

Reading Well for teens FAQs – for library staff

This document provides some Frequently Asked Questions related to the new Reading Well for teens scheme. For general information about Reading Well, please visit our general [FAQs](#).

If you have a question that isn't covered here, please email readingwell@readingagency.org.uk

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What is Reading Well for teens?

A new **Reading Well for teens** collection will launch in public libraries in England and Wales on **World Mental Health Day 2022** (10th October). The scheme will support the mental health and wellbeing of teenagers, providing information, advice and support to help teens better understand their feelings, handle difficult experiences and boost confidence. The list is an update to the 2016 Reading Well for young people ("Shelf Help") scheme, focusing on supporting young people's wellbeing in a post-pandemic context.

What age group does the scheme target?

The collection is targeted at **teenagers (13-18)** and includes a wide range of reading levels and formats to support less confident readers and encourage engagement.

Why have you updated the scheme?

Reading Well for young people (“Shelf Help”) launched in 2016. Over the last few years, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, young people have experienced a range of challenges related to their mental health and wellbeing. The new list has been developed to directly respond to these challenges.

The pandemic’s disruption to young people’s lives, alongside issues such as Brexit and increasing concern about global warming, has increased uncertainty about identity, position in society and future plans. In 2020, almost 1 in 2 young people (47%) said they didn’t feel in control of their lives and 1 in 3 (32%) that they felt ‘overwhelmed’ by feelings of panic and anxiety on a daily basis.¹

The new list includes a range of topics identified through our evidence reviews and co-production process including managing feelings, neurodiversity, body image, bereavement, social anxiety, learning about life, boosting confidence, surviving online, and sexuality, gender identity and mental health.

How did you identify the topics to be included?

Reading Well is an evidence-based, quality-assured programme. The focus of Reading Well is to provide helpful reading to support people to understand and manage their health and wellbeing. The lists are created to provide early-stage support and are not a replacement for clinical intervention.

We follow an established process for developing all our reading lists as outlined in our [book selection protocol](#).

The topics included have been identified following a thorough evidence review, including reviewing National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines and relevant policies, consultation with the health sector, library staff and an expert roundtable. This work informed our [book selection framework](#) which outlines the key findings and provides recommendations for the scope of the list.

We have also worked closely with our co-production partner, [Partnership for Young London](#), and a panel of diverse young people from across England and Wales. Their views have been central to the development of the list and have helped to ensure both its inclusivity and accessibility.

How were the books chosen?

The Reading Well for teens books were chosen by our expert book selection panel, and mapped against the [book selection protocol](#) and [book selection framework](#).

Our book selection panel included representation from accredited organisations and professionals including the creator of Book Prescription Wales, NHS England, Royal College of Psychiatrists, Royal College of GPs, British Psychological Society, Royal College of Nursing and British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. Leading mental health charities, including Mind and the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, library staff and government departments were also represented on the panel.

We have also worked closely with our co-production partner, [Partnership for Young London](#), and a panel of diverse young people from across England and Wales. The views of a representative range of young people have been central to the development of the list.

¹ The Prince’s Trust and YouGov (2020) [Young People in Lockdown](#)

Were teenagers involved in selecting the books?

Yes, all our Reading Well collections are co-produced with those with lived experience. For Reading Well for teens, we worked with our co-production partner, [Partnership for Young London](#), and a panel of diverse young people from across England and Wales.

Why have you included books about neurodiversity?

All the books included in the collection have been selected by our book selection panel and co-production group against our [book selection framework](#).

Evidence shows neurodivergent children and young people had worse mental health outcomes after the start of the pandemic² and 63% of autistic young people said their mental health was worse following the outbreak of the pandemic.³ NICE clinical guidelines recommend providing autistic young people and their families with information about autism, its management and support available.⁴ NICE recommends people receiving a diagnosis of ADHD are informed about sources of information and support.⁵

Why have you included books about body image?

The books included on Reading Well for teens have been identified and chosen by our expert book selection panel following a thorough evidence review, in line with our book selection protocol and mapped against our book selection framework. We also worked with our co-production partner, Partnership for Young London, and a panel of diverse young people from across England and Wales to identify topics and books for inclusion.

Body image and eating disorders are a key area of concern with increasing prevalence amongst young people. The proportion of children and young people with possible eating problems has increased from 6.7% in 2017 to 13.0% in 2021 in 11- to 16-year-olds, and from 44.6% to 58.2% in 17- to 19-year-olds over the same period.⁶

Why have you included books about bereavement?

All the books included in the collection have been selected by our book selection panel and co-production group against our [book selection framework](#).

Evidence shows experiencing bereavement and loss has a detrimental impact on children and young people, including on their wellbeing and mental health. This has been compounded by the impact of the pandemic with a significant number of young people reporting the winter lockdown was harder to cope with than previous one because someone in their family had died, often as a result of COVID.⁷ Providing clear, honest and age-appropriate information can help young people cope with bereavement and loss.

Why have you included a book that uses the term Queer?

All the books included in the collection have been selected by our book selection panel and co-production group against our [book selection framework](#). Throughout this process there was a high level of support for the term Queer.

² NHS Digital (2020) [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020](#).

