

Reading Well Books on Prescription Scheme

[Main heading] Reading Well: Books on Prescription scheme – guide for professionals

What is Books on Prescription?

GPs and mental health professionals can recommend endorsed self-help books to people with mild to moderate mental health conditions. Self-help books work most effectively for conditions which are receptive to book-based self-help CBT therapy.

Recommendations can be taken to the local library where the books can be borrowed free of charge.

A new national scheme for England

The first Books on Prescription (BOP) scheme was developed in Cardiff by Professor Neil Frude, a Clinical Psychologist. There has been a national scheme in Wales since 2005.

The BOP model has been adopted by over 80% of English library authorities working with local health partners. *Reading Well: Books on Prescription*), launched in 2013, is the first national scheme for England building on existing best practice. It provides:

- A consistent approach to delivering BOP through all English public libraries, including the provision of standardised public library book collections
- Quality-assured resources, including a national, expert-endorsed self- help booklist and patient information leaflet
- The signposting of reader-recommended creative reading (such as novels and poetry), included in the Mood-boosting Books promotion, and social reading based activity such as reading groups
- Signposting via NHS Choices and other key partner networks

A partnership approach

Reading Well: BOP has been developed by The Reading Agency working with the Society of Chief Librarians. Health partners endorsing the scheme include the Department of Health (NHS Choices and the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Programme (IAPT), the Royal College of GPs, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Royal College of Nursing, The British Psychological Society and Mind.

The scheme is delivered most effectively when supported by local partnerships between library authorities, GPs and other mental health service providers including psychological well being practitioners.

Why use the *Reading Well*, Books on Prescription scheme?

NICE guidelines recommend CBT-based self-help books as a first step in the treatment of mild to moderate mental health conditions including depression, anxiety, phobias and some eating disorders.¹

BOP is an early intervention treatment and part of the 'watchful waiting' at step one of the Stepped Care Model for mental health and IAPT provision. It can be used as a stand-alone treatment, as complementary to a pharmacological and/or a psychological approach and as a key element in a supported programme.

It increases the range of treatment options available and for many patients will be preferable to medication.

It can build an understanding and active involvement in the management of conditions, helping to increase psychological resilience.

Quality-assured library book collections can be an important first step for people experiencing mental distress who have not sought professional help. The *Reading Well: BOP* user guide includes appropriate referral advice for people not currently receiving support.

For people with more severe mental health conditions, referral to local IAPT services or other supported therapeutic interventions will be more appropriate than using self-help materials without guidance.

BOP may also be useful to people with physical conditions such as cancer which can cause stress and anxiety.

What does *Reading Well: BOP* cover?

The 2013 scheme provides book-based support for adults experiencing mild to moderate mental health conditions. The core list provides evidence-based self-help in the following areas:

Anger

Anxiety

Binge eating

Chronic fatigue

Chronic pain

Depression

Health anxiety

OCD

Panic

Phobias

Relationships

Social phobia

Self-esteem

Sleep problems

Stress

Worry

The core book list will be revised regularly using expert and patient review. Additional lists are planned for carers, young people and other conditions.

Who is it suitable for?

Although some audio material is available, the *Reading Well: BOP* scheme is primarily suitable for competent adult readers. Independent users will need to be able to read the material carefully and follow the activities suggested. Not everyone will have the necessary skills to make effective use of book-based treatment but it is a useful option for those who can.

¹ NICE guidelines: Depression in Adults, CG90,(2009), Anxiety, CG22, (2004), Eating Disorders cg9 (2004)

Books are available in English.

Who can recommend books?

GPs may want to recommend self-help reading to people they might not yet refer to IAPT services or to use whilst waiting for treatment.

Other mental health professionals, e.g. Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners, councillors or therapists, may also recommend books.

Some people may use library book collections independently as a first step in seeking help.

How does it work?

Books can be recommended using the book recommendation form attached to the user guide. This is also downloadable from www.readingagency/readingwell.

Service users take their book recommendation to the library where the book can be borrowed free of charge. If the book is not available, library staff will obtain it as soon as possible.

If the service user is not a member of the library, they can join. In most libraries, the recommendation form will provide suitable ID if it has been signed by a health practitioner.

Individuals can also borrow books without submitting the book recommendation. Library book loans and borrower details are treated as strictly confidential.

You can find more detail about *Reading Well* at www.readingagency/readingwell

Available resources

As well as this guide for health professionals, resources to support the scheme include a user guide (A5 leaflets) and posters (A4 and A3). These are available from your local library service or www.readingagency.org.uk/shop Digital resources can be downloaded at xxx

Follow up

It is recommended that health professionals document the use of the Reading Well BOP scheme in client notes. This is to ensure continuity of care and appropriate referral to more specialist support where unsupported self-help is insufficient.

The user guide advises service users to contact their GP or another health professional immediately if the book doesn't seem to be helping. Practitioners are encouraged to reinforce this as part of the consultation process.

If well-being deteriorates, a step up to level 2 of the IAPT step care model is recommended.

Other reading and well-being schemes

There is evidence that reading novels and poetry can reduce stress and that taking part in reading-based social activity such as reading groups can break down social isolation and promote well being²

Mood-boosting books

Mood-boosting books is signposted in the *Reading Well: BOP* user guide and is available in local libraries. It is a national promotion of reader-recommended uplifting titles, including novels, poetry and non-fiction, particularly aimed at people who may be experiencing mild to moderate mental health conditions.

Reading groups in libraries

Reading Well: BOP also signposts people to social reading activities in libraries. Reading groups can be a good way of bringing people together, promoting well-being and reducing isolation. (web reference)

How else can libraries help?

Public libraries have an important role to play in supporting the health and well-being of local communities. They provide:

- Trusted local spaces where people can meet up physically and virtually
- Community outreach supporting vulnerable people
- Staff with local knowledge and expertise in information, reading and community engagement
- Assisted on-line access to health and well-being information and resources

They enable self-help through:

- Health and care information services
- Referral and signposting
- Public health promotion activity
- National reading programmes promoting learning, literacy and well-being
- Social and recreational opportunities e.g. reading groups
- Volunteering opportunities that keep people active, engaged and learning

Evaluation

We would like to contact you in the future regarding evaluation of the scheme. Please register your practice at xxxx.

² Mindlab International, 2009 and www.readingagency.org.uk/about/the-universal-reading-offer