The Reading Agency and Libraries Connected

Reading Well

Evaluation of Year 5 – 2017/18

October 2018

BOP Consulting
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Foreword

The Reading Well Books on Prescription programme has never been so relevant as the health of the nation becomes an increasing cause for concern. Prevalence rates are rising steeply, creating pressure on services as well as personal relationships, family life, economic prosperity and community cohesion. The health sector is creaking under the strain. Self-help, self-care and prevention are becoming increasingly embedded as policy priorities alongside the development of social prescribing frameworks which signpost to quality assured community interventions running alongside statutory support.

The fifth annual evaluation of Reading Well Books on Prescription makes clear that the programme has proven value in delivering better health outcomes, supporting health practitioners and helping people to help themselves. It does not solve the problem of current health challenges but it is part of the solution.

Reading Well, delivered through a partnership between The Reading Agency, Libraries Connected and local library services, with funding from Arts Council England and Wellcome, provides quality-assured reading available free from public libraries to help people understand and manage their health and wellbeing. This report shows it has helped almost a million people to support their mental health and wellbeing, live well with dementia and manage long term conditions, as well as help to position the public library health offer at the forefront of community health service delivery.

Whilst there is still work to be done to further engage health professionals and secure sustainable delivery models for public libraries, we are inspired by the work underway to build profile and increase reach and impact, as well as by the passion and commitment of public library services who are delivering the programme to local communities with local health partners. Key achievements of 2017/18 include:

Building health partnerships:

- Working closely with Public Health England and NHS England’s IAPT programme, alongside the Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of GPs and Royal College of Psychiatrists as well as other partners on the development of the new adult mental health list. See the full list of partners here: reading-well.org.uk/about

- Promoting the scheme to 2,000 UK GPs in both 2017 and 2018 at the Royal College of GPs conference and other key national primary care conferences

- Confirming a Libraries Connected/The Reading Agency partnership with Public Health England

- Being invited to become a formal partner with the Coalition for Collaborative Care, reflecting the work we have done to embed co-production in the development of Reading Well

- Developing a new partnership infrastructure and securing support from Welsh Government to support the launch of Reading Well in 100% of Welsh authorities in 2018/19

- Continuing to develop links with Health Education England both at a national and local level

Hosting events:

- Launching Reading Well for mental health nationally with speeches from a wide range of stakeholders including author Matt Haig and stakeholders from Arts Council England, Wellcome, Public Health England and the Coalition for Collaborative Care

- Hosting a panel at the London Creativity and Wellbeing Week promoting libraries, reading and wellbeing

Digital delivery:

- Expanding our communications reach by instituting fortnightly programme update newsletters to library staff sharing best practice, toolkits and other resources

- Developing the Reading Well website to make our online resources bank more accessible, increasing users on the site by 24%
• Launching our refreshed Reading Well for mental health booklist with 100% of the titles available for e-lending

We recognize there are continued financial pressures on public libraries, but are working hard on building sustainable delivery models and maximising impact through effective partnership working.

Reading Well provides the perfect example of integrated care, combining the management and development skills of The Reading Agency with the power and community reach of public libraries to deliver real health and wellbeing benefits to local communities. We look forward to seeing it continue to grow and develop over the next five years through local and national partners to build on the trusted programme we have created, delivering maximum value to the sector and continuing to champion the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Debbie Hicks, Creative Director, The Reading Agency
Julie Oldham, Libraries Connected
October 2018
Executive summary

This evaluation presents findings from the fifth year of the Reading Well Books on Prescription programme.

Launched in June 2013, Reading Well aims to support people in managing their mental health and wellbeing by providing access to accredited self-help reading through English public libraries.

It operates across four schemes:
- Reading Well for mental health
- Reading Well for dementia
- Reading Well for young people
- Reading Well for long term conditions

Policy context
- A shift in public health practice towards preventive care: prevention, or preventive care, is increasingly considered to be a necessary public health strategy to improve quality of life, reduce health inequalities and reduce avoidable demand on NHS services.
- Mental health programmes within the NHS, other nations and local authorities are prioritising prevention, access, integration and quality of care. 2018 saw the issue of UK’s first Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health, which commits to a prevention-focused approach to improving the public’s mental health.
- Aging well agenda is gaining momentum as evidence base improves: numerous recent research studies focusing on ‘the silver population’ are improving our understanding about wellbeing in later life, often exploring the causes, influencers and policy implications for supporting a healthy aging population.
- Social prescription as a means to deliver public health outcomes: recent programmes include Department of Health and Social Care’s Health and Wellbeing Fund which awarded funding to 23 social prescribing schemes in 2018.
- Other emerging cross-cutting health agendas include loneliness, arts and health, and health inequalities.

User reach and impact
- Book loans of titles included in the Reading Well booklists have been rising year on year since launch. Total book loans have exceeded 2 million between 2013 and 2018. In 2017/18, the estimated total of book loans for Reading Well across the English population is 360,496, showing an increase of 28,887 from 2016/17. Overall, our formula for calculating total user reach indicates around 931,000 individual users since 2013 (recognising multiple loans per person).
- Across all schemes, based on the user survey data we have received, respondents were mainly female and carers. Satisfaction has been high – 88% of participants across all schemes since we started collecting data reported that they found the book helpful or very helpful.
- Dementia scheme: considering all the user data we have received from the past three years, overall 95% of respondents had found the book helpful or very helpful. In 2017/18, 90% of users of the dementia scheme reported that it had increased their awareness of sources of help, 87% reported that it had helped them to understand more about dementia, 71% reported that it had helped them to care for someone with dementia, and 61% that it had supported them to cope better with the illness.
- Young people scheme: in 2016-2018, 90% would recommend the book they borrowed because it provided support in dealing with difficult feelings and experiences. 81% reported that it had provided advice for coping with pressures associated with mental health and wellbeing, 76% reported that it had provided useful information and advice and 70% reported that the book had helped to boost their confidence.
— Long term conditions: although only receiving a small sample of responses this year, preliminary evidence suggests high user satisfaction. All user respondents found that the book helped them to understand more about their conditions and that it improved their confidence in managing symptoms.

Health partners impact
— In general terms, health practitioners seemed to be aware of and use Reading Well, especially the common mental health and long term conditions schemes; they agreed that the schemes help people to understand more about their condition and feel more confident about self-managing their symptoms.
— However, the low number of survey responses suggests there is a need to further promote the scheme among the broad range of health practitioners for whom it is relevant.

Library service impact
— Sign-up to the programme is high: 98% of English library authorities run a Reading Well scheme.
— As reported in the previous year’s report, the most common active partnerships reported are with GPs. However, library services were increasingly diversifying the types of partners they work with.
— Libraries reported a strain on resources to engage with as many health partners as they would like. However, evidence also shows libraries are using online resources to do so. The programme guidelines targeted at public health commissioners were the most downloaded resources on the Reading Well website in 2017/18, with 3,735 downloads.
— According to library services, the most helpful aspects of the long term conditions scheme included provision of free and accessible information, raising awareness, representing a concrete alternative support for patients to use independently, and enabling partnerships with local institutions to offer more rounded support to patients.

Library case studies
As part of this year’s evaluation, we conducted case studies with four library services across England:
— With health and wellbeing increasingly visible on local governments’ agenda and remit, the Reading Well programme has allowed library services to demonstrate in a concrete way how they are contributing to local authority targets.
— The fact that Reading Well is an expert endorsed programme gives library services the confidence to engage health professionals and users.
— Reading Well complements library services offers, enriching user experiences. It serves as an effective community resource that enriches participants’ experience, as well as serving as a follow up tool for further interest.
— In line with the library survey findings, engagement and raising awareness among health professionals has been a challenge. Limited resources within the library services also restrict the amount of outreach activities library services can do.

Conclusion
Five years since the launch of the programme, Reading Well Books on Prescription has a lot to celebrate. With the shift in health policy towards prevention, Reading Well’s influence as an exemplar community reading and health initiative will continue to amplify.

Our analysis reveals consistent and high-level user satisfaction. We have also started to establish user profiles and patterns which will help Reading Well to widen its communications reach.

Although engagement with public health professionals continues to be a challenge, libraries are starting to develop connections with partners in the health sector and beyond. However, there is a continuing need for additional financial support for these activities from local and national sources.
Our work this year in re-approaching the programme logic model indicated the potential for Reading Well to be aligned more closely with other Reading Agency programmes (e.g. Reading Friends) in recognition of the potential for social outcomes to be better achieved and for social interventions to aid in supporting mental health issues.

**Recommendations**

— Library services have suggested they would benefit from greater support in advocacy for the scheme at a national level, particularly among health partners. The Reading Agency and Libraries Connected may wish to consider how this can be developed further, including innovative approaches to engaging with health agencies and practitioners.

— Wherever possible, attempts to attract funding for libraries to deliver the programme and have more time and resources to broaden their reach to local health partners should be encouraged. This could be pursued at national, regional or local levels, with responsibilities shared across all organisations supporting the Reading Well programme.

