

READING FRIENDS

Reach and Impact Report 2021-2022



Registered charity number 1085443 (England & Wales)

Introduction

Reading Friends is The Reading Agency's social reading and befriending programme delivered with public libraries. It uses all kinds of reading to start conversations and connect people socially around shared stories, interests and passions.

The Reading Agency's mission is to tackle big life challenges, including loneliness and social isolation, through the proven power of reading. Loneliness is a serious problem with far-reaching implications for both individuals and communities. It is linked to poorer health outcomes,¹ poorer personal wellbeing,² and it is estimated to cost the UK economy between £2.2 and £3.7 billion per year.³ The Covid-19 pandemic worsened loneliness and wellbeing levels across the UK due to lack of meaningful contact, reduction in support and increased anxiety.⁴ The effects are ongoing, as, in 2022, 31% of adults (20.7 million)⁵ reported that they were lonelier than before the pandemic⁶ with over one-third reporting that they were very or somewhat worried about the effect of the pandemic on their lives right now.⁷

The need for programmes alleviating loneliness and improving wellbeing is clear. In 2021 to 2022, Reading Friends connected people together through reading for pleasure, thereby improving wellbeing, supporting meaningful connections and empowering individuals. Reading Friends offered inclusive sessions for everyone as well as targeted activities for priority communities, strengthening communities across England, Scotland and Wales.

Amid ongoing social distancing restrictions, public libraries returned to hosting Reading Friends activities and events in person, whilst also continuing to provide other options for people who are vulnerable, prefer to participate online, by phone, or who cannot travel to the library.

In 2021, public funding for Reading Friends came to an end, and the programme transitioned from a funded model to a subscription model. This was the first year with no public funding for the programme and its delivery partners. It worked successfully to sustain interest, engagement and income for Reading Friends. The model will be reviewed on an annual basis.

This report outlines the reach and impact of the programme activity that took place between 2021 and 2022.

1 House of Commons Library (2021) [Tackling loneliness](#)

2 DCMS (2022) [Tackling loneliness evidence review: executive summary](#)

3 New Economic Foundations (2017) [The Cost of Loneliness to UK Employers](#)

4 British Red Cross (2020) [Life after Lockdown](#)

5 ONS (2021) [United Kingdom population mid-year estimate](#)

6 IPSOS (2022) [Two years of life under lockdown](#)

7 ONS (2022) [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 1 April 2022](#)

Reading Friends 2021-2022 Highlights

Reading Friends uses reading as a platform to **generate conversation**, share stories, life experiences and perspectives, in a fun and welcoming environment. This approach ensures that Reading Friends participants and befrienders can not only meet new people, but also **create long-lasting connections** and, in many cases, **friendships**. The programme also encourages people to read more and to enjoy doing so more, which has a **powerful impact on communities** – improving the **wellbeing** of those involved in the programme, building **social networks** and enabling access to **social support**.

In 2021 to 2022, **3,728** people across **72** library authorities connected over **44,054** times⁸

87% participants
72% befrienders
felt **more connected**
to other people

75% participants
63% befrienders
increased their
satisfaction with
their life

71% participants
30% befrienders
felt **less lonely**

78% participants
74% befrienders
added purpose to
their week

70% participants
53% befrienders
increased their
confidence to try
new things

98% participants rated their experience of Reading Friends as Good or Very Good

90% befrienders rated their experience of Reading Friends as Good or Very Good

“One of the regular attendees at the weekly sessions chose not to read but to listen. He would visibly relax during the reading. He became less agitated as the session progressed. After approximately 12 weeks he asked if he could have a go at reading. He read a section of the story and struggled over a few unfamiliar words but his pride and sense of achievement at the end of the session was palpable. It was a fantastic moment for me too.” *Project coordinator, Cardiff City Council Libraries*

⁸ N=62, 61 library authorities submitted data between October 2021 to June 2022. One library authority submitted data for June 2021 to October 2021.

