



The Human Library is an international equalities movement that uses the language and mechanism of a library to facilitate social contact. It aims to challenge common assumptions and prejudices that can be held towards people from minority or marginalised backgrounds and to celebrate difference, promote equality and diversity, contribute to cohesion, and reduce stigma, discrimination and hate.

Just like a real library, visitors, or 'Readers', are given the opportunity to choose from a wide and diverse range of titles. However, in the Human Library 'Books' are *people*, and reading is when a Reader and Book are engaged in *conversation*.

Human Library organisers recruit Books and 'Librarians' for an event. Books are trained to understand that they are giving their Readers the right to respectfully ask any questions, and Librarians are trained to create a space where they can facilitate conversations, in which Books and Readers feel safe, respected and valued.

It was with delight that we were able to deliver our first school event at Acle Academy in 2012. We were supported by an enthusiastic and understanding staff team who took the time to learn about the Human Library methodology, value its principles of inclusion and choice, and agreed to host 2 events – the first for staff and the second for students.

"When I first heard about the Human Library I was struck at once by its simplicity and its potential to have a profound effect on the 'Readers'. By deciding to first host an event for teaching staff on a training day we had an opportunity to use their experiences to help in the planning of a second event for students." Tim Phillips

The first Human Library at Acle Academy featured 11 Books with 36 Readers engaging in 28 conversations. 100% of staff valued their experience as very good or better, would recommend the Human Library to students and would visit another Human Library if given the opportunity. Some Readers said:

"I gained an insight into a white person's journey through and to Islam. I was surprised to learn that there is a certain amount of prejudice between Muslims." **Teacher who borrowed 'Muslim'**

“I found it very easy to chat about all subjects including his HIV status.” **Teacher who borrowed ‘HIV+’**

“I think people are frightened to ask questions that could overcome prejudices.”
Teacher who borrowed ‘Learning Disability’

The second Human Library at Acle Academy featured 19 Books with 100 Readers engaging in 61 conversations. Following the Human Library, 87% of students said that following the Human Library they would be more likely to challenge a person if they saw them doing something unfair to someone else because they are different, and 87% of students said that following the Human Library they would be more willing to speak more openly about prejudice and discrimination.

“I think things have definitely changed since the Human Library, I’ve noticed a change in what people are saying about each other...I think it helped us all to realise that people are different to what you assume.” **Student H**

We will now continue to organise events in High Schools in the UK, and to develop and improve our practice. We were always convinced that secondary schools were a relevant and important setting for the Human Library methodology, as evidenced by the reaction of Tim Phillips:

“The events themselves exceeded all my expectations. The number of borrowers was exceptionally high and the responses to the questionnaires, and in the student forums, have convinced me that not only was a high school the right venue but that the students could give a unique insight into how the Human Library could be utilised to meet the needs of students in other places. I am determined that we will hold regular events at Acle Academy and I hope our experience can contribute to research into the Human Library.”

We hope that you will join us on 15th October at Acle Academy to hear more about the Human Library methodology and it’s impact among staff and students at Acle Academy, and engage in discussion about how the Human Library can benefit young people across the county for many years to come.