— Case studies suggest emerging library partnerships with local creative organisations to achieve social impact (e.g. poetry sessions, reminiscence sessions). As identified in the updated logic model, the Reading Well programme has an aspiration to improve the social connections of users, which is not currently captured in the programme design. A useful focus for next year would be to encourage interesting new partnerships that can increase social opportunities for users of the Reading Well programme.
1. Introduction

This evaluation presents findings from the fifth year of the Reading Well Books on Prescription programme with data relating to activities taking place between April 2017 and March 2018.

Launched in June 2013, Reading Well aims to support people in managing their health and wellbeing by providing access to accredited self-help reading via English public libraries. It is a core component of the Public Library Universal Health Offer, a strategy focusing on the public library contribution to the positive health and wellbeing of communities. The programme is delivered by The Reading Agency, in partnership with Libraries Connected, with funding from Arts Council England and the Wellcome Trust.

The programme operates on both a referral and self-referral model. It seeks to establish local partnerships between health, social care providers and libraries to signpost individuals to library services and recommend books from the accredited reading lists. Users and library members can also self-refer to the programme, either signposted by publicity material in the community, media coverage of the programme, or through library promotion of the schemes. The books are available on the open shelves of participating libraries for anyone to borrow.

The programme currently consists of four schemes, one of which was relaunched this year:

2013: launch of Reading Well for common mental health conditions
2015: launch of Reading Well for dementia
2016: launch of third booklist for young people’s mental health and wellbeing, while continuing to deliver the previous two schemes
2017: launch of the fourth booklist for people with long term conditions and their carers, while continuing to deliver the three other schemes
2018: re-launch of a refreshed booklist for adult mental health and continuation of the other three schemes

Methodology

This report presents data and findings from a range of sources, seeking to establish the ongoing impact of the programme, as well as how it can best be developed to achieve greater impact in the future. The main data sources for this year have been:

- Surveys with users, health professionals (prescribers) and library staff
- Analysis of book loans data
- In-depth case studies with four library services

All surveys with each stakeholder group were conducted between June and September 2018 (requesting data for the previous financial year). The user data was gathered through short surveys for the long term conditions, dementia, and young people schemes, which were printed on postcards that could be returned to The Reading Agency by freepost. The postcards were distributed in libraries and the surveys were made available online. Data from survey postcards received over the last three years of the programme is also shared in certain sections of the report to explore impact from a larger sample than is typically returned on a yearly basis.

The report has four main sections:

- a rapid policy review exploring where the Reading Well model fits within current health policy and research;
- user reach and impact, which explores the overall reach of the programme and self-reported impact from users from each scheme separately;
- prescriber and health partner impact, which explores the main benefits and challenges experienced by those engaging in the programme as ‘prescribers’ and referers;
- library service impact, which explores the perspectives of participating library authorities.

The final section of the report presents conclusions and recommendations to develop the programme in its next phase.
We are grateful for the research support from all participating library services to feedback and circulate user surveys; British Library for sharing Public Lending Right (PLR) data; as well as the four case study libraries: Coventry Libraries, Kirklees Libraries, Lewisham Libraries and North Somerset Libraries.
2. Review on policy context

The context of health care in the UK continues to change rapidly. An ageing population and increasing levels of mental health morbidity within the population has increased the demand for health and social care services. Economically, government austerity measures following the global financial crisis means the NHS, local governments and other health service providers are operating in a more strenuous, resource-restricted environment. Alongside this, increased devolution to regions, nations and local governments increases the need for a more targeted, personalised healthcare offer to individuals.

It is against this backdrop that the Reading Well programme was conceived. As part of the Universal Health Offer developed by Libraries Connected (formerly called Society of Chief Librarians) and The Reading Agency, Reading Well combines the strong evidence base around the impact of self-help reading on mental health conditions with a social prescribing model. The programme offers patients and carers booklists endorsed by health experts and made available in public libraries. The scheme is co-produced with people with lived experience of the conditions covered, to ensure service user engagement throughout.

A shift in public health practice towards preventive care

There is a growing consensus that lifestyle has a deterministic influence on an individual’s health and wellbeing. Prevention or preventive care is therefore considered to be a necessary public health strategy to improve quality of life, reduce health inequalities and reduce avoidable demand on NHS services.

In 2016/17, the Conservative Government issued the mandate for the NHS which set out seven enduring objectives to 2020. One of the objectives is to ‘Lead a step change in the NHS in preventing ill health and supporting people to live healthier lives’.1 For the first time, the objectives in the 2016-17 mandate were underpinned by specific annual deliverables. The focus on prevention is also reflected in the NHS’s Five-Year Forward View for Mental Health, which called for better integration of GP, community health, mental health and hospital services, as well as more joined up working with home care and care homes.2

Mental health programmes prioritising prevention, access, integration and quality of care

In 2016, the independent Mental Health Taskforce commissioned by NHS England articulated a clear need for prevention and early intervention, with recommendations such as prioritising children and young people and the development of local Mental Health Prevention Plans3. The report’s recommendations were accepted by the Government and set the priorities for NHS England. In 2017, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education held a public consultation on the green paper Transforming children and young people’s mental health provision, which laid out a proposal that focuses on earlier intervention and prevention, especially in and linked to schools and colleges.4

As mental health is a devolved policy area, other nations and local authorities are also acting on this agenda. The Scottish Government’s Health Literacy Action Plan 2017-2025 highlights the role of library services in improving health literacy in policy and practice, such as through developing digital tools to support the shared decision-making interaction between people and their health practitioners.5

2018 saw the issue of the UK’s first Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health. Co-produced by 13 public health organisations, endorsed by 7 statutory organisations and professional bodies and signed by five local authorities, the Concordat commits to a prevention-focused approach to improving the public’s mental health.6

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1 NHS mandate 2018 to 2019
2 NHS Five-Year Forward View 2014/15
3 The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health. A report from the independent Mental Health Taskforce to the NHS in England, February 2016
4 Transforming children and young people’s mental health provision: a green paper. December 2017
6 Prevention concordat for better mental health. 15 June 2018
Aging well agenda gains momentum as evidence base improves

The UK is facing an aging demographic. Numerous recent research studies focusing on elderly wellbeing are improving our understanding about wellbeing in later life, often exploring the causes, influencers and policy implications for supporting a healthy aging population.

Healthy aging is one of the three priorities advocated by the Centre for Aging Better to the Government, alongside age-friendly places and an age-friendly economy. Its recent evidence review *Inequalities in Later Life* illustrates the differences in people’s experiences of later life in terms of health and social connections.7

Age UK’s Index of Wellbeing in Later Life, released in 2017, analysed a large sample from the Understanding of Society Survey data and identified four key factors of wellbeing in later life: participation in enjoyable, meaningful activities, physical activity, support for older people, and positive social interactions8. Its *Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life* report shed further light on the relationship with cultural participation and wellbeing. Interestingly, library use and reading played a much more important role in the cultural participation of elderly people who are in the bottom quintile of the wellbeing index than those in the top quintile9. This implies that Reading Well could potentially achieve further positive impacts for this group.

Social prescribing as a means to deliver public health outcomes

With the increased demand on NHS services and the recognition that health is affected by a range of social, economic and environmental factors, governments and public health providers are providing more support to social prescribing programmes.

Nearly half of all clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) across England are investing in social prescribing programmes. The General Practice Forward View highlighted its commitment to extending social prescribing as key to personalising care to the needs of the individual.

In August 2018, the Department of Health and Social Care announced funding awards to 23 social prescribing schemes through its Health and Wellbeing Fund, which is part of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) Health and Wellbeing Programme.

NHS England is taking a leading role in improving the uptake and effectiveness of social prescribing. Planned actions in the next twelve months (2018-19) include commissioning one-stop social prescribing connector schemes in local areas through CCGs; the development of a quality framework of social prescribing; setting up regional learning networks and collaboration with Healthy London Partnership to learn best practices.

Multi-disciplinary partnerships are also becoming more prolific. There are currently eight regional Social Prescribing Networks10 across the country, as well as a network in Ireland. These networks engage health professionals, researchers, social prescribing practitioners, community and voluntary sector organisations, commissioners and patients to share knowledge and support social prescribing at local and national levels.

**Other cross-cutting health agendas**

**Loneliness**

— The prime minister launched a strategy on tackling loneliness in 2018, taking on one of the recommendations by the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness11.

— In 2018, ONS released an analysis of the characteristics and circumstances associated with loneliness in England using the Community Life Survey.

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7 *Inequalities in later life*, Centre for Aging Better, December 2017
8 *Index of Wellbeing in Later Life*, Age UK, February 2017
9 *Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life*, Age UK, April 2018
10 https://www.socialprescribingnetwork.com/
11 *Combatting loneliness one conversation at a time: a call to action*, Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness
2016 to 2017. The analysis revealed that people in poor health, those with long term conditions, young adults (aged 16-24) and people who feel a low sense of belonging or trust in their neighbourhood are more likely to feel lonely.

