



UK Health
Security
Agency

Knowledge & Library Services: Search results

Searcher: Mary West (mary.west@ukhsa.gov.uk)

Person requesting search:

Date of request: 26/01/23 **Date results sent:** 09/02/23

Level of search: (2) Annotated bibliography

Search question:

What impact do shared reading services have on the health and wellbeing of groups to social isolation.

Terms used:

The complete search strategy is in the [Appendix](#).

Limits applied:

Age group	Language	Publication type	Time limit
Adults	English		2012-2023

Summary of resources searched and results:

Source	No. of results*
CINAHL	6
Google Scholar	18
Medline	28
Scopus	20
Social Policy and Practice	51
Social Care Online	5

TOTAL after deduplication and screening for relevance = 28

Disclaimer

Although every effort has been made to ensure this information is accurate, it is possible it may not be representative of the whole body of evidence available. Both articles and internet resources may contain errors or out of date information. None of the resources have been critically appraised. No responsibility can be accepted for any action taken on the basis of this information.

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Results:

Grey Literature.

Bristol Ageing Better. **Shared Reading Groups**. Accessed online 08/02/23.

<https://bristolageingbetter.org.uk/shared-reading-groups/>

BAB is a partnership of individuals and organisations working together to reduce isolation and loneliness among older people in Bristol. The project established more than 30 shared reading groups across the city – reaching those over 50, at risk of social isolation on hospital wards, sheltered housing sites, libraries and a range of other settings.

GOV.UK. Blog - **DCMS Libraries**. Dr Jane Davis MBE, Posted on:19 October 2016 -

Categories: Case study. <https://dcmslibraries.blog.gov.uk/2016/10/19/the-power-of-shared-reading/>

Dr Jack Czauderna, Chair of Pioneer Health Foundation says, “You may think The Reader is all about reading, but it is really all about health.”

1 in 5 older people in the community suffer depression, with mental ill health accounting for a quarter of the UK’s burden of illness, costing society £105 billion a year. [Recent research](#) tells us that using library services regularly will result in £27.5m savings annually to the NHS, which would become additional costs if libraries were not there.

Those who read with us report far-reaching health benefits and our research bears this out. A social return on investment (SROI) report by Liverpool John Moores University, Centre for Public Health (2013), found that for every £1 invested in shared reading, an average of £6.47 was generated to users’ health and well-being.

Ruth Pointer - Locality Manager at Leicestershire County Council - explains: “Shared reading is not just a library thing, it’s much more than that – it’s a way of supporting health and wellbeing. Participants say to me, “This is the highlight of my week”, it makes a huge difference to their lives and they get so much out of it, as do the volunteers who run the groups. It’s a brilliant model and is exactly what libraries should be about”.

The Reader. **‘SOMETHING CREATIVE AND UNPREDICTABLE IN AN OTHERWISE VERY CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT’: SHARED READING IN SECURE MENTAL HEALTHCARE.**

Written by Rachael Norris, 21st June 2019

<https://www.thereader.org.uk/something-creative-and-unpredictable-within-what-was-otherwise-a-very-controlled-environment-shared-reading-in-secure-mental-healthcare/>

For nearly a decade The Reader has been running Shared Reading groups in a range of settings within the Criminal Justice System including prisons, approved premises, high-security psychiatric hospitals, secure units and community justice initiatives.

Informal weekly groups provide the opportunity to listen, empathise and share reflections, giving offenders and ex-offenders new ways to tell their stories and move towards secondary desistance.

Earlier this month, in conjunction with CRILS (Centre for Research into Reading, Literature and Society, University of Liverpool), we brought together commissioners, psychologists and researchers into prison reform, prison officers, occupational therapists, and members of other reading agencies in London to explore the impact of Shared Reading in secure mental healthcare.

The Reader. **PAIN RELIEF THROUGH SHARED READING**

Written by The Reader, 31st August 2018. <https://www.thereader.org.uk/pain-relief-through-shared-reading/>

For over five years now, The Reader has been delivering a *Shared Reading* group at Broadgreen Hospital for people living with [chronic pain](#). The group has been the subject of two research projects carried out by [The Centre for Research into Literature and](#)

[Society](#) (CRILs) at the University of Liverpool, which explored [the impact of a literature-based intervention](#) for those living with chronic pain and a comparative study of [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Shared Reading](#).

