



IMPACT REPORT

2024-2025



THE READER IS THE UK'S BIGGEST SHARED READING CHARITY



The Reader's mission is to bring about a reading revolution, ensuring that literature becomes part of the fabric of life, and that Shared Reading groups are widely available, bringing people and books together in welcoming places.

This report highlights growth in participation in our Shared Reading groups across the UK; an expansion of our Reading Heroes programme for care-experienced children and an increase in visits to the Home of Shared Reading in Calderstones, Liverpool.

There are many highlights, but it is hard to fully encapsulate the thousands of small moments and small acts that make up this impact, like a wondrous kaleidoscope. **96% of Shared Reading group members said they had 'conversations that matter' in their groups this year.** This is no small thing. Human connection is the foundation for living well but it takes lots of small moments to create. A warm welcome. An open door. A wondrous piece of literature, prepared and shared, with care. We are so grateful to all our volunteers and staff for all they do and are delighted to share some stories from our Shared Reading community in this report.

It could be easy to feel overwhelmed by the scale of The Reader's mission, especially in these turbulent times when feelings of division and disconnection are felt by so many, and we are faced with discouraging statistics about the decline in reading habits. The need for strong social infrastructure is clear and that is what The Reader provides – communities based on Shared Reading, welcoming spaces and meaningful connections.

Like many other charities and arts organisations, it has been a year of challenge as well as impact. The economic environment doesn't just affect our finances, it affects our people, and many of our partners, and it has required us to make hard choices. We thank all of our people and our amazing supporters for their dedication and commitment over the last year, without which we wouldn't be able to achieve the deep and meaningful impact outlined in this report.



Jemma Guerrier
Managing Director



Anita Marsland MBE
Chair of the Board of Trustees

WHAT IS SHARED READING?

Each week, The Reader brings people together at Shared Reading groups across the UK. These groups are free, and for everyone.

At Shared Reading groups, a trained Reader Leader selects stories and poems to read aloud together. Everyone is welcome to share how the words make them feel, as well as their thoughts, ideas and memories. There is no pressure to talk or read aloud.

Everyone experiences what is read in their own way, but the shared language found in literature can help us to understand ourselves – and others – better.



[watch a video about how Shared Reading works](#)



“Shared Reading really is a way to meet people as equals, where we’re all learning from each other. For that hour when we’re stuck into a great story or poem, people feel seen and heard.”

Jane, a volunteer
Reader Leader

"That hour was like a port in a storm"

Retired nurse Delia Cartlidge became a carer for her husband Stuart, a former aeronautical engineer - after he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease in 2020. The couple joined The Reader's dementia friendly Shared Reading group at Liverpool Central Library. Sadly, Stuart's condition deteriorated but Delia continued to go to the group by herself.

"Listening to someone read aloud is very therapeutic, it takes you into another world or time, and you can forget any problems or troubles in your own life, if only for a short time.

Speaking for Stuart and myself, that hour every Wednesday was like a port in a storm where we could forget about dementia and relax. For me especially, it lightened the load of being a carer, and so helped me to cope with an increasingly difficult situation.

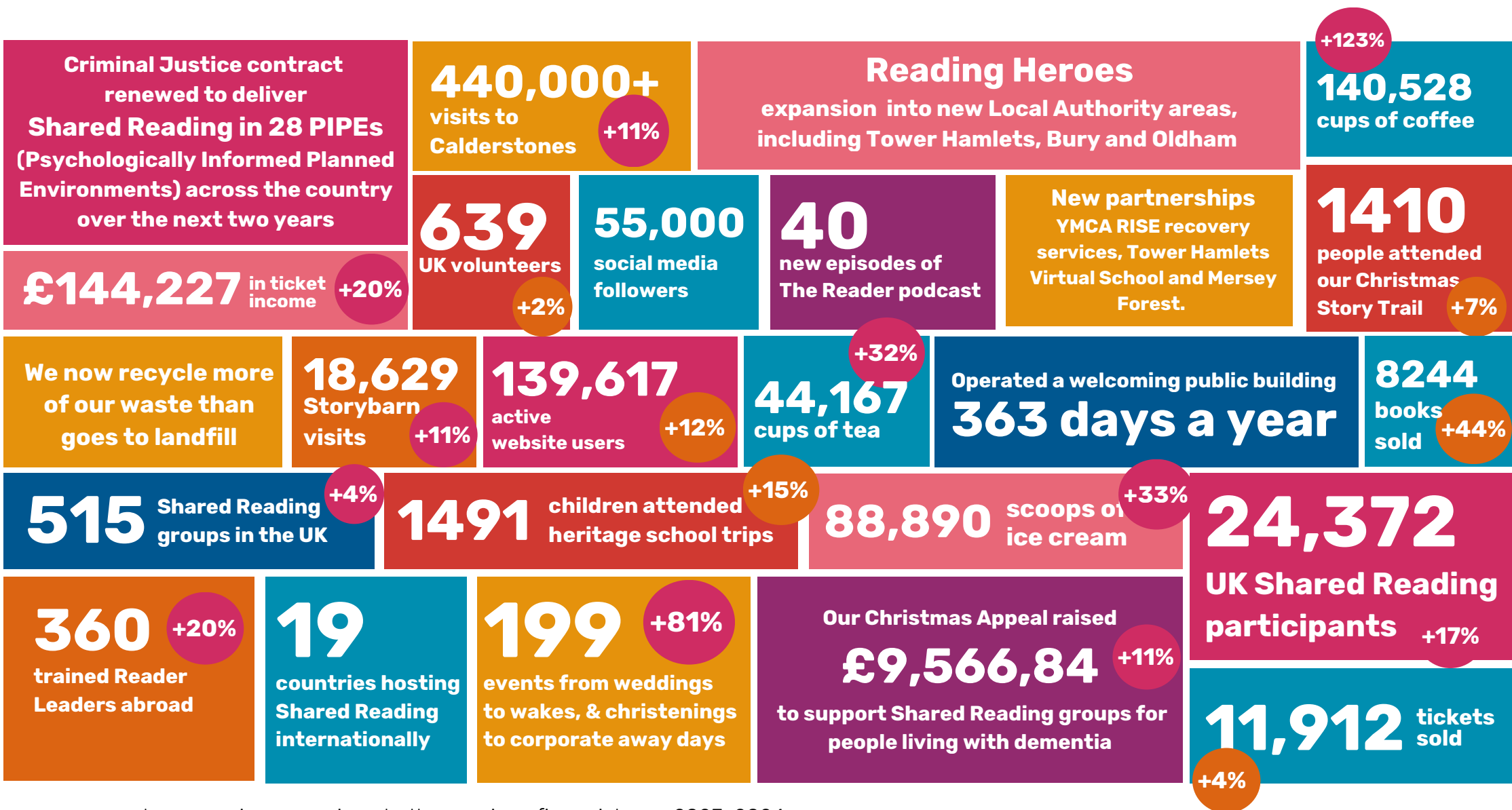
Now that Stuart can no longer attend the group, that hour every Wednesday has become even more beneficial to me. I just love it! It's the highlight of my week. We have all sorts of people dropping into the group of all ages which is also good."



