

JOIN THE READER TEAM



WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in working with us. We hope that in return we can offer you an exciting and varied job, a career filled with purpose, development opportunities and many additional benefits.

The Reader is a national charity that uses the power of literature and reading aloud to transform lives. Everyone who works with us, regardless of their job title, plays a part in contributing to this. Our Shared Reading model brings people together to read great stories and poems - creating powerful moments of connection. In a world that feels increasingly divided, and with increased pressures on our mental health, Shared Reading offers us time and space to share what matters to us.

“Shared Reading gave me the confidence to believe in myself. I’d never experienced anything like it; just talking about what came up in our minds as we read the text. It was a small group, and nobody was trying to show off in a way that sometimes happens in academia.

It was gentle, and kind, and lovely. I thought it was amazing. I realised I didn’t need any literary experience. In fact, I didn’t need anything besides the openness to engage, connect and be present.”

Mariana
Storybarn Coordinator



We are very proud that wellbeing has been and always will be a priority here, and many of our staff stay with us for a long time because of this.

We are committed to benchmarking our salaries regularly to ensure we provide good pay in a competitive sector, offering opportunities for personal development and career progression and enabling staff to experience the life-changing benefits of Shared Reading.

We are based at the beautiful Mansion House in Calderstones Park in South Liverpool, and a nationwide charity whose values and ethos span our remote team and the communities we support. The Reader is 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. Our work is supported by a collective of commissioners, grant funders, corporate partners and individuals.

Jemma Guerrier
Managing Director



"At The Reader you are a person, you're thought of as a complete individual and your needs are taken into account. It's allowed me to 100% be myself at work."



WHAT SHARED READING DOES

"It's about feelings. It's about reading something and saying 'that's just made me feel this' - it's about connection. That's what happens in the room in between the story."

If you're new to literature or not, the impact of getting together and connecting through reading aloud, whether a book or poem, is at the heart of everything we do. In contrast to traditional reading groups, in our Shared Reading sessions the reading takes place within the groups themselves, rather than in advance. The liveness of the reading opens up space for new thoughts to emerge and new connections to be forged. We read 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.

We know that our work is helping to improve wellbeing, reduce isolation and build stronger communities. We offer the opportunity for all our staff members to experience and benefit from shared reading. It is open to all and you don't need to be academic or have previous experience with literature. You might be surprised at what shared reading can do for you too.

Katie Clark
Director of Literature



85%

say Shared Reading helps them to understand other people better

95%

say Shared Reading makes me feel better

95%

look forward to their group as an important part of their week



STAFF BENEFITS

- **Generous holiday entitlement.**
- **Holiday exchange scheme.**
- **Flexible working options including home, hybrid and remote options.**
- **A chance to experience the benefits of Shared Reading.**
- **Employee Assistance Programme.**
- **Hardship Fund.**
- **Enhancements to statutory provision for maternity / paternity and sickness absence.**
- **Beautiful head office location.**
- **Free onsite parking.**
- **Regular opportunities to visit for remote staff.**



Hear from our people in their own words about why they love working at The Reader:

"If you're looking for an employer who cares about you and your wellbeing then it's the right place."

We are extremely invested in the wellbeing of our people, particularly when it comes to mental health and vulnerability.

"There is always a very open dialogue with regards to new roles. I was encouraged to go for another role if it was out there. I was allowed to develop as I could and make my own decisions."

We are hugely supportive of career development and proactively provide opportunities for our people to develop and grow. We offer lots of different progression paths, including into other roles and departments.

"When I'm having a bad day I tell myself that I'm helping support the people who deliver those Shared Reading groups."

We are mission driven and values led. We offer company wide annual 'Think Days' where we all get together to enjoy Shared Reading.

OUR VALUES

Our values reflect and shape our behaviour and guide our volunteers, staff, trustees and supporters as we work together to bring people together and books to life.



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.



BELONGING AT THE READER

Our diversity, equality 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

APPLICATION PROCESS

"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."



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. Where necessary and appropriate for the role, a relevant DBS check will be undertaken as part of the onboarding process.

How to apply

Visit thereader.org.uk/jobs to download an application form. Once completed, please send to laurakershaw@thereader.org.uk. Unfortunately, if we receive a high volume of applications, we may not be able to reply to everyone individually.

Equal opportunities

We are committed to attracting diverse candidates. 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.

Selection process

If successful at shortlisting, you will be invited to interview. There may be an informal stage for some roles, for other roles we may also ask you to complete a task ahead of or at the interview, and for some roles we will hold a second stage interview. We will keep you informed of our expectations during the process. We will provide all interview questions in advance.

Attending the interview

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.

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

CRIMINAL JUSTICE GROUP LEAD

HOURS/FTE: 8.75 hours per week / 0.25 FTE

REPORTS TO: Criminal Justice People and Projects Manager

BASED: York

CONTRACT: Fixed Term

SALARY: £22,145 per annum (pro rata) (Travel to and from settings will be accounted for)

CLOSING DATE: 9am, Friday 10th May 2024

About the Role and Key Responsibilities

This role offers a unique opportunity to merge a passion for literature with a commitment to breaking down barriers for individuals within the criminal justice system. At The Reader, we believe in the transformative power of Shared Reading, a practice where a trained Reader Leader guides a group through the exploration of great literature, fostering deep discussions along the way. At The Reader we call this 'Shared Reading'. Shared Reading is a tool through which human life can be explored safely and - crucially - deeply.

