The Reader

Recruitment Pack

'*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 both National and International reach, based at The Mansion House in Calderstones Park, Liverpool, our HQ and organisational home. 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

The Reader is a national charity that wants to bring about a reading revolution so that everyone can experience and enjoy great literature, which we believe is a tool for helping humans survive and live well.

Through a growing movement of 1,000 volunteers and partners across different sectors, we currently bring over 2,500 people together each month to share and discuss great novels, plays and poems. We call this Shared Reading.

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

Everything we do – from our Shared Reading groups to our social enterprises, from our publications to The Storybarn – creates lively, connected, warm communities by bringing people together and books to life.

About Shared Reading

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 great novels, poetry, plays or other literary matter, aloud. It's not a course, it's not a book club.

Reading the literature aloud, sharing it in real time, means that everyone is involved in a live 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.

Extracts from **The Reader's Business Plan: 2017 – 2022, Revised Nov 2018**

Our Vision, Mission and Ambition

Our Vision is of a world in which everyone has 'something real to carry home when day is done'.

Our Mission is to bring about a reading revolution so that everyone can experience and enjoy great literature, which we believe is a tool for helping humans survive and live well. Everything we do – from our Shared Reading groups to our social enterprises, from our publications to The Storybarn at Calderstones – brings people together and books to life to make this happen.

Our Ambition

By 2022 we would see success in the following terms:

Successfully established Calderstones and its businesses - by 'successfully established' we mean a lively and well-used centre which is financially stable, providing a Shared Reading hub for Liverpool City Region and the wider North West and a lodestar for the rest of the UK and wider world. A successful Calderstones will have a well-used programme of Shared Reading, heritage, culture and wellbeing activity, and will be generating income from social enterprise activities which are in tune with our core purpose. Success will mean 44,000 annual visitors by 2022, including 10% from economically deprived areas of Liverpool, with opportunities for people to make connections, feel good, volunteer, learn, develop new skills and gain employment

A support structure in place for a growing Shared Reading movement - by 'support structure' we mean the necessary infrastructure (e.g. digital, communications, training and support, Quality control for the Shared Reading movement, monitoring and evaluation system) and a sound financial structure to support its continued growth.

We want to have developed and be supporting 1,500 Shared Reading groups/reading pairs in the UK by 2022.

The Reader will be a strong, learning organisation, with personal and organisational development, guided by our values, making us flexible, curious, determined and brave.

Our History

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.

Extract from **The Reader at Calderstones – A Community Built on Shared Reading**

With the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Liverpool City Council (LCC) and grant funders, The Reader has transformed the Grade II listed Mansion House in Calderstones Park 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 their new location in the heart of the Mansion House grounds.

We are hugely ambitious for The Reader at 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.

As part of the post-refurbishment vision for the site, 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 love 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.

There is broad scope for personal development in this pivotal role – The Reader works in a range of sectors, across arts, health, justice and education and has a strong local base with growing national reach across the UK. We are about to make a developmental leap forward and we need a truly great staff to help propel us.

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.

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.