



## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

**25 September 2020**

### **Derby Book Festival celebrates National Poetry Day**

1 October marks National Poetry Day and Derby Book Festival's Shared Reading programme will celebrate the joy that poetry brings to our lives. Nationally, there has been a rise in enthusiasm for poetry, particularly online, over the lockdown period. On National Poetry Day the Shared Reading Co-ordinators plan to run a range of activities, both online and in the community.

The Shared Reading programme aims to increase well-being by connecting people in group settings to share, listen and talk about poems, short stories and novels. The interactive sessions are mainly led by volunteers and enable members to share and discuss personal responses to what is being read. Pre-Lockdown, groups were held in a variety of settings including Extra Care Housing, the YMCA, St James' Centre, Derby College and the Riverside Library.

Shared Reading Co-ordinator, Jo Wright-Symonds explained: "Throughout lockdown our Shared Reading volunteers have been innovative in finding new ways to keep in touch with their group members, many of whom may have become particularly isolated during lockdown through having to shield and with group activities being forced to stop.

"Whilst the groups have been unable to meet physically, the programme has continued through Zoom meetings and other initiatives, including sending out 1300 individual Poetry Postcards, weekly newsletters, displaying PopUp Poems in shop windows, park noticeboards, railings and in local libraries, recording [Shared Reading videos](#) and the volunteers have been compiling weekly themed poem anthologies, which will be a valuable resource in the future."

They are keen to continue to send out Poetry Postcards and have also supported Age UK with their 'Letter Friend' project.

On National Poetry Day activities will include:

- a downloadable poetry quiz
- the display of more PopUpPoems across shops, arts venues, libraries, houses, fences and gardens
- encouraging people to pass on a poem on a postcard
- poetry reading performances across the city (subject to Covid guidelines) – see photo opportunity below
- creating an anthology of poems based on the National Poetry Day theme of ‘Vision.’

Lyndsey Ramsden, one of the two Shared Reading Co-ordinators, says: “People of all ages and backgrounds can benefit from Shared Reading. It creates a safe, supportive and relaxed environment which fosters a sense of well-being, enjoyment and connectedness. This can lead to improved confidence, reduced social isolation and stronger more supportive communities.”

Established four years ago, last year the Shared Reading programme successfully secured funding for three years from the National Lottery Community Fund to expand groups across Derby and Derbyshire.

To find out more about Shared Reading, how to become a volunteer, enquire about setting up a new group or arrange for someone to receive a Poetry Postcard or a PopUp Poem to display, email: [shared.reading@derbybookfestival.co.uk](mailto:shared.reading@derbybookfestival.co.uk)

**ENDS**

**For further press information, please contact:**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**Photo opportunity:**

You are invited to join Jo Wright-Symonds, Shared Reading Co-ordinator, at 11am on Thursday 1 October outside Parklands View Extra Care Housing complex, Bath St, Derby DE1 3FG, on the edge of Darley Park, where she will be performing socially distanced readings of poems to six residents who haven't been able to meet as a Shared Reading Group since March. The reading will last approx 15 minutes and if more than 6 residents want to attend, there will be another session at 11.30am. Jo will be available for interviews.

## **Background to the Festival**

The sixth Derby Book Festival will be held from 28 May to 5 June 2021. The 2020 Festival was forced to cancel due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Festival features internationally acclaimed authors and celebrates local writing talent with the aim of bringing Derby's residents together in a love of books and inspiring new readers to appreciate the pleasure and power of reading.

The nine-day Festival programme includes a broad range of events and activities aimed at all ages and interests from children's activities and book related crafts, to author talks, discussions, live performances, films, Masterclasses for budding writers and the annual Book Quiz.

The organisers plan to hold a series of one-off events, both online and 'live' through the coming months.

The Festival is organised in partnership with all the major arts, cultural and educational partners in the city: Déda, Derby City Council, Derby College, Derby LIVE, Derby Museum & Art Gallery, Derby Theatre, Landau Forte College, Marketing Derby, QUAD, University of Derby and Waterstones.