How many people take part in Reading Friends?

Between June 2021 and June 2022, 72 library authorities hosted Reading Friends activities across England, Scotland and Wales.

More than **3,728 participants, befrienders and project staff took part,⁹ connecting over 44,054 times.¹⁰** This included:

- 25,316 connections in 2,896 groups
- 17,826 connections in 8,913 one-to-ones
- 907 introductory engagements

Map showing locations of library authorities running Reading Friends in 2021-2:

There were high levels of continued engagement in the programme:

Half of participants (49%) and 3 in 5 befrienders (60%) responding to our surveys **had taken part in Reading Friends for over 9 months.**

Three-quarters of participants (74%) and 3 in 5 befrienders (60%) reported that they would **continue taking part** in the programme.

Ten of the public libraries in England hosting Reading Friends activities belonged to areas identified as 'Priority places' and 17 were identified as 'Levelling up for culture places' by Arts Council England (ACE) and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – areas in which investment and engagement are low.



⁹ Final activity forms for library authorities: N=52. Go to appendix, methodology for a breakdown of participant and befriender numbers

¹⁰ Participation monitoring forms: N=62, Go to appendix, methodology for a breakdown of data collected on reach

How do people take part in Reading Friends?¹¹

Participants, befrienders and project staff connected...

in different ways:

73% in person at the library
62% over the phone
31% online video calls
19% in person at another community organisation
17% in person at home
6% online through social media



through different activities:

85% Talked about what they've been reading
85% Conversation about other topics or shared interests
79% Sharing stories and memories
65% Reading poetry
63% Using reading-related activities or materials
50% One-to-one chats
48% Reading together
29% Home Library Service 'book drop and chats'
25% Author events (virtual or in person)
23% Using writing (journals, creative writing)
21% Using crafts (origami, painting, knitting)
19% Using music (song lyrics, reading and writing)
15% Rhyme times and Sing-Alongs

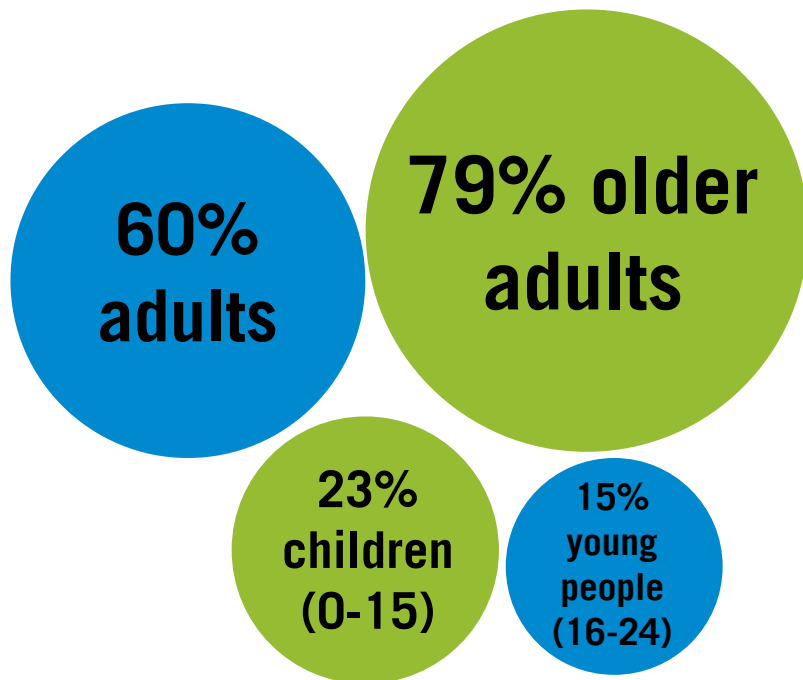
¹¹ Final activity forms for library authorities: N=52. Go to appendix, methodology for a breakdown of data collected on delivery models, activities and audiences

Who takes part in Reading Friends?

People of all ages

Reading Friends is for everyone.