As part of our Criminal Justice Team, you'll be trained to lead Shared Reading sessions with individuals navigating the justice system. Your role will involve not only facilitating these sessions but also reaching out to those who may be hesitant to participate. By embedding Shared Reading into these environments, you'll create spaces where everyone feels welcome and valued, enabling individuals to engage in meaningful dialogue and personal exploration through literature. This represents a chance to contribute to a nationwide movement dedicated to providing access to the enriching experience of Shared Reading, particularly for those who may have limited exposure to such opportunities.

The role is as part of our Criminal Justice Team, who work across the UK delivering our HMPPS contract for the enrichment programme for a nationwide body of Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs) as part of the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) Pathway. See supplementary information for more details.

Key Responsibilities

- **Literary Skills:** a demonstrable relationship with literature, an eagerness to learn and develop a strong understanding of Shared Reading and how literature can work to improve people's lives, along with the ability to articulate this well
- **Facilitating Shared Reading Groups:** Lead weekly Shared Reading sessions in a safe and inclusive environment, engaging residents and fostering discussions on literature.
- **Building Relationships:** Develop rapport with residents and staff to promote participation in Shared Reading groups, especially those who may be hesitant.
- **Mentoring and Development:** Support partner staff in delivering quality Shared Reading sessions, providing feedback and guidance as needed.
- **Communication and Collaboration:** Work closely with setting staff to embed Shared Reading into the culture and routine, while collaborating with colleagues to share best practices.
- **Planning and Organisation:** Manage workload effectively to meet targets, including text selection, preparation, record-keeping, and contributing to project reports.
- **Problem-Solving and Initiative:** Address day-to-day challenges collaboratively, contributing to solutions that enhance delivery and participant engagement.
- **Decision-Making and Adaptability:** Make decisions within project parameters, demonstrating flexibility and alignment with Shared Reading principles.
- **Teamwork and Contribution:** Actively participate in personal and professional development activities, while contributing to organizational goals through written contributions and engagement.

Person Specification

- **Facilitation Skills:** Ability to effectively lead group activities and handle potentially challenging situations with sensitivity.
- **Self-Motivation:** Demonstrated capacity to work independently and proactively without constant supervision.
- **IT Proficiency:** Competency in using basic Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel, Outlook) and willingness to learn new IT skills as necessary.
- **Record-Keeping:** Strong organizational skills with a focus on maintaining accurate records of activities and participant engagement.
- **Engagement Strategies:** Understanding of strategies to engage individuals who may initially feel disconnected from the concept of literature-based activities.
- **Literary Appreciation:** Demonstrable passion for literature, including a wide range of personal reading experiences, especially poetry, and the ability to articulate its significance in an engaging manner.
- **Communication Skills:** Excellent verbal and written communication skills, with the ability to build relationships and convey ideas authentically.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Capacity for self-reflection and the ability to engage in reflective practice to support emotional well-being, both for oneself and others.
- **Understanding of The Reader's Mission:** Familiarity with the goals and values of The Reader organization, and a commitment to promoting Shared Reading across diverse communities.

Supplementary Information – Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs)

The Reader has worked in CJ settings for over ten years, delivering our Shared Reading model to people serving sentences in secure and community settings for excellent, meaningful and person-centred outcomes. Shared Reading brings people together in small groups to read the world's best writing (always aloud) to prompt thoughts, feelings and reflections which may or may not be shared by participants. Shared Reading aims to improve wellbeing, increase pro-social behaviour and support the prevention of re-offending via shared engagement with literature, a tool through which human life can be explored safely and – crucially – deeply. The Reader consistently sees the following outcomes in line with the below from our activity in CJ services (evaluation exercise 2019-20):

- 98% feel safe and welcome in the group (pop. 164)
- 86% agree: 'hearing other people's views helps me to think differently about things' (pop. 165)
- 85% agree: 'this activity makes me feel better' (pop. 167)
- 77% say they feel 'inspired to read more' (pop. 163)

PIPEs are specifically designed environments – whole wings or units – where staff members have additional training to help them develop an increased psychosocial understanding of their work. This understanding enables them to create an enhanced safe and supportive environment, which can facilitate the development of those who live there. They are designed to have a particular focus on the environment in which they operate; actively recognising the importance and quality of relationships and interactions. They aim to maximise learning opportunities within 'ordinary' living experiences and to approach these in a psychosocially informed way, paying attention to interpersonal difficulties, for example those issues that might be linked to a diagnosis of Personality Disorder.

PIPEs have been designed to operate in prisons and in probation approved premises settings. They aim to provide opportunities for improved relational experiences, supporting residents to make meaning of their environment and thrive through participation in a pro-social setting.

Development of the PIPEs concept originated, in part, as a response to a number of key government policies relating to the management of offenders with a diagnosis of Personality Disorder. The developed strategy identifies PIPEs as having a central role in the development of pathways for offenders with this diagnosis. It is not, however, a requirement that participants have a diagnosis or that all offenders on the pathway must, at some point, reside in a PIPE.

If you're inspired by our mission, are looking for a new challenge, and want to work for a forward-thinking organisation at a really interesting time, we'd love to hear from you. Please send your completed application forms to laurakershaw@thereader.org.uk

Find Out More

Visit our website

For the latest opportunities and news, along with ways you can get support the Reading Revolution and details of where to find a Shared Reading group, visit thereader.org.uk

Follow us on social media

Follow @thereaderorg on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for all the latest updates.

Drop into a group

Experience the joy of reading aloud together in a Shared Reading group - for free and for everyone. Visit the website or call 0151 729 2200 to find a group near you.

Tune into The Reader podcast

Discover what our Reading Revolution is all about and help spread the word. Listen on Spotify or Apple.



Find us @thereaderorg



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