

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



**“Reading for pleasure is
the single most important
thing that will make a child
successful in life”**

UNESCO, 2011

THE READER

The Reader is a national charity based in Liverpool. Our Shared Reading movement spans the UK and benefits 19,500 people annually. Central to our vision is our work supporting children and young people, working to expand their potential through reading.

The importance of reading for pleasure for a child's cognitive ability, emotional wellbeing and reading attainment level is well evidenced. Research shows that reading for pleasure is more important for children's cognitive development than their parents' level of education and is a more powerful factor in life achievement than socio-economic background (OECD, 2002).

Yet, most children in England do not read on a daily basis: in 2019, only 29% of 1-13 year olds surveyed reported reading for pleasure daily, down from 30% in 2017. When this age span is extended to include 14-17 year olds, the average comes down to 27%. (Egmont, 2019).

Based in the North West, we see first-hand how our local communities have significantly worse levels of school readiness than the rest of England. Research shows that Halton, Knowsley, Sefton and Wirral all face these low levels, with Liverpool being the worst in the North West. (LJMU, 2020).

THE STORYBARN

Based in Liverpool, and welcoming over 17,000 people a year, the Storybarn is a creative and imaginative space, designed to encourage children to share their ideas.

Here you'll find a team of trained Storyhunters, dressing up clothes, bubbles, a craft room and installations to stimulate young imaginations including a 12-foot robot, a hot air balloon, a tree house, a slide and of course, hundreds and hundreds of books.

Whilst children with additional needs are always welcome, regular Storybarn Relaxed Sessions ensure that families with sensory conditions can come and enjoy the magic of the space at their own pace and in their own way. Alongside this, we are able to deliver BSL read along experiences on request for Deaf visitors where an additional member of our team reads along using sign language to ensure that everyone can experience storytime together.

The Storybarn magic also goes out on the road with games, trails and storytelling in the great outdoors, inspiring children to explore nature, and embark on their very own storytelling adventures.



FIRST PAGE

Delivering Shared Reading can improve parental wellbeing, support language development and build social connections.

The Reader works with partners with long term family relationships, including children's centres, health providers and third sector support organisations, such as Homestart, Refugee Women Connect, Kinship Carers and Save the Family. By working together with this network of trusted organisations across the North West, we can support partner organisation staff and volunteers to embed The Reader's effective training and support programme within their services.

First Page has reached over 14,000 people and has four strands:



Stories for You and Yours

Delivers three in-person interactive sessions focused on building parent/carer confidence, something especially important for those who were never read with when they were younger, or struggle with reading now. Each attendee leaves with a selection of picture books and a guidebook.

100%

said they wanted to spend more time reading with their child

100%

said they had learned new ways to make reading fun



Sharing Stories in the Early Years

A full day of training for partner staff and volunteers to help them run a Shared Reading group, delivering a weekly story and rhyme group for under 5s. Every attendee receives a rhyme bag with a selection of picture books to set them off ready to read in their community groups.

100%

felt more confident choosing stories and poems to read

100%

had new ideas about making reading exciting for children

94%

felt more confident about helping children and parents stay involved during session

Books and Babies

Brings the parents/carers of very young children together through a facilitated group over four weeks where attendees are immersed into a world of song, rhyme, puppetry and interaction. These groups bring people together at a sometimes lonely and vulnerable stage of life to explore their thoughts and feelings in a safe and supportive group facilitated by a highly trained staff member. Participants are gifted books to take home to carry on their exploration together.

"It's rare to do something that is actually for me as well as for her."

Books and Babies attendee

Family Fun Days

Welcomes our partner organisations and their attendees to our interactive playspace, The Storybarn. Bringing the magic of stories to life through curated play and storytelling, Fun Days focus on improving wellbeing and access to reading.

95%

said the activity was good for their family's wellbeing

100%

said the day helped their child build a positive relationship with reading

READING HEROES

Since 2016, we've been successfully promoting the benefits of reading for pleasure for care experienced children aged 2-15 years through our Reading Heroes programme. Reading Heroes sparks a love of reading for pleasure by pairing children with a highly trained volunteer to enjoy the magic of reading aloud together.

Nearly all of those who take part in Reading Heroes will have had Adverse Childhood Experiences (NIHR, 2022), such as abuse, neglect or caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, and will be living with the life-long impacts of those.

Reading Heroes can help to increase care experienced children's chances of success in life through their newfound love of reading for pleasure. It can also boost their confidence and self-esteem and increase their wellbeing at a time when the mental health repercussions of their experiences make life and learning challenging.

Referred to our programme via their Virtual School, children are paired with highly trained volunteers and read online 1:1 for a period of 6-9 months. The work is overseen by The Reader's experienced project team who train and support volunteers to deliver engaging sessions and provide ongoing safeguarding provision and assistance.



Following their 1:1 reading sessions, each child regularly receives a book to their home for the next year to help them build their own personal libraries. They are also invited to attend an ongoing programme of online groups, workshops and events - championing each child's interests and talents, whilst bringing great stories to life.

Since the project began, we have read with over 250 care experienced children across Merseyside and have now begun to expand this programme into Greater Manchester and London.

92%

said it stimulated imaginations and improved confidence with literacy

100%

reported significant improvements in wellbeing

85%

reported significant improvements in confidence and self esteem

Please get in touch if you'd like to talk to someone about our work with children and young people:

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