



A Verbal Group Project



What is Reading Rooms?



- Reading Rooms is an award winning project run by the Verbal Arts Centre but is based out in the heart of the community across Northern Ireland.
- Reading Rooms uses a reading aloud and shared reading experience to engage participants encouraging them to open up and share their ideas, thoughts and feelings from their own personal experience relating to the short story and poems being used by volunteer facilitators and RR Staff.
- The Reading Rooms project has been delivered with children, young people and older people since its inception as a UK City of Culture project 2013 which is now expanding in its legacy. The work with Reading Rooms has shown outcomes beyond all expectation and continues to develop and grow.

Listen.Share.Change.

High Quality Literature is Read:

Classics

Folk stories from all over the world

Children's Stories including picture books

Contemporary Work

Translated Works

International Work

Local Work

Different genres:

Science Fiction

Fantasy & Horror

Fables/Fairy tales/Legends

Mystery

Realism

Biographical & Autobiographical etc

**Literature is carefully selected by our
Literary Guide: Dr Susanne Stich**

**Selections partly made in response
to feedback from volunteers and groups**



First there is a conversation.



The literature is the jumping off point for a conversation.

Opportunity for meaningful conversations for Older People can reduce significantly as they age as their world reduces when they become less mobile or enter into a home or need day care

Conversations can be limited or reduced to negative interactions

With a brain injury some have lost the ability simply to begin a conversation

For children and young people the increase of social media has resulted in less ability to engage in conversation

Reading Rooms is a regular social activity that encourages participation in the conversation helping to ease loneliness & isolation for all ages and all groups

VOLUNTEERS



- Reading Rooms is a volunteer delivered project
- At present we host volunteers across Northern Ireland
- Bespoke Training: OCN Level 2 or Level 3 Facilitation Skills for Shared Reading
- Volunteers then shadow more experienced facilitators, are mentored by them and then given their own group
- Additional training is offered e.g. Direct Communication with Dementia Training and Direct Communication for Stroke Survivors
- Master classes e.g. Being Heard – Workshop on voice with Theatre Director Caitriona McLaughlin
- Other opportunities to meet writers or attend other events at the Verbal Arts Centre
- Volunteers are further supported by staff and through our monthly Volunteer Meetings and through Support and Review sessions.

Main Groups Reading Rooms work with:



- **Older People**
- **Children and Youth at Risk or in Care**
- **Criminal Justice System**
- **Disability, Mental Health and those living with long term conditions e.g. Dementia or an Acquired Brain Injury or Surviving a Stroke**



Working with Older People



Working with Disability

- **Memory Cafes**
- **Dementia Units**
- **Residential Care Homes**
- **Nursing Care Homes**
- **Day Care**
- **50+ Groups**
- **Reading Rooms with care staff, managers**
- **Reading Rooms RQIA Staff and Inspectors**

- **Praxis**
- **Acquired Brain Injury Units and with**
- **Headway**
- **Stroke survivors with Stroke Association and Chest, Heart and Stroke and Royal Victoria Hospital**
- **Beacon Centre (Mental Health)**
- **Evergreen Centre Derry/Londonderry**
- **Willowbank Centre (Dungannon)**
- **The Base (Magherafelt)**
- **NOW Group (Belfast)**

Children and Young People At Risk and In Care

Health and Social Care Trusts

Examples include:

- Looked After Children Team (LAC)
- Residential Care /Social Workers (Referrals)
- 16+ Pathway Team
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health
- Services to age 18 (CAMHS)

Education System

- Referrals through Sencos in Schools
- Statemented Children
- Special Needs Schools
- After School Programmes



Community/Voluntary & Charitable Partnerships

- **Voypic** - All children and young people who are cared for away from home.
- **Extern** – Children and young people who need family intervention and care
- **Kinship Care** – Children looked after by family members
- **Barnardo's** – Fostered/Adopted Children & YP/Young Carers/C & YO living in poverty
- **Playtrail/Ardnashee School and Tuned In** – children and young people with learning disabilities



- **Include Youth** - for young people in or leaving care, from disadvantaged communities or whose rights are not being met to improve their employability and personal development.
- **Parents of Older Children with Autism (P.O.C.A)** young people with Autism/Aspergers Syndrome

Reading Rooms for Early Years



**Saturday Mornings 11am in Eason's Bookshop
Derry/Londonderry and Special Events in Belfast**

- Stories for children aged 0 – 10 years of age
- Drama/art/movement to engage children in themes and ideas of the stories and to offer interaction and comprehension of language. Encourages creativity and participation.