The Californian research certainly chimes with that of CRILs which found that, as well as providing respite from pain during the sessions themselves, the relief could continue for days afterwards, and even result in a better night's sleep.

The Reader. **WHAT LITERATURE CAN DO: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SHARED READING AS A WHOLE POPULATION HEALTH INTERVENTION**

Written by Martin Gallagher, 14th September 2017.

<https://www.thereader.org.uk/literature-can-investigation-effectiveness-shared-reading-whole-population-health-intervention/>

Investigating the impact of *Shared Reading* on mental health and well-being in the four boroughs of Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark.

One *Shared Reading* group member says that literature is not just "talking about" feelings, but actually "doing feelings" - getting into them and re-experiencing them in another form. *Shared Reading* is about re-experiencing life from off the page, and as a result, being useful to the lives of it's group members.

The Reader. **NEW RESEARCH PROVIDES EVIDENCE THAT SHARED READING DELIVERS POSITIVE CHANGE FOR INDIVIDUALS IN PRISONS AND PROBATION SERVICES**

Written by Maisie Jeynes, 16th November 2022. <https://www.thereader.org.uk/new-research-provides-evidence-that-shared-reading-delivers-positive-change-for-individuals-in-prisons-and-probation-services/>

The distinctive qualities of Shared Reading – being read to, reading aloud, and sharing literature – made a unique contribution to participants' experience. It also made an important contribution to PIPE staff competence, especially through the Reader Leader training and experience of leading groups (one Prison Officer commented that it had been the 'best training for working on the PIPE' that he had had). Shared Reading groups were regarded very positively by participants, and engagement with literature in this 'shared' and open way was described as highly meaningful.

We're pleased to see the impact of our work in PIPEs evidenced through this study . If you're interested in hearing more about our Shared Reading services in PIPEs, or more widely in mental health and community settings, please email Kate Bramhall, Criminal Justice Programmes Manager at katebramhall@thereader.org.uk or Helen Wilson, Head of Adult Shared Reading Programmes at helenwilson@thereader.org.uk.

Please see *Enabling features of Psychologically Informed Planned Environments* 2013 from National Offender Management System for more information about PIPEs.

The Reader. **Ready and Waiting: What the voluntary sector can do for social prescribing in Liverpool**. September 2020. <https://www.thereader.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/SLC-Project-Report-2020-F.pdf>

The Reader. **STRONGER FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE. GROWING SHARED READING WITH SUPPORT FROM THE SECOND HALF FUND**

MAY 2019. <https://www.thereader.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Stronger-Foundations-For-The-Future-The-Readers-Second-Half-Fund-Repo....pdf>

The Reader. **An investigation into the therapeutic benefits of reading in relation to depression and well-being**. November 2010. [Project Title An investigation into the therapeutic benefits of reading in relation to depression and well-being \(thereader.org.uk\)](#)

The Reader. **Read to Care An Investigation into Quality of Life Benefits of Shared Reading Groups for People Living with Dementia.** 2014.

<https://www.thereader.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Read-to-Care-2014-Final.pdf>

The Reader. **An Evaluation of a Pilot Study of a Literature-Based Intervention with Women in Prison Short Report.** Professor Jude Robinson, School of Law and Social Justice, University of Liverpool Dr Josie Billington, Centre for Research into Reading, Information and Linguistic Systems (CRILS), University of Liverpool. 2012. [CRILS-Women-In-Prison-Report2012.pdf \(thereader.org.uk\)](https://www.thereader.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CRILS-Women-In-Prison-Report2012.pdf)

The Reader. **Cultural Value Assessing the intrinsic value of The Reader Organisation's Shared Reading Scheme.** Accessed online 08/02/23. [Cultural-Value.pdf \(thereader.org.uk\)](https://www.thereader.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Cultural-Value.pdf)

The Reader. **WHAT LITERATURE CAN DO.** The Reader's Shared Reading Groups in Communities in South London Supported by the Guy's and St Thomas' Charity. Accessed online 08/02/23. <https://www.thereader.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/What-Literature-Can-Do.pdf>

The Reader. **Our Impact – Case Studies.** Accessed online 08/02/23. [Our Impact - The Reader](https://www.thereader.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Our-Impact-The-Reader.pdf)

The Reader - <https://www.thereader.org.uk/what-we-do/shared-reading/>

Somerset County Council. **Shared Reading – Memory Group**
Taunton Library. Accessed online 08/02/23.