Liverpool

Delia's Reader Story

OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE



+ percentages are in comparison to the previous financial year 2023-2024

WHERE WE READ

INTERNATIONAL SHARED READING

Belgium, Denmark, Germany

Ireland, New Zealand, USA

Mexico, Sweden, Norway

Switzerland, Canada, Finland

Brazil, Argentina, China

Australia, Spain, France, Italy



Community Shared Reading groups



Closed settings



Children and Young People



Criminal Justice



SHARED READING IS FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN

Since 2016, we've been successfully promoting the benefits of reading for pleasure for Care Experienced children aged two to 15 year through our national Reading Heroes and Liverpool based Tiny Heroes programme. We match our Reading Heroes with a highly trained volunteer to enjoy the magic of reading aloud together.

We know that Reading Heroes has a profound impact on the lives of the young people we read with; we're ambitious and proud of the work we're doing to ensure that as many Care Experienced young people as possible can experience Shared Reading. This year we have expanded our training and delivery model, enabling us to read with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children, as well as those children growing up in Kinship Care arrangements.

This year we have been delighted to expand Reading Heroes into new Local Authority areas, including Tower Hamlets, Bury and Oldham, whilst also investing in our understanding of the changes required to process and infrastructure in order to effectively scale project delivery in a way that matches our bold ambitions for growth.

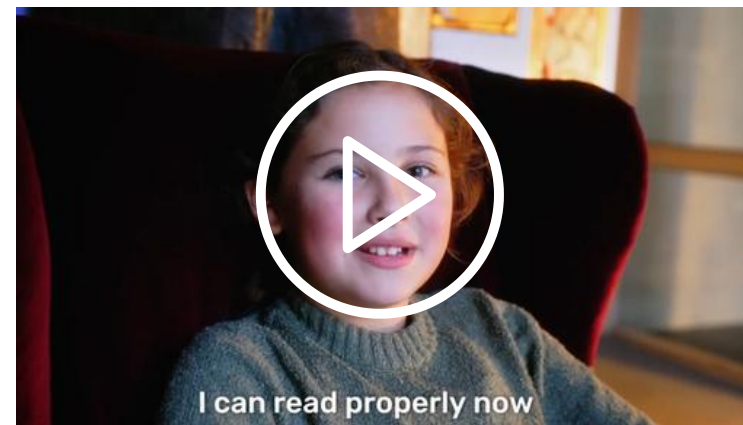


100%

**of participants
reported significant
improvements in
wellbeing**

"Relaxing, cool, easier"

Reading Heroes participant
response when asked 'What do you
think about reading now?'



[watch a video about the impact of Reading Heroes](#)

"I told him he was brilliant"

James was twelve when a referral was made to Reading Heroes by his Virtual School. He was paired with Helen, and the two began reading together online on a weekly basis. During the course of his reading placement, James* was in three foster care settings. On two occasions when James was moved to a different home, The Reading Heroes team were able to reestablish the reading placement, allowing Helen to be a constant person in James' life during a time of immense change. We asked Helen to tell us more.

"We had fun reading different poems - he's got a real ear for rhythm and now goes back to correct himself if the rhythm is lost."

Poetry became a regular feature in their reading sessions, from Spike Milligan's 'On The Ning Nang Nong' and 'Today I saw a little worm' to 'Double Double Toil and Trouble' from Macbeth, Benjamin Zephaniah and discussions about Haiku poetry.

