

**READING
WELL**



Mental Health Awareness Week 2023

Library Toolkit



**Libraries
Connected**

**THE
READING
AGENCY**

Mental Health Awareness Week 2023

15 to 21 May

Co-ordinated by the Mental Health Foundation, Mental Health Awareness Week is an annual public campaign to tackle stigma and help people to better understand and care for their mental health.

This year, the campaign will focus on **anxiety** with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding of what it is and how we can manage anxious feelings so that they don't become a problem.

This toolkit provides:

- key facts on mental health and wellbeing
- resources for promoting Reading Well, Reading Friends and Road to Reading
- library display and activity ideas
- template social media copy
- signposting to further useful resources.

15 to 21 May 2023

Mental Health Awareness Week



#ToHelpMyAnxiety

Key facts on mental health and wellbeing

- Around **1 in 6 people** experience symptoms for **common mental health problems** in **England¹** and **Wales²**, **1 in 4 in Scotland³** and **1 in 5 in Northern Ireland⁴**
- A recent survey found a quarter of adults felt **so anxious** that it **stopped them from doing the things they want to do** some or all of the time.⁵
- People in the UK are experiencing widespread **stress** and **anxiety** in response to the cost-of-living crisis. More than **one third** of adults feel anxious and almost **3 in 10** feel stressed.⁶
- **4 in 5** young people reported the pandemic made their mental health worse.⁷
- **8 in 10** young people agreed the pandemic had increased feelings of **anxiety** and **isolation**.⁸

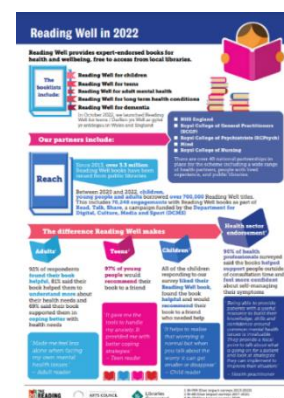
How libraries and reading can help

- Self-directed bibliotherapy increases '**mental resilience**' to anxiety and anxious feelings.⁹
- Regular readers for pleasure reported **fewer feelings of depression** than non-readers, and **stronger feelings of relaxation** from reading than from watching television or engaging with technology intensive activities.¹⁰
- Bibliotherapy improves **self-esteem** and supports with a range of other personal, health, mental health and wellbeing-related issues for children, young people and adults.¹¹
- There is clear evidence of the **therapeutic value of the library space** itself – a qualitative study with people with mental health conditions identified the library as a space that is at once 'familiar and welcoming, comforting and calming, and empowering'.¹²

How Reading Well can help

The following information is available as an [infographic](#), which can be downloaded and printed.

- **92%** of people found their Reading Well book helpful, **81%** said their book helped them to understand more about their health needs and **69%** said their book supported them in coping better with health needs.
- **90%** of health professionals surveyed said Reading Well books helped support people outside of consultation time and feel more confident about self-managing their symptoms.



¹ NHS Digital (2016) [Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, England, 2014](#)

² Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government (2012) [Together for Mental Health: A Strategy for Mental Health and Wellbeing in Wales](#)

³ Scottish Government, Rhiaghaltas na h-Alba (2022) [The Scottish Health Survey 2021 - volume 1: main report](#)

⁴ Department of Health NI (2014) [Making Life Better: A Whole System Framework For Public Health](#)

⁵ Mental Health Foundation (2022) [Stress, anxiety and hopelessness over personal finances widespread across UK - new mental health survey](#)

⁶ Mental Health Foundation (2022) [Stress, anxiety and hopelessness over personal finances widespread across UK - new mental health survey](#)

⁷ Young Minds (2020) [Coronavirus: Impact on Young People with Mental Health Needs](#)

⁸ Young Minds (2020) [Coronavirus: Impact on Young People with Mental Health Needs](#)

⁹ [Bibliotherapy to decrease stress and anxiety and increase resilience and mindfulness: A pilot trial](#)

¹⁰ [Reading between the Lines: the Benefits of Reading for Pleasure](#)

¹¹ Niman et al. (2019) [The Effect of Bibliotherapy on the Self Esteem among Early Adolescents](#); G. Sevinç (2019) [Healing Mental Health through Reading: Bibliotherapy](#)

¹² L. Brewster (2014) [The public library as therapeutic landscape: a qualitative case study](#), *Health & Place* 26: 94-99

Promoting Reading Well, Reading Friends and Road to Reading

READING WELL



Mental Health Awareness Week is a great opportunity to shine a spotlight on **Reading Well** collections in your library.