**Arts and health**

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing’s inquiry report *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* presented findings from a two-year research project, evidence-gathering and consultation which looked at practice and research in the arts and health and social care, and made recommendations to improve policy and practice. The report discussed how art forms part of social prescribing and commended the role of museums and libraries in increasing community wellbeing (quoting an example of Healthy Libraries in Norfolk). The report also recommended that NHS England and the Social Prescribing Network support clinical commissioning groups, NHS provider trusts and local authorities to incorporate arts on prescription into their commissioning plans and to redesign care pathways where appropriate.

Arts Council of Wales’ *Arts and Health: Mapping Report* surveyed and gathered good practice examples to review the relationship between arts and health. The report urges that arts should be a core component of social prescribing schemes across Wales. It also calls for stronger collaboration across different organisations including public health sector and local governments.

Research carried out by Aesop and BOP Consulting discussed ‘Active Ingredients’, a framework that seeks to explain the positive impact of the arts on health and wellbeing. It identified social interaction, curiosity, experimentation and expression as the ‘active ingredients’ that lie behind such outcomes.

**Health inequalities**

The Mayor of London’s *Health Inequality Strategy* in 2017 outlined five key aims to tackle inequalities and achieve the Mayor’s vision in London over the next ten years: healthy children, healthy minds, healthy places, healthy communities and healthy living. Actions within this strategy include supporting the most disadvantaged Londoners to benefit from social prescribing to improve their health and wellbeing.

Recognising ethnicity as a single independent factor on health outcomes, in 2018 Public Health England, in collaboration with the Institute of Health Equity and the University of Sheffield, produced the first national resource to help public health professionals, commissioners and local decision-makers engage in action to reduce ethnic inequalities.

The above overview outlined the key trends and context of the health sector over the past three years. The increased focuses on preventive care, mental health and the aging population offer great potential to position the Reading Well programme alongside agendas that are being promoted at national and local levels. The trends described in this section also indicate a central role for libraries which increasingly position themselves as ‘community hubs’, and have an important role to play in addressing loneliness and health inequalities issues.

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12 Loneliness - What characteristics and circumstances are associated with feeling lonely? ONS 10 April 2018
13 Arts and Health Mapping Report, Arts Council of Wales, January 2018
14 Active Ingredients, Aesop and BOP Consulting, September 2018
15 Health Inequalities Strategy, Mayor of London, 2017
16 Local action on health inequalities: understanding and reducing ethnic inequalities in health, Public Health England, August 2018
3. Reading Well programme logic model

In April 2018, BOP facilitated a workshop with the Reading Well team and the Libraries Connected Public Library Health Group with an aim to co-produce a logic model for the Reading Well programme.

As the Reading Well programme continues to expand and mature, the logic model aims to outline the inputs, outputs and the logical steps to achieve the intended impacts of the programme. Figure 1 shows how the various elements fit together (i.e. how inputs link to outputs and how these correspond to outcomes and impact). The following page summarises how we used this logic to devise an evaluation framework and methodology for the current report.

While Reading Well’s most direct offer is the curation and provision of booklists, through these core activities Reading Well is also engaging public health professionals and enriching public libraries' health and wellbeing stock and offers.

We recognise that Reading Well may not yet be fully capturing the proposed outputs, and that current evidence around some outcomes are weaker. For instance, we see outcome 2 around social connections as an aspirational outcome which future Reading Well evaluation can explore in more detail.
Figure 1 Logic model for Reading Well programme

**Inputs**
- Funding from ACE, Libraries Connected and Wellcome
- In-kind resources from Libraries Connected and partners
- The Reading Agency staff and board time and resources
- Local libraries’ staff time and resources

**Activities**
- **Access to health information:** provision of health professional endorsed book lists / books relating to specific conditions and illness, freely available at public libraries
- **Public health sector engagement:** engage and develop partnerships with local public health professionals and organisations
- **Enrich public libraries’ core offer:** complement or support public libraries health and wellbeing stock and other activities e.g. home libraries

**Outputs**
- **Each financial year:**
  - No. of book loans
  - No. of new public library visitors introduced through the Reading Well programme
  - No. of health partners involved
  - No. of library partners using the scheme
  - No. of public libraries joining the programme
  - Amount of external funding public libraries received to fund the programme
  - No. of public libraries / public health activities Reading Well is being promoted in

**Outcomes**
1. Patients (and carers) become ‘expert patients’ - well-informed and confident in managing their conditions
2. Patients and carers improve their social connections through regular visits to libraries / being visited by home libraries
3. Libraries seen as trusted partner in contributing to community health and wellbeing by public health sector
4. Libraries are a hub where the public access trusted information about their own conditions and general wellbeing

**Impact**
- Quality of public health services improved through strong partnerships with libraries, enriched non-clinical resources and shared-decision making with expert patients
- Community health and wellbeing is improved through better access to health information and empowered patients / carers

**Target groups**
- Dementia patients and carers
- Young people with mental illness and their carers
- Long term conditions patients and carers
- Mental illness patients / at-risk patients and carers
4. User impact and reach

4.1 User reach

For the purpose of this evaluation, we were supplied with Public Lending Right (PLR) data from the British Library who collect data measuring the extent to which books are loaned through the public library system to establish payment terms for authors.

The PLR statistics in Table 1 presents the data collected from a sample of library authorities in England. It indicates a decline in the frequency of loans for the common mental health conditions and dementia schemes, but a dramatic increase in loans for the young people scheme (as may be expected given it was launched in 2017). These findings replicate those in previous evaluations, which have shown a ‘tapering off’ of loans across schemes as new lists and focus areas are introduced, with associated promotional activity.

Table 1: PLR Loans Data from sampled library authorities, 2015-18 and % change

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>% change 2015-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult mental health</td>
<td>35,884</td>
<td>29,959</td>
<td>21,496</td>
<td>-40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>23,356</td>
<td>18,103</td>
<td>11,007</td>
<td>-53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>9522</td>
<td>24,003</td>
<td>19,996</td>
<td>110%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term conditions</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>24,003</td>
<td>19,996</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68,762</td>
<td>72,065</td>
<td>66,814</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Courtesy of PLR, 2018.

When aggregating the sample figures across all English authorities (based on proportion of book issues per total population) we can see that there has been an overall increase in total loans from 331,609 in 2016/17 to 360,496 in 2017/18 (Table 2).

In order to convert this into a total user number, we use the borrowers to issues ratio from each scheme (based on Libraries West) and apply it across the total population. This suggests a total reach in 2017/18 of 153,059 users. When added to the reach numbers since the programme was launched, this implies a total reach of 931,019 since 2013.

Table 2: Book loans, 2015-18 and % change

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>% change (since schemes were launched)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult mental health</td>
<td>123,921</td>
<td>127,117</td>
<td>115,982</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>93,502</td>
<td>77,375</td>
<td>59,388</td>
<td>-36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>127,117</td>
<td>107,889</td>
<td>-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term conditions</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>77,237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>217,423</td>
<td>331,609</td>
<td>360,496</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Reading Well data is currently only showing public library usage and not uptake in schools, colleges and Higher Education England (HEE) libraries, for

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17 We are grateful for them providing the data free of charge

18 We recognise the limitations of using just one region’s borrower to loans ratio but have used this in the interests of pragmatism and comparability since the scheme was launched.
the young people scheme. This is a gap in the data that we are currently working to fill by setting up an alternative data collection methodology.

4.2 User profile and overall impact

In 2017/18 (Year 5), the total number of postcards collected for impact survey of the programme on users was 84. This sample was 69 for Year 4, 115 for Year 3 and 160 for Year 2. Table 3 shows the total number of survey postcards collected across all schemes from the beginning of the programme. Due to these small sample sizes we have analysed user data since the beginning of the programme to assess the overall impact of the programme.

Table 3: Number of postcards collected for user impact survey across scheme, 2014-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y2</th>
<th>Y3</th>
<th>Y4</th>
<th>Y5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term conditions</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common mental health conditions</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Before introducing the analysis on individual schemes, we provide a brief overview of the user profile and impact of all the schemes across the years. This sample includes data from 428 users.

User profiles have remained consistent over the years. Data from 2014-18 suggested that 74% of the Reading Well users responding to user surveys were female, and 26% were male. 87% of the respondents were White.

The main user group who have responded to surveys were carers. 44% of the respondents identified themselves in the survey as relatives or carers of people that are experiencing the conditions that the books deal with, and 32% described themselves as “Someone with symptoms”. Among the rest (24%) were friends, colleagues with conditions or symptoms, or people who wanted to know more about the topic of the book. The larger proportion of responses from carers rather than people experiencing symptoms is perhaps to be expected considering the cognitive impairment of users with dementia, for example. We continue to recommend that alternative evaluation methods are considered to engage with a full and representative range of user groups.