Through all the changes that James experienced over their time reading together, the connection between James and his reading buddy Helen has been consistent. On their last reading placement, James said that he had been awarded certificates for English and Maths at school, and had achieved great marks in his reading, spelling and comprehension tests.

"He read beautifully today - and knew he had - and asked for my opinion. I loved that he loved what he'd done. I told him he was brilliant, and I asked him did he know that? And he replied 'I am. I didn't know that before, but I am'

I asked him if it was ok to share - he said yes and that it was ok for me to be proud, which of course I am, very."



Online

Helen & James'* Reader Story

*name has been changed

SHARED READING IS FOR EARLY YEARS

Our First Page Project brings the joy of story sharing and reading for pleasure to families across the North West, through collaboration with a network of trusted partner organisations. Our partners include children's centres, health providers and third sector organisations, such as Homestart, The Greenhouse Project and Kinship Carers.

This year, working closely with those community partners we welcomed **339 individuals to 14 Family Fun Days**, allowing families to immerse themselves in our magical playspace The Storybarn, unleash their imaginations and explore nature.

We continued to deliver our Sharing Stories in the Early Years training, equipping **28 partner staff and volunteers** to deliver quality story times as part of their own provision and shared hints and tips to support **207 new parents** with Shared Reading as part of our 'Books & Babies' outreach sessions, hosted in community settings across the North West. We provided ongoing support to our partners to deliver **38 weekly community story times** or 1:1 story sharing interventions.

"My absolute favourite activity this summer by far was The Storybarn. I nearly cried when I saw the upstairs for the first time it felt so special and magical, it was exactly the kind of thing that I wanted my little boy to be able to experience and to enjoy with him."

Family Fun Day participant



59,825
children reached by
the First Page
project since 2018

SHARED READING IS IN THE STORYBARN

**“Wonderful, well organised,
great value for money and
the staff were friendly,
approachable and helpful”**

Storybarn attendee



[watch a video about Storybarn Birthday parties](#)

The Storybarn is our magical playspace for families. This year, we engaged with **18,629 people** (+11% on last year) across a diverse range of programmes, with standout successes including **four weeks of fully sold-out Holiday Club**. During these sessions, **24 children** joined us each weekday to explore the joys of reading for pleasure alongside creative arts and crafts activities. We were also thrilled to host our first-ever **Brunch with Mrs Claus**, a new collaboration between Storybarn and our Events teams providing families with a magical and innovative way to enjoy the festive season together.



**A need at times to be together and talk -
And then the finding we can walk
More firmly through dark narrow places
A need to reach out sometimes hand to hand -
And then find Earth less like an alien land...
A need at times of each for each
Direct as the need of throat and tongue for speech**

From 'Not Love Perhaps', by A.S.J. Tessimond

SHARED READING IS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

28

Criminal
Justice
Settings

47

Weekly
Groups

Our team of Criminal Justice Group Leads have been busy running Shared Reading in 28 Prisons and Approved Premises through our national contract for the delivery of Shared Reading in PIPEs (Psychologically Informed Planned Environments). This year we were asked to start the first groups in PIPE settings that house residents with additional needs.

PIPEs are designed to have a particular focus on the environment in which they operate and actively recognise the importance and quality of relationships and interactions. Shared Reading forms part of the enrichment programme and is one of the structured activities on offer.

"It's one of the only times during the week when I have that openness, touching with that deeper part of myself – even for an hour – it takes you out of that jail mindset. I feel like the group has helped me recognise some very real parts of myself."

Daniel*, Young Offender Institution resident

*name has been changed

We are also privately funded to deliver Shared Reading by three individual units, including a maximum security prison, a female prison unit and a Secure Children's Home for residents aged 10 to 17 years. In March 2025 we secured a new contract to set up Shared Reading groups at a service in Devon that supports prisoners with personality disorders, neurodivergent needs, or learning difficulties, providing therapeutic and educational support.

Our network of Shared Reading groups offer huge potential for those progressing through the OPD (Offender Personality Disorder) pathway and we aim to grow pathways, developing links between 'closed' settings The Reader works in (such as prisons), intermediary services (such as probation), and our community-based activity to enable people to access Shared Reading at any stage in their journey.



[watch a video about our Criminal Justice work](#)

“it was true and it was dark and deep”

The Reader has Shared Reading groups in community and Criminal Justice settings across the UK. Ben* had been living in an Approved Premises for the last two months, following some time in prison. The settings' Shared Reading group has become an important part of his week.

“Shared Reading is a good way of switching off from what’s going on with you, and escaping off into another world, but then when we stop and talk about the story you see where other people are actually coming from and the insights of what everyone else feels or sees is really interesting. It’s also a relaxed place to be for an hour and a bit!

I remember when we read *Invictus**, yeah that stands out to me, because it was true and it was dark and deep, it didn’t make me feel bad or good, but it made me think. Those two lines at the end I think about a lot.* When I said it takes you away, I mean after the session too, you might hear something that makes you think about the poem again and you escape again.

