

# RECRUITMENT PACK



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#SharedReading

The Mansion House,  
Calderstones Park  
Liverpool  
L18 3JB

**r** The  
Reader

# About The Reader

*"Who knew that reading – which I was told was a solitary affair – could bring people together in the same way that a book can bring a reader to the world?"*

Lemn Sissay

The Reader is a national charity bringing 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. 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.



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.



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.

# The Reader At Calderstones

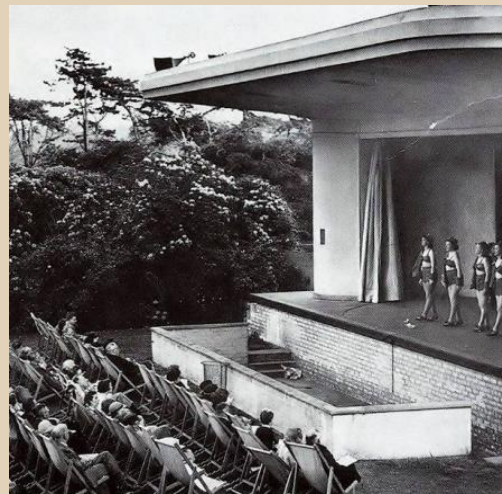
Our Head Office is based in the Mansion House in Liverpool's Calderstones Park.

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, which opened in September 2019.

The Reader at Calderstones offers a working model of a community that has literature, art, heritage, wellbeing activities, food and fun at its heart. It's the first community of its kind in the UK and indeed, the world - a place where everyone can come to find something real to take home at the end of the day.

The Reader at Calderstones is home to the Calderstones Mansion House Community Interest Company's social enterprises, the Reader Café, the Ice Cream Parlour and the Storybarn, our imaginative play space, which generate income to support our charitable work. Each year The Storybarn welcomes around 6,000 children and family members and 74 schools and 3000 pupils, inspired by a lifelong love of reading for pleasure.

This a place unlike any other, where everyone is welcome, and where anyone can come to experience literature, find and share meaning, be nourished, develop new skills and explore creativity.



## What our staff say

*"The overall friendly vibe in the office, the teamwork and culture of helping each other out, the focus on staff members as individuals and the culture of empathy and kindness that working with literature fosters - it is the nicest place I have ever worked"*

Employee Survey, November 2019

*"The Reader staff are a warm, generous and supportive team. A real cliché but it really does feel like one big family where everyone has your back"*

Employee Survey, November 2019

# Shared Reading Reach



719

groups and 1:1 readings  
taken place between  
2019-2020



28,154

beneficiaries engaged  
with our activities



13,766

beneficiaries reached  
through Shared Reading  
activities

Data taken from April 2019 to March 2020

## 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 inspire us to do more to help people build deeper connections with each other, and themselves.



**94%** said it *"makes me feel better"*



**89%** said it *"helps me connect with  
others in a different way"*

*Feedback from our Community Survey, September 2020  
– 351 individuals surveyed, response rate 84%*



Thanks to the support of the players of the People's Postcode Lottery, we're making important investments in our people, systems and processes that enable our work to thrive.

- We've transformed the way we deliver Shared Reading under the banner 'The Reader at Home', bringing the connection and comfort of great literature to new and existing audiences in need of wellbeing support, distraction and meaning during Covid.
- We've created and curated over 100 pieces of digital reading content and grown our followers on Facebook by 50%.
- We were awarded the Investors in Volunteers standard in recognition of the quality of our volunteer support.
- We've improved the digital support we offer volunteers with the soft launch of a new online community hub which includes a library of over 1000 reading resources and new training videos.



# Our Values

*"People are dying – it is no metaphor –  
for lack of something real to carry  
home when day is done."  
Saul Bellow, Herzog*

Our values reflect and shape our behaviour, and guide our volunteers, staff, trustees and supporters as we work together to bring about a Reading Revolution.



