

# Reading Well Books on Prescription: Library staff handbook

# READING WELL

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# Introduction

## What is the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme?

Reading Well Books on Prescription provides accredited reading to help people manage their health and wellbeing, available from English public libraries. It is delivered by The Reading Agency in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) with funding from Arts Council England and the Wellcome Trust. The scheme is endorsed by leading health bodies and delivered by public libraries.

Reading Well Books on Prescription for common mental health conditions was launched in June 2013 as the first national scheme for England. The programme is available in 97% of public library authorities and is part of the [Society of Chief Librarians' Universal Health Offer](#). A second scheme for people with dementia and their carers was launched in January 2015. Reading Well for young people was launched in April 2016 and a fourth scheme for people living with long term conditions and their carers will launch in July 2017.

All the books are selected by experts and the booklists are endorsed by leading health organisations such as NHS England, Public Health England, The Royal Collage of General Practitioners, The Royal College of Psychiatrists and The Royal College of Nursing. Health professionals can refer people to a recommended list of accredited titles to help with specific conditions and people can also use the scheme independently as a first step to understanding and managing symptoms and seeking help. The programme complements existing local health services and is a simple way of delivering prevention and early intervention care.

Reading Well Books on Prescription also signposts people to other wellbeing services in libraries, including social and recreational activity such as reading groups and volunteering

## Reading Well Books on Prescription for common mental health conditions

[Reading Well Books on Prescription for common mental health conditions](#) was launched in 2013 as the first national scheme for England with a list of evidence-based self-help books on common mental health conditions. Its core booklist of 30 titles provides evidence-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) self-help techniques.

## Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia

[Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia](#) recommends helpful reading to improve people's understanding and awareness of dementia in its various forms. The core booklist includes professionally endorsed information and advice for people diagnosed with dementia and their carers, as well as support with how to live well with the condition.

## Reading Well for young people

[Reading Well for young people](#) provides recommended reading to young people to help them understand and manage their mental health and wellbeing. The scheme provides young people aged 13 to 18 with advice, information and support on a range of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, and difficult experiences like bullying and exam stress.

## Reading Well for long term conditions

[Reading Well for long term conditions](#) provides a booklist of 28 titles offering people living with long term conditions and their carers expert-endorsed health information and self-management support. The booklist covers general information on living well with a long term condition, titles on specific conditions (diabetes, arthritis, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD), asthma, heart disease, angina, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and stroke), symptom-based titles (mental health and wellbeing difficulties related to living with a long term condition, sleeping difficulties, fatigue and pain management) and titles for family and carers.

## **How are the books selected?**

All the titles on the booklists were selected using an evidence-based approach supported by a rigorous process of consultation and expert advice. The titles have all been recommended and endorsed by health experts as well as people with lived experience of the conditions covered.

You can download the [book selection protocol](#) and [book selection framework](#) which go through the book selection process.

## **How does the scheme work?**

Reading Well Books on Prescription aims to increase access to quality-assured health information and advice. The scheme adds value to existing care and service provision. Health and social care professionals can recommend books to people to use while waiting for, or as part of, treatment. Books can be used before, during and after diagnosis and to support family and carers.

The scheme can also be used on a self-referral basis as the books are available on the open shelves of the local public library for anyone to borrow. Evaluation of the scheme shows that self-referral is a key feature of how the scheme is used. Many people borrow books without a recommendation, as a first step to understanding their condition and its symptoms. The value of an expert-endorsed collection means that the scheme is safe to use in this way especially when supported by the availability of user leaflets which include information about where to go for further help.

# **The need**

## **National need**

There is an enormous need for quality-assured and community-based health promotion and information. For more information about the national need, see [our evidence base](#).

## **Local need**

Local area health targets are set by newly formed local authority health and wellbeing boards, working with public health departments and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). These targets will be informed by the findings of the local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The JSNA analyses the health needs of populations to guide the strategic commissioning of health, wellbeing and social care services within local authority areas. It also underpins local health and wellbeing strategies and strategic commissioning plans. It is important to consult your local JSNA in order to understand the health and wellbeing needs of your local community and how the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme can help to meet them.

