

THE Haberdashers' Company



ShannonTrust
unlocking the power of reading

Charities Impact Report



Summary

In September 2020 the Haberdashers' Benevolent Foundation celebrated the end of a 3-year grant of

£45,000

to the Shannon Trust, a charity which teaches people in prison to read

The personal barriers that stop people learning to read include embarrassment, previous experiences of education, learning difficulties and vulnerability.

The grant (£15,000 per annum) helped to fund



10,800
learners



4,450
mentors



"I feel more confident with writing letters to my family and friends and look forward to the replies. I know there's still a long road ahead but I'm pleased I've made my first steps. I hope to continue with my learning whilst in prison."

Responding to Covid-19:

Social distancing and movement restrictions in prisons have meant that, for most prisoners, learning sessions haven't been able to take place since March.

The Trust's priority is the safety of prisoners and prison staff looking after them. They responded quickly and developed creative solutions to support learners and mentors. These include:

- Creating activity packs for people to use in-cell.
- Providing Turning Pages reading books to increase the number and choice available to all people in prison helping address boredom and isolation.
- Recruiting and training volunteers to support prisons when they're able to visit again. They will be at the forefront of training new mentors and will provide first-line support to prisons.
- Keeping connected with people in prison through prison radio and newsletter. Using radio, they have been able to stay in touch with their learners, mentors and a large section of the prison community who are unable to read.
- Developing an innovative CD to train new mentors, using a stories and sounds approach. This has already proved very popular and the Trust will be incorporating it into future face-to-face mentor training sessions.
- Responding to the advances in the use of digital technology to make Turning Pages and mentor training content available in digital formats in prisons.

Learning to read is about more than words on a page. For men and women in prison it increases confidence, opens up the world of education and provides an opportunity to change. It helps them to keep in touch with their families and to cope in a prison system reliant on the written word. Many want to share their new skills with their family, developing a new legacy for their children:

The Shannon Trust truly appreciates the support they have received from The Haberdashers' Benevolent Foundation. Because of you, more people in prison will learn to read. More will be able to stay connected with their families and more will see themselves as learners.

The Shannon Trust team, and their learners and mentors, thank you for your partnership in unlocking the power of reading.

Case Study

Before becoming a reader, Ade wasn't able to support his children's learning. He was unable to share a story with them and he couldn't share his feelings with his partner. He was on the edge of his family's life, looking in, wanting to play a bigger part.

In and out of prison since he was a teenager, Ade's macho reputation helped him hide that he couldn't read. Embarrassment and fear of becoming vulnerable held him back from learning. Scared of being taught and fearful of starting to learn, Ade resisted any attempt to help him. He would deliberately cause arguments to be removed from classes.

Ade got through by pretending he could read and asking prison officers for help. Encouragement from one prison officer in particular, and a well-timed chat with a Shannon Trust mentor, helped Ade to think differently.

Learning to read has changed the lives of both Ade and his family. His children listen to bedtime stories he records for them through Storybook Dads. Their Dad is now supporting their education and, when they visit, he is able to read with them. And his partner has received her first ever Valentine's Day card from him.

No longer scared of being taught, Ade now sees himself as a learner. He's studying for numeracy qualifications and is a member of the prison student council. He's also shared his story on National Prison Radio to inspire others to learn to read.



"Not reading ruins relationships, makes you feel dumb. You know you can make loads of money but you still feel dumb because you just can't read."

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"I can read a goodnight story to my daughter. I've never read to my kids before."