

a way back to life

A Reader Leader's story

I used to work full time but in 2012 I had a nervous breakdown and ended up in hospital for a month, with anxiety and psychosis. I was given ECT and medication and I did CBT as well, but it didn't work for me. I was discharged but went back into hospital a second time.

I started attending a reading group in Birkenhead - it was a nice place to go, friendly.

My confidence needed to be built up again and just by getting out and going to the group, that was a first step for me. It's about coming up to a normal level and finding out that people aren't all that different from yourself really - that really helps with your confidence.

When I came out of hospital the second time The Reader asked me if I wanted to volunteer. I do that three days a week now. Being industrious helps me and working together in a group to find out the meaning in a story or a poem gets the mind working in a good way, livens it. And you feel calmer as well, more in tune - you're on the same frequency as other people.

In the reading group my thinking is more focused and I don't dwell on things or just sit there ruminating - that's what I often do at home. You're amongst people and that makes a difference. It's therapeutic - it takes you out of yourself and puts you in a different state of mind.

You have light-bulb Eureka moments, like "Oh, yeah, I've felt that!" or "I've never looked at it that way before."

Probably these are just thoughts that most people in society have on a daily basis, but because of the situation you've been in, they can be quite valuable moments - they help to put your mind back together again. When you've been on tablets and had different treatments, things can become quite foggy.

Some minds are very clear and can bring up memories and thoughts quite quickly; other minds might have a few layers of mud over them, and there are things that battle to get out through that mud.

I haven't been in hospital since December 2014.

I don't have weekly visits from the Community Psychiatric Nurse anymore and my psychiatrist has signed me off into nurse care - that's progress. He is happy about the way things are going for me. I told him, "Actually it's the therapy of reading the books and going to the groups that's helped, not the drugs". I really believe that it's the reading groups that have helped me more than anything - they are a *different kind of medicine* and it's through them that I've found a way back into life.

Read to Lead

The Reader's flagship *Shared Reading* ongoing learning programme



We know your time is precious, so our stimulating, flexible and sociable training works around you.

Get in touch and be part of the story
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The Reader

CONNECT
REALISE
CHANGE



Charity Number 1126806 (SCO43054 Scotland)

Since 2008 The Reader has pioneered the use of *Shared Reading* to improve well-being, reduce social isolation and build stronger, self-supporting communities.

We inspire and support people to read aloud together. At the heart of each group is **you**, a trained facilitator. Your *Shared Reading* story begins with *Read to Lead*:

Read to Lead is our exciting and inspiring ongoing learning programme. It equips you with the confidence and skills to start your own *Shared Reading* group. During this enriching experience, you will develop a deeper love of reading and connect to a network of like-minded people.

Your training begins with a series of invigorating and thought-provoking sessions, delivered either intensively over three-days, or flexibly over a period of weeks.

During the initial modules you will:

- experience the joy of *Shared Reading* and find out of how it can change lives.
- learn key techniques that underpin *Shared Reading* and get the chance to try them out.
- develop reading, facilitation and communication skills that will enhance your life beyond *Shared Reading*.

After your initial training you'll be part of a growing Reader family, working together to build the *Shared Reading* movement and will feel ready to start your own group in a setting of your choice.



“Working together in a group to find out the meaning in a story or a poem gets the mind working in a good way, livens it.”

“It gives me real enjoyment that I am helping people again.”

“This has helped me to engage part of the community I really struggled with and has made me feel more confident.”

“It’s about learning to read people as well as literature.”

I started seeing people respond to me differently at work – it was remarkable really and it was almost instantaneous.”

“The whole course was fantastic, the course leaders were brilliant – I’ve never been on the receiving end of such skilfully delivered and amazing training. I came away feeling that I had been given something very special and powerful to take home with me.”

Louise, Reader Leader