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/events/shared-reading-memory-group-2/>

Our shared reading group is a place to relax, make new friends and share stories with others. Just drop in and enjoy listening to a great story or poem, no pressure to talk or read.

The Reading Agency. **Read Talk Share.** Accessed online 08/02/23

<https://readingagency.org.uk/news/blog/read-talk-share-initiative.html>

Read, Talk, Share is an initiative to combat loneliness and promote wellbeing through the proven power of reading during the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery.

Read, Talk, Share will expand The Reading Agency's already successful Reading Well and Reading Friends programmes. The two initiatives demonstrate the power of reading to support and connect isolated individuals, and the benefits of bibliotherapy to mental health. The Reading Well book collections will be in every library across the country and are available as eBooks and Reading Friends activity is popping up all over England. Supporting you and your loved ones at this challenging time.

Special EU Programmes Body. **Project Case Study: Shared Reading Programme Tackling Isolation and Loneliness during Lockdown.**

https://seupb.eu/sites/default/files/styles/PEACEIV/Listen_Share_Change_Tackling_Isolation_During_Lockdown.pdf

“Knowing how much this programme meant to our community participants and the emerging need to tackle isolation and loneliness, we set our focus on launching a Digital LSC Programme. With some additional training and support we were able to launch LSC Digital, enabling our participants, both old and new, to join in and enjoy the Reading Room experience from their

homes. By successfully increasing the accessibility of our online platform, we were able to create 24 targeted digital groups and reach 438 participants across Northern Ireland during the initial COVID-19 lockdown period.

GOV.UK. Research and analysis. **An Evaluation of Shared Reading in PIPEs**. Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service. Published. 3 October 2022.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-evaluation-of-shared-reading-in-pipes>

As part of the Joint NHS England and HMPPS Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) Pathway, the University of Cambridge was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of a structured 'Shared Reading' initiative delivered in the context of Psychologically Informed Planned Environment (PIPE) services in prisons. PIPEs are intervention services offered as part of the OPD Pathway that aim to support transitions and consolidate skills learnt in formal treatment programmes.

The aim of the study was to identify and describe the contribution that Shared Reading makes to the work of PIPEs in prisons and to identify the processes through which change, if any, takes place.

LGA. **Lancashire County Council – Health and Well Being**. Accessed online 08/02/23.

[Slide 1 \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

Shared reading programmes. Development of a cohesive programme of events in cultural services venues. Development of learning opportunities for communities.

LGA. **Public health transformation four years on Maximising the use of limited resources**. February 2017. [Public health transformation four years on.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#).

Public health operates a series of shared reading groups across Somerset libraries. The groups are coordinated by the Reader Organisation which has developed an innovative shared reading model, bringing people together in weekly groups to listen to poems and stories read aloud. Thoughts and experiences are shared; personal and social connections are made. Taunton and Yeovil libraries have also proactively set up 'wellbeing zones' – comfortable areas where people can meet friends, and also health professionals. Tackling social isolation The five district councils, which are represented on Somerset HWB, have taken the lead in working to reduce isolation in local areas. A series of local events took place, bringing together district and parish councils and statutory and voluntary sector partners to map assets, identify gaps and develop action plans. Public health supports this approach which is seeking to build a social movement in which there is greater awareness of the problems of isolation, and communities are geared up to help people. Action so far includes a Lottery bid supported by the Community Foundation, a small grants scheme via district councillors, and working to build isolation into the Making Every Contact Counts framework.

Derby Book Festival. **Community Shared Reading**. 2020.

<https://www.derbybookfestival.co.uk/community/shared-reading>

Many people say Shared Reading has a positive impact on their happiness and wellbeing, reducing social isolation and building self-confidence. Anyone can benefit, but particularly people looking for new groups to join, want an introduction to different types of literature, or just want to make new friends. Many social prescribers are recommending Shared Reading as part of their holistic therapy programmes.