Early Years Programme in the community

- Schools/Community Groups/Nurseries
- Feedback from teachers has been very positive in particular for those who don't normally engage e.g. children with disabilities.

Special Events

- **Mental Health Arts & Film Festival October 2014 /2016**
- **EU Day of Solidarity between the Generations 26th April**
- **with Linking Generations Funding**
- **Intergenerational Reading Rooms**
- **Positive Ageing Week 26th Sept- 1st Oct**
- **Positive Ageing Month - Belfast 2016**
- **Seasonal events: Hallowe'en, Christmas, Easter etc**



Reading Rooms in Art Galleries

Partnership with VOID Gallery



Kelly Richardson **Haunted** Summer 2014

Various Artists **Civil Rights: We have the power to begin the world over again** Autumn 2014

Curated by Lynette Yiadom Boakye & Maoliosa Boyle

Various Artists: **Horse** Spring 2015

Curated by Mark Wallinger and Maoliosa Boyle

A many splintered thing Summer 2015

Bieke Depoorter - Irina Popova - Jana Romanova – Nadia Sablin: Curated by Gregory McCartney & Susanne Stich

Anne Wenzel **Night Falls, Day Breaks**
Spring 2016

Object: Introducing Older People or Children and Young People to a Gallery Setting

Guided Tour of Exhibition and a Chance to Ask Questions

Reading Rooms with literature based on themes associated with the Exhibition

Creative Experience with Void Staff and Artists
Making Art



Reading Rooms Goes Mobile



Reaching remote and more rurally based groups

For RAPID

Park, Eglinton, Newbuildings, Claudy

Groups in Causeway Coast and Glens (Older People e.g. Burnfoot Seniors)

Fermanagh e.g. Headway and Disability Groups e.g. Fresh Focus

Mid Ulster Council e.g. EOTAS Upperlands, Stroke Association, The Base and Willowbank (Disability)



Reading Rooms Mobile at Festival Events



Launches

RAPID: Older Peoples Project to launch their walking programme

Foyle Pride to launch their LGB&T Library

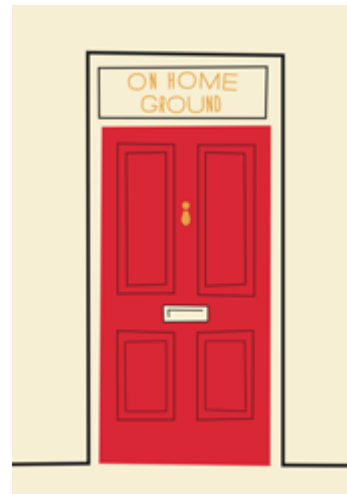
Community Festivals

Clooney Estate

Literary Festivals

Seamus Heaney On Home Ground/
for Crescent Arts Centre

Culture Night



About Beyond the Walls

funded by Spirit of Achievement 2012

- Young people aged 18-30 years involved within the Criminal Justice System
- Participants complete 20 weeks of Reading Rooms, 1 hour per week in groups of up to 8
- Participants have the opportunity to be put forward for the Shared Reading Training after week 20 where they will deliver Reading Rooms with an experienced Volunteer
- Partners include: Probation NI, Extern, Simon Community, Youth Justice Agency, NIACRO and Start360



Participants identify with many different issues including: drug and alcohol abuse and/or addiction, homelessness, poverty, mental ill-health, low self-esteem and confidence, relationship problems, identity issues and barriers to employment
Concepts covered in the literature include all of the above issues and many more



Reading Rooms: Consulting



Shared Decision Making

Literature connecting to the issues/concerns or themes

Henry Smith funded programme in Residential Care and Nursing Homes linking with My Home Life, England and through Ulster University School of Nursing

Reading Rooms for Staff/Residents and Families and the community

Consultation through stories to open up discussion on connecting Care homes to the community and how this can be achieved or improved.