Between 2021 to 2022, our evaluation findings show that **people of all ages and from a variety of backgrounds** took part in Reading Friends. Public libraries and their partners ran inclusive and mixed-ability sessions for people in their local community. Library authorities worked with...¹²



¹² Final activity forms for library authorities: N=52. Go to appendix, methodology for a breakdown of data collected on delivery models, activities and audiences

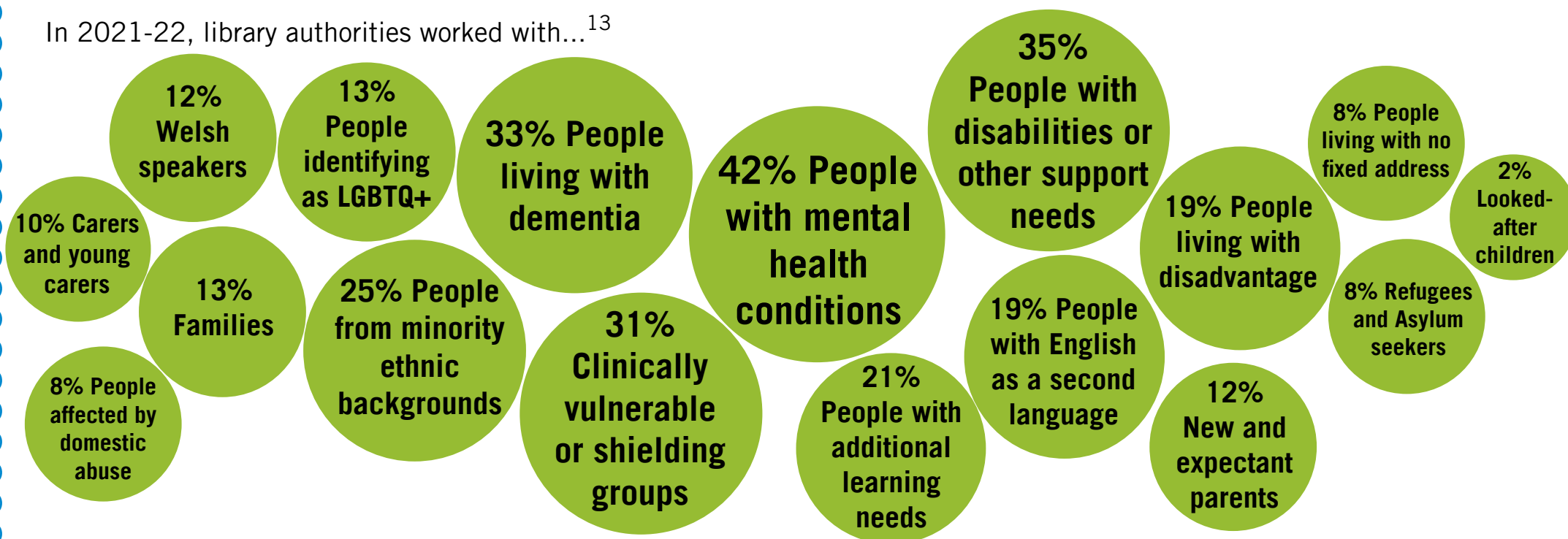
Who takes part in Reading Friends?

People from priority communities

Public libraries and their partners also ensured that targeted activities and different platforms for delivery were available to **people from priority communities**¹³ as well as **those who require further support with their reading** – ensuring that everyone could take part and feel that they belong to the Reading Friends programme.

There are growing areas of work taking place, such as with refugees and people with no fixed address, which the programme would like to expand on in future years. For example, Cardiff City Libraries created a partnership with the Huggard Centre, a local charity supporting people who are experiencing homelessness or sleeping rough. Library staff regularly go to the Centre to run Reading Friends sessions.