# Why libraries?

## The Universal Public Library Health Offer

Reading Well Books on Prescription is part of the [Society of Chief Librarians' Universal Health Offer](#) – one of the universal offers SCL is delivering with the support of Arts Council England. The other offers are Digital, Learning, Reading, Information and Culture. The aim of each offer is to deliver a core package of partnerships, resources and advocacy messages at a national level, which can be delivered locally and shaped to meet differing local needs.

[The Dementia Offer](#) is part of the Public Library Health Offer. It articulates the key role libraries play in supporting people whose lives are affected by dementia and in building dementia-friendly communities. Reading Well for young people is also part of [ASCEL's Children's and Young People's Promise](#).

Research shows that people see libraries as safe, trusted and non-stigmatised places to go for help with, and information about, health problems.<sup>1</sup> The Universal Public Library Health Offer demonstrates the important role that libraries play in supporting the health of local communities. They provide:

- A network of local community hubs
- Community outreach supporting vulnerable people
- Staff with local knowledge and expertise in information management and community engagement
- Assisted online access to health resources.

Libraries enable local communities to support their health and wellbeing through:

- Health and care information services
- Referral and signposting
- Health promotion activity
- National reading programmes promoting learning, literacy and health and wellbeing
- Social and recreational opportunities such as reading groups
- Volunteering and community engagement opportunities.

Reading Well Books on Prescription helps people discover the other relevant health and wellbeing reading services available in libraries by highlighting them in both the user and prescriber leaflets.

For more information about the Universal Public Library Health Offer see the [SCL website](#).

## Is Reading Well Books on Prescription a universal offer?

Reading Well Books on Prescription is available in 97% of English library authorities. At a time of cuts and library closures, the scheme demonstrates how public libraries can deliver on key policy areas such as dementia and mental health – improving the health and wellbeing of local communities. It helps to raise the profile of libraries, levers in new resources and supports local authorities in delivering a consistent and quality-assured level of service as cost effectively as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> *Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Wellbeing*, Hicks, D., Creaser, C. et al, MLA, 2010.

# The evidence base

## Does it work?

The [2016-17 evaluation](#) of Reading Well Books on Prescription shows that the scheme is effective both in terms of reach and impact. Evidence is building to show that the scheme works as community health service intervention.

In the third year evaluation, the programme so far has:

- Reached approximately 778,000 people
- Been delivered in 98% in English library authorities
- Achieved a 286% increase in library loans of books on the dementia list
- Delivered significant user benefits, with 90% of users found the common mental health conditions booklist helpful or very helpful and 96% said the same of the dementia and young people's booklists

You can download the previous evaluations from our website:

- [Reading Well Books on Prescription Evaluation 2013-14](#)
- [Reading Well Books on Prescription Evaluation 2014-15](#)
- [Reading Well Books on Prescription Evaluation 2015-16](#)

## Clinical guidelines

The schemes all follow [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\) clinical guidelines](#).

## Creative and social reading evidence base

There is growing evidence shows that reading novels and poetry can reduce stress, and that social reading activity such as reading groups can promote wellbeing, combat isolation and bring people together in supportive communities. See [readingagency.org.uk/readingwell/evidencebase](http://readingagency.org.uk/readingwell/evidencebase)

# Partnerships

## Core partners

Reading Well Books on Prescription is delivered by The Reading Agency working in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians and delivered through English public libraries. It is funded by Arts Council England and the Wellcome Trust

## National health partners

The following health partners support the Reading Well:

- British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- The British Psychological Society
- Mental Health First Aid England

- Mind
- National Association of Primary Care
- NHS England (IAPT)
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- Royal College of Nursing
- Royal College of Psychiatrists

The dementia scheme is also supported by:

- Alzheimer's Society
- Carers UK
- Dementia UK
- Innovations in Dementia

Reading Well for young people is also supported by:

- The Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians
- NHS England (Children and Young People's Mental Health)
- Public Health England
- YoungMinds

Reading Well for long term conditions is also supported by:

- British Heart Foundation
- British Lung Foundation
- Carer's Trust
- Carer's UK
- Diabetes UK
- Health Education England
- The IBS Network
- The Mental Health Foundation
- Self Management UK
- The Stroke Association

## **Local partners**

Local partnerships include local authority public health departments, IAPT services, health libraries, hospitals, prisons, pharmacies and charities supporting older people, carers and people with experience of mental ill health.

