Loneliness Awareness Week 2023
Library Toolkit

Loneliness Awareness Week 2023
12 to 18 June

Co-ordinated by Marmalade Trust, Loneliness Awareness Week is an annual public campaign to raise awareness and tackle loneliness.

The theme of this year's campaign is **Connection Matters**, and we are all being encouraged to harness everyday moments of connection to help us all feel happier and less lonely.

This toolkit provides:

- key facts on loneliness

- resources for promoting Reading Friends, Mood-boosting Books and Reading Groups for Everyone

- library display and activity ideas

- template social media copy

- signposting to further useful resources.

We're taking part in

L NELINESS AWARENESS WEEK

12th -18th June 2023

PROUDLY PART OF THE
MONTH OF COMMUNITY

#ConnectionMatters
#LonelinessAwarenessWeek

Marmalade TRUST

Connection Matters

It's what makes us human

Key facts on loneliness

- Loneliness is linked to poorer health outcomes,[1] poorer personal wellbeing,[2] and it is estimated to cost the UK economy between £2.2 and £3.7 billion per year.[3]
- The Covid-19 pandemic worsened loneliness and wellbeing levels across the UK due to lack of meaningful contact, reduction in support and increased anxiety.[4]
- In 2022, 31% of adults (20.7 million)[5] reported that they were lonelier than before the pandemic.[6]
- 1.4 million older people in the UK are often lonely.[7]
- 8 in 10 young people agreed the pandemic had increased feelings of anxiety and isolation.[8]

How libraries and reading can help

- 19% of readers say that reading stops them from feeling lonely.[9] This is backed up by a study analysing social connectedness which found that reading books significantly reduces feelings of loneliness for people aged 18-64.[10]
- Participation in shared reading groups is linked to enhanced relaxation, calmness, concentration, quality of life, confidence and self-esteem, as well as feelings of shared community and common purpose.[11]
- A survey of UK adults who had used library services during lockdown found that 63% indicated it had helped them feel more connected to their local community.[12]
- Higher literacy skills are associated with a range of positive societal benefits, including having a stronger sense of belonging to society and being more likely to trust others.[13]

How Reading Friends can help

The following information is available in the Reading Friends short impact overview, which can be downloaded and printed. By taking part in the programme:

- 87% of Reading Friends participants and 72% befrienders felt more connected to other people.
- 71% of Reading Friends participants and 30% befrienders felt less lonely.
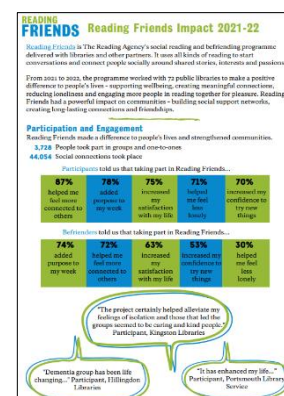
[1] House of Commons Library (2021) Tackling loneliness
[2] DCMS (2022) Tackling loneliness evidence review: executive summary
[3] New Economic Foundations (2017) The Cost of Loneliness to UK Employers
[4] British Red Cross (2020) Life after Lockdown
[5] ONS (2021) United Kingdom population mid-year estimate
[6] IPSOS (2022) Two years of life under lockdown
[7] Age UK (2018) All the Lonely People
[8] Young Minds (2020) Coronavirus: Impact on Young People with Mental Health Needs
[9] Billington, J (2015) Reading between the Lines: the Benefits of Reading for Pleasure Quick Reads University of Liverpool p. 6
[10] Hilhorst, S, et al. (2018) A Society of Readers Demos p. 12
[11] Longden E., Davis P., Billington J., et al (2015) Shared Reading: Assessing the intrinsic value of a literature-based intervention Medical Humanities, 41 (2), pp. 113-20
[12] Peachey, J (2020) Making a Difference: Libraries, Lockdown and Looking Ahead
[13] OECD (2013) Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills

Reading Friends, Reading Well, Mood-boosting Books and Reading Groups for Everyone

[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.