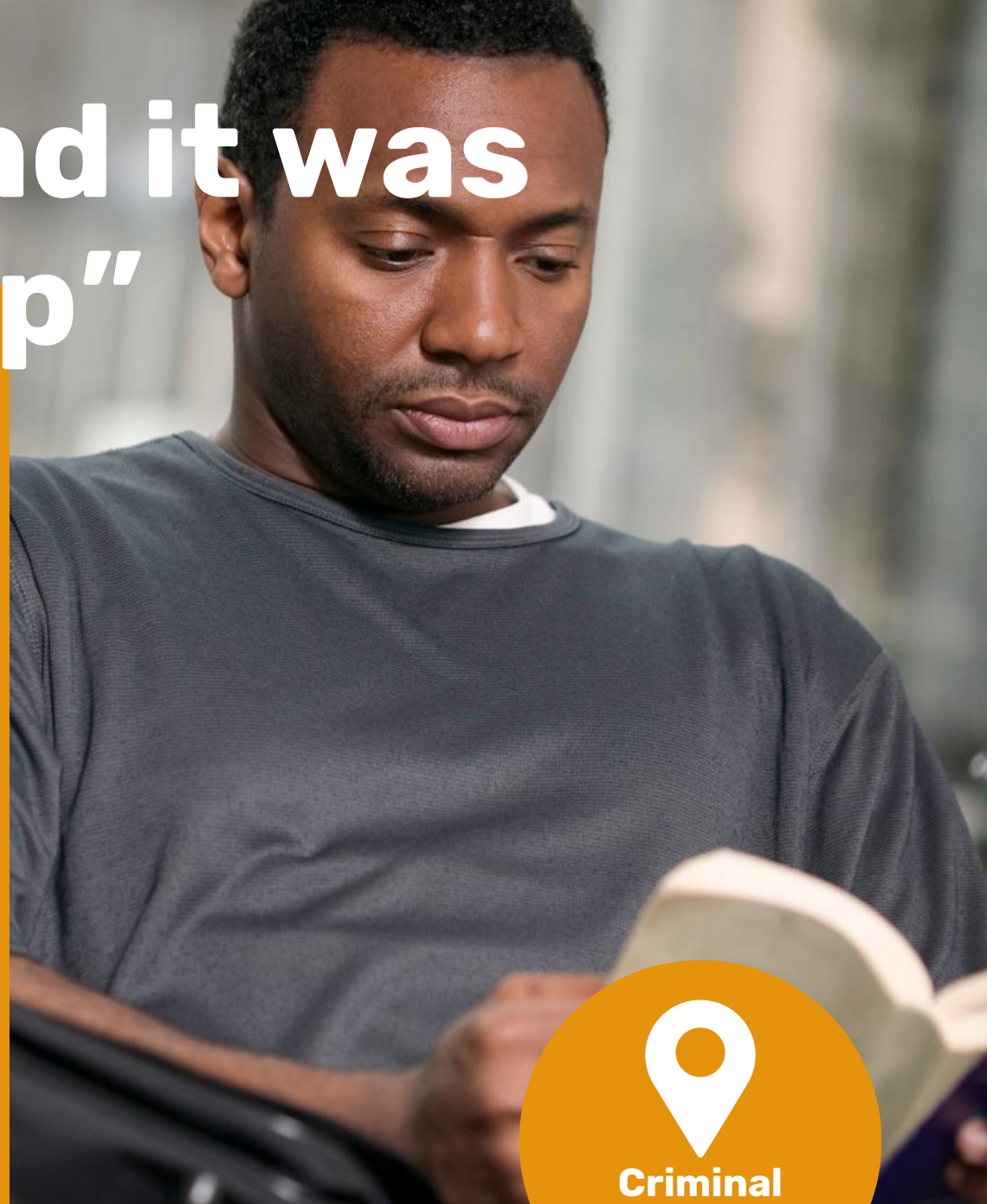
To someone who hasn’t attended before I would say to them give it a few weeks, sit back and listen to the story, and then go away and think about what you’ve heard. Give it a chance. They will look at their life, not in story form, but as a way of reflecting. The group is non-judgmental, we focus on the story and everyone comes into the group the same. It’s relaxed and you can go anywhere when listening to a story.”

**I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.**

***Invictus by W.E. Henley**

Ben*'s Reader Story

name has been changed



**Criminal
Justice
setting**



SHARED READING IS FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We recognise that creating meaningful and lasting change is ongoing and complex work, which raises questions and requires us to have conversations that feel difficult for many of us.

We have miles to travel in terms of learning and in order to expand the racial diversity of our workforce and some of our Shared Reading communities. 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.

In this year we made progress by:

- 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.
- Sharing a new 'Just Us' anthology of tried and tested pieces that have been used and worked well to open up conversations in Shared Reading.
- Setting up new Monthly 'Just Us' Shared Reading Group for staff and Reader Leaders to open up and share this anthology.
- Continuing 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.
- Partnering with The University of Nottingham on a project researching neurodivergence in relation to literature, aiming to help us ensure that our Shared Reading groups are truly open and accessible to everyone.

"I left feeling a little softer towards the world."

Feedback from Project Participants



[Read our full EDI commitment here.](#)

OUR VOLUNTEERS, STAFF & PARTICIPANTS*

Regularly monitoring the diversity of our people and participants is a crucial part of our EDI work to help us understand who we are reaching and how that changes over time, ensuring that Shared Reading is in the places where it's most needed.