Building local partnerships is a central to the success of local delivery of the Reading Well programme. Libraries can build partnerships with local authority public health departments, local primary care contacts, IAPT services, health sector libraries, hospitals, prisons, pharmacies, and local charities who are stakeholders in each of the booklists respectively (for example, the local Alzheimer's Society branch for Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia).

## **The shared model**

A shared national model is the most cost-effective way of working. Reading Well Books on Prescription saves costs for both libraries and commissioners. It delivers a low cost community service, providing health and wellbeing benefits to local people. The national cost average of the scheme is around £1 a person. It also raises the profile of public libraries' contribution to the health agenda and has brokered some important new national and local library partnerships.

Reading Well:

- Delivers economies of scale, resulting in high quality resources at lower cost
- Centralises administration and management, releasing capacity at the frontline and reducing local overheads
- Helps build the national evidence base, which in turn helps to secure national funding

## **Working with public health**

You will find it helpful to contact public health colleagues to discuss partnership opportunities linked to the local delivery of Reading Well Books on Prescription. They can help identify relevant prescribers, distribute materials to health professionals and advise on funding and commissioning opportunities. The best way to start is by contacting your local director of public health.

## **Local commissioning**

Active commissioning partnerships with library services are being developed. Around a third of library services have now been commissioned by local authority public health partners to deliver Reading Well. Interest is also developing among clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). You can download commissioning guides for each scheme here:

- [Common mental health conditions commissioning guidelines](#)
- [Dementia commissioning guidelines](#)
- [Young people commissioning guidelines](#)
- [Long term conditions commissioning guidelines](#)

# **Resources**

## **Core booklists**

The core booklists of titles are the main Reading Well resource. You can also access the format availability for each of the booklists, as well as an overview of each of the titles on the list.

Download the booklists here:

- [Common mental health conditions booklist](#)
- [Dementia booklist](#)
- [Young people booklist](#)
- [Long term conditions booklist](#)

## **Overview of the titles**

We have put together overviews of the titles for each scheme as a guide for librarians:



- [Overview of the common mental health conditions titles](#)
- [Overview of the dementia titles](#)
- [Overview of the young people's titles](#)
- [Overview of the long term conditions titles](#)

## Format availability

In order to make Reading Well Books on Prescription as accessible as possible, material is available in other formats including e-books and audio. Further information for format availability for the schemes can be found on a format spreadsheet; see:

- [Common mental health conditions format availability](#)
- [Dementia format availability](#)
- [Young people format availability](#)
- [Long term conditions format availability](#)

Reviews of books featured on the core booklists are available on the Reading Well website: [www.reading-well.org.uk/books](http://www.reading-well.org.uk/books)

The core reading lists are only available for use as part of the Reading Well schemes and when supported by its printed resources. Permission to use the core lists by organisations not subscribing to this scheme should be sought from The Reading Agency.

## User leaflets

The Reading Well Books on Prescriptions user leaflets are available in hard copy from [The Reading Agency shop](#).

They are essential to the delivery of the scheme. Evaluation shows that a large proportion of users self-refer to through the user leaflets showing that they are imperative to people coming to the library to use the scheme. The leaflets also contain essential signposting to further support and information. Library authorities are encouraged to accept the recommendation form (included in the leaflets) as sufficient evidence of identity to join the library.