In 2021-22, library authorities worked with...¹³



¹³ The Reading Agency and public libraries focused on engaging audiences who may experience barriers to their reading, accessing resources and social support

¹⁴ Final activity forms for library authorities: N=52. Go to appendix, methodology for a breakdown of data collected on delivery models, activities and audiences

Who takes part in Reading Friends?

People experiencing loneliness

Loneliness and social isolation can have a huge impact on wellbeing and the health concerns of loneliness are well-documented.¹⁵ We asked participants and befrienders about the social support available to them in the three months before taking part in Reading Friends to understand more about how the programme can make a difference to people experiencing loneliness.

Our evaluation findings suggest that a **high proportion of Reading Friends participants** responding to our survey **felt lonely always/often or some of the time** (38%) – 14 percentage points higher than the general population in June 2022 (24%).¹⁶

Over three-quarters (77%) of befrienders, many of whom also experienced loneliness and isolation during this period, reported that they took part in Reading Friends to meet and support people who may feel lonely or isolated.

- 38% participants and 17% befrienders felt lonely always/often or some of the time
- 32% participants and 12% befrienders had not socialised with a friend or group of friends
- 24% participants and 16% befrienders did not have people that they could call on



¹⁵ Final activity forms for library authorities: N=52. Go to appendix, methodology for a breakdown of data collected on delivery models, activities and audiences

¹⁶ ONS (2022) [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal well-being and loneliness](#). [22 June to 3 July 2022 edition of this dataset]

What difference does Reading Friends make?

In 2021 to 2022, Reading Friends made a positive difference by:

Improving wellbeing

by increasing life satisfaction, adding purpose, reducing loneliness and increasing confidence



Creating meaningful connections

through reading, sharing stories and new perspectives



Ensuring more people were reading their way to a better life, by reading more or having access to different reading opportunities



Connecting communities, by building strong partnerships and increasing engagement with public libraries as free spaces offering social support



Reading Friends improves wellbeing



Participants and befrienders increased their life satisfaction

75% of participants and **63%** of befrienders agreed or strongly agreed that by taking part in Reading Friends they had **increased their satisfaction with their life.**



Comments from respondents highlighted the **value of forming new contacts** through Reading Friends and of **meeting new people** in a **fun** way and **in a comfortable environment**. This was particularly apparent for participants who live with mental health conditions, who reported that meeting people through Reading Friends was a key factor in enhancing their mood.

‘It has enhanced my life being part of the Reading Friends group’
— *Participant, Portsmouth Library Services*

“I have gained a huge amount of satisfaction from watching people connect have fun and return each week and for the care that has been shown to one another.” — *Befriender, Surrey County Council Library Service*

‘I am often humbled when I realise how much the reading groups impact on peoples lives. They share life experiences , reminisce and connect with each other over a cuppa and a story. It’s very powerful.’
— *Befriender, Stoke-on-Trent library services*

“I love interacting with different groups I suffer with depression, so this is excellent for me. Very uplifting.”
— *Participant, Library unspecified*

Reading Friends improves wellbeing

Participants and befrienders added purpose to their week



78% of participants and **74%** of befrienders agreed or strongly agreed that Reading Friends **added purpose to their week.**

“I have really loved this project. It has given me something to look forward to each week.” — *Participant, Library unspecified*

“I have memory problems, so the routine is important to me and it is good for me to exercise my brain too.” — *Participant, Cheshire East Libraries*

“It helps me take a break when looking after my husband and also gets him out of the house.” — *Participant, Oldham Libraries*

“It has been satisfying knowing my efforts are helping others and making others feel more connected.” — *Befriender, Hillingdon Libraries*



Feedback from respondents emphasise the importance of routine to wellbeing, particularly for **people who experience mental health conditions or additional support needs** who noted the positive impact of Reading Friends activities in providing **mental stimulation on a regular basis.**

Reading Friends improves wellbeing



Participants and befrienders felt less lonely

71% of participants and **30%** of befrienders agreed or strongly agreed that after taking part in Reading Friends they **felt less lonely**.