You can download a detailed overview of the titles in each Reading Well booklist (including ISBNs, available formats, jacket images and blurbs) here:

- [Reading Well for mental health](#)
- [Reading Well for teens](#)
- [Reading Well for children](#)

Many of the Reading Well titles are available as e-books and audiobooks. For details, see the [format availability spreadsheet](#).



Engaging with health partners

The resources below have been created to help libraries connect with local health partners and services, and alert them to the library Health Offer.

- [Health sector engagement letter](#): A template letter library staff can send to health/social care professionals to establish partnerships to deliver Reading Well.
- [Social prescribing toolkit](#): A toolkit has been created to help library staff develop their social prescribing offer. It includes an overview of social prescribing, and guidance on working with partners and Link Workers locally.
- [Social prescribing infographic](#): Library social prescribing offer infographic, customisable for a local service context.

There are lots more free resources to support your delivery of the scheme on the [Reading Well website](#).

READING FRIENDS



[Reading Friends](#) connects people by starting conversations through reading, giving opportunities to meet others, share stories, make new friends and have fun. Reading Friends has made a **difference to people's lives** – supporting wellbeing, creating meaningful connections, reducing loneliness and engaging more people in reading together for pleasure.

Mental Health Awareness Week is a great time to promote any groups that your library service runs. Or get in touch if you'd like to find out more about running Reading Friends at readingfriends@readingagency.org.uk.

Engaging with health partners

- The [Reading Friends Reach and Impact Report 2021-22](#) includes more detail on the impact of the programme, including the mental health and wellbeing impact on participants and befrienders. This report or the [short impact overview](#) can be shared with health partners and services to raise awareness of the project running in your library and encourage signposting.
- [Reading Friends Presentation for Partners](#): Share this PowerPoint presentation with partners to explain the Key Principles of Reading Friends and what activities you're running. (*Note: you must be logged-in to access this resource*)

World Book Night, the annual celebration of reading, has launched **Road to Reading**: a 10-week initiative that challenges you to read for 30 minutes a week and see what a difference it makes to your life.

The mental health and wellbeing benefits of reading are numerous, so why not encourage library visitors to take up the challenge and build a healthy reading habit!



- The challenge kicks off on World Book Night, during the **Reading Hour (7-8pm)** on **Sunday 23rd April**, but people can join anytime. Library visitors can [sign up to Road to Reading here](#).
- Libraries can download promotional resources for the challenge from the [World Book Night website](#).

Library display and activity ideas

Display ideas

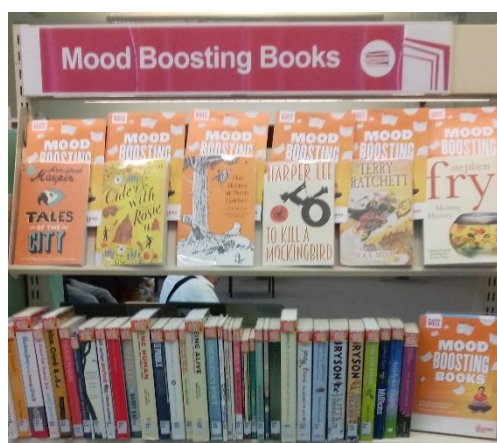
- Does your library have digital screens you could use to promote your Reading Well collections? Download [plasma screen artwork](#).
- Create a display of [Reading Well](#) books, alongside the [infographic](#), posters/leaflets/pull-up banners (printed materials can be ordered [online](#)). If space is limited, you could pick out [titles from the collections that address this year's theme of anxiety](#).
- Create a display of [Mood-boosting Books](#), and download and print some promotional [A4 posters](#) to put up around the library.
- Make a display of books recommended by staff for boosting their mood and helping them to relax. You could also ask library visitors for their recommendations!
- Create a display around the NHS [5 steps to mental wellbeing](#). Include books that link with the 5 steps, for example books on learning new skills and books on mindfulness. You could also promote activities, such as groups or clubs in the library where people can connect with others, and volunteering opportunities with the library where people can give back to others.
- Create a display about the [Road to Reading challenge](#), which helps people build a reading habit so they can reap the benefits, including for their mental health and wellbeing. Promotional assets can be downloaded from the [World Book Night website](#).



