven to build confidence, improve wellbeing, reduce isolation and strengthen communities.

By bringing people together in small groups to read a book, short story or poem, our Shared Reading groups create warm, welcoming spaces where individuals' thoughts and feelings are recognised and valued. Group members can choose to read aloud, share personal reflections or simply to listen – in this way, individuals form real connections - with their inner selves, with literature and with each other. As one of group members puts it: *'It has the power to change the way you see the world and, indeed, how you see yourself'*.

Everything we do – from our global Shared Reading movement to the events, activities and social businesses on offer at Calderstones – builds warm and lively communities by bringing people together and books to life.

Pre-Covid, we led a growing movement of 1,200 volunteers and partners across different sectors, and supported over 700 Shared Reading groups across the UK. During the pandemic, things have changed but we have moved about a third of our work online, and we are actively seeking to develop new additional alternative provision.

As we build our next five-year plan, we are determined to be an organisation that works for everyone. 'Belonging at The Reader', our equality, diversity and inclusion strategy will be a central part of our work. In order to develop an effective strategy, we are especially keen to receive applications from people of colour.

We have a diversity champion, Pranav Sood, on our Board of Trustees, and the organisation's diversity and inclusion work is being directly led by Jane, our Founder and Director.

## Follow the links below to see The Reader in action:

A Ritual to Read to Each Other – watch [here](#)

Jane's TEDx Liverpool talk - watch [here](#)

Radio 4 interview with Bazalgette - listen [here](#)

Merseycare Danish TV film - watch [here](#)

What Shared Reading does for people living with chronic pain - watch [here](#)



# The Reader

The Reader at the first Arts & Health Conference - read [here](#)  
*The Reader Magazine* – read more [here](#)

## Our Mission, Vision and Values

The Reader is a unique place to work, where action is underpinned by strong values. We live our values, embedding and actively using them in our day-to-day working life. We are always encouraged to challenge each other when we feel the values are not being lived – when something isn't 'readerly'.

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

## Our Work

Shared Reading is a powerful group experience that brings literature to life. A group of two or more people – one of them a trained Reader Leader – meet, usually weekly, and read books, poems, plays or other literary matter, aloud.

By reading with adults with physical or mental health conditions, people coping with or recovering from addiction, or in the criminal justice system, with school groups, families, looked after children, and with older in care homes, our work helps to improve wellbeing, reduce isolation and build stronger communities.

Reading literature aloud, sharing it in real time, means that everyone is involved in a live, creative, and often profound human experience. Group members are encouraged by the Reader Leader to respond to literature personally, sharing feelings, thoughts and memories provoked by the reading. While each individual experiences the text in their own way, the literature provides a shared language which can help open deep conversation and connection between group members.

During the pandemic, things have changed but we have moved about a third of our work online, and we are actively seeking to develop new additional alternative provision. Additionally, we have trained partners in more than a dozen countries from New Zealand to the USA, from Norway to Brazil to develop Shared Reading. This work includes a formal international development partnership with our sister organisation, Het Lezerscollectief, in Belgium.

## Our work at Calderstones

We re-opened Calderstones Mansion, in Calderstones Park, Liverpool, following a £5m restoration in Autumn 2019. Our aim is to build a community based on Shared Reading, demonstrating that making literature part of the fabric can make life better. Pre Covid shut down, we had 80+ regular volunteers running Shared Reading and other community groups, running our shop, and on hand to talk to visitors in our Calder Stones Story heritage exhibition. Calderstones was also intended to demonstrate a mixed funding model of earned, state-supported and philanthropic money, and much of the Calderstones plan centres on our (already moderately successful) social enterprises. Of course, plans need to change now in



# The Reader

the light of the Covid restrictions but we are continuing to look forward and innovate, including, for example our work to develop a youth training/employment project as part of the refurbishment of another building on the site – the Coach House.

We are a member of the Arts Council National Portfolio, where we have recently been rated at 'strong' in diversity, and we are supported by a wide range of funders including People's Postcode Lottery, National Lottery Community Fund and the Steve Morgan Foundation.

## **Our Governance and The Board of Trustees**

The Reader has a group structure, comprising of The Reader Charity and the Calderstones Mansion House Community Interest Company (CIC).

The Reader has a Board of Trustees which meets four times a year.

The Board currently has seven Trustees in total and you can visit our website to find out more information about our Trustees and the rest of the management teams at <https://www.thereader.org.uk/about-us/our-people/>.

A Committee structure is in place to support the Trustees in ensuring good governance. There are two Committees in operation: (i) the Audit Committee, which oversees governance and risk and (ii) the Nominations Committee which oversees Trustee appointments.

The Calderstones Mansion House CIC has its own Board of five Directors. There are currently three members of The Reader Board who sit on the Calderstones CIC Board of Directors. The Audit Committee is a Group Committee that oversees the work of the CIC as well as The Reader.

The COO and governance secretariat at The Reader help to ensure that the Board can fulfil their legal obligations as directors of a limited liability company - i.e. being legally responsible for the organisation's company records, accounts and performance.