“The project certainly helped alleviate my feelings of isolation and those that led the groups seemed to be caring and kind people and it was clear others that took part were isolated too.”
— *Participant, Kingston libraries*

Comments from respondents showed that many people’s lives, particularly if **clinically vulnerable**, continued to be impacted by the pandemic in 2022. By **offering a variety of activities** and **other ways of taking part**, either **online or over the phone**, Reading Friends helped **tackle some of the barriers to meeting and connecting with others**, allowing many more people to take part and engage with reading.

“Being able to signpost people to other specialist services. They see us as a safe space, so will engage with offers of support.”
— *Project coordinator, Calderdale libraries*



“I attended with my husband, however he has sadly passed away. [...] Even though he is not here with us now I will carry on attending the sessions as I know he enjoyed them.” — *Participant, Oldham Libraries*

Comments from project coordinators and befrienders emphasised the importance of a programme that **focuses not only on connecting individuals** but also on **signposting people to other services**, ensuring that as many people as possible are able to **access both social and specialist support**.

“Great framework for helping to reduce social isolation in the community.”
— *Befriender, Hillingdon Libraries*

Reading Friends improves wellbeing

Participants and befrienders increased their confidence to try new things



70% of participants and **53%** of befrienders agreed or strongly agreed that by taking part in Reading Friends they had increased their **confidence to try new things**.



Feedback from respondents suggests that **shared reading** and **book talk** are linked to this increase in confidence, where books and other reading materials provided a **catalyst for conversation**, allowing people to **build upon their social networks** and to **feel empowered**.

“I have made new friends so it has helped me with confidence.” — *Participant, Portsmouth Library Services*

“Learned to talk a bit more, I have very eclectic interests, been good to be able to talk about them. [...] It has made a big difference to me as I don’t have many people to talk to.” — *Participant, Kingston Libraries*

“Dementia group has been life changing, meeting new friends, fun activities and a purpose to go outdoors. It has improved my confidence that I lost in lockdown.” — *Participant, Hillingdon Libraries*

“We feel that we have helped people feel connected, feel heard and seen, develop their writing, crafting, social and discussion skills, given them something to look forward to, and given them a chance for positive self-reflection.” — *Project coordinator, Bristol Libraries*

Reading Friends creates meaningful connections



87% of participants and **72%** of befrienders reported that as a result of taking part in the Reading Friends programme, they **felt more connected to other people**.

“The greatest achievement is the genuine friendships that have developed from the befriending phone calls. Both participants and befrienders have found the experience rewarding, some have now met in person. It has been lovely to hear from participants and befrienders how much they enjoy the phone calls.” — *Project Coordinator, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Libraries*

“I look forward each week to join in and enjoy the proposed books and being able to access them which I feel has broadened my outlook.” — *Participant, Norwich Central Library*

Comments show that sharing stories and talking about the books they were reading ensured participants and befrienders were **communicating new perspectives** and **broadening their own mindsets**, ultimately, allowing for more **meaningful connection with others**. Many indicated that one of the greatest successes of the programme were the genuine friendships that resulted from the one-to-one chats and group meetings.

“Being vulnerable to chest complaints and living in a rural setting, Shared Reading has helped me with my feelings of isolation. I look forward to the weekly zoom meetings and lively conversations generated by the material read to us. Members share their life experiences and books they are reading. [...] This service is invaluable to the community.” — *Participant, Sheffield Libraries*

“We have a wonderful group of people. Our leader is fantastic. [...] We have a group that, although diverse in reading tastes, we respect each other’s views. We are interested in each other as people too. It has introduced me to some wonderful new authors.” — *Participant, Library unspecified*

Reading Friends ensures more people are reading their way to a better life



Participants and befrienders read more

One in three participants (**33%**) and more than one in four befrienders (**27%**) reported that taking part in Reading Friends encouraged them to **read more**.

