



SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

Project Case Study: Shared Reading Programme Tackling Isolation and Loneliness during Lockdown

THEME:

Building Positive Relations:
Regional Level Projects

FUNDING (ERDF+MATCH):

€1,625,838.4

MATCH FUNDERS:

Executive Office Northern
Ireland and the Department
of Rural and Community
Development, Ireland

LEAD PARTNER:

NI Housing Executive
(NIHE)

PROJECT PARTNERS:

The Verbal Arts

Start Date: 01/08/2017

End Date: 31/12/2021



[https://
www.theverbal.co/
listen-share-change](https://www.theverbal.co/listen-share-change)



@EveryStoryNI



@listensharechange

The Listen, Share, Change (LSC) project aims to promote positive relations amongst 52 estates across the North, celebrating cultural diversity and promoting community cohesion by supporting tenants to live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

Each week, a team of trained neighbourhood champions deliver LSC sessions to over 20 community groups. Verbal's shared reading model is used to bring people together to listen, laugh and have a conversation through short stories and share experiences with participants of different backgrounds.

To date, it has benefitted 1,379 participants and successfully adapted its services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Knowing how much this programme meant to our community participants and the emerging need to tackle isolation and loneliness, we set our focus on launching a Digital LSC Programme. With some additional training and support we were able to launch LSC Digital, enabling our participants, both old and new, to join in and enjoy the Reading Room experience from their homes. By successfully increasing the accessibility of our online platform, we were able to create 24 targeted digital groups and reach 438 participants across Northern Ireland during the initial COVID-19 lockdown period."

Carol Hegarty, LSC Programme Manager

The project was also able to deliver the programme to new groups, thanks to the support of an incredibly dedicated team of volunteers.

Participants in the project said it allowed them to remain in contact with people during lockdown, with one describing it as a '*blessing*' and another as a '*lifeline*' at a time when they were unable to see family.

Furthermore, LSC has delivered 120 digital tablets to community groups across the North, which will allow an additional 240 people to take part this year.