Redbridge Libraries



Lancashire Libraries



Islington Libraries

Activity ideas

- Does your library run any Reading Friends groups that you can promote? There are lots of promotional resources available to download from the [Reading Friends website](#).
- Support reading groups that meet in the library to choose a title from one of the Reading Well collections or a Mood-boosting Book to read together.
- Encourage visitors to sign up to World Book Night's [Road to Reading challenge](#) and boost their wellbeing through reading! Anyone stuck for reading inspiration can check out the [World Book Night 2023 booklist](#) or the [Reading Groups for Everyone](#) resources and noticeboard.
- Run a drop-in session for people to find out about the resources and activities on offer locally to support mental health and wellbeing.
- Invite mental health professionals or local mental health charities/voluntary organisations to give a talk or run a workshop at your library.
- Organise an event with an author whose book appears in one of the Reading Well collections. The Reading Well team can often help with putting you in touch with authors and publishers. *(Note: there will be a cost attached to author visits.)*
- Screen author videos/webinar recordings freely available online. [The Reading Agency's YouTube channel](#) has lots to choose from, including three 'in conversation' style webinars with [authors from the Reading Well for teens list](#).
- Many Reading Well books are available as ebooks. Run a digital drop-in to demonstrate how to download and search the library ebook catalogue for Reading Well titles.



Social media activity



Social media is a great way to spread the word about what your library is doing to support Mental Health Awareness Week and to engage people.

You can post the tweets suggested below, along with the following downloadable digital assets, to visually promote Reading Well online:

- Reading Well for children [animated gif](#), [image bank](#), [book jacket composite](#), & [social media cards](#).
- Reading Well for teens [animated gif](#), [image bank](#), & [book jacket composite](#).
- Reading Well for mental health (adults) [animated gif](#), [image bank](#) & [book jacket composite](#).

The Mental Health Foundation has also created some [campaign graphics](#) for sharing on social media.

Suggested tweets

- #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek is a time to talk about all aspects of mental health. Advice and support for all ages can be found in our #ReadingWell books, e-books and audiobooks. Explore the books online 📖 <https://reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription>
- How are you marking #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek @mentalhealth this year? Find some time for helpful reading that supports your mental health and borrow an expert-endorsed #ReadingWell book from your local library. <https://reading-well.org.uk>
- Many people across the UK told @mentalhealth that they feel anxious some or all of the time. Find support from your local library this #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek with expert-endorsed #ReadingWell booklists 📖 <https://reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription> #ToHelpMyAnxiety
- Stories can be a powerful source of comfort and escapism in difficult times. Find support at your local library with expert-endorsed #ReadingWell booklists – it's easy, free and you can access many titles digitally! #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek @mentalhealth <https://reading-well.org.uk>
- It's #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek and at [insert name of library service] we are doing [your local library activity]

Don't forget to use the official **#MentalHealthAwarenessWeek** or **#ToHelpMyAnxiety** hashtags online to ensure your content reaches as far as possible, as well as the [#ReadingWell](#) hashtag and [@readingagency](#) and [@mentalhealth](#) handles.

More useful resources

- **Mental Health Foundation: Mental Health Awareness Week campaign**
More information about getting involved in the campaign and downloadable resources including posters, logos and social media graphics: www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/public-engagement/mental-health-awareness-week
- **NHS: Every Mind Matters**
Expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental wellbeing and make them part of your daily routine: www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters
For young people: Information and advice on topics including exercise, sleep and how to take care of yourself on social media: www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/youth-mental-health
Libraries can [download resources](#) to signpost to Every Mind Matters.
- **NHS: 5 steps to mental wellbeing**
Find out more about the 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing, including practical tips and advice: www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/
- **BBC Mental Health season**
Running throughout May 2023, with particular focus from 15th May, the BBC will be shining a light on mental health across TV, radio and social media.
A collection of existing content relating to mental health from across the BBC can be browsed and accessed online: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04t6bc1

Looking for help?



Mental health services are free on the NHS.

If someone is having problems with their mental health, it's a good idea for them to [talk to their GP](#). GP's can talk to them about their mental health and help introduce them to the right mental health service for their needs.

Some people may find starting a conversation about their mental health difficult. Mind has put together a guide on how to talk to your GP: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/seeking-help-for-a-mental-health-problem/talking-to-your-gp/

If someone needs support urgently the following organisations are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Samaritans

Call: 116 123 | Email: jo@samaritans.org | [write](#)

Samaritans is a safe place to talk about whatever's getting to you.

Samaritans is free, confidential and available 24/7 for people of any age across the UK and Republic of Ireland.



Childline

Call: 0800 1111 | [email](#) | [online chat](#)

Childline's trained counsellors are there to help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. Childline is free, confidential and available any time, day or night.

childline

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME
childline.org.uk | 0800 1111

AFC Crisis Messenger

Text AFC to 85258

This is a free, confidential, 24/7 text message support service for anyone who is feeling overwhelmed or is struggling to cope.



Always call 999 if your life or the life of someone else is in danger.



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