

Reach and impact in 2022/23

What is Reading Friends?

Reading Friends is The Reading Agency's social reading and befriending programme. It connects people by starting conversations through reading, giving opportunities to meet others, share stories, make new friends and have fun.

From 2022 to 2023, the programme worked with 39 library authorities across the UK and their delivery partners to make a positive difference to individual lives and whole communities – creating meaningful connections, reducing loneliness and improving wellbeing.

How many people took part?

- Over 4,600 people took part in groups and one-to-ones
- Over 28,300 social connections took place

Made friends for life
- Participant,
Hillingdon Libraries

The difference Reading Friends made in 2022/23

Reading Friends made a difference to people's lives and strengthened communities.

By taking part in the programme:

77% participants
and 86%
befrienders
added purpose
to their week

83% participants
and 84%
befrienders felt
more connected
to other people

68% participants
and 29%
befrienders felt
less lonely

69% participants
and 68%
befrienders
increased their
satisfaction with
their life

71% participants
and 70%
befrienders
increased their
confidence to try
new things

I tended to avoid social interactions with people I didn't know but the Reading Friends group (and group facilitator) was welcoming and I gained confidence to share my thoughts and experience. I also started to participate in other activities, all of which have contributed positively to my mental wellbeing.

- Participant, Leicester Libraries

I have enjoyed meeting people and learnt a lot about my local community from the group, both past and present helping me to feel more connected to my local area. I have enjoyed the sense of fun and camaraderie amongst the Reading Friends group, the way they support each other, the laughs they share and the way they welcome everyone.

- Befriender, Surrey Libraries