Figure 2 Users’ profile, 2014-2018, (n=250)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A relative or a carer</th>
<th>Someone with symptoms</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Between 2014 and 2018, the large majority of users across all schemes accessed the books through self-referral (82%) rather than through a recommendation from a health professional (18%). Figure 3 shows a slight
downward trend on the number of people receiving recommendations from a health professional for a Reading Well book over the four years. This may signal an increase in libraries supporting users more directly and the effectiveness of the scheme as a self-referral mechanism. On the other hand, this also reveals the need for a renewed commitment from the health sector to the scheme as part of their social prescribing offer, as it is clearly a downward trend compared to earlier years.

Figure 3 Answers to ‘Was this book recommended to you by a health professional, e.g. GP or therapist?’, 2014-2018, (n=426)

Across all years, satisfaction with the books had been high. In general, respondents to the survey said that they had found the book helpful or very helpful (88%). Users tended to read the entire book (73%) rather than focusing on the relevant sections of it. These numbers tend to be stable across all years of the programme.

Figure 4 Answers to ‘How helpful did you find it?’ , All schemes, 2014-2018, (n=426)
4.3 User impact

4.3.1 Dementia

Thanks to the data collected in previous years’ evaluations, it has been possible to integrate this year’s analysis with a longer-term analysis of the data collected between Year 2 and Year 5 (n=169).

In Year 5 we received a relatively low response rate from users of the dementia scheme (n=31). 70% were relatives, friends or carers of someone who has dementia, 3 respondents were individuals with dementia, and the remaining 20% classified themselves as ‘other’ – people with early symptoms, people who are aging or who want to be aware of the issues.

Consistent with the general user profile and pattern of Reading Well, the majority of respondents were female (80%). 48% were aged 45-64, 29% were aged 65-74, and 19% were aged over 74. 16% of users (5) were referred to the programme by a health professional, whereas 84% were not. Only one respondent became a member of their local library authority in order to borrow the Reading Well book. 67% read the entire book and 33% only read the relevant sections.

All users (100%) found the book helpful (39%) or very helpful (61%), which is consistent with previous years’ evaluation.

This profile reflects the results observed in the previous years of the evaluation.

In 2017/18, 90% of the dementia scheme users reported that the book had increased their awareness of sources of help, 87% reported that it had helped them to understand more about dementia, 71% reported that it had helped them to care for someone with dementia, and 61% that it had supported them cope better with the illness.

These are broadly in line with or slightly more positive than the user data collected across the four years of the evaluation, as shown in Figure 5.

Considering all the user data from the past three years, overall 95% of respondents had found the book helpful or very helpful.
4.3.2 Young people

As with the other schemes, the number of users of the scheme returning postcards was quite low (n=36). However, this does reflect a slight increase from the postcards collected in Year 4 (n=22), and it is in line with the quantity of feedback collected across the other schemes.

Of those returning feedback postcards 76% were female and 24% male. Most of the survey participants were White (69%). 56% (20 respondents) of the respondents were aged 18+, 11% aged 13-16, 11% under 13, and 11% were aged 16-18.

Users for the young people scheme indicate a different pattern in accessing the books. One respondent was referred to the programme by a health professional; the rest were recommended by family or friends (21%) or librarians (17%). However, for 54% the decision to read the book was not influenced by anybody.

Most of those responding to the survey were already a member of the library and 3 users became a member of the library to borrow books.

Although these findings are based on a relatively small sample (n=36), these statistics are in line with the user profile identified last year. Further research would be required to explore engagement and impact of the scheme in greater depth.

4.3.3 Long term conditions

Reading Well for long term conditions is Reading Well’s latest scheme launched in 2017/18. We received 17 user responses to the survey. Due to the low sample size the below analysis should be treated only as indicative evidence of
impact. We expect the quality of the data to improve as the scheme matures and the user sample increases.

Consistent with the general user profile, users of the scheme were mainly female. However, 41% indicated that the book was recommended by a health professional – a much higher percentage than that of the overall programme (15%). They were also more likely to be someone experiencing long term conditions (80%) rather than a carer. This preliminary evidence supports the important role of health professionals in influencing uptake of the scheme by their patients, and the potential of the long term conditions scheme specifically for health sector engagement.

**Figure 7  Answers to ‘Did the book…’ Year 5 (n=17)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help you understand more about your condition</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make you more confident about managing your symptoms</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help you symptoms reduce/get better</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help you to care for someone with the condition</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


User satisfaction of the scheme was high. All survey respondents found the book helpful or very helpful. Figure 7 further suggests that the scheme had helped users mainly through improving their understanding of the conditions (100%) and confidence in managing symptoms (94%).
5. Health partners’ impact

Given the relatively low number of responses collected among health professionals (n=11) in 2017/18, we have combined the data with previous years’ surveys in order to generate some insights about the overall impact of the programme.

Figure 8 Answers to ‘Which Reading Well Books on Prescription schemes have you used?’ Years 2 to 5 (N=244)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long term conditions</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common mental health conditions</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BOP Consulting, 2018

In general terms, health practitioners seemed to be more aware and likely to use the common mental health and long term conditions schemes. Between 2014 and 2018, over half of the health professionals reported using the common mental health conditions scheme, perhaps explained by its longer history. The recent long term conditions scheme had also been used by 36% of health professionals, potentially also indicative of the higher number of responses last year, when the scheme was launched.

The analysis presented in this section combines health practitioners survey responses between 2014 and 2018. Questions around impact and usage focused on different schemes in different years. Whilst the analysis relates to the impact of the overall programme, the results are naturally biased towards the common mental health scheme, due to the larger sample size from previous years’ surveys.

Figure 9 Answers to ‘How have you used the scheme?’ Years 2 to 5, (n=244)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For general information and advice</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As part of a supported treatment programme</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As support post-treatment</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support a patient while on a waiting list</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a targeted and one-off self-help intervention</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support a carer/family member</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BOP Consulting, 2018

Health practitioners mainly used the Reading Well programme for general information and advice (57%), as well as part of a supported treatment programme (47%). Only 27% of health professionals reported using the scheme to support a carer/family member. However, given that the main user group of Reading Well is carers (as shown in the above user analysis), The Reading Agency may wish to consider how the programme can be promoted to health professionals as providing support to families and carers, as well as patients.

20 The analysis presented in this section combines health practitioners survey responses between 2014 and 2018. Questions around impact and usage focused on different schemes in different years. Whilst the analysis relates to the impact of the overall programme, the results are naturally biased towards the common mental health scheme, due to the larger sample size from previous years’ surveys.
Almost 90% of health practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that the schemes had helped people understand more about their condition, as well as feel more confident about self-managing their symptoms (80%). This view also supports users’ self-reported impact. The perceived impact was less strong in relation to reducing patients’ symptoms and supporting carers. However, there may be scope for health partners to promote the scheme further among this latter group.

The strongest impact of the programme on health practitioners was at the practical level; it diversified the resources they could offer and allowed health practitioners to support patients outside of formal consultation time. Reading Well also improved health practitioners’ awareness about the services available in libraries. This provides some indicative evidence to support the programme outcomes around developing trusted relationships between libraries and health practitioners.

The positive responses from the health practitioners are encouraging; however, the low survey response this year also indicates that general awareness of the programme could be improved. When asked how libraries can best promote the schemes among healthcare practitioners, health practitioners suggested that the programme needs more publicity and stronger links across local authority departments. In order to do this, people suggested targeting GP Practice Managers, or liaising with health professionals using social media.
6. Library service impact

As with previous evaluations, we also asked library authorities what they thought about the programme and its local impact. We received 49 responses to the library surveys. Although the sample is lower than Year 4 (n=84), it remains representative of libraries overall.

6.1 Programme distribution

98% of authorities run at least one Reading Well scheme. 95% of authorities are running the common mental health conditions scheme or the young people scheme; 93% run the dementia scheme and 87% run the long term conditions scheme. 21

The scheme has a strong presence in the libraries of the various local authorities. The percentages shown in Figure 12 largely reflect the data collected last year (Y4), showing that the schemes continued to be well distributed across libraries in the various local authorities. Furthermore, when asked about availability and distribution within their local authority, libraries underlined that Reading Well titles might not be on the shelves of every library, but in most cases they were all accessible via free requests or through online platforms such as digital books. In rare cases, the books also appeared to be available in sites managed by external partners, such as cafes, schools and community centres. This emerging ‘extended’ offer has also been reported by the case studies undertaken in this research.

6.2 Partnerships with health professionals

As reported in the previous year’s report, the data showed that across all schemes the most common active partnerships reported were with GPs. For the common mental health conditions scheme a large proportion of libraries reported partnerships with IAPT services (55%). For the dementia scheme a considerable number of libraries (49%) reported partnerships with memory clinics (49%) and care homes (37%). For the new long term conditions scheme, partnerships were still created mostly with GPs (56%) and, to a lesser extent, with nurses and nurse practitioners (18%). Even though the partnerships with GPs are still the most common, library services are increasingly diversifying the types of partners they work with.

