

## What is Reading Friends?

Reading Friends is an exciting UK-wide project that empowers, engages and connects isolated older people through reading. Reading Friends connects people by starting conversations through reading. It builds positive relationships that benefit volunteer Reading Partners and Reading Friends. Everyone can enjoy Reading Friends, even people who find reading difficult. Reading Friends makes a difference to people's lives by helping them stay active and improving the quality of their social connections.

Reading Friends was developed in response to the evidence that for older people the benefits of a social reading programme could be huge. Reading for pleasure empowers; it keeps us learning and mentally active, it can reduce or slow cognitive decline, takes us off into another world and reduces stress, gives us a way of exploring experiences through fictional worlds and something to talk about and share with others. It can even change the way the brain works.

The project is led by The Reading Agency; with Scottish Book Trust leading the delivery in Scotland, and Literature Wales and Verbal leading in Wales and Northern Ireland respectively. The project began in 2017 with test phase projects across the UK developing and interrogating approaches, materials and evaluation until August 2018.

In Scotland the test phase project is being run by Stirling Libraries, working with a range of local partners to recruit volunteers and participants for befriending and group versions of Reading Friends.

## Reading Friends in Scotland – intergenerational pilot project?

We would like to commission 1 new project in the pilot phase to specifically explore intergenerational approaches for developing and delivering Reading Friends. The purpose is to partner younger volunteers with older Reading Friends to explore and engage in Reading Friends activities – including but not limited to:

- **Social reading** - reading to and with others, talking about reading, reading related befriending, reading aloud, joining/setting up a reading group and/or book chats. This could use a wide range of reading materials including fiction, non-fiction, comics, picture books, newspapers, audio and online content.
- **Recommending reading** - book gifting, reviews, word of mouth, curated lists
- **Supporting others to read** –moving from being engaged by others to supporting others to engage
- **Story Sharing** – discussing and sharing personal stories, experience and reminiscences, perhaps stimulated by reading material, pictures, music or objects



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We are particularly interested in project proposals which will seek to co-design their activities approaches with participating younger and older people. The project will begin in September 2018 and will be funded for 1 year – there is £10,000 available.

We would like the project to work with us to ensure the future sustainability of Reading Friends by maximising fundraising opportunities locally. Interested projects should be able to demonstrate a clear plan for future fundraising and how they propose to fund Reading Friends locally from September 2019.

## **The pilot projects might work with one or all of the following models:**

- Initiating social reading projects between local residential care/day centres and schools/nurseries
- Engaging local youth groups to volunteer for reading activity in care settings – residential/community centres/hospitals etc.
- Supporting older volunteers to support younger readers in schools
- Co-programming of reading activity between older and younger participants

Equally organisations applying may have other intergenerational reading models which they wish to develop. As long as the core purpose of empowering, engaging and connecting isolated older people through reading is prioritised, we are open to proposals which take a range of approaches.

As the pilot period is only a year long, priority will be given to projects which can be founded on existing experience and/or networks.

## **The pilot project will be funded for 1 year and will:**

- Develop local partnership networks of organisations interested in supporting vulnerable older people through reading and connecting them with younger readers.
- Interested projects should be able to demonstrate a clear plan for future fundraising and how they propose to fund Reading Friends locally from September 2019.
- Co-produce their approach together with the older and younger people they hope to benefit and reflect on the successes and failures of their co-production approaches
- Test different types of reading activities and feedback on what works best to engage different older and younger people
- Test different ways of recruiting and engaging participants in the Reading Friends model
- Co-produce intergenerational adaptations to the existing training resources with Scottish Book Trust and the Reading Agency and test them with relevant organisations/co-ordinators, volunteers and participants



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- Test the resources and materials that Reading Friends project has co-produced with older people and make suggestions for improvements and changes from an intergenerational perspective
- Help us to identify gaps in resources and materials available, particularly around supporting intergenerational approaches to Reading Friends
- Test the Reading Friends website functionality and feedback changes and improvements that need to be made, particular around how to best engage younger volunteers and groups online
- Develop user-generated reading lists and activity suggestions
- Help to develop an animation programme, participate in the programme once developed and provide feedback on how it can be improved
- Participate in an impact evaluation undertaken by our evaluators

## **What support will pilot project receive?**

- Up to £10,000 for the year of their participation (subject to budget and reporting face-to-face and online training for volunteers)
- access to resources , materials and approaches developed during the test phase
- marketing materials for Reading Friends
- Support to develop their sustainability proposals, including key messages for fundraising and tools to secure additional funding.

