**Reading Rooms: Marketing and Communications Plan**

1. **Synopsis**

Reading Rooms is a low threshold, high quality outreach programme of reading based activity celebrating literature to foster rich, sustainable levels of community engagement and participation across all group types.

1. **Aims**

The aims of Reading Rooms are to:

2.1 Share the learning and delivery of Reading Rooms between Verbal Arts, Derry with Hull Culture and Leisure Library Services to establish Reading Rooms in Hull during Hull 2017.

2.2 Create an accessible and safe setting for participants to engage and flourish in an enjoyment of literature and other art forms.

2.3 Use a shared reading delivery model to work with the general population of Hull as well as targeting some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in the city i.e.

* older people within and without the care system,
* young people in care/or at risk,
* adults with mental/and or physical disabilities and
* Individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds experiencing issues related to racial tension.

1. **Company Summary**

Reading Rooms is a partnership project between The Verbal Arts Centre and Hull Culture and Leisure Ltd.

3.1 The Verbal Arts Centrebelieves that narrative/storytelling is a transformational art form open to all, through which we translate values into action: engaging heart, head, and hands.

Narrative/storytelling is accessible & participation based created from the experience of challenge, choice and outcome which we all have encountered.

The Verbal Arts aims to give everyone regardless of ability, background or circumstances the opportunity and the means to; tell their story & listen to the stories of others.  Stories are made up of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterise who and what we are and are reconstituted and articulated through language both spoken and written.

The ability for all sections of the community (especially the most vulnerable and marginalised) to reconstitute and articulate shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices through language is the unchanging need that the Verbal Arts strives to meet.

All programmes of activity are delivered across 4 themes: (1) Purposeful Storytelling (2) Digital storytelling, (3) Shared Reading, (4) Publishing & events. All activities are accessible & participatory - building outwards from the individual or community experience. And are delivered to a range of stakeholder groups including; older people, people with dementia, adults with learning disabilities, young people on the edge of care, victims of conflict, prisoners, young people aged 14-19 from areas of high socio-economic deprivation etc.

3.2 Hull Culture & Leisure Ltd was established in April 2015. It is a company limited by guarantee with charitable objectives wholly owned by Hull City Council. The company is commissioned by Hull City Council to manage the city’s library services, museums, The Ferens Art Gallery, parks, sport and leisure facilities, Civic Catering, Hull New Theatre and The City Hall.

1. **Key messages**

Reading Rooms:

4.1 is a mobile shared reading programme that gives participants a voice, reduces isolation and anxiety, and promotes wellbeing.

4.2 is a low threshold, high quality outreach programme of reading based activity celebrating literature to foster rich, sustainable levels of community engagement and participation across all group types.

4.2 are accessible and safe settings for participants to engage and flourish in an enjoyment of literature and other art forms.

4.3 create a safe space within a range of community venues as well as in Libraries using high quality, locally relevant and thematically targeted literature to engage approximately 10,000 people in reading activity during 2017.

4.4 by using a reading aloud and shared reading setting the programme encourages participants to share personal experiences from their past, sparking memories, stimulating new thoughts and provoking conversation related to the short story and poems selected in advance and tailored to the needs of the group by the project’s Literary Guide.

4.5 group sessions are led by a trained facilitator who has completed an intensive three day accredited training programme on how to use the reading aloud model and engage with the groups they are working with. The facilitator skilfully brings the group together and prompts conversation without pressure. Discussions are free flowing and this social aspect of the group allows for a friendly atmosphere and an opportunity to learn more about others.

4.6 can take place anywhere in the community and works best in groups of no more than 10 people. Reading Rooms will be popping up across Hull during 2017.

1. **Key Selling Points**

5.1 Reading Rooms were first established in Derry – Londonderry during their year as City of Culture in 2013. The purpose of this project is to share the project with Hull during its year as UK City of Culture with a view to Hull sharing it with the next UK City of Culture and other public library services.

