



## Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Commitment

*'If you don't understand, ask questions. If you're uncomfortable about asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It's easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place. Then listen some more. Sometimes people just want to feel heard. Here's to possibilities of friendship and connection and understanding.'*

From *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

**Jemma Guerrier Managing Director, Katie Clark Director of Literature, Anita Marsland Chair Co-Statement:**

The Reader believes that everyone should have the opportunity to experience the power of literature to survive and live well. From our twenty-year history, we know that the power of Shared Reading can help build connection between people from diverse backgrounds and grow our ability to think in different ways and better understand different experiences and perspectives.

Whilst inclusion is integral to our work, we know that we can do more to make our belief that Shared Reading can be for everyone a reality.

Over the last three years, The Reader's conscious commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion has grown. In particular, we want to help ensure that racism is eliminated from the world and feel we have a small but vital part to play in that change.

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work, including our commitment to addressing racism and racial diversity, covers all aspects of our organisation and focuses on how we ensure that:

- Our ways of working treat people fairly and enable everyone to participate.
- We can be more representative of our communities – considering our Board, staff, volunteers and participants in our work.
- Everyone coming to The Reader feels that they 'belong'.
- Great literature from writers with diverse backgrounds and experiences is enjoyed across our Shared Reading and programming.

In particular, over the period of our current three-year business plan which takes us to March 2026, we aim to increase the representation of black, Asian and ethnic minority communities in our staff team, volunteers and participants in our work by 50%.

We recognise that creating meaningful and lasting change is ongoing and complex work, which requires us to have conversations that feel difficult for many of us and to raise questions that we might not yet know the answers to. But this will not deter us from our commitment to building a diverse and inclusive Shared Reading movement, and ensuring that all our employees, volunteers and participants feel welcome and safe, and are treated

with fairness and respect regardless of race, age, sex or gender, disability, sexual orientation, social class, religion and belief.

We have embedded Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in our current business plan across all aspects of our delivery, reach and how The Reader is run. Accountability for EDI is held by Directors Group with regular reporting to our Board of Trustees, and targets set to increase the racial diversity of our staff, volunteers and participants.

**Our progress in 2024/25 towards achieving these goals is outlined below:**

- Following on from our 'Just Us' staff Shared Reading project, we rolled out new guidance and workshops for Reader Leaders on how to address race and racism in Shared Reading through their practice.
- We shared a new 'Just Us' anthology of tried and tested pieces that have been used and worked well to open up conversations in Shared Reading.
- We set up new Monthly 'Just Us' Shared Reading Group for staff and Reader Leaders to open up and share this anthology
- Continued to focus on diversity in the literature we read, using our annual Bookshelf, anthologies and volunteer support sessions to promote use of diverse texts.
- Continued expansion of inclusive recruitment practices, including anonymising applications at shortlisting stage.
- Regular engagement with our Diversity Advocates group and Board on our EDI actions and progress.
- Offered an optional, external online session for all staff on understanding menopause. The session aims were to increase understanding, symptom awareness, self-advocacy skills and interactive learning.

**Looking forward, in 2025/26 our key priorities are:**

- Build on our work around how we read about racism and difference by delivering two practice focused workshops aiming to reach 25 volunteer Reader Leaders each workshop. Deliver a new monthly Shared Reading group, focusing on literature by writers of colour for all Reader Leaders to build confidence in this area of practice.
- Develop our Shared Reading groups reading with those who have English as an additional language across delivery with adults and young people. We will capture and share learnings from our work so we can demonstrate how Shared Reading models inclusion.
- Use a proportion of our recruitment budget to spend on diverse recruitment networks when opportunities arise.

- Identify ways to encourage and increase a higher participation rate for our Front of House and Catering role applicants to complete our recruitment monitoring form. This will give us a better understanding and fuller picture of who is applying to work for the Reader.
- Continue to take proactive action to increase the racial diversity of volunteers and group members, ending the year with a comprehensive overview of representation across our service delivery areas.
- Our Literature Directorate diversity framework is used to support selection of annual Bookshelf texts to ensure diversity of texts are read across the movement.
- Continue to maintain active engagement and monitoring of EDI targets and plans via quarterly board meeting, quarterly Diversity Advocates Group, Feedback Week census for demographic data on Shared Reading participants and annual volunteer and staff survey.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions for this work, please contact Katie Clark, Director of Literature on [katieclark@thereader.org.uk](mailto:katieclark@thereader.org.uk)