

Reading Well Books on Prescription: Prescriber Handbook

READING WELL

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Section one: About Reading Well Books on Prescription

What is the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme?

Reading Well Books on Prescription is an exciting new public library health service development. It provides self-help reading for adults based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for a range of common mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, phobias and some eating disorders.

Books can be recommended by GPs or other health professionals from a [core booklist](#). The books are available from the public library where they can be borrowed free of charge.

Recent research shows that people see their library as a safe, trusted and non-stigmatised place to go for help with, and information about, health problems.¹

Reading Well Books on Prescription also helps people discover other library well-being services, including mood-boosting novels and poetry, and social reading activities such as reading groups.

Is it new?

Reading Well Books on Prescription is the first national scheme for England. It builds on local best practice to create a quality-assured and consistent national model and is based on an original scheme developed in Cardiff by Professor Neil Frude.

How does it work?

Reading Well Books on Prescription provides access to quality-assured health information and advice to help people understand and manage common mental health conditions. It is an early intervention treatment and part of 'watchful waiting' or 'active monitoring' at step one in the Stepped Care Model for mental health prior to considering more formal referrals to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services. It can also be used alongside medication and psychological approaches.

Conditions covered

Reading Well Books on Prescription provides evidence-based self-help in the following areas; anger, anxiety, binge eating, chronic pain, depression, health anxiety, obsessions and compulsions, panic, phobias, relationship problems, self-esteem, sleep problems, social phobias, stress and worry.

How were books selected?

The books were selected using an evidence-based approach supported by a rigorous process of consultation and expert advice. The titles have all been recommended by experts from partner organisations as useful, effective and accessible. The [book selection protocol](#) provides further information about the selection process.

¹*Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-Being*, Hicks, D., Creaser, C. et al, MLA, 2010

Who can recommend books?

GPs can recommend self-help reading from the Reading Well Book on Prescription core booklist to their patients. Books can also be recommended by other health professionals including mental health nurses, practice nurses, counsellors, therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists and IAPT psychological well-being practitioners.

Section two: How do prescribers use the scheme?

Who is Reading Well Books on Prescription suitable for?

Book-based therapy will not be suitable for everyone. Reading Well Books on Prescription is aimed at competent adult readers who can read the material and follow the suggested activities.

Some of the titles are available in other formats including audio, e-book, braille and large print, though this will depend on individual library collections.

Recommending a book

Where a health professional feels that Reading Well Books on Prescription could be effective, they should discuss the scheme with the patient as a treatment option. If the patient agrees, the prescriber should then refer to the core booklist and consider with the patient which book is most relevant to their condition. We have produced a [guide to the core books](#) summarising the contents of each title to help prescribers make the right recommendation.

There are 30 recommended titles on the core booklist. These are listed under the conditions covered by the scheme.

The core booklist is available as part of the [user leaflet](#) and on the electronic [recommended reading form](#).

A book can be recommended by ticking the relevant circle on the reading list in the user leaflet or by completing the online recommended reading form. It is important to complete the prescriber details on the form as this will help the patient to join the library if they are not already a member. There is space on the recommendation form for any notes the prescriber may wish to make about other resources or treatment.

It is recommended that patients receive a user leaflet as part of the consultation as this tells them about the scheme and how it works. There is also a useful short guide on [how to make the most of self- help reading](#) which the patient might find useful.

The patient should be advised that if the book doesn't help, they should contact their GP. If the patient's well-being deteriorates, a step up to level two of the IAPT Stepped Care Model and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Stepped Care Model for people with common mental health disorders is recommended.

What the patient does

The patient takes the recommended reading form to the local library where it can be exchanged for the book. Books can also be borrowed without a recommended reading form and some people may prefer to borrow the title without handing in the form.

If the book is not available, it will be reserved for the patient and made available as soon as possible, usually within 48 hours. In most library authorities there is no charge for this service but this will depend on local practice. If the patient is not a member of the library, they will be able to join immediately if they have a recommendation form signed by the prescriber.

What the prescriber does

The prescriber should record use of the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme on the patient's records and follow up as part of treatment. For systems using SNOMED CT, CTV3 and Read v2, the following codes should be used to record referral for mental health self-help literature:

System	Code	Coding
Systemone (TPP)	CTV3	XaLOs
Emis, Isoft, Vision	Read v2	8HHr
Other systems	SNOMED CT	199121000000106

Please register your details if you are prepared to be involved in evaluation of the scheme by emailing readingwell@readingagency.org.uk.

Section three: The evidence base for Reading Well Books on Prescription

Does it work?

Clinical evidence clearly supports the value of the books on prescription approach.

NICE Guidelines

Guidelines from NICE recommend CBT-based self-help approaches as a first step in the treatment of common mental health conditions including depression, anxiety, phobias, chronic fatigue and some eating disorders.

Clinical evidence

Evidence is growing that self-help books based on the principles of CBT can be effective. For a review of the evidence base go to: <http://readingagency.org.uk/readingwell>

Evidence for the value of creative and social reading

Whilst there is less clinical data for the well-being benefits of creative and social reading compared to self-help, evidence is building to show that reading novels and poetry can reduce stress and that social reading activity, such as reading groups, can promote well-being, combat isolation and bring people together in supportive communities.

Section four: Reading Well Books on Prescription resources

A public library health service

The Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme will be delivered by nearly all English library authorities from June 2013. Public library authorities are the local co-ordinating agencies for the scheme. They will provide the book collections, distribute leaflets to prescribers and act as the local contact point for health professionals wishing to take part.

If you have not yet been in touch with your local library service and would like to know who to contact, please email readingwell@readingagency.org.uk.

Resources

Available resources include:

- **Reading Well Books on Prescription user leaflet** containing the recommended reading form. Available as hard copies and also as an [online read-only version](#)
- **Downloadable [recommended reading form](#)** and the [core booklist](#)
- **Reading Well Books on Prescription guide for professionals** available as hard copies and also as an [online read-only version](#).
- **Posters** in A3 and A4 – please email readingwell@readingagency.org.uk
- **Reading Well Books on Prescription website** (www.readingagency.org.uk/readingwell) containing a range of resources, including FAQs

You may also be interested in

- **Reading Well Mood-boosting Books:** a national promotion of uplifting novels, poetry and non-fiction chosen by readers. A [new list of Mood-boosting Books](#) is now available, and supporting materials can be ordered from the Reading Agency shop (www.readingagency.org.uk/shop). There will be an additional list recommended by people who have been diagnosed with cancer in summer 2013.

Section five: Supporting partners

Core partners

Reading Well Books on Prescription is delivered by The Reading Agency working in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians and local library services.

The Reading Agency is an independent charity with a mission to give everyone an equal chance in life by helping people become confident and enthusiastic readers. It runs national reading programmes and partnerships across the library network. It is funded by the Arts Council. www.readingagency.org.uk.

The Society of Chief Librarians is a local government association made up of the chief librarians of each library authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. SCL takes a leading role in the development of public libraries, through sharing best practices, advocating for continuous improvement on behalf of local people, and leading the debate on the future of the public library service. www.goscl.com.

National health partners

The following health partners are supporting the scheme:

- Department of Health – Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme (IAPT)
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- Royal College of Nursing
- Royal College of Psychiatrists
- British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
- The British Psychological Society
- Mind

Section six: Evaluation and further information

We are evaluating the uptake, prescriber value and patient impact of the scheme. If you are able to help us with this evaluation or would like further information about Reading Well Books on Prescription, please contact us at readingwell@readingagency.org.uk.