## We read to lead

Great literature is in our DNA, developing imagination, deepening understanding and expanding experience. Reading is also about the kind of attention and understanding we give to our actions, other people and the wider world.

## We are kind but bold

Through kindness we inspire ourselves, and others, to do more than we might have thought possible, always aiming for encouragement and trust. But we are bold, too, in saying what we mean as clearly as we can.

## We make our own pattern in the world

We don't simply do as others do, we try to work out what is good and right, and do that. We value innovation, foresight and bold ideas in every part of our organisation.

## We learn from experience and we learn through our mistakes

We're not afraid of owning our mistakes: understanding them helps us grow. We try to be creative in difficult situations, lively-minded and willing to learn.

## We love The Reader and take responsibility for it

Everyone at The Reader is The Reader. We each take responsibility for making The Reader as good as it can be: we pick up the rubbish, speak up when we've made a mistake, notice and try to fix the glitches.

*visioning a world  
where none is lonely, none hunted, alien,  
this man, superb in love and logic, this man  
shall be remembered.*

From *Frederick Douglass*  
by Robert Hayden

## Belonging at The Reader

### Our diversity, equity and inclusion statement



In a nearly twenty-year history of developing Shared Reading groups, The Reader has created thousands of warm and welcoming spaces where all comers are seen and, when they choose to speak, heard.

We consciously work to build the same warm and welcoming feeling, the feeling of belonging, in our workplace. Kindness is one of our values and it helps us care about how we treat each other, always aiming for encouragement, openness and trust.

We use our values to try to ensure The Reader is a thoughtful environment, and we ask all colleagues to be bold, building an environment where all needs and concerns can be raised, listened to, and when possible, acted upon. So, we'll ask you to tell us if you have any specific needs or if there are things we can do to make you feel more at ease.

One of our values is 'we make our own pattern in the world' and we do that by appointing the best candidate to the role. Current employees and applicants for jobs will always be considered on their abilities and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of age, caring responsibilities, colour, disability, employment status, sex, gender, gender identity, marital status, nationality, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

In our commitment to build diversity into our teams and programmes, we are particularly keen to receive applications from people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds; LGBTQ+; those with disabilities, those with unconventional life experience or educational background.

If you require any reasonable adjustments during our recruitment processes, including assistance with reading this page or documents linked to below, please contact [jobs@thereader.org.uk](mailto:jobs@thereader.org.uk)



# DIRECTOR OF LITERATURE

Hours/FTE	35 hours / 1 FTE (flexible working will be considered)
Reports to	Founder
Based	The Mansion House, Calderstones Park, Liverpool, L18
Contract	Permanent
Salary	£47,000 - £60,000
Closing date	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
Vacancy Reference Code	37/2021

## About the Role and Key Responsibilities

A Note from Jane Davis, Founder:

I founded The Reader 20-odd years ago with the conviction that I had to 'get great books out of the university and into the hands of people who need them'. Despite the fact that that was not a very catchy strapline, the idea stuck some kind of chord, and since then The Reader has grown to be a multi-million-pound charity and social business employing around 150 people, and engaging thousands of volunteers and Shared Reading group members. We have thousands of hours of reading great literature under our belts! We've also built our national HQ and model of a Shared Reading community at Calderstones Mansion, in Calderstones Park, Liverpool, and developed an international Shared Reading community in 16 countries.

Over the last few years, I have been planning my retirement from my role as Founder Director, working on a succession plan and considering how I should best use my skills and experience to bring this transition about. As I started to imagine extracting myself from The Reader, I realised we would need new structures to carry the key purpose of the organisation into the future. One of those new structures is the Literature Directorate, which was created in April 2021. I've been leading it, and understanding what is needed from this role, since then. As the directorate has begun to feel established, it is now time to appoint a new person to this role.

The Reader is a thoroughly professionalized organisation; but, as a result of the influence of literature, it is also a warm, personal setting for hard and caring work. Consequently, many different qualities are desirable in a Director of Literature. But if some divine Head of Recruitment decreed: 'Only one skill or attribute may be listed', what we'd be listing is simple: a belief in the power of literature to change the world, because you yourself have been changed by it.