“It has introduced me to different books and authors encouraging me to read more. Tuesday is an evening to look forward to.” — *Participant, Library unspecified*

“It encourages me to read things I wouldn’t normally.” — *Participant, Hillingdon Libraries*

“It has significantly broadened the range of books I read and introduced me to authors I had not come across.” — *Participant, Bristol Libraries*

“Reading friends has revolutionised my reading – I love the sessions and enjoy hearing others’ views and getting recommendations. I had never heard of Borrowbox before Reading Friends, & it has really changed the things I read. I was in a reading rut before [...] I have also been introduced to audiobooks & now actually enjoy doing my chores as it gives me an opportunity to ‘read’ as I chop/dust/iron!!” — *Participant, Leicestershire Library Service*



Our evaluation findings indicate that Reading Friends keeps **new and returning audiences reading together for pleasure**. This was borne out in comments from participants, befrienders and project coordinators alike, who reported that Reading Friends **widened their usual reading choices**, with more people reportedly **accessing different types of books and genres** than before.

Reading Friends ensures more people are reading their way to a better life



Participants and befrienders were offered different opportunities to engage with reading

“I like to read, but with my sight loss it has been difficult and was nice to know that I can do other reading activities[sic] that are related to reading.” — *Participant, Oldham Libraries*

“I think the greatest success was being able to fill a need within the Reading Friends lives. From loneliness to mental stimulation, everyone has slightly different needs, and I think the Reading Friends scheme is a great way to help fill these gaps, as sessions can be easily tailored to fit peoples’ individual needs.” — *Project coordinator, Cheshire East Libraries*

“Discovering a new way of delivering reading related activities to people who cannot get to a library or use a computer [...] participants continue to enjoy meeting with others – who have now become friends – in the comfort of their own homes.” — *Project coordinator, Norfolk Library and Information Service*

“It’s good to learn about authors and other types of books that you would never read normally. Also became a member of the library. Learnt about the library and what it offers which I never knew.” — *Participant, Leicestershire Libraries*

Respondents reported that the **different ways of taking part** in Reading Friends, the **range of reading-related activities** and the **variety of reading materials** made it easier for those who experience barriers to their reading, or who struggle to visit the library in person, to take part in Reading Friends. Respondents noted the ways in which the flexible programme activity had **increased engagement with the library service** itself, as well as **reading together for pleasure**.



Reading Friends connects communities

Providing social support to those involved in the programme



49% of participants and **60%** of Befrienders had taken part in Reading Friends for over 9 months, signing up to the programme prior to 1 October 2021

Reading Friends is a programme that provides a **high-level of interaction with others** and with reading. This means that **activities are provided on a regular basis**, increasing the frequency with which participants are **engaging with reading together for pleasure and connecting with others**.

Comments indicate that many people had begun taking part in Reading Friends during the third national lockdown, as part of The Reading Agency's **Read, Talk, Share campaign** and the DCMS-funded period of activity, but continued into 2022, demonstrating the legacy of the Reading Friends programme.



Reading Friends connects communities



74% of participants and **60%** of befrienders reported that they would **continue taking part in the programme**.

“Connecting people who sometimes feel left behind by community services whether due to their age or due to their disabilities. By running such inclusive groups, it meant that literally anyone could join and enjoy reading (even if they can’t read themselves) and give them the opportunity to make new friends and support network.” — *Project coordinator, Lancashire Libraries*

“Our group has been a source of comfort to members knowing other members understand what they are going through and people accept them.” — *Befriender, Wiltshire County Council Libraries*

By connecting multiple times through Reading Friends, the high-level of interaction that is central to the programme allows individuals to connect with others in a more meaningful way, creating **long-lasting friendships** and ensuring that people have **someone to call on** – strengthening social networks and whole communities by providing much needed social support:

“I have a librarian as my ‘Reading Friend’ who has been extremely kind and understanding about my deteriorating health this year, she has helped me with problems when I was in hospital/care home, I look forward to talking to her every 2 weeks.” — *Participant, Hillingdon Libraries*

