The Reader

SHARED READING FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA



"It was as if the poetry unlocked a part of her that the dementia was keeping hidden away"

Occupational Therapy Assistant

DEMENTIA IN THE UK

Dementia is a growing challenge for Public Health and social care – 1.4 million people are expected to be diagnosed by 2040.

With an ageing population, the number of people living with dementia in the UK is increasing. Latest available data tells us that over 944,000 people in the UK have dementia – 1 in 11 people over 65. To enable people to live as well as possible and for as long as possible, it is increasingly important that we find accessible and meaningful solutions to provide support for people living with dementia and their carers.

"It makes me feel a bit special. Like I still have my mind and can think about things and have my opinions respected."

Shared Reading group member



HOW SHARED READING HELPS

Research, spanning over a decade, shows that Shared Reading is an effective intervention with well-evidenced outcomes that improves mental health and alleviates loneliness by building connection. The Reader has been reading with people with memory loss since 2006, creating safe, calming and stimulating spaces for people to connect to themselves and others.

Through a growing network of tailored delivery in partnership with Local Authorities, CCGs and care homes, The Reader is working to reach people at all stages of progression, from early intervention in the community to more advanced onset in acute care wards. Shared Reading creates a space where everyone's voice is valued and respected.

Evaluation of our Shared Reading groups by researchers from The University of Liverpool, showed the following outcomes:

86% improved mood

87% greater concentration

73% increased social interaction

86% less agitation

“The poetry brings life back to life.”



Sally, an Occupational Therapy Assistant, tells us how Shared Reading has benefitted patients she works with who are living with dementia.

“Shared Reading is so important for people living with dementia. I’ve seen patients find another language when expressing their thoughts, feelings and needs, which is frequently prompted by listening to poems.

In addition to this, there’s the positive emotional and physical experience of connecting with others within the group setting. It offers individuals a safe space, where they have the time to find themselves again, when they may otherwise feel lost, trapped, and even robbed by their cognitive impairments. It also reduces distress, anxiety, confusion, aggression, and other associated feelings and behaviours for both the individual and the caregiver - it really is powerful stuff!

Shared Reading is not merely a distraction as it gives patients the chance to really feel something; to think, to breathe, to live, and to connect with others….the poetry somehow brings life back to life.”

Specialist Dementia Ward

Sally’s Reader Story

Click below to watch a short video about Shared Reading in a community setting.



Click below to watch a short video about Shared Reading in a care home setting.



HOW WE CAN WORK WITH YOU



We deliver Shared Reading groups for people living with dementia and their carers from the earliest stages of diagnosis through to advanced treatment and acute care. We do this in a number of ways:

- By training and placing volunteers to lead Shared Reading within an identified setting, such as public libraries and community centres, providing accessible dementia support and ensuring that those living independently can access meaningful activity which improved wellbeing.
- Within a care home or day care setting, we can coordinate volunteers or train partner staff to deliver Shared Reading activities.
- At the point of acute dementia care, Reader staff can be placed to deliver a programme of Shared Reading to best meet the needs of a specified setting.

Our work has shown that reading together with those living with dementia and their carers and family positively supports well being for both parties, offering respite and the opportunity for powerful, meaningful connection. Costs start from £495.

Links to Find Out More:

What is Shared Reading?
Shared Reading & Dementia
Shared Reading in Health & Social Care
Alzheimer's Society article
Our 23/24 Impact Report
Our Research

"'I couldn't tell you what I did yesterday, but I'm alright with a book – I'd go to the group every day if I could."

Barbara, Shared Reading Group Member

For an informal chat about how we could support you to establish Shared Reading within your services, please contact:

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