You can also download interactive versions of the leaflet from the Reading Well website:

- [Reading Well for common mental health conditions user leaflet](#)
- [Reading Well for dementia user leaflet](#)
- [Reading Well for young people user leaflet](#)
- [Reading Well for long term conditions user leaflet](#)

## Supporting materials for promotion

There are other supporting materials available to purchase from the Reading Agency shop for each of the schemes. Overprinting is available on request and is priced per individual order.

- [Reading Well for common mental health conditions shop](#)
- [Reading Well for dementia shop](#)

- [Reading Well for young people shop](#)
- [Reading Well for long term conditions shop](#)

## Online health professional's toolkit

An [online prescriber toolkit](#) is available to help health professionals run the scheme. This includes the prescriber handbook, the core list overview document, digital versions of the leaflets and an online recommendation form.

## Websites

[The Reading Well website](#) includes helpful information about the Books on Prescription and Mood-boosting Books titles, as well as providing users the chance to rate and review them. It also includes a blog and supporting resources for the public, health professionals and libraries.

For more information about reading groups, see the [Reading Groups for Everyone website](#), which provides resources to help people find and join a reading group. It includes a database of local groups, including those targeted specifically at people with mental health conditions and dementia.

# Management of Reading Well Books on Prescription

## Central and local co-ordination

Working in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians through the Public Library Health Group. The Reading Agency manages the national development and delivery of Reading Well, acting as the central point of contact for national co-ordination and administration, advocacy and national partnerships.

The Public Library Health Group consists of senior library representatives from each of the English regions. The members of the group represent the views of local SCL and regional library authorities on the development and delivery of the scheme. Members of the group include:

<b>South West Region</b>	Martin Burton	South Gloucestershire Libraries	<a href="mailto:martin.burton@southglos.gov.uk">martin.burton@southglos.gov.uk</a>
<b>South East Region</b>	Craig Jones	Surrey Libraries	<a href="mailto:c.jones@surreycc.gov.uk">c.jones@surreycc.gov.uk</a>
<b>London</b>	Kate Pitman	Tower Hamlets	<a href="mailto:Kate.Pitman@towerhamlets.gov.uk">Kate.Pitman@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>
<b>London</b>	Daniel Waller	Hillingdon Libraries	<a href="mailto:dwaller@hillingdon.gov.uk">dwaller@hillingdon.gov.uk</a>
<b>West Midlands Region</b>	Sorrelle Clements	Coventry Libraries	<a href="mailto:sorrelle.clements@coventry.gov.uk">sorrelle.clements@coventry.gov.uk</a>
<b>East Midlands Region</b>	Tracy Beighton	Leicestershire Libraries	<a href="mailto:tracey.beighton@leics.gov.uk">tracey.beighton@leics.gov.uk</a>
<b>Eastern Region</b>	James Nicol	Cambridgeshire Libraries	<a href="mailto:james.nicol@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">james.nicol@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>

<b>Yorkshire and Humber Region</b>	Andy Wright	Wakefield Libraries	<a href="mailto:awright@wakefield.gov.uk">awright@wakefield.gov.uk</a>
<b>Yorkshire and Humber Region</b>	Jane Mellers	Kirklees Libraries	<a href="mailto:Jane.mellers@kirklees.gov.uk">Jane.mellers@kirklees.gov.uk</a>
<b>North West Region</b>	Julie Spencer	Bolton Libraries	<a href="mailto:Julie.spencer@bolton.gov.uk">Julie.spencer@bolton.gov.uk</a>
<b>North East Region</b>	Fiona Hill	Newcastle Libraries	<a href="mailto:fiona.hill@newcastle.gov.uk">fiona.hill@newcastle.gov.uk</a>
<b>North East Region</b>	Anne Archer	Newcastle Libraries	<a href="mailto:anne.archer@newcastle.gov.uk">anne.archer@newcastle.gov.uk</a>
	Elizabeth Elford	SCL	<a href="mailto:elizelford@gmail.com">elizelford@gmail.com</a>
	Sue Ball	ASCEL	<a href="mailto:sue.ball@staffordshire.gov.uk">sue.ball@staffordshire.gov.uk</a>

Public library authorities are the local co-ordinating agencies for the scheme. They manage local partnership development, advocacy, commissioning and fundraising. Public libraries also manage book stock and the distribution of print resources, and act as the contact point for enquiries from local GPs and other health professionals who wish to become involved as prescribers.

