

# The Reading Friends programme test year: at a glance



**Reading Friends aims to:**  
*'empower, engage and connect older people who are vulnerable and isolated, people with dementia and carers by starting conversations through reading.'*

## How many took part?



**624**  
Reading Friends



**104**  
Reading Partners  
(volunteers)

## Where were the test sites?



## What did they do?



**244 hours**  
of contact...



...across **239**  
activity  
sessions

## What did people think?



90% of Reading Friends participants would recommend the programme to others

90% of Reading Friends participants want to carry on taking part in the programme

94% rated their experience of the programme as 'good' or 'excellent'

100% of Reading Partners would recommend the programme to others

100% of Reading Partners wanted to continue volunteering

The average score Reading Partners gave the experience was 9.3/10

# Outcomes from the test year...

## Motivations



The most common reason for wanting to take part in the Reading Friends programme was to meet new people (42%), followed by wanting to talk about reading with others (32%).

*"I just love reading and have seen lonely people at first hand. I anticipate that I will get as much out of it as they do!" - Reading Partner*

*"I'm partially sighted so I can't read alone anymore" - Reading Friend*



The most popular reasons for volunteers to take up the role was to meet and support isolated/ lonely older people (37%) and share their love of reading (22%)

## Social outcomes

Increasing opportunities for social connections is one of the key aims of the Reading Friends programme.



**88 %**  
of Reading Friends Agreed the programme had 'increased opportunities for social contact'

*"I enjoy the general chatter...it's interesting to hear what other people have to say" - Reading Friend*



## Reading outcomes

How many Reading Friends read with other people once a week?

Before:  
**5 %**

After:  
**40 %**



*"One volunteer is really enjoying it...they've been introduced to lots of new literature" - delivery staff*

## Personal outcomes



**88 %**  
of Reading Friends either agreed or strongly agreed that Reading Friends added purpose to their week

The programme helped volunteers use and develop skills, feel valued and widen their social networks

*"I really feel that I'm getting the confidence I need, and do not feel shy!" - Reading Partner*

Reading Partners strongly agreed that 'Being a Reading Partner has increased my confidence'

**94 %**

of Reading Friends agreed or strongly agreed that they looked forward to taking part in Reading Friends activities



*"One of the volunteers loved the fact that the project gives permission to talk to a neighbour" - Delivery Partner*

## Organisational outcomes

Reading Friends has enabled delivery organisations to expand their current provision, increase capacity, reach out to more beneficiaries, and network.

One delivery staff member commented that it was valuable to be *"raising the library's profile, particularly within circles relating to health and wellbeing for this demographic"*.

*"...every week I'm getting emails from people that want to be involved in the project, either personally or professionally" - delivery staff*