OUR GROUP MEMBERS*

18%

were under 50

36%

were 50-70

47%

were 70+

71%

female

7%

identified as a
sexuality other
than heterosexual
or straight

28%

identified as
D/deaf, disabled
or with a long-
term health
condition

*adult participants

**Group data
collected every
two years.**

Next set of data
available in 25-26
report

OUR VOLUNTEERS

86%

female

8%

global
majority

18%

identified as
D/deaf, disabled
or with a long-
term health
condition

5%

identified as a
sexuality other
than heterosexual
or straight

OUR WORKFORCE

17%

identified as
D/deaf, disabled
or with a long-
term health
condition

20%

identified as a
sexuality other
than heterosexual
or straight.

31%

identified as
neurodivergent

3%

global
majority

RECRUITMENT DATA

8%

global
majority

80%

female
applicants

25%

identified as a
sexuality other
than heterosexual
or straight.

28%

identified as
neurodivergent





SHARED READING IS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

We continue to deliver Shared Reading on wards and in recovery settings across a range of in patient facilities, with an increase of 91 new active groups across the North West and South East.

Our priority remains to cement referral routes between hospitals, recovery settings and communities by mapping different channels and engaging with key staff, ensuring those receiving treatment can access consistent Shared Reading support wherever they are based and at whatever stage of their recovery journey.

We have continued to deliver four weekly Shared Reading groups at **Prospect Park Hospital in Reading, Berkshire**, where Shared Reading continues to be considered an essential part of treatment by the Occupational Therapy staff. Our Berkshire community Shared Reading community groups offer Prospect Park group members the opportunity to attend a community Shared Reading group once they are discharged from acute care.



[Click to listen to an episode of The Reader podcast which explores our 14 year partnership with Prospect Park.](#)

“There was a sense of psychological realism to the poem that all the group related to with the complexities around separation. Patients shared what the poem meant to them; overall it was exemplary in terms of therapeutic experience and engagement for patients.”

Peter, Occupational Therapy Assistant & trained Reader Leader



"It helps me not to feel alone"

Anna* is a patient at Prospect Park Hospital on Orchid Ward, and she has been coming along to the Shared Reading group for about four months.

"It's my favourite group! I've been here a long time and my son was worried that I was spending too much time alone - you ruminate alone in your room.

[Shared Reading] makes me think, it makes me reflect and it helps me to feel not alone.

It just feels such a safe space to be. I haven't talked much about the loss of one of my sons - but [in this group] I would be able to. It feels secure. It feels united. It feels connected. And also I have respect and admiration for those who don't feel confident to read. It gives space."

To find out more about our long-standing Shared Reading delivery at Prospect Park, listen to our special Podcast episode where we meet staff and participants and hear their stories.

Anna's* Reader Story

*name has been changed



**Listen to
the podcast**



**Prospect
Park,
Berkshire**

SHARED READING IS FOR BREAKING BARRIERS

Our Shared Reading groups for speakers of other languages have grown this year. We now have 15 ESOL Shared Reading groups across the movement.

Groups are taking place in libraries, at Calderstones and with partner organisations such as New Horizons, Dolphin Women's Centre in Birmingham, Borderlands Bristol and Changing Lives Doncaster.

Findings from 2024's evaluation revealed high engagement:

- 93% of ESOL group members agreed that Shared Reading lifted their mood.
- 89% said hearing other people's thoughts gave them a new way of seeing things.
- 78% said Shared Reading helped them to connect with others in a deeper way.
- Shared Reading had a positive impact on their lives outside the group, with 59% saying they felt more confident.

Our ESOL support sessions bring Reader Leaders together to share learning and best practice.



"All the poems we've read are giving some emotions. We can explore more things we haven't known yet. I feel thankful to you, Shared Reading. It is fantastic."

ESOL Group Member

“They’ve become like family”

Nataliia relocated to the UK from Ukraine in January 2023. While living in Skelmersdale, she joined one of The Reader’s Shared Reading groups for speakers of other languages (ESOL). She has also just completed her Reader Leader training and hopes to help run a group herself.

“For me the Shared Reading group was my safe place where you are always welcome. Everyone really cares about you and supports you. When I moved to Skelmersdale I did not have the Ukrainian community around me and I was too shy to speak as I did not want to make any mistakes. I had studied English at school, and my written English was good, but I had not used it for more than 10 years.

To say that the group is great is an understatement. They’ve become like family to me. I never missed a single week. Sometimes we would discuss one line in a poem for 20 minutes and everyone would find something to say and share their ideas. Although we are all from different places, we have so many similarities and shared our thoughts with each other and discussed things happening in our own lives. We all really connected through the poems.

Some members of the group were from Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kurdistan, Sudan and other countries and many could not speak much English in the beginning. It was really nice you could see their progress week by week – putting all these English words in a sentence. I also went to ESOL classes at college but I learnt more from Shared Reading as I felt it was more practical and useful.

I started volunteering with Refugee Women Connect and now work part-time as an Outreach Worker with perinatal women. It’s what I always wanted to do and sounds like a miracle. It’s really magic.”



Nataliia’s Reader Story



SHARED READING IS FOR ALL AGES

The Reader delivers Shared Reading groups for people living with dementia and their carers from the earliest stages of diagnosis through to advanced treatment and acute care.

This year has seen continued growth in our dementia-focused Shared Reading, with exciting new developments across the Liverpool City Region.