## **The pilot project will also be supported by the Reading Friends project team at Scottish Book Trust and the Reading Agency to:**

- support partnerships and project plans,
- devise co-creation approaches and volunteering strategies where needed
- collect information about their projects and reflect on the successes and challenges they have experienced.
- to develop and modify project plans as the project progresses, with the emphasis being on continuous learning and a flexible approach to project delivery
- test sustainability strategies, encouraging the continuation of their Reading Friends activities after the initial funding period expires.

The project will involve a network of local partners. The intention is that public libraries would be included in the pilot project in some capacity either as lead or supporting partners.

## Who should apply to be a pilot project?

We will support one pilot project focussing on intergenerational approaches.

We expect the project will be managed by a lead organisation working with partners and we expect that public libraries will be involved in some way. However if two or more organisations wish to submit a joint partnership proposal that would also be considered – this might be particularly relevant where organisations have expertise in working with differing age groups. We would encourage those applying to investigate whether any other organisation in their geographical area is also applying and, if applicable, to consider applying in partnership. Lead organisations and supporting partners might include:

- Public libraries
- Self-organised groups (e.g. carers groups or DEEP network)
- Voluntary organisations (e.g. befriending organisations, voluntary support organisations)
- Commercial or not-for-profit service providers e.g. care providers
- Youth organisations
- Schools and nurseries

If you think you would like to submit a proposal for the Reading Friends intergenerational project in Scotland but are not sure whether you would be eligible, please contact Koren Calder at Scottish Book Trust : [Koren.calder@scottishbooktrust.com](mailto:Koren.calder@scottishbooktrust.com) 0131 524 0160

## How will the pilot project be selected?

The **Project Proposals** will be assessed using the following criteria:

- Credibility and robustness of approach to engaging both younger and older people both as volunteers and as participants
- Depth of understanding of considerations arising from an intergenerational approach and appropriate plans to accommodate those considerations
- Proposed approach to consulting/co-creating with target groups to ensure the approach to reading is appealing to them and meets their needs
- Strength and credibility of proposed partnerships
- Projects should be able to demonstrate a clear plan for future fundraising and how they propose to fund Reading Friends locally from September 2019.
- As the pilot period is only a year long, priority will be given to projects which can be founded on existing experience and/or networks.

## What if I apply and am unsuccessful in becoming a Reading Friends pilot project?

Reading Friends is a large and long-term project with four years funding from Big Lottery Fund for testing, development and rollout.



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If you are not successful in becoming a pilot project there are a number of ways in which you or your organisation could be involved in Reading Friends:

- We have a newsletter to update stakeholders about Reading Friends which will let you know how the project is progressing and any opportunities to get involved in the future. Please let us know if you would like to receive this by emailing: [natalie.frost@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:natalie.frost@readingagency.org.uk)
- The pilot is the second phase of this project, following an initial test phase. On completion of the pilot project there will be rollout phase. There may be opportunities for you to get involved for the roll out phase between Sept 2019 – Sept 2020 as a formally evaluated or informal participant organisation. The newsletter will provide updates about these opportunities.

## What next?

Please fill out the **Project Proposal Form**, which should be attached with this document in the email you received.

If you have any questions about the Reading Friends project or filling in the **Project Proposal Form** please contact Koren Calder at Scottish Book Trust:

Koren.calder@scottishbooktrust.com 0131 524 1060

- The deadline for applications is **18<sup>th</sup> May 2018**
- Shortlisting will take place on **Monday and Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May**
- If your project is shortlisted you will be invited to attend an interview on either **Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May or Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June**
- A decision will be made by **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2018 or shortly afterwards.**



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