



Some of you may have noticed that it's been a while since the last newsletter so welcome to the bumper Christmas edition!

Coach/Learner update

Numbers are steady at the moment and we have 15 reading pairs currently meeting across the Forest. We hope that the recent publicity in the local papers and the work of our new Contacts Coordinator Malcom Vine and his team will encourage more learners to come forward in the New Year.

Unfortunately (for us!) a few of our long serving reading coaches have left recently for personal reasons, leaving us a little thin on the ground. However, we had a really good response to our latest training course (see below) and several new coaches have now joined our team.

FRED Plus Launch

The 'launch event' at the Forest Community Church on 3rd October was really well attended and made the local press. FRED Plus is our response to increasing demand to include extended reading activities and early writing skills.

Our Chair, Roger Deeks opened the event and Kris, our trainer, gave a brief overview of the rationale for FRED Plus and what it will offer for current and potential learners. Lady Bathurst then officially launched FRED Plus. She has held a lifelong interest in adult literacy work and has supported literacy development in prison education.

One of our learners, Sabrina, gave a brief talk about her book *The White Giant*, which she has written and published with the help of her coach Katrina. Sabrina also made the local press and a copy of this is on the website (www.forestreadeasydeal.org.uk) under the News/Events tab.

Additional Training Session

This was held on 1st November at the Forest Community Church. One of the most popular parts of these training sessions is always the opportunity for everyone to share ideas and experiences and just to chat amongst themselves. Although each learner/coach experience is quite different, it's always interesting to hear how people deal with problems which may arise and for them to share any success stories.

Kris also talked about the use of language experience to support learners and how they can be encouraged to move on to writing. Handouts from this session and from some previous training sessions are on the website under the Resources tab.



*Lady Bathurst, Mayor of Coleford Cllr Nick Penny, co-ordinator Sheila Priest, chairman Roger Deeks, trainer Kris Ventris-Field and Mayor of Lydney, Cllr Bob Berryman.

A PROJECT to help adults in the Forest learn to read is being extended to help people develop their reading and start writing.

FRED Plus – an extension of Forest Read Easy Deal (FRED) – was launched by Lady Bathurst at the Forest Church in Cinderford.

Among those joining her was Sabrina Drew, a FRED learner, who has gone on to write *The White Giant*, a book based on her grandmother's memoirs.

FRED co-ordinator Sheila Priest said: "There are more people than you would expect struggling to read and write fluently. We are there to help them if they, or their advocates, step up and contact us."

"Sabrina Drew is a great example of how making one phone call can change your life."

"Our tutors are trained in new techniques that address many of the issues that created challenges to people learning to read in the past."

"There is a second chance, whatever your circumstances or age, to learn to read and start writing."

FRED started in 2011 and trains volunteer coaches who work with learners on a one-to-one basis.

"There are currently more than 30 people trained as coaches and 15 pairs working together across the Forest."

FRED chairman Roger Deeks said: "Forest Read Easy Deal has made a major contribution to improve literacy in the Forest of Dean."

"The results have transformed lives, as people who have learnt to get by without reading are suddenly given a new opportunity that opens many doors that were previously closed."

"Last year it became apparent that there were many current learners and members of the public for whom reading was at a rudimentary stage and who wanted to improve their reading skills."

"There was also a demand for people to progress to being able to write and this has led to the development of FRED plus and coaches and resources will be available to offer this extra learning opportunity."

"We were particularly pleased that Lady Bathurst was able to join us as she has done a great deal to support literacy in the county."

Contacts co-ordinator Malcom Vine added: "I have worked as a FRED coach and seen the benefits it can offer."

"I have recently joined the committee as contacts co-ordinator to help recruit learners and I'm happy to meet organisations to explain what FRED offers and the difference it can make for individuals and employers."