I used my personal experience of living a tough life, and using reading as way of understanding it, to create The Reader from 1997 onwards. I don't expect to find someone who has had the same kind of life circumstances as me, but I do hope that someone with a comparable urgency will come forward and that the person who takes this job will bring with them a powerful, personally-fueled desire to change the world by bringing about a reading revolution. You'll be fired by imagining Shared Reading groups on every corner; books in places they never were; great literature doing its work in mental health drop-in centers and dementia care homes, in social care services and prisons and addiction rehabs.

Many readers have the belief that literature can change the world, because they have been personally affected by a line, a word, a sentence, a novel, a Shakespeare play, or have enjoyed a life of reading, which is the experience of living through other minds. We are looking for someone who not only has that experiential belief but also can translate that belief into action. You must be a "doer" of some sort – a writer or a creator, a thinker, an organiser, an orator, definitely an inspirer of others.

One specific and difficult task you'll be asked to take on is doing the thinking we need to ensure The Reader is working towards a more humane society, against all forms of unkindness, not simply by following a template of externally devised thoughts or programmes but by using individual reading and personal thinking, collaboratively, to develop our own practice. In addition to building a comprehensive Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy which we've been working on since 2018, in the wake of the death of George Floyd, the organisation committed itself to becoming an antiracist organisation. Antiracism has many meanings in the world, but at The Reader, one of our values is that we make our own pattern in the world, and so we are working at understanding what such a statement means for us, as readers and as people who work together. We started this work by developing reading-based projects (Native Son Project and Just Us project) in which we (staff, trustees and volunteers) are talking to each other through Shared Reading and beginning the conversations we need to have about race. Of course, there are many other forms of division, exclusion and discrimination: you will be key to working out how The Reader should address them through our reading.

My retirement date is not yet set: instead a number of conditions are to be met before I can stand back. Primarily these are about securing the presence of literature and literary thinking at the heart of the organisation through this role, the work of the literature directorate and the active involvement of our Reader Leader volunteers. In my role as Founder, I am looking to work with the new Director of Literature over the next year or so, to help create a strong future for The Reader, grown from our founding intention.

Jane Davis  
Founder Director 21.10.21

## Overview of Responsibilities

The Director of Literature ensures that great literature and Shared Reading remain at the heart of The Reader, utterly central to its mission.

In this role, you will lead the development of the entire literature programme – setting the tone and tenor of how we read and what we read, and ensuring that the reading of literature feeds the organisational ethos. You will manage 3 Heads of Department within the Directorate across three teams;

- Publications – providing staff and volunteers with curated literature for use in Shared Reading as well as championing the work of The Reader to the general public primarily via The Reader magazine and The Reader podcast.
- Programmes – devising and delivering The Reader’s public events programme at Calderstones and elsewhere including online, weekly community activities and one-off events
- Teaching and Learning – designing and delivering The Reader’s teaching and learning programmes, developing and nourishing Shared Reading practice across our international network of practitioners. Working directly with the Volunteer Support Team to ensure effective quality assurance for volunteer-led Shared Reading and providing our volunteers with inspirational resources and learning opportunities.

You’ll be responsible for:

- Inspiring the entire organisation – Shared Reading participants, volunteers, visitors to The Reader at Calderstones, staff members, the Trustee Board – in its reading life.
- The annual programming theme and Reader Bookshelf of recommended reads, which inspire our events and reading experiences each year.
- The programming of literary events both online and at Calderstones, including Gravity Festival and The Penny Readings.
- The Reader magazine and podcast, and our wider publishing programme.
- The curated reading resources on our Online Community Hub, used by our national network of volunteers and staff.
- The oversight and development of The Reader’s quality assurance system, ensuring we maintain high quality delivery of Shared Reading.
- Ensuring great teaching of Shared Reading is delivered and further developed.
- Retaining and building standards of diversity and range of literature, including writing from earlier times and challenging texts.
- Being a leader in the ongoing work development of The Reader’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy, paying particular attention to the role of the Shared Reading and the literature we read in creating more humane, warm, and diverse society.