Culture Liverpool. **Shared Reading North West: For the community, by the community**.

2017. <https://www.cultureliverpool.co.uk/news/shared-reading-north-west-for-the-community-by-the-community/>

“We know we have much to gain from the considerable talents of people as they enter the second half of their lives, given freely alongside public services. By supporting these innovative social action projects to grow we know they will transform lives and make a significant impact on some of the biggest social challenges we face.”

Dr David Fearnley, Medical Director at Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust said: “Shared Reading enables participants to feel differently about themselves and others – bringing shifts in perspective which are part of the process of developing mental wellness. Reading and reflecting together in a safe environment loosens default patterns of thinking, being and behaving, making it possible for all kinds of people to believe in their own capacity to be resilient or to change. I’m really proud to be part of this innovative work, which is a great example of the way in which traditional services can be supplemented by interventions that are based in the arts.”

The Reading Agency. **Shared reading for wellbeing**. Accessed online 08/02/23. [Shared reading for wellbeing | Reading Agency](#)

1 in 6 adults struggle to read and 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health issue at some point in their lives.

Our work tackles adult literacy, mental health and social isolation through the power of reading.

Museums Libraries and Archives. **Public library activity in the areas of health and well-being Final report**. May 2010. [library health final report 20 May 2010.pdf \(artscouncil.org.uk\)](#)

Reading Friends

<https://readingagency.org.uk/news/blog/reading-friends-2021-22-reach-and-impact.html>

Impact report -

<https://readingagency.org.uk/news/Reading%20Friends%20reach%20and%20impact%20report%2021-22.pdf>

Reading Well (older adults case study)

Reading Well complements older adults offer in North Somerset -

<https://readingagency.org.uk/adults/impact/reading-well/-north-somerset-library-service-has.html>

Read, Talk, Share - How the Reading Agency helped libraries tackle loneliness

<https://dcmslibraries.blog.gov.uk/2021/07/07/read-talk-share-how-the-reading-agency-helped-libraries-tackle-loneliness/>

Reading Outcomes Framework from The Reading Agency

<https://readingoutcomes.readingagency.org.uk/evidence/evidence-by-outcome/>

[Read to Care: An Investigation into Quality of Life Benefits of Shared Reading Groups for People Living with Dementia](#)

Includes 11 case studies alongside personal feedback from group leaders on their own key moments and findings from their reading in care homes, this provides an inspiring introduction to reading with older people, whatever their situation.

[Cultural Value: Assessing the intrinsic value of The Reader’s Shared Reading Scheme](#)

This short report draws out what it describes as the five intrinsic elements of the Shared Reading experience: Liveness, Creative Inarticulacy, The Emotional, The Personal, and The

Group. There are also further examples included of group members responding to what they are reading, and of what it is that impacts them.

[What Literature Can Do \(An investigation into the effectiveness of Shared Reading as a whole population health intervention\)](#)

This report is particularly useful for the range of settings and communities that Shared Reading is shown to be able to reach; from young children in a school to older people living with dementia, as well as groups of people recovering from addictions, or who are living with severe and enduring mental illness.

An evaluation of the social value of the Get into Reading initiative in Wirral, Merseyside Final report, May 2013 Gayle Whelan, Community Asset Research Assistant, Applied Health and Wellbeing Partnership. https://socialvalueuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/final_gir_sroi.pdf

Telegraph and Argus. **The social and wellbeing benefits of reading groups**

7th March 2016. <https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/14325437.the-social-and-wellbeing-benefits-of-reading-groups/>

Now the The Reading Agency has found that book groups offer significant social networks and wellbeing benefits, as well as boosting reading.

A nationwide survey of book clubs found that 95per cent reported that members felt happy being part of the group, 94per cent said being part of a reading group leads to members reading more widely, and 80per cent said members enjoy the books they're reading more when they discuss them with the group.

Some respondents said they had found support and friendship within reading groups designed specially to meet their needs, such as visual impairments or mental health diagnoses. Others said being part of a group had helped them re-discover reading for pleasure, led to longterm friendships or helped them work through a challenging period in their life.