5.2 Reading Rooms is a non-threatening environment where people can experience literature and discover low threshold, high quality outreach programme of reading based activity celebrating literature to foster rich, sustainable levels of community engagement and participation across all group types.

1. Competition

Reading rooms is a unique programme there is currently nothing similar being delivered in Hull and the surrounding area.

1. SWOT

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strengths | Weaknesses | Opportunities | Threats |
| Unique programme in Hull | Distance between Hull and Derry-Londonderry | Hull UK City of Culture 2017 | Lack of take-up due to vast range of other opportunities on offer |
| Learning and support from Verbal Arts | Capacity of Library staff to deliver alongside other 2017 programmes | Set-up pop-up Reading Rooms at other events to promote | Delivery could slow down if library staff time is not managed |
| Funding from James Reckitt Library Trust to deliver a year-long programme | Funding for 1 year programme – need to fundraise for future years alongside delivery | Funding from James Reckitt Library Trust to extend delivery | Marketing and promotion needs to be clear and targeted to avoid perception that Reading Rooms are reading groups |
| Literature catalogue developed by Verbal Arts |  | Potential to roll out to other library services and generate income from training | Longevity of the programme could be affected if funding and/or staff capacity is not available |
| Legacy project from Derry-Londonderry 2013 (Only project to be handed on) |  | Open discussion with Paul Hamlyn Foundation to discuss national programme |  |
| Library staff team enthusiasm for project |  |  |  |

1. Target audience

8.1 Reading Rooms will build on existing Library statutory and non statutory networks for example;

General community Reading Rooms will;

* Schedule activities in a range of different library branches
* Target community groups/youth centres and offer taster sessions as a recruitment tool

8.2 When recruiting for specific groups the project will target community/voluntary groups that represent;

* Ethnic minority groups
* Youth at risk charities
* Older people advocacy groups
* Disability/Chronic illness advocacy groups

8.3 Hull Culture & Leisure will also look to develop strategic partnerships right from the outset by offering tasters with key statutory partners;

* The Clinical Commissioning Group, Health and Wellbeing Board and Public Health, Mental Health Services
* Hull City Council Housing Department and local housing associations
* Probation services Hull Youth Justice Service, The Warren and other youth services
* Hull City Council, particularly social care services
* Schools and colleges
* HMP Voluntary sector organisations e.g. The Goodwin Development Trust, The Freedom centre, Artlink etc.

1. Target locations

The locations for this proposal is subdivided into three areas;

* + *Reading Rooms in Libraries* especially those areas where the branch is the only community space
  + *Reading Rooms out in the community* (i.e. in youth groups, community centres etc.)
  + *Reading Rooms Pop up* – we will use a pop up space which allows the project to take place where there is no existing infrastructure – so you go to where the people are

1. Marketing activity

The following marketing activity will be undertaken:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| DATE | ACTIVITY | RESPONSIBILITY |
| January 2017 – December 2017 | Contact with community groups  Recruit volunteers | Reading Rooms Hull Project Manager/Assistant |
| 3 April onwards | Press office to send out information to media, set-up interviews etc. | HCC/Hull 2017 Press offices/Reading Rooms Project Manager |
| w/c 17 April 2017 | Press releases issued | HCC/Hull 2017 Press offices/Reading Rooms Project Manager |
| w/c 24 April 2017 | Media interviews | Reading Rooms Project Manager / Verbal Arts |
| 26 April 2017 | Launch event | Reading Rooms Hull Project Manager |
| 26 April 2017 | Website launch | Reading Rooms Project Manager / Verbal Arts |
| May 2017 to December 2017 | Press releases sent out on a regular basis to promote new groups/ good news stories | Reading Rooms Hull team |
| May 2017 to December 2017 | Website to be updated weekly with group information/positive stories | Reading Rooms Hull team |
| 8 June 2017 | Presentation at SCL Conference on libraries role in UK City of Culture 2017 | Michelle Alford/Rosie Millard |
| December 2017 / January 2018 | Final evaluation publicity |  |

Other opportunities will be undertaken as they arise.