## **The Role**

***We are now looking for new Trustees to The Reader Board who would also sit on the Calderstones Mansion House CIC Board and /or on the Audit Committee.***

## **What does being a Trustee mean?**

As a charity trustee you will have an overriding duty to advance the purposes of the charity, for which there are seven key duties:

- You'll be responsible for the proper administration of the charity
- You must accept ultimate responsibility for everything the charity does
- You have to act reasonably and prudently in all matters related to the charity
- You must safeguard and protect the assets of the charity
- You have a duty to act collectively with the other Trustees
- You must act in the best interests of the charity
- You must avoid conflict between your personal interests and those of the charity

### **What are we looking for?**

Following the retirement of two trustees and with another long-standing trustee retiring next year, the Board is looking to add to its existing base. We're looking for trustees with experience and knowledge of any of the following specific areas:

- Literary experience (e.g. Reader Leader in the shared Reading movement, author, publisher) This will be someone who understands The Reader's literary mission – someone who brings a humane, practical understanding of literature and its powers. It would be very good if this person could bring additional experience of personal difficulty helped by literature; or of personal experience of the necessity for diversity in literature; or is a graduate of the Reading in Practice MA
- Commercial experience: The Reader is always looking to develop our business and to innovate, and we are looking for someone who has commercial experience within an organisation (perhaps in conferencing/hospitality/property, but we are open...). The key qualities we seek are a good instinct for opportunities and entrepreneurialism, and experience of business development
- Communications: A large part of our work depends on great communication with people and we'd welcome high-level professional expertise in this area on the Board, from someone who can bring experience from other sectors
- Movement building - we are building an international movement of Shared Reading and would welcome the experience of someone who has built or been involved in the development of a movement.
- Social or other third sector experience - much of our future work will be about building partnerships with other third sector organisations. We'd welcome applications from people with experience in the sector.

### **How much time does it take?**

In terms of time commitment, we would expect this to be, on average, half a day per month. This would involve attendance at Board meeting (currently taking place on Zoom or Teams), attendance at sub committees along with preparation time for attending these meetings and visits to our groups and events.

You will also be expected to attend Board development days and strategic planning events.

We are looking for people who are able to put in the time to prepare for meetings by reading the documents. We seek trustees who come to meetings willing and are able to contribute productively to the discussions. We want people who are keen to learn about all different aspects of The Reader's work. And we need you to bring your own expertise and experience to the table.

### **How to apply**

If you are interested in this opportunity, please submit your application to Anna Wells, Head of People at [annawells@thereader.org.uk](mailto:annawells@thereader.org.uk)

Your application should consist of:

- A completed CV (which should include employment history)
- A covering letter, explaining your interest in this role
- The names, positions, organisations and telephone contact numbers of two individuals who could be approached as referees. (We will only approach referees having first requested your permission)
- Full contact details from you including address, email and phone contacts

### **Closing date for applications is Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

If you would like to have an informal chat about what this role would involve please contact Anna Wells, Head of People, [annawells@thereader.org.uk](mailto:annawells@thereader.org.uk)

### **What happens next?**

- We will acknowledge receipt of your application information and advise you on what happens next.
- Following consideration of the applications and shortlisting, if successful we will ask you to meet with us.

### **Interviews are scheduled for the week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.**

- At this time, you will meet with a small group of trustees and possibly some Shared Reading group members, as well as having a further discussion with members of the Directors Group
- It would be at this time that we'd also carry out the checks we are required to around you being a "fit and suitable" person as a trustee; such as taking up references and self-declarations. All Trustees to the Board undertake an enhanced DBS check, organised by The Reader.
- And finally, at this stage you would become a co-opted trustee and we will use this time to provide a good induction into being a trustee at The Reader.

You will then be proposed formally as a trustee at the following scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees.

## **Key Responsibilities**

With collective responsibility shared by all of the trustees, to hold the charity 'in trust' for current and future beneficiaries and, acting reasonably, prudently and collectively in all matters, to direct the charity in its charitable objects by undertaking the following duties and tasks:

1. To work collectively with other trustees/directors, the chief executive and, where relevant, other senior staff to see that:

- The Reader has a clear vision, mission and strategic plan and the systems to monitor and review their achievement;
- business, operational and other plans support the vision, mission and strategic plan;
- innovation in meeting its charitable objects is sought out and nurtured;
- always to act in the best interests of The Reader.

2. To take collective responsibility, with other trustees/directors, for the performance of the charity and the use by the charity of its assets by:

- ensuring The Reader has satisfactory control systems for monies, properties and other assets and that monies are invested to the maximum benefit;
- receiving and reviewing regular reports on the performance of The Reader and its assets;
- approving the organisation's annual budget and annual accounts;
- agreeing major policies;
- articulating and re-enforcing the values of The Reader;
- ensuring there are mechanisms available for beneficiaries, employees, volunteers, other individuals or organisations to bring to the attention of The Reader and/or the Trustees any activity that threatens the probity of the organisation
- ensuring that major risks are reviewed and that systems have been established to mitigate or minimise these risks.