One member, Jane Clark, said: "I went through a very difficult time just after my second child was born. Another mother came up to me and asked if I'd like to join a book club that was just beginning and I took the plunge and said yes. It was a life-changing moment for me. I believe passionately in the power of books but I believe fundamentally in the power of talking and including. A social group, like a book club, has the power to lift, involve and welcome a person who may be feeling isolated or unhappy."

Elaine Price of [Shipley](#) joined a book group after her divorce and found it a valuable support. "I'd been through a divorce and a house move, it knocked me for six. I moved to a new area where I didn't know many people and I felt lonely. I don't go out drinking but wanted to make new friends," she says. "A colleague told me about a book group at the library so I went along and felt instantly at home. I'd always enjoyed reading and liked the idea of discussing a book. We each take it in turns to pick a book and sometimes we have a 'theme night' and discuss several books in the same genre. It has led me to read books I'd never have considered before, and it has given me strong friendships."

Derbyshire Carers Association. **Shared Reading for Wellbeing**. Accessed online 09/02/23. https://derbyshirecarers.co.uk/uploads/documents/Shared_Reading_for_Wellbeing.pdf

In a Shared Reading group, poems, articles and stories are read aloud and then we share our thoughts: what we liked / didn't like, what we're reminded of, how a story or poem makes us feel...The aim is to relax and enjoy the readings and conversations that follow. These groups are welcoming and informal and there is no pressure to participate in any particular way. You can read, listen, talk, ask questions or just observe. Since 2017, the Shared Reading groups have taken place in different settings such

as libraries, Derby College, supported housing and the Royal Derby Hospital.

The University of Nottingham. **School of English. Shared reading groups.** Accessed online 09/02/23. <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/public-engagement/shared-reading-groups.aspx>

The school participates in two shared reading group initiatives that engage with the local community and help to promote the health benefits of reading aloud in group contexts.

They are:

- The Dementia Reading Group
- The Community Reading Group

Dementia Reading Group

Research into bibliotherapy has revealed that reading poems and stories can have a positive effect on people with dementia, as well as bringing together older and socially-isolated people. Shared reading involves reading stories, poems, novels and plays to groups – readings which are experienced and discussed communally by group members. Undergraduate placements

Undergraduate students from the School of English have the opportunity to undertake placements as Reading Group Facilitators in the Dementia Reading Group, getting involved in group reading and one-on-one reading with residents in a local care home. Full training is provided by the school and the County Dementia Outreach Service. Students are fully supported throughout the placement.

Contact the Dementia Reading Group

For more information about the group, please contact [Dr Kevin Harvey](#).

Dementia Day-to-Day website

Reading group participants also have the opportunity to blog about their experiences for the Dementia Day-to-Day website. This blog is an exciting new initiative, jointly run by the [Institute of Mental Health](#) and the School of English.

It brings together authors from all walks of life - each with their own experience of, and interest in, dementia - to explore the subject of ageing and wellbeing from as many angles as possible.

[Read the Dementia Day-to-Day blog](#)

Community Reading Group

The Schools of English and Education at the University of Nottingham, together with the School of English at Sheffield Hallam University, jointly run a community shared reading group. The group is open to everyone - new members are always welcome. Shared reading is an increasingly popular activity in the UK. Pioneered by [The Reader Organisation](#), a charitable social enterprise, shared reading aims to connect people with fantastic literature and with each other. Shared reading involves the reading aloud of stories, novels, poems and plays to groups of people - readings which are experienced and discussed communally by group members.

Our group has been running for over two years. We meet at the [Thomas Helwys Baptist Church](#), Church Street, Lenton, Nottingham every Wednesday at 2.30pm. If you are interested in coming along to the group and sharing in the delight of listening to reading aloud, you'll receive a warm welcome!

Bibliotherapy: Its Processes and Benefits and Application in Clinical and Developmental Settings. Author: Nick Canty, Lecturer, Department of Information Studies, University College London.

<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1574599/1/Bibliotherapy%20FINAL%20pdf.pdf>

The article provides a brief historical account of how books have been used in institutions through the centuries and how then bibliotherapeutic process works through the use of texts from which the reader gains an insight into their personal situation by identifying

with a character experiencing similar problems.