- You'll be responsible for leading the development of a new organisational structure which will ensure that the voices of our Reader Leaders and group members are given expression and are heard in our organisational development activities.
- General Director-level work, as a member of Directors' Group which is collectively responsible for the work of the organisation as a whole, building the organisation's strategy and plans, and reporting to the Board of Trustees.

## Key Responsibilities

### Knowledge and skills

- Great vision for literature in the world
- Wide and deep range of reading experience
- Excellent writing skills
- Exceptional communicator
- Good at working alone and in teams
- Good with people, strong management skills

### Literature and reading

- We are looking for a reader who has a strong vision for the place of literature in the world, who understands the emotional power of Shared Reading, at both individual and group level, and the potential of the literary experience as an agent for change. You'll be able to describe the kind of change that literature can bring about.
- You'll have a wide, deep and, above all, personal literary experience and be able to draw on your own inner anthology of great texts that feed your soul. You'll be able to speak about your own reading life in compelling terms.
- You'll be a reader who is also an explorer, willing to look beyond your current experience, but with a clear sense of what it is you are seeking for in literature when you go looking.
- You'll understand the levels/range of literary expertise within The Reader movement and ensure the organisation continually encourages development of practice, as well as finding ways to harness and promote the expertise of exceptional practitioners.
- You will be committed to the enlargement of our reading range – we want more diverse and challenging texts, from all times and from many cultures. But above all we seek a commitment to the curation of texts which speak to our inner and emotional lives.

### Leadership and people management

- We're looking for a dedicated reader who is also an inspiring leader. This is, above all, about ensuring that the golden thread of literature is woven through all our organisational thinking, practice and making. You will ensure that Shared Reading is undertaken and embedded at all levels of the organisation, and that our organisational thinking about literature remains lively and flexible.
- You will have responsibility for ensuring the Literature Directorate meets its operational, financial and strategic objectives.
- You'll be able to provide responsible, supportive leadership for the Heads of Teaching and Learning, Programmes and Publishing, as well as providing leadership and a sense of collective purpose to the Directorate as a whole.

## Communication

- You will be able to write well, with nuance and complexity, about The Reader's work and more widely about the literary experience.
- You will be able to speak authoritatively in public and in the media about The Reader's work, able to tell the stories we want to tell so that the world understands what literature can do.
- You will be able to develop business planning documents and compile information for Directors' Group, the board, funders or other external agencies and stakeholders

## Liaison and networking

- We're looking for someone who has, or can develop, a network of contacts with writers, thinkers, and publicly-recognised readers in order to build The Reader's brand and influence e.g. via podcast, magazine
- You will be a good team member, used to collaboration and able to build strong, flexible and respectful working relationships internally.
- You will be a leader who tells our Reader stories, building belief in what we have to offer, and able to make good and trusting relationships on the basis of your direct experience of our work.

## Planning and organising

- You will be responsible to leading the development of an organisational structure to encourage the participation of Volunteer Reader Leaders (and eventually group members) in organisational thinking.
- You will be responsible for the development of the Literature Directorate plan, working collaboratively with other Directors to ensure that all plans help build the overarching organisational plan.
- You will offer leadership and support the Heads of Department within your team in relation to operational planning and the implementation of projects, and take responsibility for the realization of the Directorate's plans.
- You will oversee the Literature Directorate budget (c £650,000) and be responsible for the high-level prioritizing of time and resources.