Loneliness 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*)

Reading Well

Loneliness Awareness Week is a great opportunity to shine a spotlight on **Reading Well** collections in your library, especially since the collections touch on subjects including anxiety and social anxiety, depression and low mood, resilience, self-esteem, along with personal stories that can help people feel less alone.

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
- Reading Well for long term conditions
- Reading Well for dementia

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.

Mood-boosting Books

Reading Well [Mood-boosting Books](#) is a national promotion of uplifting titles, including novels, poetry and non-fiction. The books are all recommended by readers and reading groups.
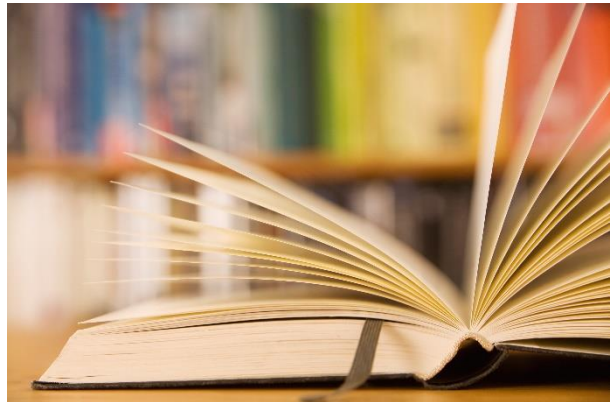
With a great range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry, Mood-boosting Booklists have something for everyone.

Mood-boosting Books are ideal titles for book clubs and reading groups to share together and are also great for individuals to read to lift their mood and boost their sense of wellbeing.
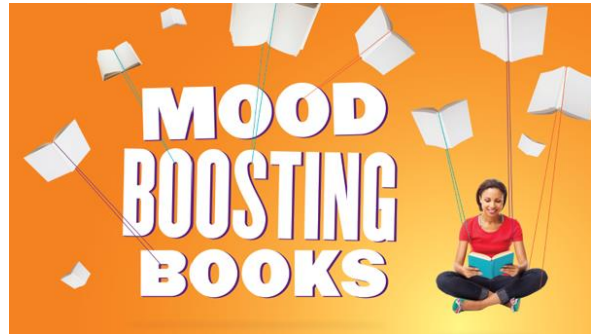
Reading Groups for Everyone

[Reading Groups for Everyone](#), run by The Reading Agency, is the UK's largest reading group network.

Reading groups are a great way to make friends, feel connected and empowered and try books you'd never have come across otherwise!

People can **find their nearest reading group** on the website, and **existing reading groups can sign-up** to access exclusive offers from publishers and the chance to win books to read and review for the website.

There's also a guide on [how to start a reading group](#), [icebreaker questions](#) to help get discussions started, and a [social media guide](#) for reading groups.

Library display and activity ideas

Display ideas

- If your library runs **Reading Friends** activities, make sure you've got lots of posters up to promote the group. *You will need to be logged in to download these resources*.

- Create a display of Reading Well and/or Mood-boosting Books.

- Advertise **volunteering opportunities** within the library – getting involved in the community is a great way for people to meet others with shared interests.

- Bloomsbury has created a booklist for libraries and other organisations looking for **books tackling loneliness, isolation, mental health issues, and maintaining human connection**. There are also a number of novels that have been chosen for their transporting and escapist quality. The list contains a mixture of fiction and non-fiction for both adults and children and can be used in a group or one-on-one setting: https://reading-well.org.uk/resources/4841

- The Reading Agency's May booklist focused on Community and Celebration. These books for adults, young people and children would also be great choices for a display!

Luton Libraries
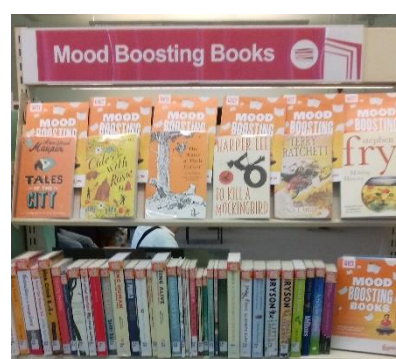
Islington Libraries

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. *You will need to be logged in to download these resources*.