Bibliotherapy as both clinical and community-based treatments are discussed through a number of case studies from the critical literature, in particular the Ayrshire Read Yourself Well Scheme and the Reading Well / Books on Prescription Scheme. The results of a medical trial on the benefits of reading a novel based on MRI scans of readers are then discussed.

What Works Wellbeing. **Can reading groups be used to tackle loneliness?** Jan 15, 2020 | by Dr Carina Spaulding and Dr Louisa Thomson.

<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/blog/can-reading-groups-be-used-to-tackle-loneliness/>

In 2017, The Reading Agency launched Reading Friends – an ambitious new UK-wide befriending programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and delivered by local partners using volunteers. Reading Friends focuses on vulnerable and isolated older people, including carers and people with dementia, and uses reading to get people chatting.

A reading group in acute mental health care. Nursing Times 30.10.12 / Vol 108 No 44 / www.nursingtimes.net.

Nursing Practice. Innovation. Mental health. <https://cdn.ps.emap.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2012/10/301012-A-reading-group-in-acute-mental-health-care.pdf>

In this article...

- How a reading group can benefit patients on an acute mental health ward
- The types of poems and stories used in the group
- What patients thought about the sessions

The Scottish Library and Information Council. **HEALTH ON THE SHELF. Health and Wellbeing in Public Libraries in Scotland.** 03/2020.

<https://scottishlibraries.org/media/3000/slic-health-on-the-shelf.pdf>

Gov.UK. Guidance **Social prescribing: applying All Our Health** .Updated 27 January 2022.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-prescribing-applying-all-our-health/social-prescribing-applying-all-our-health>

Wokingham Borough Libraries. **The Shared Reading Experience-What's it all about?** With Sue Colbourn. Accessed online 09/02/23.

<https://wokinghamboroughlibraries.wordpress.com/category/shared-reading/>

Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals. **Trust shortlisted for national patient experience award** Shared Reading programme delivers incredible connections and powerful moments for patients.

<https://whh.nhs.uk/about-us/news-events-and-features/latest-news/trust-shortlisted-national-patient-experience-award>

Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals has been shortlisted for a prestigious national award as one of the first acute trusts in the country to use a Shared Reading programme to improve the patient experience on its wards.

Shared Reading is a simple yet powerful idea, pioneered by Liverpool-based national charity The Reader, which brings people together in small groups to talk and share great novels, poems and plays. It has been shown to improve mental and social wellbeing among participants.

More than 150 patients have benefitted from Shared Reading groups, led by staff from Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals, since they were introduced in July 2019 as

part of a patient experience initiative. The incredible impact in improving both the mental and physical health of patients has resulted in the Trust being shortlisted in this year's Patient Experience National Network Awards (PENNA) – Partnership Working to improve the Experience category.

Initially introduced on the intermediate care ward at Halton Hospital and dementia and stroke wards at Warrington Hospital, weekly Shared Reading groups bring patients and staff together to read aloud, share thoughts, reflections and memories sparked by the literature.

Whilst the therapeutic benefits of Shared Reading in aiding recovery are well documented, Acute Medical Therapies Team Manager at WHH, Rachel Bold identified early on the additional benefit of these sessions in assessing patients. Shared Reading Sessions on the Forget Me Not ward (B12) enabled staff to observe the physical and cognitive function and wellbeing of patients with dementia in a relaxed and enjoyable setting.

After witnessing extremely positive results for both mental wellbeing and physical health WHH is now exploring rolling the programme out to support more patients on additional wards.

Chief Nurse at WHH, Kimberley Salmon-Jamieson said: "Shared Reading has created incredible connections and powerful moments for patients, empowering them to find their voice and to re-connect with themselves, their fellows and our staff.

"We look forward to introducing it to more patients this year."

The Baring Foundation. **24 August 2020 How literature can be a lifeline to support mental health.** Rachel Parker. <https://baringfoundation.org.uk/blog-post/how-literature-can-be-a-lifeline-to-support-mental-health/>

Rachel Parker of The Reader in Liverpool explains how they use shared reading of great literature to help improve mental health and resilience in settings including prisons, secure mental health units and the community.

