

DARLLEN YN WELL WELL READING WELL

Reading Well

Books on Prescription for children: Background Information

As part of the successful [Reading Well](#) scheme, [The Reading Agency](#), the Society of Chief Librarians Cymru and [Libraries Connected](#) are launching a new **Reading Well for children** booklist. The scheme is part of the Libraries Connected Universal Public Library Health Offer and has been developed with leading health organisations, children and families.

Reading Well Books on Prescription

Reading Well provides helpful reading to support health and wellbeing. The books are selected and recommended by leading health bodies and people living with the conditions covered.

It is delivered by The Reading Agency working in partnership with the Welsh network of Libraries Connected, the Society of Chief Librarians Cymru, with funding from the Welsh Government and Arts Council England. The scheme is developed and recommended by leading health partners and delivered in public libraries. Promotional materials are made available bilingually in English and Welsh working with the [Books Council of Wales](#) to obtain rights for and translate titles in the book collection.

Reading Well for children will be the third Reading Well scheme to be delivered in Wales following on from Reading Well for dementia in 2018 and Reading Well for mental health in 2019. Reading Well for dementia was launched as part of the [Dementia Action Plan for Wales](#) and Reading Well for mental health is part of the [Together for Mental Health](#) strategy.

Since its launch, the scheme has supported **1.2 million people** to borrow **2.3 million books in Wales and England**. It has been supported by the public as well as by GPs, mental health professionals and government ministers as a helpful community-based health service. It has also delivered significant patient benefit; in a recent survey, **90%** of young people would recommend their Reading Well book for support with dealing with difficult feelings and experiences.

Reading Well for children

Key messages

- Reading Well helps people to understand and manage their health and wellbeing
- **Reading Well for children** provides helpful reading to support children's mental health and wellbeing
- The books provide quality-assured information, stories and advice. Books have been chosen and recommended by leading health professionals and co-produced with children and families

- The booklist is targeted at children in Key Stage 2 (aged 7-11), but includes titles aimed at a wide range of reading levels to support less confident readers, and to encourage children to read together with their siblings and carers
- The books will be available in English and Welsh for anyone to borrow from libraries. They can also be recommended by health and social care professionals, teachers and anyone else working to support children and families

The need

There is enormous need for quality-assured health information, advice and stories to support children in understanding and managing their mental health and wellbeing:

- 1 in 10 children in Wales between the ages of 5 and 16 has a mental health problem and many more have behavioural issues¹
- 50% of mental health conditions are established by age 14²
- Over a third of UK parents of children aged 4-11 (34%) worry about their child's mental health at least once a week, and these worries appear well placed as almost two thirds (60%) of children aged 8-11 say they feel stressed, sad or worried at least once a month³

As the demand for children's mental health support has grown, so have pressures on treatment pathways:

- 70% of children and adolescents in the UK who experience mental health needs have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age⁴

How reading can help:

- Evaluation has shown that bibliotherapy is cost effective, elicits a positive response from people, improves self-management and results in better person - doctor relationships.⁵ Reading Well collections can support people with quality-assured, evidence-based resources outside of clinical settings, or while they await treatment.⁶

¹ Welsh Government (2019). [Together for Mental Health: A Strategy for Mental Health and Wellbeing in Wales.](#)

² Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. (2005). Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62 (6) pp. 593-602. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593.

³ BookTrust, (2019). ['New BookTrust research shows half of children in the UK don't discuss their mental health and wellbeing with their parents.'](#)

⁴ Children's Society (2008) *The Good Childhood Inquiry: health research evidence*. London: Children's Society.

⁵ 'Evidence Review of BOP and Creative Bibliotherapy Projects in Libraries', *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, D Chamberlain, vol 15 (2008)

⁶ BookTrust, (2019). ['New BookTrust research shows half of children in the UK don't discuss their mental health and wellbeing with their parents.'](#)

- 2 in 5 (39%) children aged 8-11 said they find it difficult to talk about their feelings or emotions, but 9 in 10 of parents (90%) aged 4-11 do agree that reading together is a useful tool to help open up conversations with their child, however almost 70% stopped reading to their children by the time they started at Key Stage 2 (7 years old)⁷

Booklist

The booklist of 33 titles provides quality-assured information, advice and stories to support children's mental health and wellbeing. The books are all selected and recommended by health experts, children and families.

The list covers:

- General information and advice about maintaining good mental health and wellbeing
- Understanding and managing feelings
- Dealing with worries
- Navigating the world around you, including at school, online and in the news
- Dealing with tough times, including when someone dies, trauma, and when a parent or carer has mental health needs
- Support for living well with specific diagnosed conditions including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and physical disabilities

How it works

Health and social care professionals, teachers and anyone else offering support to children and families can use the scheme to recommend helpful reading. The scheme can also be used on a self-referral basis. The books will be available on the open shelves of the local public library for anyone to borrow.

Evidence-based practice

Reading Well follows clinical guidelines for the treatment and support of mental health and wellbeing. Specific self-help interventions are included when recommended within NICE guidelines.

⁷ BookTrust, (2019). ['New BookTrust research shows half of children in the UK don't discuss their mental health and wellbeing with their parents.'](#)

The book selection panel was made up of health professionals following a rigorous and evidence-based approach. The scheme has been co-produced with children and families.

Supporting organisations

Reading Well for children is supported by the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies, The British Psychological Society, Carers UK, Carers Trust, Mental Health First Aid England, Mental Health Foundation, Mind, National Association of Primary Care, NHS England (Children and Young People's Mental Health), Public Health England, Royal College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Psychiatrists.

About us

The Reading Agency is a national charity that tackles life's big challenges through the proven power of reading. We work closely with partners to develop and deliver programmes for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Reading Agency is funded by Arts Council England. www.readingagency.org.uk

The **Welsh Government** is the devolved government of Wales. We are working to help improve the lives of people in Wales and make our nation a better place in which to live and work. We aim to promote, protect and improve the health and well-being of everyone in Wales. www.gov.wales

Libraries Connected is a membership organisation, representing heads of library services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We take a leading role in the development of public libraries through advocating for the power of libraries, sharing best practice and helping to shape the public library service now and in the future. www.librariesconnected.org.uk

Society of Chief Librarians Cymru advocates for continuous improvement of the public library service and works collaboratively with partners to secure the best outcomes for citizens across Wales. We oversee the delivery of six universal offers (Digital, Health, Culture, Information, Learning, Reading) which aim to ensure citizens have the opportunity to be healthy and connected to friends and family. SCL Cymru believes passionately that public libraries have a key role to play in improving the wellbeing of local communities.

Contact us

For more information about the scheme, visit the Reading Well website at www.reading-well.org.uk/wales or email readingwell@readingagency.org.uk.