3. To see, with other trustees/directors, that The Reader complies with all legal and regulatory requirements by:

- maintaining familiarity with the articles of association in order to ensure compliance;
- agreeing the levels of delegated authority and ensuring these are recorded;
- complying with the requirements of the Charity Commission of England and Wales, charity legislation and relevant company law

4. Collectively with other trustees/directors, to implement the highest possible standard of governance for The Reader by ensuring:

- that The Reader has an appropriate governance structure and that this is understood by all trustees/directors and senior staff members;

- that the Board of Trustees has the skills required to govern the charity well and has access to relevant external professional advice and expertise;
- compliance with the organisation's Trustee Code of Conduct;
- that there is a fair procedure for the recruitment or co-option of trustees/directors.

Please note: this is a voluntary position but reasonable out-of-pocket travelling expenses will be paid upon production of a valid receipt.

#### **Person Specification:**

- Knowledge and experience of the third sector
- Good interpersonal and communication skills
- Experience of managing people and performance
- Experience of strategic planning and delivery
- Strong leadership skills
- Integrity
- Experience of working in a committee
- The ability to act impartially and fairly
- Strong compatibility with The Readers' vision, mission and objectives
- A good understanding of governance and the responsibilities of trustees
- Ability to express and share own views
- Ability to challenge constructively

#### **More about The Reader**

##### **Our work and practices are recognised by others**

- The Reader has been awarded the Investing in Volunteers (iV) kitemark – the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. The iV award recognises the quality of support that The Reader offers to all its volunteers and its commitment to providing meaningful volunteering opportunities that are open to all.
- Our Founder, Jane Davis, was made an Ashoka Fellow in 2011 when she also received an MBE for Services to Literature.

##### **What our volunteers say**

'It's something very deep – I don't know how to name it but I have to say, I get way more than I give. It's so stimulating. I love the way that we interact with the literature and the total lack of intellectual snobbery – the poems are allowed to live and breathe and when you're sharing that with people, particularly in this setting, it just opens up the world to me'.

Reader Leader, Dementia Support Care Home

‘What I found at The Reader is the gift of trust from the very beginning and an ever-supportive and warm atmosphere. It is also a unique way of engaging with literature and with people.’

Volunteer Reader Leader

‘What I like is that it is free and welcoming to everyone, not just for certain people – loneliness is not only old people, it’s young people and immigrants and everyone. Everyone here is sharing thoughts which help us to connect with each other. There is no judgement, we are free to say what we want and respect each other. If we started to judge, people would stop participating, but here we don’t judge and there is time for each of us to speak. The group brings people out of the house, gives us something. If I didn’t come here to this group and this centre, what would I have in my life? Stay at home and be depressed? We need something to keep our mind active and to be connected.’

Reader Leader, West London

## **The Leadership Team**

After more than 20 years since founding The Reader, our Director, Jane Davis, plans to stand down in the next two years. It is hoped that trustees will we recruit now will be able to aid in the transmission of values, ensuring Jane’s legacy is built in to The Reader’s practice. A succession plan is in place.

Jane works with COO Ailsa Horne, Director of Services and People Zoe Gilling, Director of Social Enterprise Anton Clarke, and Finance Director Ginny Hopton. Our Director of Development, Jemma Guerrier is currently on maternity leave.

The Leadership Team is supported by a senior management team comprising heads of department across front-line and back office services.

More details about our Leadership Team can be found [here](#).

## **Our impact**

We regularly capture the impact that Shared Reading has on readers and volunteers, on children and adults, in prisons, in health and social care and in the community. These stories - like the one below from Nim - inspire us to do more to help people build deeper connections with each other, and themselves.

‘What I see in the group is people showing their worth. People hit a certain age and sometimes illness comes into the picture and you start to think ‘What have I got to offer? Am I still useful?’. The group is about wanting to still keep achieving and not wanting ‘disabilities’ of any kind to hold you back: that one ailment, that one issue or diagnosis, that doesn’t define you. There’s still a brain in there, so don’t judge me, give me an opportunity and recognise that my wellbeing *matters*.’

Read the full story [here](#)



## Diversity at The Reader

We've developed a Diversity Champions group who are helping to build the foundations for 'Belonging at The Reader', as well as researching and sharing best practice in other organisations. We've extended our range of literature, and plan to continue to do that until 50% of our curated library is made up of work by black, Asian or minority ethnic writers.

Recently we built an all-staff away day around a shared reading of *Native Son* by Richard Wright, and gave copies of the novel to all 120 staff (many thanks to Vintage). We're looking for additional help in discovering and thinking about black literature during the years ahead, and that might come in the form of a specific literary trustee, or in the formation of a black literature advisory group.

The Reader

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[www.thereader.org.uk](http://www.thereader.org.uk)

@thereaderorg #SharedReading

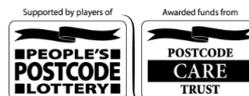
Charity Number 1126806 (SCO43054 Scotland)



The Reader is supported by:



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



*Steve Morgan*  
FOUNDATION