Bristol Green Capital Partnership. **How reading groups are offering a different kind of medicine.** 19th October 2016. <https://bristolgreencapital.org/how-reading-groups-are-offering-a-different-kind-of-medicine/>

We want *Shared Reading* to become so widespread that everyone, wherever they are, can access a group. We want to build a movement of Readers, so that *Shared Reading* can become part of everyday life.

The reading groups are a different kind of medicine – it's through them that I've found a way back into life.

Daniel, reading group member

The Bush Theatre. **How Shared Reading Brings People Together.** Tue 04 Dec 2018.

<https://www.bushtheatre.co.uk/bushgreen/shared-reading/>

What have been the highlights for you?

Holly – My overall highlight of this project was when one of the elder members in our group told me that the group acted as an antidote to the loneliness she often experiences. That for me is at the heart of what a community theatre is. It's a place for people to explore their own creativity, but it's more than that, it's also, sometimes, a lifeline.

Ruksana – What I've enjoyed seeing is how the action of sharing is present in so many different ways. There's the Shared Reading of course, the sharing of views from group members and the sharing of the physical things like the coffee pot and the room we occupy. I've also found myself bumping into group members in and around Shepherds Bush quite regularly and stopping for a chat. In the past weeks I chatted to a reader on

the 207 bus and another group member walking on a local street. It's lovely to know that we are part of a community in more ways than one.

The Brain Charity. **Shared Reading**. Accessed online 09/02/23.

<https://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/event/shared-reading/>

Starwards. Inspiring Inpatient Care. **Reading Groups at Prospect Park Hospital**. 2017.

<https://www.starwards.org.uk/27-books/>

Reading Groups at Prospect Park Hospital

Two wards in Prospect Park Hospital (Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust) are running reading groups, in partnership with The Reader Organisation to provide reading groups. These shared read aloud groups are suitable for all abilities thanks to their trained facilitator who warmly encourages people to linger over sentences and words. During these 90 minute sessions, no-one feels under pressure to comment. And yes, the sessions really are one and a half hours long. It's fascinating that the hospital's experience is that even acutely ill patients manage, in the main, to concentrate or at least to comfortably manage to be part of the group for the whole time. The groups read both classic and modern texts, including novels, short stories, poems, plays and non-fiction. That's a pretty comprehensive range of genres! And means that many patients will be discovering very different types of writing than they're familiar with. Each session always includes a story and a poem and the chance for people to read aloud if they'd like to. An important factor in the groups' huge popularity among patients and staff is that the facilitator (who is trained by The Reader Organisation) liaises closely with the nurse consultant, occupational therapists and ward staff so that the groups are well advertised. The ideal group size is between six and ten people, and staff are active, not just 'observing', participants. Prospect Park's Sue McLaughlin says that the benefits for people taking part in the groups include:

- patients spending some time off the ward
- a safe, relaxing, therapeutic environment
- the pleasure of shared reading
- an opportunity for self-expression
- irrelevance of status as staff or patient in the midst of being absorbed in the texts
- a great sense of achievement and of being involved in something worthwhile.
- intense engagement with other people, about issues of considerable emotional importance and complexity
- the lasting impact of the group, with conversations continuing and involving other people who weren't there. Some patients take away copies of the texts, to reread by themselves or share with others.

The Reader: Case Study Quotes [Our Impact - The Reader](#)

We regularly capture the impact that Shared Reading has on readers and volunteers, on children and adults, in prisons, in health and social care and in the community. These stories inspire us to do more to help people build deeper connections with each other, and themselves.

"I am self-employed but have a limited capacity for work due to mental health issues. I live alone and am often isolated. Shared Reading makes me feel connected, improves my mood drastically and gives me a chance to stretch intellectually."

People feel more connected to others.

People experience improved wellbeing.

People have a greater sense of purpose.

People have a better relationship with literature.

“My readers have lived full, rich lives and Shared Reading shows that person is still very much there.” Shared Reading group leader, on reading with people with dementia.

[Reader Stories - The Reader](#)

Publications that may be of interest

NHS England. **Social Prescribing**. Accessed online 09/02/23.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/>

Social prescribing is a key component of [Universal Personalised Care](#). It is an approach that connects people to activities, groups, and services in their community to meet the practical, social and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing.