Figure 12 Answers to “To what degree is book stock available across the schemes”, Year 5 (n=49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>In every library in the authority</th>
<th>In most of our libraries (more than half)</th>
<th>In some of our libraries (less than half)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMHC</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term conditions</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


21 The Reading Agency’s monitoring data
Figure 13 Top 3 most common active partnerships with the health sector in each Local Authority, by programme scheme, Year 4 and 5

PANEL A: Common mental health conditions scheme (n=45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPs</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAPT services</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health nurses</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PANEL B: Dementia scheme (n=43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPs</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory clinics/memory service providers</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care homes</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PANEL C: Young people scheme (n=44)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPs</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School nurses</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAPT services</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PANEL D: Long term conditions scheme (n=45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPs</td>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses and nurse practitioners</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care assistants</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3 Funding

Figure 14 Answers to “Have you received any funding to support the Reading Well for long term conditions scheme?”, Year 5 (n=37)

The clear majority of libraries (84%) had not sought further funding for the promotion of the long term conditions scheme, which corresponds with last years’ results relating to the young people scheme.

Among the libraries who had received a source of funding to support the programme (4) the lowest amount declared was £1,500, and the highest is £20,000. Among the respondents, most of the libraries seemed to receive their funding from the Local Public Health services or from Clinical Commissioning Groups. Case study data also revealed that some public libraries receive in-kind support, for activities such as event hosting or material printing.

Figure 15 If you have purchased leaflets to promote the Reading Well for long term conditions scheme please indicate where you have distributed these”, Year 5 (n=37)

6.4 Programme impact: focus on long term conditions scheme

What do you think are the three main ways the scheme is helpful to people with long term conditions in the community?

When asked to reflect how the long term conditions’ scheme is most helpful the main responses related to various areas. Participants underlined that the programme:

— Offers free and easily accessible information
— Allows anonymity
— Represents a concrete additional support that patients can use during their treatment in an independent way, with an alternative format
— Raises awareness on the matter
— Enables library services to partner up with local institutions in order to offer more rounded support to patients

It is an overwhelming experience to be diagnosed with a condition - often too much to take in at the time. Having information afterwards is helpful & the reader can pace how they receive the info. Info is relevant & up to date. This saves time in finding out about their condition without having to scour the internet. Reading Well is discreet, informative & available, especially in our main branches. Customers do not need to speak to staff to access these books and the information available to them.

The scheme has allowed us to increase work with local community partners & services, so customers can get access to a better range of support if needed

How do you think the scheme could be improved to engage more people with long term conditions who would benefit from it?

Libraries suggested three main ways in which people with long term conditions could further benefit from the programme:

— Firstly, suggestions on the collection per-se: request for more large print books, audio items and books for carers/friends/family support to be included in the collection. The Reading Agency is already starting to include more of these formats.
— Secondly, engagement with partners and other institutions, both at a local and national level, should be promoted and encouraged. This will create links across institutions and strengthen the support net around individuals and the community.
— Thirdly, the scheme should continue and extend the amount of publicity activities it is already involved in, to increase awareness around the offer, possibly with the use of social media and a greater focus on digital promotion.

Can you recommend any further ways you could be supported to run the scheme?

Libraries highlighted that creating stable connections with local health partners represents one of the biggest barriers to successfully running the scheme. Feedback revealed a certain level of lack of confidence in approaching potential partners. Libraries felt they “don’t speak the same language” of the health sector, and that they would need support in understanding how to create connections with potential partners.

We need help in contacting/setting up links with GPs and other local health partners, so that we can confidently approach them - we find it hard to gain support from more private/independent services as we don’t have enough evaluative data on our own to
prove why they should direct people to the scheme, the library and library activities.

This finding suggests an emerging need for additional resources for libraries to support their journey in creating links with potential partners, starting from the body of evidence already existing.

“Training - partnership engagement, funding applications; successful case studies all in one place, so that best practice can be shared.”
7. Library case studies

As part of this research, we conducted case studies with four library services across England to learn in-depth how the Reading Well programme has been supporting the library services’ work. We also looked at how the library services have been working to promote the Reading Well programme. We were particularly interested to learn about the ways in which Reading Well has helped to develop partnerships and enrich the library offer.

The case study research was conducted between August and September 2018. In addition to interviews with library staff, our researchers also interviewed library partners to seek their perspectives. See appendix section 9.5 for the full list of consultees.

Reading Well supports local library services in delivering local authority priorities

With health and wellbeing increasingly visible on the local government agenda and remit, the Reading Well programme has allowed library services to demonstrate in a concrete way how they are contributing to the council’s targets. Moreover, the Reading Well programme could build bridges with other departments within the council, as it reaches a diverse group of residents who are also being targeted by other departments.

One of the three big strands of the Council priorities is ‘Health and Wellbeing’. Being able to show we’re delivering to the Council’s priorities and showing other departments that we can help them hit their targets, for example through reaching out to specific groups, is good. It gives us a strong reason to continue to deliver the scheme.

As an expert endorsed programme, Reading Well gives library services the confidence to engage health professionals and users

The fact that health professionals recognise Reading Well booklists is iterated throughout the case studies as the key ‘confidence factor’. It provides the right language to initiate conversations with health professionals and gives librarians the confidence to make book recommendations to library visitors or other people across their outreach activities.

“The Reading Well Collection has given us the opportunity to link with health services in our city… We went to a music festival here in Coventry, we had a stand and talked to people about the programme. The fact that the scheme has been selected and endorsed by specialists gives us the confidence to recommend these books when people need.”

“The health and wellbeing of residents is a priority of the council and we have a duty to support wherever we can. The fact that Reading Well is providing booklists and promoting books that are approved by health professionals is really good, because we’re not health experts. We need that sort of input.”

Reading Well complements library service offers, enriching user/participant experiences

All of the library services interviewed were active in promoting health and wellbeing through various activities. These include health lectures, promotional events at conferences and campaign days, care home visits and partnerships with health organisations. Reading Well serves as a strong complementary resource that enriches participants’ experience, as well as serving as a follow up tool for further interest and resources.

— At North Somerset Library Service, digital tablets with old photos of the local area are shared with people with dementia as a reminiscence project to initiate conversations. Reading Well flyers are given out to them and their carers.

— Coventry Libraries loans Reading Well collections to partner organisations to maximise the reach of the list.
At Lewisham Libraries, Reading Well books are on display at fortnightly health lectures as further reading and resources.

Kirklees Library Service has used a text from a Reading Well book to facilitate poetry and drama workshops with children and young people.

**Reading Well sparks creative partnerships**

Reading Well booklists contain a wide range of books beyond the usual self-help or clinical textbooks. The diversity of the booklists has allowed library services to promote the programme and reach out to people in a creative context.

Kirklees Libraries, for example, has been working with the Chol Theatre and spoken word artist Lisa Luxx to carry out workshops with students and young people using the books from the Reading Well for young people scheme. These workshops explore various topics such as self-acceptance and empathy. The impact of this partnership has already been felt by the service.

“We realised the list was a high-quality resource. We wanted to do something different to reach young people and make them aware of this resource, using a different way to engage them. We knew from the beginning that we needed something different, more than a simple talk delivered by a librarian.”

**Challenges**

**Raising awareness of the programme and advocacy**

While the high rate of self-referral and stable loan rates indicate continuing engagement with the scheme, raising awareness among health professionals and supporting organisations remains a challenge. This is particularly true for library services which do not already have strong links with the public health sector.

Engagement with internal council departments at a local level is another pivotal element to the success of the programme, as other departments could potentially open up new avenues and unlock links to reach out to Reading Well target users. As more services are becoming involved in cross-policy provision, and increasingly health and social care, it is likely to be useful for the Reading Well offer to be promoted across Council teams and departments wherever possible.

“There was a good turnout at our internal sharing session at the council. Colleagues from the vulnerable teens team, NHS team, and our Care Connect system attended. Other colleagues attended out of their own interest or who were supporting other people with conditions... These are great connections to establish – people are very interested and are giving us lots of follow up opportunities.”

Responders highlighted the value of a national campaign promoting the health and wellbeing impact of local library services, spearheaded by The Reading Agency and Libraries Connected, as individual authorities do not have the same national portfolio.

“It’s always good to have reminders about why the stock is there, why the books should be used. They can easily be forgotten and sink to background. Anything [promotional support] at a national level would be good – it focuses everyone. Especially with healthcare where credibility is so important. When it’s promoted nationally it’s more credible.”

**Limited resources and preparation time**

Our survey data and interviews suggested that a large majority of library services do not receive external funding for the programme. Keeping the cost of the books and leaflets affordable or securing additional support is therefore a priority. A few library services interviewed also mentioned that their low staff level reduces their capacity to carry out outreach visits as much as they used to.
8. Conclusions

Five years since the launch of the programme, Reading Well Books on Prescription has a lot to celebrate – the continued growth in terms of scale and reach, as well as the successful integration with local library authorities’ offers and services.