“For us the making of friendships and support between the participants has been the most important aspect of the groups. Several participants were newly widowed or were in very lonely situations and have subsequently become friends and have been able to share stories and help each other and have branched out into other activities, signposted by the befriender.” — *Project coordinator, Halton Libraries*

Reading Friends connects communities

Building on new and existing partnerships and engaging new audiences



“We were surprised at the number who attended which was larger than expected. Events like this has helped us to engage on a deeper level with customers as they have started opening up and sharing their feelings and personal experiences. This particular event was also interesting for us as it brought in a very wide range of ethnicities and age group.” — *Project coordinator, Brent libraries*

“It’s good to learn about authors and other types of books that you would never read normally. Also became a member of the library. Learnt about the library and what it offers which I never knew.” — *Participant, Leicestershire Libraries*

Project coordinators responding to our survey formed 57 **additional partnerships** to run and host Reading Friends activities and events in their area. Many public libraries partnered with local **MIND charities, NHS trusts, family centres, Refugee Action Groups, care homes and dementia groups**, as well as a **homeless shelter, Women’s Aid and The Red Cross**, amongst many others. By building on new and existing partnerships, Reading Friends project coordinators were able to reach more people, and particularly those in priority communities or who experience barriers with their reading. In addition, the tailored format, targeted sessions and the range of delivery methods ensured public libraries were able to promote their services to as many people as possible. Participants have also become members at their local library as a result of taking part in Reading Friends, exemplifying the ways in which the programme **supports public libraries** to promote their free services and resources and engage new audiences.

“Reading friends allowed us to stay connected to our regular users but also to connect with many new customers.”
— *Befriender, Staffordshire Library Service*

“We were able to reach a wider audience by loaning tablets to residents who did not have the necessary technology at home themselves, and by doing so they were able to join online events or access vital online services. [...] It is worth noting that we were able to reach wider demographics within the borough, successfully establishing Teen engagement groups, and support groups for expecting and new parents.”
— *Project coordinator, Hillingdon Libraries*

Case Study

Bringing people together online

Aura Libraries in Flintshire (Wales) told us how Reading Friends helped one participant **overcome her fear of technology** and **create new friendships**. It gave her the **confidence** to request books through the library 'Select and Collect' service and try new authors.

She's retired, lives on her own and passionate about reading. She had been missing the regular contact and emotional lift of the Reading Friends in-person groups and took the opportunity to join the new Zoom Reading Friends group, despite her aversion to going online. She believes it reinvigorated her reading habits after the "dark months" of the first lockdown and feels a sense of achievement by being able to access the group.

As the months have gone on, she has **shared more about herself** and **found common ground** with a young mum in the group. They both live in different areas of Flintshire, so otherwise may never have met.

The **cross-generational friendship** is an added bonus. **One of the joys for her is meeting regardless of location** and she **looks forward to the conversations**.



Case Study

Working together in the community

Hillingdon Libraries told us about their experiences running Reading Friends across the community with many groups and one-to-ones taking place. They invested time in talking and engaging with people online, by phone and in person.

“A predominant issue felt by the vulnerable residents during the pandemic were feelings of **loneliness and isolation**. Through the employment of the Reading Friends scheme, we worked to ease the intensity of these emotions, and towards overcoming them by providing access to resources, and signposting to relevant partners and agencies, which has proved to have been very important and successful.

We managed to work **in partnership** with several agencies and council departments across the borough and have been able to co-ordinate our efforts to help residents. This was particularly successful during lockdowns when we worked in close partnership with Hillingdon’s community hub.

We **reconnected** with partners we worked with prior to the pandemic and **built new partnerships** with care homes and social prescribers.”



Conclusion

In 2021 to 2022, Reading Friends made a positive difference to people's lives – supporting people with their **wellbeing**, creating **meaningful connections**, reducing **loneliness** and **engaging more people in reading together for pleasure**.