## Initiative and problem solving

- We are seeking a deeply creative person, able to lead the directorate and wider organisation in creative literary thinking, taking literary practice to the needs and demands of real-life work, such as the development of our anti-racism position and our involvement with all kinds of people who may feel literature is not for them.
- You will identify key literary/reading/philosophical problems which arise in the course of our work and be a key thinker, giving voice to the complexity of problems and taking part in the discovery of solutions.
- You will be dealing routinely with issues which may not have an apparently immediate solution, and you'll be able to hold complex problems in mind, able to use literature, first and foremost, as your mode of nuanced thinking.

## Decision making and freedom to act

- You will be responsible for organisation-shaping decisions which will affect thousands of people involved in The Reader movement, as well as the organisation's legacy for the future.

# Person Specification

## Essential Criteria

- Powerful vision for literature in the world
- Inspiring leader – able to demonstrate your experience of inspiring others to read, or think and become fellow travelers with you in some way
- Wide and deep range of reading experience
- A highly motivated serious reader, with a profound grasp of the reality (impact and potential) of Shared Reading, and the ability to inspire belief in The Reader's mission
- A literary thinker first and foremost – able to demonstrate that 'literariness' is a specific way of understanding the world
- Generously open-minded, unconstrained by ideologies but able to understand and translate, where appropriate, their relation to The Reader's core purpose.
- Creative, able to lead the development of new literary products and services
- Demonstrably comprehensive understanding or experience of least one area within the literature-directorate: publishing/programming/teaching/comms
- Able to build networks of literary connection, e.g. publishers, writers, booksellers and to develop literary supporters
- Understands and aims to embody and represent The Reader's Values
- Excellent writing skills – demonstrated by written submission
- Exceptional Communicator
- Good at working alone and in teams
- Good people manager

## Desirable Criteria

- Experience of working in a senior managerial or leadership role
- Experience of building a creative product from scratch
- Transferable skills that you think would help you do this role well



## Employee Benefits

- 30 days leave allowance a year plus bank holidays (pro rata dependent on FTE)
- Employer Pension Scheme – Auto enrolment begins three months after start date. Payments are matched 4% on auto enrollment scheme and 6% on standard scheme by The Reader.
- Flexible working policy (44% of staff work flexibly, *January 2021*)
- Opportunities for personal development, including external training
- Head Office based within Calderstones Park
- All employees have access to an Employee Assistance Programme with Health Assured
- Four employees are Mental Health First Aid Champions being able to provide advice to staff

## Pre-Employment Checks

- All employment offers are conditional upon receipt of two satisfactory professional references. Referees will be sought from an applicant once an offer of employment is made and referees will not be approached without the applicant's permission.
- All contract types are subject to a probationary period of 6 months.
- Where necessary and appropriate for the role, a relevant DBS check will be undertaken as part of the onboarding process.

## How to apply

Visit [www.thereader.org.uk](http://www.thereader.org.uk) and select the 'Get Involved Section' where you will be able to view and download an application form. Please complete the application form and submit to [laurakershaw@thereader.org.uk](mailto:laurakershaw@thereader.org.uk)

### Equal Opportunities

We are committed to attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds. Applicants who meet our minimum (essential) criteria and identify as one of the following will be guaranteed an interview.

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
- LGBTQ+
- Those with disabilities
- Those with unconventional life experience or educational background

Deadline for applications: 5pm, Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

- NB: applications arriving after 5pm will not be considered
- A high volume of applications may make replies to everyone impossible.

## Selection Process

For this role there is a three stage application process; Stage one: Application Form and written submission, Closing date 28<sup>th</sup> January 2022, Stage two: interview expected to take place week commencing 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022 and Stage three: second interview and A Day at The Reader, expected to be week commencing 21<sup>st</sup> February.

## Attending the Interviews

We will cover travel expenses for anyone who is not currently in a position to do so.

If you need any more information on the format of the interview, who will be interviewing, and what to expect on the day, please contact [laurakershaw@thereader.org.uk](mailto:laurakershaw@thereader.org.uk).

If you have any special requirements, please let us know in advance and we will be happy to make any adjustments needed.



The Reader is supported by:



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



*Steve Morgan*  
FOUNDATION