Recent years have seen a shift in UK health policy towards preventive care to accommodate changing demographic needs including an aging population, isolation and loneliness, and lifestyle-related health issues such as obesity and diabetes. We expect Reading Well’s influence as an exemplar health and literature initiative will continue to amplify.

Despite the ongoing challenges with a low survey sample, we have been able to conduct time-series analysis which reveals consistent and high level user satisfaction. We have also started to establish user profiles and patterns which will help Reading Well to widen its communication reach.

Findings from the library survey and case studies reflect each other: engagement with public health professionals is challenging, but libraries are starting to develop connections with partners in the health sector and beyond. Our case study research suggests that public libraries are participating in the Universal Health Offer with a wide variety of community-based activity. As public library practices become more collaborative and they gear services towards health and wellbeing agendas, Reading Well offers a platform for public libraries to build continued strong partnerships for their health offer.

Our work this year revisiting the programme logic model indicated that there are some intended or potential outcomes (e.g. social) that are not such a strong focus of programme activities at present. It may be useful to consider how Reading Well can be aligned more closely with other Reading Agency programmes (e.g. Reading Friends) in recognition of the potential for social outcomes to be better achieved.

Recommendations

— Improving data validity: recognising the challenges around improving user survey samples, The Reading Agency should continue to strive to work with public libraries to improve the survey response rate from users. While the postcard format helps to respect privacy and anonymity, other methods such as short surveys after library health outreach activities should also be considered.

— Supporting library services: library services see national advocacy as an effective way to raise awareness amongst public and health professionals. The Reading Agency could increase its promotion of local Reading Well activities and showcase local examples through communications materials. On a practical level, The Reading Agency could further support knowledge sharing among libraries – promoting the regular Reading Well newsletter to libraries that shares best practice, tools and case studies to build the capacity of public libraries in building partnerships with the health sector.

— Wherever possible, attempts to attract funding for libraries to have the time and resources to broaden their reach to local health partners should be encouraged. This could be pursued at national, regional or local levels.

— Research on emerging areas of impact: case studies suggest some emerging library partnerships with creative organisations which would be an interesting impact area to explore in future research. Moreover, the Reading Well programme has the potential to improve the social connections of users, which is not currently captured in the programme design. Future evaluation research should also start developing an evidence base on these areas of impact.
9. Appendix

9.1 Library case study: Coventry Libraries

Years involved in Reading Well: 2013-present

Schemes currently participating in: Reading Well for mental health, Reading Well for long term conditions, Reading Well for young people, Reading Well for dementia.

Reading Well and Coventry Libraries' objectives

The Reading Well Collection has given us the opportunity to link with health services in our city.

The Reading Well programme has been a vital platform for Coventry Library Service, not only contributing to the health and wellbeing of the residents but also opening doors for the library service to create links and partnerships within and outside of the council.

The Reading Well for mental health scheme in particular has kick-started relationships with the public health team, as well as with individual health professionals who are interested in their work and would advocate for them. Dr Jane Fowles, who got involved after attending one of Coventry Library’s presentation events, has since been the bridge between GPs and the Coventry Library Service team and has helped to create connections with the Pharmacists group.

When Dr Jane Fowles understood the value of the collection she opened many doors. Including helping us to build links with Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group

We went to a music festival here in Coventry, we had a stand and talked to people about the programme. The fact that the scheme has been selected and endorsed by specialists gives us the confidence to recommend these books when people need.

In July 2018, Coventry and Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Boards designated 2019 as the Year of Wellbeing to raise the profile of health and wellbeing opportunities for everyone. Its main aim is to acknowledge and promote all the successful existing services and programmes already present in the region, including Reading Well.

Libraries in Coventry understand how they can have a role of being a “community hub” for wellbeing…. We want to remind people that libraries are public spaces, and not the formal place everyone has in mind. It is a sharing place.

Promotion and engagement

Promotion forms part of Coventry Library Service’s strategy to reach out to its targeted groups. As such, they have put a lot of effort into various types of promotion channels and activities.

For example, the library service has created and distributed videos to promote the scheme in different ways based on the targeted groups. They also produced a series of targeted newsletters to be distributed through their partners and activities.

Moreover, Coventry Library also promotes the scheme at their own events during national awareness days or national campaigns, such as World Mental Health Day, through a solid social media presence.
World Mental Health Day: How We Can Help Talks

For World Mental Health Day 2018 Coventry Library Service hosted an hour-long lunch time session consisting of a series of brief talks by key support services in the city to talk about the importance of talking about mental health issues. Presenting organisations included Coventry and Warwickshire Mind, CWPT IAPT Service, Rethink Mental Illness, and The Environment and Me Team from Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. The session was designed to encourage people to pop along on their lunch breaks, with opportunities for people to talk to advice agencies and for the services to network with each other after the session.

During the session Reading Well for mental health and Shelf Help resources were available, as well as relevant information from the partner organisations attending.

Dementia Action Week 2018 - Take a Walk Down Memory Lane Tea Parties

Building on last year’s successful partnership, Coventry Library Service partnered with Alzheimer’s Society to organise a vintage style tea party with various images themed around music that could be used to evoke memories and begin discussions. The tea party was held at the Central Library, formerly called the Locarno, where many older people have fond memories of seeing bands. The tea party received 37 attendees across the two events, many of whom were living with dementia or caring for people with dementia. Reading Well for dementia books and Pictures to Share books were also introduced to attendees to encourage reminiscence and stimulate conversations.

Not only did the event engage isolated individuals and their carers, it also engaged health professionals. Staff from a local domiciliary care organisation attended the event and were introduced to the professional resources to aid their staff and client interactions.

Partnerships are of great strategic importance for Coventry Library in maximising the impact of the Reading Well programme. The service loans the Reading Well collections to partner charities and organisations. These partners include CGL, a drug and alcohol support charity for young people which houses a collection in their public spaces, care homes, and hospital wards that support 13-17 year-olds with physical and mental health needs. The library service also works with IAPT professionals to support their practice and work with patients.

Change Grow Live (CGL)

Coventry Young Person’s Service is a free and confidential early intervention and substance misuse service for young people, their families, carers and affected others.

CGL works with children and young people between 5 and 24 years old, developing one-to-one relationships with practitioners. Their early intervention work often involves arts and crafts to help externalise their difficult experiences and to approach them from a different angle.

CGL hosts a collection of the Reading Well for young people books loaned from the Coventry Library Services. The collection is displayed in the main reception area, with a paper sign-in/sign-out form. Practitioners sometimes select short parts of the books to integrate into the support they offer to the children and young people they work with.
We found that sometimes fiction didn’t work well with our kids, mostly because not all of them have an adequate level of literacy to read the entire book. However, short books and selected texts can be useful.

Belgrade Theatre: Arts Gymnasium

Arts Gymnasium is part of the Belgrade Theatre’s Community & Education programme, and uses theatre and arts activities to contribute to the quality of life and positive wellbeing of people living in Coventry. These sessions are exclusively for people aged 50 and over and run once a week during school term time at the Belgrade Theatre. In 2018, all Belgrade Theatre community groups (youth and over 50s) worked together to develop an immersive, site-specific production which used dance, digital and drama to explore Coventry’s rich history.

We always have leaflets visible in the theatre, next to the entrance. We run the Arts Gymnasium – 4 groups of over-50s coming in every week, where we are trying to cover that gap of early-stage dementia. Our users are from different stages, to the point that they often come with carers or family. We often talk with them about how they can access the programme.

Coventry Library Service identified building and maintaining a wide variety of professional relationships as one of the biggest challenges in delivering and supporting the Reading Well programme. Nevertheless, Coventry Library Service was able to develop and maintain trusted relationships with partners across the years, thanks to continuous networking activity and the variety of Reading Well collections available.

Our discussions with partners start by finding a common ground, we identify how Reading Well will be able to support their objectives and move onto further discussions about the best way to promote and market the scheme through their organisation.

Perspective from partners

Representatives from the Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group believe that the Reading Well programme fits well with the health department’s overall strategy of creating stronger and more resilient communities which help people to live longer and healthier lives through self-care.

In the overall strategy, we are trying to promote prevention. This programme is a good example of how we recognise and celebrate good things that are going on. We want to raise awareness and make it noticed and recognised...

Beyond promoting general mental wellbeing within the community, the Reading Well programme is particularly useful to GPs with patients on the waiting list for treatment.

We are signposting and making sure all the information and pathways to self-help are out there. We want to keep on reminding people that there is a programme well-embodied in our system.

The fact that Reading Well is recognised by professionals as an authenticated programme plays an important role in the perception of the schemes among partners and library services, since it enables the various parties to have a conversation with the public health professionals.
While the adult mental health scheme has established a successful partnership model between the library service and the public health sector, parties identified a focus on specific conditions such as diabetes as a next step.