We launched a new Shared Reading group at **The Lighthouse Nursing Home in New Brighton, Wirral**. Newly established partnerships with care home providers mean that new groups in **Southport and St Helens** are in the pipeline, as well as partnership with Liverpool City Region Library Services that will see four new dementia friendly Shared Reading groups established in **Halton, Knowsley and St Helens** libraries.

These additions build on the strong foundations laid in previous years, allowing us to reach even more people living with dementia in both residential and community settings.

We're proud of the momentum we've built and look forward to further demonstrating the impact of this work.



[watch a video about our dementia focused groups](#)

Our survey of Shared Reading group members living with dementia found:

100%
feel safe and
welcome in
their group

84%
say 'this activity
makes me feel
better'

85%
agree Shared
Reading 'gives me
something
different to think
about'

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

The Reader recognises that its activities impact upon the environment through its routine internal operations, its infrastructure development, and through its influence and effects on the wider community. We take seriously our responsibility for, and our commitment to, protection of the environment at all levels. As we work towards a net-zero strategy, in 2024-2025, some key achievements were:

100%

of our waste was successfully diverted from landfill.

Any waste that was unable to be recycled was turned into sustainable energy through the RDF process.

Too Good to Go saved
370 meals
Avoiding:
999kg of CO₂e

1,342 kWh
of solar energy generated since December 2024.



Invested in better food waste bins for all our kitchens, both staff and commercial, separating out waste that can be composted using our on-site hot composting facilities, and food waste to be composted off-site.

Greatly improved our knowledge of a realistic carbon journey through Net-zero

Consultancy
Allowing us to create a set of actions to work towards and highlighting our major carbon contributors.

Switching our Recycling Waste Management contract, enabling us to receive detailed Recycling Reports every month and better take responsibility for improving contamination levels through data analysis.

Attending Sustainability Network meetings to share and build knowledge across a number of departments in the organisation.

New flowerbeds installed in the grounds to encourage biodiversity and pollination habitats.

Our Upcycling Group received the 'Zero Waste Community Fund' from Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority for 24/25. The group gives new life to furniture that was otherwise headed to landfill.

Our Litter Picking Group was launched, bringing staff, volunteers and members of the community together once a month to help clean up the park.

Adapting our menus to use local seasonal ingredients to highlight local produce and reduce imported food miles.

Took part in 'No Mow May' across site.

Plant sales brought in
£3,558.40
with the money made going back into the gardening group.

SHARED READING IS FOR WONDER

The theme for our annual Reader Bookshelf was 'Wonder' and it led to a year of exciting new literary discoveries and partnerships. From April '24 to September '25 over 1,100 Shared Reading sessions have taken place using a poem, story, extract, or working through whole novels from our Bookshelf.

Claire Keegan's short novel *Foster*, Lucia Berlin's short stories and the essays of Kathleen Jamie (a recommendation from volunteer Reader leaders) found hundreds of new readers. The popularity with SR groups of Marghanita Laski's post-war novel *Little Boy Lost* with groups helped cement a partnership with the book's publisher, Persephone, who returned for a sold-out event at the Mansion and hosted a day of Shared Reading at their shop in Bath.

At least
850

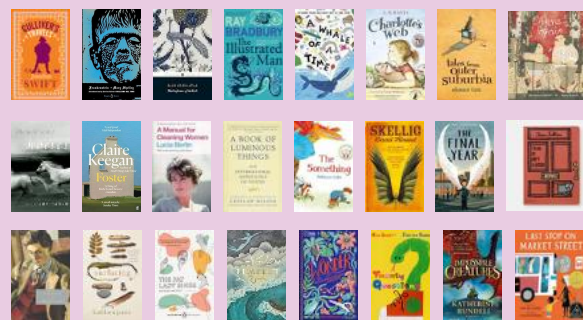
Shared Reading sessions used texts from the Bookshelf



most popular texts

We formed a World Book Day partnership with Liverpool One, who purchased copies of the complete Reader Bookshelf for display in several locations in the shopping centre, as well as supporting a day of Shared Reading taster sessions. The benefit of the Bookshelf was expressed by one North West Reader Leader whose group (like several others) read the whole of *Frankenstein*:

'The group is still filled with "wonder" that the enjoyment reading this book together has brought.'



WONDER

OUR COMMUNITY OF VOLUNTEERS



Our volunteers are at the heart of our national Shared Reading movement, giving time to choose, prepare and share great literature week in, week out. The rich and meaningful impact outlined in this report wouldn't be possible without their dedication, commitment and care. At our home in Calderstones Park, our volunteers provide a warm welcome seven days a week, as they open the door to a programme of weekly Shared Reading groups, upcycling, and heritage tours and take care of our gardens - inviting everyone to come and explore what we have on offer.

This year, we were re-awarded the Investing in Volunteers (IiV) Kitemark – the UK's gold standard for excellence in volunteer management. This is a testament to our ongoing commitment to creating a supportive, welcoming and rewarding environment for all our volunteers. Achieving the Kitemark was no small feat and a special mention goes to the 50 volunteers who took part in interviews and shared their valuable insights. We're proud to have met all six quality areas, with particular commendations for:

The passion & dedication of our wonderful volunteers

How embedded volunteering is in everything we do

The high quality training and induction we provide

Our welcoming culture and diverse opportunities

93

Reading Heroes Volunteers

179

Volunteers based at Calderstones

488

Volunteer Reader Leaders



"It's a haven for me too!"