## **Guidelines for running the scheme**

The following delivery guidelines have been agreed by the Public Library Health Group as core requirements for delivery of the scheme by library services.

### **Designated responsibility**

There should be an identified member of staff in each authority with responsibility for managing the local delivery of Reading Well Books on Prescription. Please keep The Reading Agency and your regional Public Library Health Group representative informed of any contact detail changes to ensure receipt of regular information updates and involvement in consultation.

### **Book collections**

Full collections of Reading Well Books on Prescription titles should be available in every library in an authority. Some authorities have purchased collections for all library service points, including mobiles and prison libraries. This level of provision may not be possible for all authorities, but core list titles should be available through every library supported by the inter-library loan system.

Books must be available on open shelves for anyone to borrow.

Additional titles cannot be displayed as part of Reading Well collections if they are not part of the core booklists. This is to retain the integrity of the accredited list. Local collections and resources can be used to complement the scheme, but should not be displayed or branded as part of it.

### **Print materials**

Leaflets should be provided in sufficient quantities to ensure the effective delivery of the scheme and to support and inform the public and professionals. We can provide guidelines to help you estimate how much print material you may need, although we recognise that budget constraints are a real issue in this respect. We suggest the following core items be prioritised:

- The Reading Well Books on Prescription user leaflets. This ensures people are fully informed about how the scheme works and where to go for further support. These guides should be made available through libraries and partner agencies and prescribers.
- Posters. These can be helpful in raising awareness with the public and partners.

Resources cannot be amended, adapted or created without consent.

### **Health partnerships**

It is important to identify a network of appropriate health professionals able to recommend titles and to support people in understanding and managing their conditions. It may be a good idea to start with a small network of enthusiastic partners. Public health colleagues can help you build this network.

### **Concessions**

Most authorities are able to offer free reservations for Reading Well Books on Prescription titles plus easy library joining for people with recommendation forms signed by a health professional. These are important baseline concessions that all authorities should aim to deliver where possible. Extended loan periods and no overdue charges are also key targets for the scheme.

### **Reading Well Mood-boosting Books**

[Reading Well Mood-boosting Books](#) is an important strand of the Reading Well scheme and is signposted in both the user guide and guide for health professionals. Where possible, Mood-boosting Book collections should be available in libraries, and staff should be briefed on the links between Reading Well Mood-boosting Books and Reading Well Books on Prescription.

### **Reading groups**

Similarly, it is important to update local reading group data on the [national reading group database](#), and to inform library staff that the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme also recommends local reading group activity. There is evidence to show that social reading activity can help promote wellbeing. Reading groups are a source of enjoyment and can make people feel included and part of a supportive social network.

### **Branding**

Branding guidelines are available to support the marketing of and communications about the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme. These guidelines have been designed for use by libraries, publishers and partners. They include key messages, visual guidelines and information about the use of the logos of Reading Well Books on Prescription and its partners. Branding guidelines should be followed when promoting the scheme. There are individualized branding guidelines for each scheme:

- [Common mental health conditions](#)
- [Dementia](#)
- [Young people](#)

- [Long term conditions](#)

### **Distribution of materials**

Materials will be delivered to agreed central library contact points. Library authorities will be responsible for local distribution to health partners. Public Health colleagues may be able to help or even manage this distribution for libraries. While some material will be available in libraries, the intention is that much of it will be distributed by libraries to local health partners including GPs, community mental health nurses and local IAPT providers.