“One of the areas that we are particularly interested in is diabetes, and how to increase self-awareness and management of one’s condition… We are approaching alternative ways of supporting this specific condition, such it has happened with the mental wellbeing.”
9.2 Library case study: Kirklees Libraries

**Years involved in Reading Well:** 2013-present

**Schemes currently participating in:** Reading Well for mental health, Reading Well for long term conditions, Reading Well for young people, Reading Well for dementia. Created special activities within the Reading Well for young people scheme (Shelf Help).

**Reading Well and Kirklees Libraries’ objectives**

> We realised the list was a high-quality resource. We wanted to do something different to reach young people and make them aware of this resource, using a different way to engage them. We knew from the beginning that we needed something different, more than a simple talk delivered by a librarian.

Mental health early intervention and prevention are Kirklees Council priorities. As such, a large proportion of the library service’s work sits within this priority. Kirklees Library Service has established a reputation for imaginative outreach and project work with a diverse range of socially excluded groups such as those with dementia, people with disabilities and their carers. The success of such activities is demonstrated by the positive perception of the local library service within the council and library stakeholder community, as well as within the wider library sector. An example of this is the nomination of one of Kirklees Library’s projects, Well into Words, for the Libraries Change Live Awards 2018.

Within the outreach activities already in place, the Service decided to commit time and capacity to the young people’s mental health agenda. The Shelf Help scheme plays an important role in this.

**Partnerships and engagement**

Kirklees Library Service has a rich variety of outreach activities and contacts. Their strong philosophy of networking and brokering relationships motivates them to partner with a diverse array of organisations and take a creative approach to using the Reading Well for young people scheme. Kirklees Library Service’s partners include spoken word artist Lisa Luxx, Chol Theatre, North Huddersfield Trust School, Castle Hall School, Pupil Referral Unit Ethos College, Project 1325 and Barnardo’s Kirklees Young Carers.

**Shelf Help with Chol Theatre**

In collaboration with Kirklees Libraries, Chol Theatre designed and delivered a series of drama workshops to introduce young people to the Reading Well for young people list and inspire them to get reading and experience their local libraries. The theatre company selected the book *Every Day* by David Levithan and designed a workshop that aimed to help young people with difficult feelings and experiences that can affect their wellbeing. The novel *Every Day* is about the story of A, a person who wakes up in a different body each day, and it is included in the Reading Well for young people scheme.

> We approached them [Chol Theatre] asked to help us to understand how to use drama to spread these messages. We believed in their approach – they were the experts in their field and we left them the freedom in doing what they thought was useful.

> We feel that in doing this we are supporting the local creative industries and creatives working in the area, and we feel this is relevant to support our local economy. Small theatre companies, for example, might struggle in regional areas, and we are proud of working with them.

Lisa created a series of workshops about self-acceptance, asking young people about their fears. She conducted workshops on poetry, helping participants to de-personalise their worries through performing, discussing and interpreting poetry with their peers. The workshops run by the theatre company Chol, on the
other hand, have been built around the concept of understanding empathy and on how to express and communicate feelings to other people.

The conversations that came out have been interesting and sometimes challenging. We discussed self-harm, for example. Other times we discussed important, and difficult themes like the balance between helping others and letting them free to live their lives. They showed a mature and deep understanding of human feelings. I think they valued the approach we used with them.

Many of the activities happened outside of the library, including classrooms and the city’s theatre. Some of the schools which hosted the workshops borrowed a collection of the Shelf Help collection from Kirklees Library and distributed the leaflets.

Shelf Help at the PRU and North Huddersfield Trust school

The Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) borrowed a collection of the Shelf Help books from the library service. These books were displayed in the school foyer for students and staff to look at. Staff were encouraged to look at the books and familiarise themselves with the titles.

The PRU had a curriculum drop-down day when the normal day is suspended. The promotion of the Shelf Help books was linked to the library service providing sessions for the students with Chol theatre group and the performance poet Lisa Luxx.

The theatre sessions looked at the idea of empathy and understanding other people’s point of view. They used the David Levithan book as a starting point. Lisa used the idea of self-acceptance and understanding others as the starting point of her sessions.

A lot of interesting and insightful comments came out of the discussion. Lisa also encouraged the participants to write a poem from the point of view of an object rather than themselves. They agreed on this, and some of them said that it made it easier to discuss thoughts and emotions…. At the end of the session, I reminded the students about the library, the Shelf Help collection and everything else we have to offer. One boy said he would now like to read the book after doing the drama workshops.

In March 2018 Chol Theatre ran a workshop at the North Huddersfield Trust. NHT school have bought the Shelf Help books for their school library. The project helped add value to their promotion of the collection and allowed the students to have time exploring themes related to mental wellbeing. Students were also introduced to the Shelf Help collection at the workshop.

Students showed good engagement… There was absolute silence while the practitioner read the text aloud – 100% engagement.

Student feedback:

“Although it is a deep topic it’s interesting to act about, that’s what makes it fun.”

“It was a really powerful way to show how some people view the world”

“It’s made me think about issues around mental health”. 
Delivery

The collaboration project with Lisa and Chol Theatre has been a pilot for Kirklees Library Service, which has already had real impact on the community involved in it. The library service, stakeholders and participants all highlighted the potential for the future development of this project. It is hoped that the programme can be developed further over two years with the appropriate advocacy and funding.

"Extra-funding will unlock links, involve more partners and kick-start something else. This time, due to the restricted amount of money we could invest, our activities were limited, delivered to the schools for free. They were asked, however, to support us with the evaluation of the programme[...]. The participants agreed that the sessions have been very powerful.

Kirklees Libraries hope that more funding could help scale up the activities to other schools, and in particular lead to more regular engagement with the participants rather than just one-off sessions, as has happened in one of the schools. Here, teachers selected students that were particularly shy or experiencing difficulties integrating with the rest of the students to attend workshops with Chol Theatre. The various parties involved agreed that targeting specific students played an important role in the delivery of the project.

"On that occasion, targeting specific students was vital to the success of the project. The schools and partner organisations took time to think about which students would benefit most from taking part, and this was beneficial.

"Our activities link directly to the early stage prevention priority our council has. We follow this path very clearly. The project and their feedback shows we can do it. In the future, we’d like to work with primary schools, and help with those problems that are rooted in the early years. We already have the right connections, but we need advocacy and promotion to make partners supporting us and believing in what we do.

With this new experimental project, the right connections as well as advocacy and promotion would be crucial to making partners support and believe in what they do.
9.3 Library case study: Lewisham Libraries

**Years involved in Reading Well:** 2013-present

**Schemes currently participating in:** Reading Well for mental health, Reading Well for long term conditions, Reading Well for young people, Reading Well for dementia.

One of Lewisham Council’s strategic priorities for building sustainable communities is ensuring that they are healthy, active and enjoyable—where people can actively participate in maintaining and improving their health and wellbeing.

In support of this aim, in 2011 Lewisham Libraries launched the Healthy Living collection and the Macmillan Core Book collection on subjects related to Cancer. Lewisham Libraries felt Reading Well would fit neatly into its Healthy Living Collection and the council’s wider objectives.

"Health and wellbeing of residents is a priority of the council and we have a duty to support wherever we can. The fact that The Reading Agency is providing booklists and promoting books that are approved by health professionals is really good, because we’re not health experts. We need that sort of input."

"Reading Well cover areas which we always have high demands for e.g. dealing with stress and anxiety, eating healthily and eating disorder… we can never have enough books on these subjects."

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**Health Lecture Series**

In September 2017 Lewisham Libraries started a ‘Health Lecture Series’ where the library team up with health professionals to deliver free lectures at the library fortnightly. Thus far these lectures have covered topics such as cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s disease, among others.

Prior to this, in 2011 Lewisham Libraries, in partnership with Macmillan South East London Cancer Network, launched two special collections: a collection of books on cancer and a Healthy Living collection to support people living with the effects of cancer. The Healthy Living collection includes books on eating well, diet, physical exercise, sleep problems and managing emotions and feelings.

**Delivery**

Lewisham Libraries stock books from all four schemes at their three hub libraries and large community libraries. The smaller libraries may not have the full collection but still have enough for displays and to cover customer requests. They also have other books to complement topics such as stress and sleeplessness through their Healthy Living Collection.

For certain areas of stock where they felt the normal three weeks loan is not enough and not appropriate for the subject, Lewisham Library offers extended loans of up to six weeks.

In terms of stocking the titles, Lewisham Libraries have experienced occasions where the books required reprinting and did not arrive in time for the promotion.

Lewisham Library regularly promotes the books through displays and on social media. Furthermore, library staff take leaflets out to GP surgeries as well as

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[22] Shaping Our Future: Lewisham’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020
through home library services. Promoting outside of the library, however, has been a challenge given tight staffing levels.