Irene is a volunteer Reader Leader at Swan Women's centre in Sefton which provides mental health support for women through counselling, group support, befriending and group activities.

"When I got involved I knew that I had not made reading a priority in my own life. Researching literature and delivering Shared Reading has certainly helped me to turn this around. The experience has been good for my own mental health and learning - and I thoroughly enjoy promoting and sharing these benefits with other women.

I find exploring literature together creates a 'level playing field' for participants with different life experiences. The discussions that emerge can go in any direction, and each week I get quite excited at the prospect of where we might end up with these.

I am just so enthralled by the knowledge, views and life experiences that the women bring to this, as well as their willingness to share these during our discussions. I have learnt so much from our conversations and feel privileged to be part of these.

It is also lovely to hear members of the group say how beneficial Shared Reading is to them and how it is a 'haven' from the other stresses and strains in their lives. It is for me too!"



Sefton

Irene's Volunteer Story

CALDERSTONES - THE HOME OF SHARED READING

Our home in Liverpool's Calderstones Park is a warm and welcoming community celebrating stories, creativity and nature. Our work here delivers The Reader's mission by;

- Improving wellbeing through a creative community and the power of Shared Reading.
- Demonstrating how a creative model of health improves social connection and wellbeing.
- Generate income to support The Reader and provide opportunities for meaningful jobs and volunteering.

We are open **363 days a year** and our estimated number of visits was **440,000** – an **11% increase** on the year before.

This year we hosted **689 public events** including sessions in our magical playspace The Storybarn for new parents and their babies, open air theatre, literary deep reads and masterclasses, themed dinners, ceilidhs and makers markets celebrating our local creative community.

We also saw significant increases in footfall to our thriving Community Interest Company venues. We scooped **88,890 ice creams** – a **33% increase** on the year before. The opening of a new cafe in our independent Bookshop helped us welcome even more customers.



[watch a video about our spaces through the seasons](#)

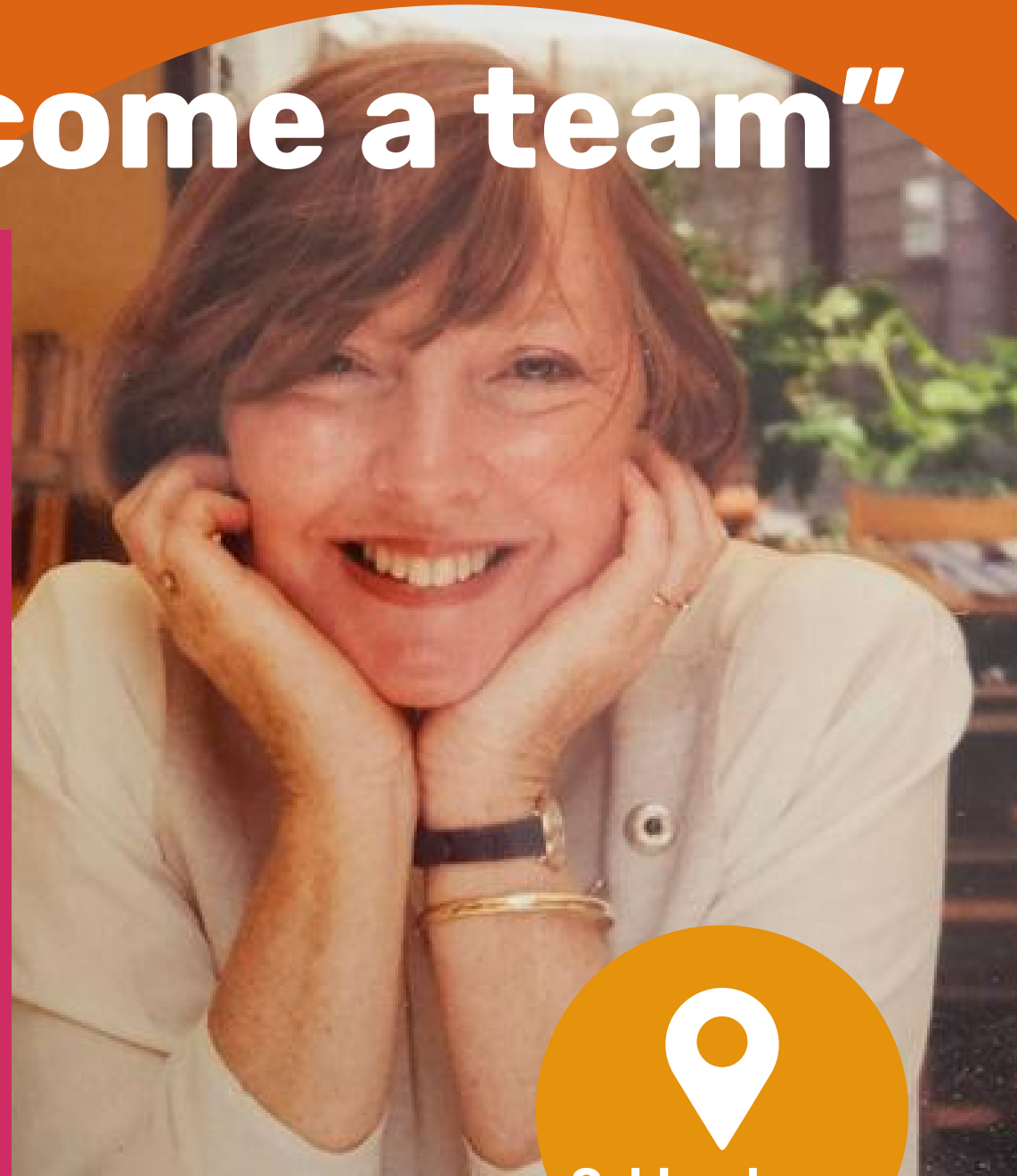
"We could become a team"