You can [download a template letter](#) to help you approach relevant health professionals with information about the scheme:

### **Community-managed libraries**

Community-managed libraries can deliver the scheme if they are able to do so within the guidelines outlined. They must:

- Contact their local library authority to explore ways they can work together to deliver the scheme (to obtain correct contact details please email [readingwell@readinagency.org.uk](mailto:readingwell@readinagency.org.uk)).
- Stock the full collection of titles in sufficient quantities to ensure adequate provision for the target audience
- Partner with appropriate health professionals who are able to recommend titles and support people in understanding and managing their conditions.
- Purchase appropriate quantities of the Reading Well user leaflet to ensure people are fully informed about the scheme and where to go for further support.

### **Health sector libraries**

NHS libraries are eligible to run the scheme as long as they meet delivery guidelines. You can download [FAQs for health sector libraries](#) about delivering the schemes.

### **School and college libraries**

School libraries are eligible to run the scheme as long as they meet delivery guidelines. They must follow the same delivery guidelines as community managed libraries and must also:

- Signpost students, teachers and pastoral care staff to local library services
- Signpost students to other health and wellbeing services provided in the school or college, such as counselling and school nurses, as well as other community mental health support for young people

## **Staff training**

### **Training options**

- An online training module: available on the SCL learning pool page, this online module provides frontline library staff with training to deliver Reading Well Books on Prescription adult mental

health and dementia schemes. It takes approximately 45 minutes to complete and staff receive accreditation upon completion.

- The ASCEL training module has a section on Reading Well for young people.
- Library staff may want to look locally for training opportunities around mental health and wellbeing to support their delivery of the schemes and the Universal Health Offer.

## **General guidelines for dealing with vulnerable people**

Library authorities are likely to have their own guidelines for dealing with vulnerable people. The following points may also be useful to consider:

- Public library staff are usually experts at dealing with the general public. Nevertheless it is important to make sure that all frontline staff are aware that people using the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme may require extra sensitivity, discretion and support.
- People using the scheme may find it difficult to approach staff for help, and they may also be lacking in concentration and confidence. It is important that they are supported as much as possible, that systems are clear and that confidentiality is guaranteed.
- If a book is not immediately available, a copy should be reserved and the customer informed of the expected date of availability. Reservations should be free of charge if possible.
- If the customer is not a library member, joining should be made simple. A form signed by a health professional and with the name and address of a customer should be sufficient ID to join.
- Library procedures should be explained and the loan period and renewal systems made clear.
- Some people may not wish to draw attention to the fact that they are borrowing a self-help book and may prefer to borrow the book without handing in the recommendation form.
- Staff should be made aware that they should not give an alternative book to someone who has had a specific title recommended by a health professional, but should instead reserve that title.

People borrowing Reading Well books may also be interested in other health and wellbeing services available in the library, such as information about local services relevant to their condition, Reading Well Mood-boosting Books and library based social and recreational activity such as reading groups. It will be helpful to draw attention to these services if at all possible.

## **Future plans and evaluation**

### **Evaluation**

[Evaluation of the scheme](#) usually takes place in the spring of each year, with reporting in the autumn. Evaluation will consist of:

- Analysis of annual book issues and publisher sales figures
- Library survey
- Prescriber survey
- User survey

### **Previous evaluations**

You can download previous evaluations of Reading Well from our website:

- [Reading Well evaluation 2013-14](#)
- [Reading Well evaluation 2014-15](#)
- [Reading Well evaluation 2015-16](#)
- [Reading Well evaluation 2016-17](#)

The University of Exeter are working with the Reading Agency and Library Authorities across England to [conduct an evaluation](#) of the scheme.

### **University of Westminster evaluation**

Researchers from the University of Westminster have carried out an [independent evaluation](#) of the impact of [Reading Well for young people](#), funded by [Wellcome](#). For the study, three sets of the book collection were brought into The Priory School, a secondary school in Hitchin. One set of the books was also given to Phase, a local charity working alongside young people to promote wellbeing.

[Read the University of Westminster evaluation here](#)

### **More information**

For any more information about the scheme, please contact [readingwell@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:readingwell@readingagency.org.uk) or call 02073242529.