The Reading Agency, public libraries and their partners were able to reach **more people from priority groups** through **targeted activities**.

A **range of delivery methods** ensured that people who continued to be impacted by the ongoing effects of the pandemic and who struggle to attend in person activity were able to access the library services, their resources and social support.

Ultimately, the Reading Friends programme **strengthened communities** across England, Scotland and Wales, using **reading as the platform to share individual experiences, nurture a sense of belonging and form long-lasting connections**.

The evaluation findings presented in this report have positive implications for how the Reading Friends programme **can deliver on local and national health and wellbeing priorities**. Working together with delivery partners, the programme has had a strong impact on communities and is making a difference to people's lives using the power of reading.

“I met my wife through the Reading Friends Group and we are getting married next week, I am truly grateful as we are starting a life together and support each other with our eyesight problems and my bipolar. We are having a very large and lively wedding and the group are all invited. We have both learnt lots through the group and feel that we fit in although we have different personalities.”

— *Participant, Portsmouth Library Services*

Appendix

Evaluation methodology

Between 1 October 2021 and 27 June 2022, 68 library authorities signed up to deliver the Reading Friends programme activities. Four library authorities that signed up in the previous year continued to host and provide data on Reading Friends activities between June and October 2021. Owing to the continued impact of the pandemic, organisational changes and restrictions on public libraries, 10 library authorities were unable to provide any evaluation data by 27 June 2022.

Participation monitoring forms, N=62

The Reading Agency collected participation monitoring data on an ongoing basis from project coordinators, encouraging them to submit data on a monthly basis. 62 library authorities provided data to The Reading Agency by the submission deadline. This figure includes the participation monitoring data submitted by four library authorities, who had signed up to the DCMS-funded period of activity in 2020 to 2021.

Final activity forms, N=52

The Reading Agency circulated activity feedback forms to project coordinators in all 68 library authorities who had signed up to host Reading Friends programme activity in 2021 and 2022. 52 coordinators responded. Percentage breakdowns for audiences, delivery models and activities are therefore based on a sample size of 52. Percentages for audiences reached, delivery models and activities do not add up to 100%, as coordinators were able to select more than one option.

The form asked coordinators about their experience of delivering the programme in their authority, including any successes, challenges and further session ideas. The forms also asked project coordinators to indicate how many participants, befrienders and paid staff they worked with to deliver the programme in their local authority. Our evaluation findings show that at least 3,284 participants and 439 befrienders took part in Reading Friends between June 2021 and June 2022. As the reach figure does not include all participating library authorities' data, this is likely to be significantly higher.

Surveys (Participant, N=337; Befriender: N=81; One-off activity or event: N=14)

In October 2021, The Reading Agency circulated five online surveys (hosted on SurveyMonkey) to library authorities delivering Reading Friends programme activity. These surveys ran until 27 June 2022 and were aimed at capturing the difference the Reading Friends programme made to participants, young participants (aged between 11 and 18 years old), befrienders, participants involved in a one-off activity or event, and delivery partners. To ensure that as many people as possible were able to take part in the evaluation, The Reading Agency also created two additional evaluation feedback tools, which could be used to collect the feedback from participants living with dementia and participants aged under the age of 11. By 27 June 2022, we received 337 responses to the participant survey, 81 responses to the befriender survey and 14 responses to the participant (one-off activity or event) survey. Owing to the low response rate for the young participant, one-off activity and partner surveys, their responses are not presented in this evaluation report.



About us

Reading Friends is a nationwide programme developed by The Reading Agency. The programme is delivered in partnership with organisations across England, Scotland and Wales. Reading Friends connects people by starting conversations through reading.

To find out more about Reading Friends, get in touch:



readingfriends.org.uk



readingfriends@readingagency.org.uk

The Reading Agency is a national charity that tackles life's big challenges through the proven power of reading. We work closely with partners to develop and deliver programmes for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Reading Agency is funded by Arts Council England.



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Registered charity number 1085443 (England & Wales)