³ Ambitious About Autism (2020) [Coronavirus and lockdown, The impact on autistic children and young people](#)

⁴ NICE [CG170] [Autism Spectrum Disorder in under 19s: support and management](#)

⁵ NICE [NG87] [Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management](#)

⁶ NHS (2021) [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2021](#)

⁷ YoungMinds (2021) [Impact of Coronavirus on young people with mental health needs](#)

Since the 1980s many in the LGBTQ+ community have reclaimed the word and it is used as an umbrella term by those who prefer it to other labels or to describe experiences that don't fit a single category of sexuality or gender identity.

However, we appreciate that not everyone feels comfortable with the word given its historical use as a derogatory term. We have tried to balance the use of the terminology with other language as appropriate.

Terminology consistently evolves and there is no 'one-size fits all' term for those who identify as LGBTQ+.

Why have you included books about sexuality, gender identity and mental health?

The books included on Reading Well for teens have been identified and chosen by our expert book selection panel following a thorough evidence review, in line with our [book selection protocol](#) and mapped against our [book selection framework](#). We also worked with our co-production partner, [Partnership for Young London](#), and a panel of diverse young people from across England and Wales to identify topics and books for inclusion.

Evidence shows that many young people explore their sexuality and gender as they go through adolescence before developing a more settled identity⁸ and there has been an increase in young people exploring their sexuality and gender identity.⁹ Young people who identify as LGBTQ+ are more likely to have a mental health disorder (34.9%) than those who identify as heterosexual (13.2%).¹⁰ Being LGBTQ+ doesn't mean someone will have mental health issues but they may be at higher risk of experiencing poor mental health due to their experiences (e.g., discrimination, social isolation). It is important that young people feel listened to, supported, and have access to clear and helpful information on sexuality and gender identity.

Why have you included digital resources and how did you choose them?

We have included digital resources alongside the books to provide additional support and information for young people. The digital resources have been chosen to provide accurate information, advice and support relating to the topics covered by the books on the list. The focus of Reading Well remains a curated booklist that provides helpful reading to support people to understand and manage their health and wellbeing; digital resources have been chosen to enhance the information available via the booklist.

The digital resources included on Reading Well for teens have been identified and chosen by our expert book selection panel and co-production panel in line with our [book selection protocol](#) and mapped against our [book selection framework](#). The focus was on evidence-based resources from UK organisations that will be regularly reviewed and updated.

Will you review the digital resources?

Yes, we're aware that digital information regularly changes and will undertake an annual review of the resources for accuracy and relevance.

Who are the supporting organisations?

Reading Well for teens is endorsed by a range of partners including Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, British Dyslexia

⁸ The Cass Review (2022) *Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people: Interim report*

⁹ Butler, J. et al. (2018) *Assessment and support of children and adolescents with gender dysphoria*; NSPCC (2021) *Childline delivers more than 5,000 counselling sessions about gender identity and sexuality in a year*.

¹⁰ Barnardo's (2019) *Left to their own devices Young people, social media and mental health*

Association, Centre for Mental Health, Children in Wales, Healthworks UK, Mental Health First Aid England, Mental Health Foundation, Mind, National Association of Primary Care, National Youth Agency, NHS England (Children and Young People's Mental Health), Royal College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Psychiatrists, and Young Minds.

Are the books accessible?

We aim for all Reading Well collections to be accessible and inclusive. The books have been chosen to support a range of reading levels and feature a range of books including self-help titles, graphic formats, personal stories and fiction. To support accessibility, titles are available in a range of different formats (e-books, audiobooks, eAudiobooks).

The inclusion of digital resources, including websites and apps, also supports the accessibility of the collection.

Does this replace the Reading Well for young people ("Shelf Help") scheme?

In general, the books on the Reading Well for young people ("Shelf Help") scheme are still useful for library users and remain valid.

We appreciate many libraries have copies of these books and they may wish to continue using them, with the books absorbed into general collections and in-line with local stock retention policies.

The new Reading Well for teens list has however been developed to respond specifically to the needs of young people in a post-Covid context and officially replaces the previous list as the Reading Well resource for this age group.

Are there issues with any of the books on Reading Well for young people ("Shelf Help")?

Reading Well for young people ("Shelf Help") launched in 2016; the books on the list reflect the evidence and knowledge available at the time. As with many things, the evidence base has developed and some of the priorities for young people's mental health have changed, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There may be books on the list that no longer represent best practice and some of the language used may no longer be current, for example, Asperger's Syndrome.

Many people find the titles useful, and libraries may wish to use their discretion and local policies when making decisions about which books to continue to stock.

Can we still purchase marketing materials for Reading Well for young people ("Shelf Help")?

We will no longer be providing supporting print material for Reading Well for young people ("Shelf Help"). Some digital resources will remain available; however, these will be phased out as we embed Reading Well for teens.

If you have existing marketing materials relating to Reading Well for young people, you should follow local policies for removing them from circulation.

Print materials for Reading Well for teens are available via our [online shop](#). A range of digital resources will be available from our website in time for the launch on 10 October 2022.

We have Reading Well for young people (“Shelf Help”) listed on our website/catalogue, should we remove it?

Following the launch of Reading Well for teens, Reading Well for young people (“Shelf Help”) will no longer be supported on the Reading Well website and the link will redirect to the new list. Where possible, we would ask people to update any listings to the new list.

Will issues of books from Reading Well for young people (“Shelf Help”) still count towards Reading Well issue figures?

We will continue to count issues of books from Reading Well for young people towards our total issue figures for at least the next two years before reviewing our methodology beyond that time.