**Promotion and engagement**

Lewisham Libraries have major promotions of Reading Well a couple of times a year, when they produce book displays and bring in partner organisations. In May 2018, Lewisham Library promoted the Reading Well collections heavily at a World Book Night event. Working with the theme of wellness, they organised short lectures on healthy eating and mindfulness with a huge array of books on display.

The Reading Well books have also been used to complement Lewisham Libraries’ recent Health Lecture Series initiative, where they select relevant and available stock to complement a particular lecture as a way of offering supplementary reading on the lecture topic.

“At the lecture whilst the books are on display we do have members of audiences who’d look at the books and be interested. Reading Well complements the health lectures and we try to promote the Reading Well stock that way.”

However, Lewisham Library did sense a general lack of awareness about Reading Well amongst GPs and health professionals.

“Lecturers generally haven’t been aware of the Reading Well stock. I put the books out because I work with the library and know the books. But it’s not something they requested.”

“GPs need to be reminded of the service. When the programme first started local GPs were all for it. We got people coming in with actual prescriptions. Now I think the early initial promotional effect has worn off, people and GPs are forgetting to use this service. I have a perception that they aren’t doing this anymore, at least not in the same numbers.”

Lewisham Library sees the need for them to promote their work more, such as engaging the health department and social services within the council. At the same time, they also see The Reading Agency as well-positioned to coordinate a national campaign.

“If The Reading Agency could promote this material much more widely to the general public to raise the profile – this sort of help is invaluable, that’d be fantastic. Whether the actual ‘books on prescription’ where GPs can give you a prescription is worth resurrecting I don’t know, but they can certainly do more with GPs and even target the general public. Health and mental health are such big topics, they’re one of the council’s biggest priorities. Any promotion that says what we’re doing with Reading Well would tie in well.”

“Lewisham Library is in discussions with Lewisham Hospital, who also hold the Reading Well collections, about potential future collaboration, such as providing more books to the hospital wards and recommending books for older people.

As the Health Lecture Series gains momentum, Lewisham Library would be interested in inviting Reading Well’s health professional contacts, e.g. the authors, to give lectures at their library and promote their books.”
9.4 Library case study: North Somerset Libraries

Years involved in Reading Well: 2013-present

Schemes currently participating in: Reading Well for mental health, Reading Well for long term conditions, Reading Well for young people, Reading Well for dementia.

Reading Well and North Somerset Libraries’ objectives

North Somerset Libraries have been using the Reading Well programme since the very beginning. The Reading Well programme is a good fit with the libraries’ priorities.

Back in around 2008, our library was involved in another similar project called Bibliotherapy where doctors prescribed books to their patients. When the Reading Well opportunity came we just carried on with this strand of work naturally.

Reading Well aligns well with the council’s priorities and helps the library department to contribute to the council’s targets.

One of the three big strands of the Council priorities is ‘Health and Wellbeing’. Being able to show we’re delivering to the Council’s priorities and showing other departments that we can help them hit their target, for example through reaching out to specific groups, is good. It gives us a strong reason to continue to deliver the scheme.

Memories Shared

In 2014, North Somerset Libraries initiated the ‘Memories Shared project’, a digital reminiscence project where historic images of North Somerset have been digitised and stored on tablets. With project funding North Somerset Libraries was able to procure 30 tablets that would provide standalone access to images from the North Somerset Studies collection. The tablets were also loaded with relevant council and library information, sample eBooks, audiobooks and puzzles.

Primarily designed for Home Library Service customers, Memories Shared aims to improve the wellbeing of older people and those living with dementia through encouraging them to share memories about the local area, at the same time building confidence and breaking down barriers to ICT. The project has expanded with sessions using the tablets inside and outside of libraries.

Memories Shared serves as a perfect engagement tool during visits to housebound readers and residential homes. Volunteers and library staff also bring along with them Reading Well flyers and encourage people to visit the collections at the library. Library staff signpost to the recommended books if people come in with a request.

People phone us up all the time about their needs like dementia, blood disorder, or if someone is concerned about their older parents. If someone comes to us we do what we can. We’re all trained as dementia friends, we signpost them to the areas where they can find the books. Sometimes we signpost them other community resources like the Memory Café.
Partner perspectives

North Somerset Libraries have worked with Alzheimer’s Society for a number of years. The partnership between the two organisations allows them to promote each other’s work. North Somerset Libraries hold Alzheimer’s Society publications and they work together on events such as Dementia Action Week in May 2018. Similarly, Alzheimer’s Society promotes the Reading Well programme through its network with public health professionals, such as putting up flyers at GP clinics and at health professional events.

I was a carer of my late mother for fifteen years who lived with dementia and have been involved in various carer and dementia groups nationally and locally, where we already shared with each other literature about dementia. When I was caring for my late mother, I only got a few hours of break every week. The library was where I’d go, to borrow or renew a book. I would go to the health and wellbeing section to find books for myself. In that sense Reading Well is good. It has a very good booklist with useful categories are good. Reading Well flyers tell people that the library is where you can get help. It’s an unexpected place, but by bringing people to libraries it also brings them to a social space.

Now as a local volunteer representative for the Alzheimer’s Society whenever I’m at public speaking, fundraising events or public health group meetings I’d always mention about the Dementia scheme. In fact I always have some leaflets in my bag.

Another way that Alzheimer’s Society is promoting the scheme and raising awareness and literacy about dementia is through the ‘memory wall’ at a GP practice. This is a wall where information about dementia is shared in an organised, friendly way. At the top it says ‘memory’ instead of the word dementia, which helps break down barriers. Underneath the header is a big question ‘Are you worried about your memory?’, followed by information about community and local services under the heading ‘Ten things you need to know’.

Reading Well leaflets and posters about NHS services are displayed to the side of the wall. The memory wall is located along the surgery’s corridor, so that it is highly visible whilst ensuring that people do not feel they are being watched when looking at the wall.

In August 2018, Alzheimer’s Society and North Somerset Libraries held a family event, Families United Against Dementia, at the newly opened Weston Museum. At the event, they put up stands where Reading Well flyers and Memories Shared tablets were shared.

Delivery

North Somerset Libraries stocks all four Reading Well schemes. All libraries stock the first three schemes, while the recent Reading Well for mental health scheme is held at the eight biggest libraries, with the four smaller libraries sharing two collections between them due to pressure on shelf space.

In the libraries the stock is organised by section – dementia, mental health and long term conditions stock is located within the health and wellbeing section, while stock from the young people scheme can be found in the teen section.

When books were superseded, such as with the first mental health collection, North Somerset Libraries distributed them to other organisations, with appropriate warnings about the use of older editions.

Reading Well posters and flyers are visible in the libraries and libraries do signpost people to relevant sections when people approach them for suggestions in person or by phone.

In our promotion we do emphasize we have self-service check-out in all branches and an online reservation service so people feel comfortable about borrowing the books.

North Somerset Libraries have not received any external funding for the latest collection, therefore it is a priority that the costs of the books are affordable. In previous years there were occasions when some titles were not immediately available from wholesalers. Related to this is the timescale between receiving
the list and the launch, i.e. whether the libraries have sufficient time to stock the books before the launch.

Promotion and engagement

Throughout the years North Somerset Libraries have adapted their promotional strategy to a more targeted approach.

In previous years, they have held a small public launch event at one of the libraries to showcase the list. For the latest mental health booklist, they decided to target their promotion to a small list of stakeholders – more at a professional level and internally. One key stakeholder group is Council staff. Library staff hosted two one-hour lunchtime sessions at Council sites to promote the new mental health scheme. Although they were small groups the sessions generated a lot of interest. Staff received several enquiries which brought new opportunities to speak to other groups.

I don’t have statistics yet but since the launch of the new mental health scheme there’s hardly any books left on the shelves! We [the library department] also benefitted from The Hour [the council’s internal lunchtime session]. It was promoted heavily on our internal weekly newsheet which helped raise awareness. The strategy of promotion this time round has been successful, hopefully this will work for future Reading Well schemes as well.

There was a good turnout at our internal sharing session at the council. Colleagues from the vulnerable teens team, NHS team, and our Care Connect system attended. Other colleagues attended out of their own interest or who were supporting other people with conditions... These are great connections to establish – people are very interested and are giving us lots of follow up opportunities. At the session we also cross promote other schemes as well... The council has a priority on health and wellbeing and it’s great that we can concretely show through our evaluation and statistics the impact of our work towards this.

Looking ahead, the libraries note an increase in need for eBook formats or large print, which might be something that Reading Well can consider.

North Somerset Libraries would also like to continue to build on the encouraging responses from the promotion of the new mental health list.

The way Reading Well books are professional and focused on peer-reviewed books is very good. We emphasise that a lot in our talks and others appreciate it. One colleague who came to our session told me she’s glad to see a book that she’s been using for a long time on the list – it’s good to get their approval.

The way we rolled out the collection to a small group of professionals gave us valuable contacts. We will need to make an effort to keep the momentum and follow up. I also feel that this time we’ve reached some groups who would potentially be interested in funding the programme.
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