For more information call 0774 637 1353 or e-mail info@forestreadeasydeal.org.uk



Initial Coach training

Kris ran a successful training session at Yorkley Community Centre on 9th December and 12 prospective coaches were introduced to the new Turning Pages reading scheme, which is going to replace 'Yes We Can Read' which we have used for the past few years.



About Turning Pages

The Shannon Trust has produced the Turning Pages reading scheme which consists of 5 structured manuals plus a set of 30 reading books to go with the manuals.

The double page spread has coach instructions on the left with learner activities on the right and uses synthetic phonics. Three progress checks are built into each manual and as these progress checks are completed the reading books can be used to consolidate the reading skills covered. There is more information about the scheme on the Shannon Trust website: <http://turningpages.shannontrust.org.uk/>



Additional training for this new reading scheme will be offered in the New Year to all reading coaches. In the meantime if you would like to look at the manuals and reading books, or would like more information, please let me know. (sheilapriest49@gmail.com).

Funding Success

Forest of Dean District Council

Every year Jane Horne, the Chair of Forest of Dean District Council, chooses a charity to support and has chosen FRED for 2018! In her official announcement Jane said: "There are so many deserving causes in the local community and this year I wanted to again support a charity which



helps people across the district. The FRED volunteers carry out wonderful work by helping people to learn to read and write and I hope that my support will raise the profile of this worthy cause more widely. By raising their profile in this way and giving them my backing it will, hopefully, lead to the charity gaining additional financial help from other organisations."

Councillor Horne is planning a number of fund raising activities to support FRED and it will mean some income to support our work as well as helping to raise our profile and get the message out to potential learners.

West Dean Parish Council has recently awarded us a grant of £1,500, some of which will go toward the new reading scheme.

Lydney Town Council also kindly donated £400 to FRED.

Waitrose collected £445 for us via their Community Matters Scheme. We plan to reapply shortly so please keep an eye out for the green token box in the Monmouth branch. The more tokens in the box, the more money we get!

Future Plans

Roger, our Chair, has been in discussion with a local company about making short video/digital clips that we could use on our website, on social media and anywhere that has digital projection technology - cinemas or elsewhere. We are hoping to have maybe two or three films, one of a learner talking about the impact of FRED on their life and then a couple explaining what FRED and FRED plus are and how people can access the service. There will be more news about this in the New Year. If you or your learner would like to be involved in this project, please let me know.

Contact Team Update from Malcom Vine

I joined the FRED committee as Contacts Co-ordinator at the end of August. After a career in housing assisting people to access and retain housing that they could afford I was well aware of the difficulties an inability to read well can cause when legal and bureaucratic barriers are placed in people's way. This can lead to problems with landlords, mounting debt and in the most serious cases homelessness. I was therefore really pleased when the opportunity to work with FRED came up.

I am hoping to build on the good work that Megan and her team have started. So far, with the help of Pleas, Leah and others delivering posters and leaflets in their local areas we have covered most of the district. When I have visited G.P. surgeries, libraries and other community venues I have been gratified to find that FRED is widely known and that people are appreciative of the work that volunteers do.

There are various other support organisations that I still want to contact and I will be looking out for any local events that we can attend. We have started to circulate the FRED display around local libraries.

If there are any ideas that you or perhaps your learner may have about where best to engage people please let me know, email: vine895@btinternet.com

Resources

Just a reminder to our new reading coaches that our main resource bank is at the Forest Road Centre in Cinderford, where all of our reading books are kept as well as folders containing worksheets for reading and comprehension, punctuation, spelling, writing etc. I'm there most Tuesday mornings so feel free to pop over and have a look.

There are also resource folders at Coleford, Lydney and Newent libraries. We have an arrangement at the libraries that learners can borrow books on extended loan – just mention FRED at the desk.

I am always happy to deliver books to you if you find it difficult to get over to Cinderford. There is a full list of our books and book collections on the website under the Resources tab.



**Finally, huge thanks to everyone for
your support this year**

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New
Year from the FRED Team!**