- The Great Get Together are encouraging more libraries and reading groups to get involved in their annual campaign (**23-25 June 2023**), bringing together communities to celebrate what unites us, to bridge divides and to tackle loneliness. With our support, they have created a *Great Read/Write Together toolkit* to give you some ideas for ways join in!

- Encourage reading groups that meet in the library to choose a Mood-boosting Book to read together, or a book from Bloomsbury's Read, Talk, Share booklist.

- Run a drop-in session for people to find out about all the resources and activities on offer locally to support community connection, mental health and wellbeing.

- Run digital skills sessions to help people feel more confident with technology, opening up more opportunities to stay in touch with friends and family and meet others.

- Offer a digital drop-in to demonstrate how to download and search the library ebook catalogue. You could highlight any Reading Well or Mood-Boosting titles available for e-loan.

- Hold a volunteering fayre/event to promote local opportunities for people to get involved with their local community and meet like-minded people.

- Map out some self-guided local interest walking routes. People could meet at the library before navigating the route together as a group.

- Parent and baby groups, rhyme time, coffee mornings, knit and natter groups and jigsaw/ board game clubs are simple and easy ways to bring people together in a relaxed environment within the library.

Lots of your regular library activities will be tackling loneliness in your local community, and Loneliness Awareness Week is a great opportunity to raise awareness of everything that's going on!

Social media activity

Social media is a great way to spread the word about what your library is doing to support Loneliness Awareness Week and to engage people. You can share the posts suggested below to promote what's on offer at your library. The following digital assets can be downloaded to illustrate your posts:

- 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
- Digital assets for Reading Friends

Marmalade Trust has also created some campaign graphics for sharing on social media.

Suggested tweets

- 8 in 10 young people said the pandemic had increased feelings of anxiety and isolation. Boost your resilience and self-esteem this #LonelinessAwarenessWeek by borrowing a #ReadingWell for teens book from your local library 👉 https://reading-well.org.uk/teens @ReadingAgency @MarmaladeTrust

- Reading books greatly reduces feelings of loneliness. Visit your library this #LonelinessAwarenessWeek and borrow expert-endorsed #ReadingWell books that support your mental health. Many titles are available digitally too! https://reading-well.org.uk @ReadingAgency @MarmaladeTrust

- Millions of us in the UK are experiencing loneliness, but reading and books can bring us together. This #LonelinessAwarenessWeek, check out @Reading_Groups near you to discover new books and make new friends! https://readinggroups.org/groups @ReadingAgency @MarmaladeTrust #ConnectionMatters

- This year's #LonelinessAwarenessWeek theme is connection. Join us at [insert name of library service] for [your local library activity]. #ConnectionMatters @MarmaladeTrust

For libraries running Reading Friends

- Our @ReadingFriends_ activities connect people by starting conversations through reading, giving opportunities to share stories, make new friends and have fun. Find out more: [WEBSITE LINK] #LonelinessAwarenessWeek #ConnectionMatters @readingagency @MarmaladeTrust

- We're tackling loneliness in our local community by running @ReadingFriends_ activities! Would you or someone you know enjoy chatting about reading? Visit our website to sign up: [WEBSITE LINK] #LonelinessAwarenessWeek #ConnectionMatters @readingagency @MarmaladeTrust

Don't forget to use the official **#LonelinessAwarenessWeek** or **#ConnectionMatters** hashtags online to ensure your content reaches as far as possible, as well as the #ReadingWell hashtag and @readingagency and @MarmaladeTrust handles.

- **Marmalade Trust: Loneliness Awareness Week campaign**
  More information about getting involved in the campaign and downloadable resources including posters, logos and social media graphics:
  www.lonelinessawarenessweek.org/resources
  You can also add your library events to their Connections Map:
  www.lonelinessawarenessweek.org/map

- **Library staff 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: www.reading-well.org.uk/resources/4984

- **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/

Looking for help with mental health?

If someone is having problems with their mental health, it's a good idea for them to **talk to their GP** who can 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.

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.