Consulting

Reading Rooms to consult with young people

For Children's Commissioner Programme on themes like poverty, social exclusion, racism etc

For OFMDFM on Good Relations projects for young people



Reading Rooms using Appreciative Inquiry Model

Reading Rooms

To lay the foundation of what we are looking at?

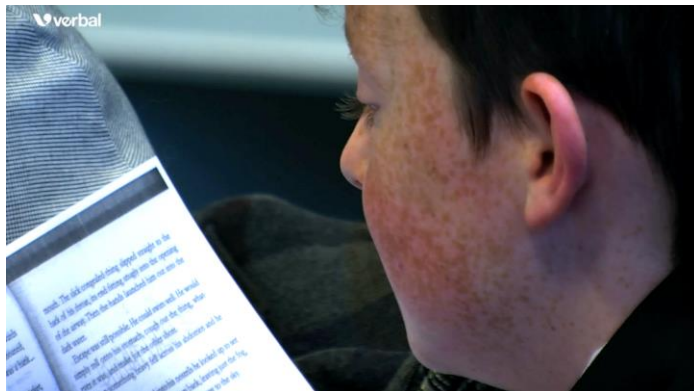
To open up discussion.



Discover

What is working well?

What makes you most proud?



Envision

How would you like things to be?

What do you value most?

Co Design

How can we work together to make this happen?

What strengths do people have that would help us?

Embed

What can we do together to make it happen?

One Small Step/One large Step

Person Centered Approach: 6 Senses Framework



Emphasises that

“Every Story Matters”

There is continuity – making links past, present and importantly future

Creates a sense of belonging to a valued group and maintain relationships

Creates security – a safe space

Creates a sense of purpose enjoying a meaningful activity

Creates a sense of achievement with your input

Creates a sense of significance that your thoughts, ideas, opinions matter and you are still valued

Chance to share your own experiences or memories

To have your voice heard and acknowledged

Opportunity to share your own story

Allows staff get to know their client group wherever they are based

Creates a sense of a shared journey

Why does this work?

Pleasure of Shared Reading

- Opens up reading where there is impairment

e.g. Sight/Limited Cognitive Function

- Or difficulties reading e.g. literacy problems or dyslexia
- A chance to reflect and share what you think or feel in relation to story/poem
- There is no right or wrong answer

Being Read to

- Fundamental and Nurturing Effect
- Not necessarily based on a preserved memory of being read to

- Creates a sense of relaxation and calm
- Eases agitation for all ages
- Improves concentration & memory
- Increases vocabulary
- Aids comprehension of language

Reading Rooms for Learning



- Through reading we enter into new worlds, situations, hear about different characters and themes.
- We can reflect on these in Reading Rooms - What do I understand by this?
- Come walk in my shoes - Connect and ask what does that mean for you? Your thoughts. Your ideas. Your opinions.
- Learn to trust and voice their own opinions and how to give them respectfully..... **Listen.Share.Change.**
- Increases Knowledge
- Develop analytical skills
- Expands vocabulary
- Increase comprehension of language
- Improve focus and concentration
- Improves writing skills
- Develops understanding of others/places etc
- Develop empathy
- Voice your opinion with confidence



Thank you for listening today



Contacts:

Sinead Devine

Reading Rooms Officer Older People

E: readingrooms@theverbal.co

Mary Fitzpatrick

Reading Rooms Officer Children and Youth

E: readingrooms.youth@theverbal.co

Aoife Logue

Reading Rooms Officer Criminal Justice Programme

E: readingrooms.outreach@theverbal.co

Stephanie Campbell

Reading Rooms Officer Mobile

E: readingrooms.mobile@theverbal.co

Claire Harkin

Reading Rooms Little Legends

E: readingrooms.schools@theverbal.co



Andrea O'Donnell

Reading Rooms Volunteer Officer

E: readingrooms.volunteering@theverbal.co

Dr Susanne Stich

Reading Rooms Literary Guide

E: readingrooms.literary@theverbal.co