Barbara volunteers at the Reader's independent Bookshop in the heart of Calderstones Park.

"It was with some trepidation that I approached my first day in the wonderful Reader Bookshop. I knew I wanted to be there but was less certain that they would want me.

Then I met Reuben who was to become my shop mate. Reuben is 24 years old and has been volunteering at The Reader for four years – both in the bookshop and on the Welcome Desk. His encyclopaedic knowledge of subjects about which I know nothing and his incisive approach to technology, about which I know even less, was utterly reassuring. I immediately knew that his assets would fill in some of the gaps in my sluggish brain and that we could become a team. Even now I dread customers bearing book tokens but with Reuben at my side, I have nothing to fear. We will cope.

My volunteer experience has become an added dimension in my life and I would highly recommend the experience to anyone who may have doubts about their abilities."



**Calderstones
Park**

Barbara's Reader Story

**Below the surface stream, shallow and light,
Of what we say we feel—below the stream,
As light, of what we think we feel—there flows
With noiseless current strong, obscure and deep,
The central stream of what we feel indeed.**

Matthew Arnold



HOW SHARED READING HELPS

We live in a time of rising concern over the impact of increasing digitisation and links to anxiety and loss of real human connection. A recent UK study reported 26 million people (nearly 50% of all adults across the country) feeling lonely occasionally, sometimes, often or always. Shared Reading can help.

Our most recent feedback week responses showed that **74% of group members** feel that Shared Reading helps them connect with others in a deeper way. Shared Reading groups don't only bring people together around the table (either in person or online) they use great literature – the most powerful human connection tool in existence, to uncover connections between people and invite people into places where they can uncover lost or buried connections within themselves.



For The Reader, the meaning of 'great' is not dependent on whether a text has been sanctioned by history or public opinion. For us the term 'great' is about what the literature does.

In Shared Reading groups we use it to help us share experiences and create space for finding and naming thoughts and feelings. We relate to the characters on the page as well as the other people in the group. We meet people with very different experiences as we travel across time and space and cross cultural divides through insight into the inner experience of individual humans. And through the experience we learn more about them, and also about ourselves.



Katie Clark
Director of Literature

"When human problems don't have a shape or language they become impossible to navigate and therefore very painful...You can see the impact on [someone] when they recognise a word that makes sense of what they are feeling. This is what the literature is doing in a Shared Reading group – providing a language for experience."

Alison Liebling from the Prisons Research Centre,
University of Cambridge.

THANK YOU!

The Reader has a collective of supporters, including commissioners, grant funders, corporate partners and individuals.

Funders and Commissioners

Arts Council England
Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Bury Virtual School
Camden Substance Misuse Services
City of Doncaster Council Public Health
Conwy Public Libraries
Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund
DWF Foundation
Garfield Weston Foundation
Hammersmith & Fulham Libraries and Archives Service
Hemby Charitable Trust
His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
JD Foundation
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
Liverpool Virtual School
Livv Housing
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Medicash Foundation
Mersey Forest
Mind in Croydon
Oldham Virtual School
Our Halton
Players of People's Postcode Lottery
Queen's University Belfast
Rayne Foundation
Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospital Trust
Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

Sefton Virtual School
Segelman Trust
St Helens Library Service
The Leathersellers' Foundation
The Limbourne Trust
The Louis Nicholas Residuary Charitable Trust
The National Lottery Community Fund
The Rainford Trust
Tower Hamlets Virtual School
University of Bristol
University of Nottingham
West Lancashire Freemasons
Well Doncaster
YMCA Liverpool

Groups:

Knit and Natter at Calderstones
Gardening at Calderstones
Upcycling at Calderstones

Business and Corporate:

Ford Motor Company

Thanks to our community
of individual donors
for their vital support
in helping to make
Shared Reading
accessible to all.



GET INVOLVED



DONATE

Give a one off donation or support Shared Reading with a monthly gift and become a Regular Giver. As little as £3 could provide reading materials, bringing people together and books to life.

DONATE HERE



VOLUNTEER

Whether you're looking to read with adults or children or even wanting to volunteer at our organisational home in Calderstones Park, we have a variety of volunteering opportunities on offer.

APPLY HERE



PARTNER WITH US

We're keen to grow Shared Reading in a way that is complementary to other services and we want to ensure that we partner with organisations who can help us reach those people who will benefit most.

READ MORE



FIND A GROUP

Shared Reading groups happen in all sorts of places all over the UK as well as online. They are free and for everyone and there is no pressure to talk or read aloud.

FIND A GROUP