

Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia: Frequently Asked Questions for health professionals

READING WELL

General information

What is the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme?

Reading Well Books on Prescription provides helpful reading for adults experiencing a variety of health conditions. The scheme is endorsed by health professionals and supported by English public libraries. It was launched in 2013 as the first national scheme for England with a list of evidence-based self-help books on common mental health conditions: www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/common-mental-health-conditions

What is Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia?

Available in English public libraries from February 2015, Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia recommends reading to improve people's understanding and awareness of dementia in its various forms. The core book list includes professionally endorsed information and advice for people diagnosed with dementia and their carers, as well as support with how to live well with the condition.

What is the evidence base for Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia?

Improving dementia services and quality of care is a key priority of the Department of Health's National Dementia Strategy. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE CG 42) recommends that dementia care should:

- Increase knowledge and understanding of dementia
- Offer practical advice about services
- Provide support following diagnosis and with early memory loss
- Support carers practically, emotionally and mentally
- Encourage people to remain independent and active
- Enhance quality of care.

The books on the Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia scheme have been recommended by experts and people with experience of dementia as providing quality assured support in these areas. For further information about the evidence base, see:

Which organisations support Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia?

The scheme is delivered by The Reading Agency, working in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians and funded by Arts Council England. Health partners include Alzheimer's Society, British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, The British Psychological Society, Carers UK, Dementia UK, NHS England (IAPT), Innovations in Dementia, Royal College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Information about Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia

Who is it for?

The scheme has been developed for people with dementia and their carers. It is also helpful in raising public awareness of the causes and symptoms of the condition and contributing to the creation of dementia-friendly communities. The scheme is aimed at people who are able to read and manage book-based content. It includes material for a range of reading levels, including people with a learning disability and carers with English as a second language.

Who can recommend books?

Health professionals who provide dementia care can use the scheme. Books can be used before, during or after diagnosis and to support family and carers. The books are all available on the open shelves of libraries for people to borrow, with or without a prescription.

How is the core book list structured?

The core book list provides:

- Information and advice about dementia and normal ageing
- Support following diagnosis
- Support and practical advice for carers
- Personal accounts of people with dementia and their relatives and carers
- Suggestions for shared therapeutic activities.

For more information about the book list, see www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/dementia For a guide to each of the individual titles, see www.reading-well.org.uk/resources/health-professionals

Does Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia also cover normal ageing?

The scheme focuses on dementia, but it also includes information about normal ageing and memory problems that may not be dementia-related.

How were the books chosen?

The books have all been recommended by health professionals and people who have dementia or are caring for someone with the condition. They have been selected using guidelines and quality standards for dementia care from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. For more information about the book selection protocol see www.reading-well.org.uk/resources/525

How does the scheme work?

A health professional or dementia service provider can make a reading recommendation using the form that is attached to the user guide. Print versions of the user guide are available from local library services, and copies can be downloaded in digital form from www.reading-well.org.uk/resources/health-professionals. People then take their book recommendations to their local library, where it can be borrowed for free. If the book is not immediately available, it can be reserved. Free reservations are available in most libraries for books from the core book list. Books can also be borrowed directly from the library without a prescription.

Library support

Do all library authorities in England provide the scheme?

Reading Well Books on Prescription is part of the Society of Chief Librarians' Universal Public Library Health Offer. Around 95% of library services offer the scheme, 87% offer Reading Well Books on Prescription for dementia, and nearly all will stock the titles on the core book list.

Are books available in all libraries?

Books are usually available from all libraries, either through their own collections or via inter-library loans. If a book is not available because it is already out on loan, it can be reserved. Free reservations for Reading Well Books on Prescription titles are available in most libraries.

Are e-books available?

Some of the titles on the dementia list are available as e-books. For more information about format availability, see www.reading-well.org.uk/resources/health-professionals The Reading Agency is working with publishers to increase the range of e-books available to support the scheme.

Can people use the scheme if they are not library members?

Library membership is required if people want to borrow books. It is easy to join a library. In most libraries, the book recommendation form will act as suitable ID if it has been signed by a health professional and includes your name and address. If you do not have a book recommendation form, proof of identity is usually required.

What other support is available in libraries?

Some libraries may provide:

- Reminiscence collections including historical objects, audio recordings, books, photographs and posters
- Information about local dementia services, support groups and reading groups
- Reading Well Books on Prescription collections for common mental health conditions
- Reading Well Mood-boosting Books – a national promotion of uplifting novels, poetry and non-fiction.

Are the books available to buy?

As well as being available to borrow from the library for free, books are also available to buy from bookshops and online if people would like their own copies to keep.

Resources

What resources are available to support the scheme?

Core resources include user and prescriber information leaflets and posters. Leaflets are available from local library services, and can also be downloaded from www.reading-well.org.uk. You can also email readingwell@readingagency.org.uk for local library service contacts or help with obtaining leaflets.

What other resources are available?

A range of digital resources is available to support the scheme, including a professional book list, a guide to the titles on the core list and online tool kits. Resources for health professionals can be found at www.reading-well.org.uk/resources/health-professionals Resources for library staff can be found at www.readingagency.org.uk/adults/practitioners-guides/reading-well-resources-for-library-professionals.html

Free copies of two useful guides, *The Dementia Guide* (www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaguide) and *The Memory Handbook* (www.alzheimers.org.uk/memoryhandbook), are available from The Alzheimer's Society.

Useful factsheets can be found at www.alzheimers.org.uk/factsheets, and *The Dementia Guide* in other languages can be found at www.alzheimers.org.uk/pubsotherlanguages. *The Dementia Guide* is now available as a film at www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaguide. Other language and signed versions are available.

Can the scheme be commissioned?

Active commissioning partnerships with library services are being developed. Around a third of library services have now been commissioned by local authority public health partners to deliver Reading Well Books on Prescription. There is also developing interest from clinical commissioning groups. Further information for commissioners interested in the scheme can be found at readingagency.org.uk/adults/RWBOPfordementiacommissioningguide.pdf

Does it work?

There is evidence that Reading Well Books on Prescription is an effective community health service intervention. In its first year, the scheme for common mental health conditions:

- Reached 275,000 people
- Achieved a 113% increase in library loans of core list titles
- Delivered significant user benefit, with 91% of service users saying they had found it helpful, and two thirds that it helped them to understand and manage their condition
- Has been used regularly by around 7,000 health professionals.

For the full findings of the evaluation of the scheme's first year, see

readingagency.org.uk/adults/impact/research/reading-well-books-on-prescription.html

Future plans

What other health areas is Reading Well Books on Prescription planning to cover?

Reading Well Books on Prescription for common mental health conditions including anxiety and depression is already available in libraries. Most of its books are based on cognitive behavioural therapy: a talking therapy that can help people manage problems by changing the way they think and behave. For more about the books on the list see www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/common-mental-health-conditions The Reading Agency and Society of Chief Librarians are also planning a scheme to support the mental health of children and young people in 2016, as well as revisions to the common mental health conditions list. We then hope to focus on long-term conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

Further information

How do I find out more about Reading Well Books on Prescription?

You will find more useful information on our website at www.reading-well.org.uk. If you would like further help or support, please email readingwell@readingagency.org.uk.

Can I tell you what I think about the scheme?

We would love to hear your views. Please register your details with us by emailing readingwell@readingagency.org.uk.