



PRESS RELEASE

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School Library Association celebrates milestone funding as Charlotte Aitken Trust commits over £500,000 to new Reading Reboot programme, in memory of Charlotte Aitken

“The young people who participate in this programme will be given the opportunity to rediscover the joy of reading, on their own terms. We know increased reading engagement can transform a young person’s experience of education, their creativity, and their future.” - Victoria Dilly, SLA CEO

National education charity, the School Library Association (SLA) will launch a high impact programme in under-funded school libraries, addressing the ongoing reading crisis by creating librarian-run social book clubs.

The Reading Reboot programme - a reading programme funded by the Charlotte Aitken Trust will build on a proven model, piloted in collaboration with Farshore and HarperCollins Children’s Books in 2024, to transform how the most disadvantaged and disengaged young people interact with literature and reading.

The three-year programme will be funded by the Charlotte Aitken Trust who will deliver over £500,000 of funding – the most significant grant made by the Trust in its history, offering a generation of young people the opportunity to build their own lasting relationships with books and reading.

Beginning in September 2026, the Reading Reboot programme will deliver 1,000 social book clubs in over 100 secondary school libraries in London, the West Midlands and the North East of England. Over three years, the programme will directly reach over 6,000 young people and 100 school librarians and senior school leaders.

The pioneering programme will focus on Year 8 pupils, targeting the age at which reading for pleasure often shows the steepest decline, and a year group that will soon be subject to

a new mandatory reading test. Reading Reboot will deliver ten-week book clubs, run in dedicated spaces within school libraries, by specially trained school librarians.

Key components of the book club sessions will be: dedicated space and time for reading engagement within the school timetable, supported by senior leadership teams; dedicated book stock, with 100+ new books provided to each participating school; free choice of book titles for participating pupils and a removal of the pressure to read. This simple, low-pressure approach to book clubs has been proven to increase reading engagement, increase reading age outcomes, improve the wellbeing of participating young people and build the positive, social associations with books and literature that will change attitudes to reading – taking it from a subject to be learnt, to an activity that can bring joy.

SLA CEO Victoria Dilly said:

“Changing attitudes to reading cannot be achieved through instruction alone - it requires reading role models, dedicated time and resources, and a commitment to meeting young people where they are. With these things in place, we know change can happen quickly.

The young people who participate in this programme will be given the opportunity to rediscover the joy of reading, on their own terms. We know increased reading engagement can transform a young person’s experience of education, their creativity, and their future.

The Reading Reboot programme will equip librarians and school leaders with professional development, build library collections, and help create engaging reading spaces for the whole school community to use. Those involved will be galvanised and empowered to advocate for reading and for the school library, with clear evidence of impact.

By awarding this funding, the Charlotte Aitken Trust has given us the means to build a legacy that will cascade across cohorts and extend beyond individual schools. We are hugely grateful to the Charlotte Aitken Trust for their support, and I feel incredibly privileged to lead the SLA in this new endeavour.

Looking forward, we will use the insights gained from this programme to raise awareness with key policymakers, demonstrating the positive impact that happens when you invest in school libraries, librarians and time for reading.”

Lauren Howard, Trustee, Charlotte Aitken Trust said:

“As a Trustee of the Charlotte Aitken Trust, I am incredibly proud that we are supporting the SLA’s Reading Reboot programme. We believe deeply in the power of literature to transform lives, and this initiative reflects that belief in action. By creating dedicated social reading spaces within school libraries, led by trained librarians and grounded in

the freedom of choice, the programme enables young people to encounter books beyond the pressures of assessment and discover books on their own terms, reframing reading not simply as a subject to be studied but as an activity to be enjoyed.

Year 8 is such a formative moment in a young person's life; it was at that age that books changed the course of my own. The right book at the right time can alter a life's trajectory, and we are proud to support a programme designed to offer that opportunity to young people across the country."

News of the funding comes at the beginning of the government-backed National Year of Reading campaign which aims to tackle the steep decline in reading enjoyment amongst children, young people and adults. The School Library Association believes that school libraries have the power to renew children and young people's reading engagement. By placing school librarians at the heart of the delivery, the Reading Reboot programme will clearly demonstrate the impact and value that librarians bring to their school communities and to the children and young people they support.

Sebastian Faulks, Chair, Charlotte Aitken Trust said:

"The Charlotte Aitken Trust is proud to be making this contribution in the National Year of Reading. Literature and literacy, especially among young people, are in crisis and we believe this School Library Association programme, which we are backing with an initial half a million pounds, could make a real difference."

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Editor's notes

- **The School Library Association** is a national education charity and membership organisation that supports all schools to develop and deliver effective school library provision and to build inclusive and engaging reading communities, ensuring that all pupils can reach their full potential. sla.org.uk
- **The Charlotte Aitken Trust** is dedicated to the support of literature, writing and reading. It is funded by the estate of the celebrated literary agent Gillon Aitken (1938-2016) in the name of his only daughter Charlotte, who died in 2011 at the age of 27. charlotteaitkentrust.org.uk
- **The Reading Reboot programme** builds on the findings from the Social Reading Spaces book club trial, conducted by the School Library Association, Farshore and HarperCollins Children's Books in 2024. [Read the research report](#)

- State schools can sign up to receive more information about the Reading Reboot programme now. Schools will not have to be existing SLA members to apply to take part in the programme. Those who are selected to take part will be schools who in the judgement of the SLA would most benefit. Participating schools will receive SLA membership as a part of the programme, providing further advice, support and inspiration. [Sign up to receive Reading Reboot programme updates.](#)