In social prescribing, local agencies such as local charities, social care and health services refer people to a [social prescribing link worker](#). Social prescribing link workers give people time, focusing on ‘what matters to me?’ to coproduce a simple [personalised care and support plan](#), and support people to take control of their health and wellbeing.

Social prescribing link workers also support existing community groups to be accessible and sustainable, and help people to start new groups, working collaboratively with all local partners.

Social prescribing is an all-age, whole population approach that works particularly well for people who:

- have one or more long term conditions
- who need support with low level mental health issues
- who are lonely or isolated
- who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing.

The King’s Fund. **Communities and health**. 05 May 2021.

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/communities-and-health>

Database searches

UK Results

Blundell, J. & Poole, S. 2022. **Poetry in a pandemic. Digital shared reading for wellbeing.**

Journal of Poetry Therapy. 10.1080/08893675.2022.2148135

Unexpectedly taking place in the midst of a pandemic, this research examined historical and contemporary assumptions about the relationship between storytelling and wellbeing and asked how a shared reading group might be used to help repair individuals and communities as they emerge into the post-Covid world. It asked how storytelling can help us to come to terms with the collective trauma we have experienced by developing empathy and enlarging identity, and considered the role of digital technology in creating safe spaces for connection and reflection. The research aimed to provide a nuanced and in-depth account of the experience of shared reading for wellbeing, and to make practical recommendations for the future of such initiatives in community settings. It identified significant risks in shared reading and asked how these can be minimised, whilst being wary of stifling the many benefits of creativity by becoming too risk averse. © 2022 National Association for Poetry Therapy.

Harsh, E. V. 2022. **A study into shared reading groups, with specific relation to religious reading.** *Frontiers in Psychology* 13. 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1025914

This paper examines a live shared-reading group conducted through The Reader Organization, with the approval of the University of Liverpool's ethics committee. It is a revised excerpt from a successful inter-disciplinary Ph.D. thesis undertaken within the School of Psychology.¹ The intention in forming the group was to explore the reading of Marilynne Robinson's *Home* by a wide variety of modern readers of different backgrounds and persuasions, in the light of religious writing in an age of diminished religious tradition. The main research question was to test what literature can do in carrying meaning which can be seen as religious, or was previously deemed religious, among readers who may not think of themselves in such terms. The second was to see how a shared community-group setting can enable collaborative engagement with the challenge to develop different ways of thinking, beyond the individual default of either religious dogma or anti-religious prejudice. The method employed overall in the wider Ph.D. study was Grounded Theory: essentially, empirical analysis rather than top-down conceptualization. Grounded Theory, in refusing to begin from rigidly preassembled categories, is appropriate to a literature-inflected study and, in particular, a literary study that is concerned with religious meaning in situations of humanitarian crisis. It allows the possibility of empirical work and careful detailed analysis, amid a complex of overlapping psychological, spiritual, and family concerns entangled within the experience of modern life. In this particular case study, which may be described as a form of Action Research, the researcher, also acting as the reader leader of the group, brought developed tools taken from psychologist Wilfred Bion, introduced to the reading group itself during the sessions as a means of measurement and navigation through the novel. If the aim was simply to undertake a study of the text, then this paper would be more narrowly literary, but the concern was with wider real-world effects in relation to individuals within the group work. Through close examination of the week-by-week transcripts of the reading group, this study highlights the search for moments of development, or what might have stood in the way of development. The researcher used a consensus group of three supervisors to check the selection of the best moments (failing or succeeding in coming closer to what will be called below, after Bion, "O") recorded in the written transcripts of the sessions. One of the most powerful findings in this study is what will be called a mini-tradition developed by the group members in praxis, in terms of practices which they find, use, and come back to during their work with more difficult and painful passages in the text. Copyright © 2022 Harsh.

Brewster, L. & McNicol, S. 2021. **Bibliotherapy in practice: a person-centred approach to using books for mental health and dementia in the community.** *Medical Humanities* 47(4) e12-e12. 10.1136/medhum-2020-011898

<https://mh.bmj.com/content/47/4/e12>

Bibliotherapy is the use of texts to provide support for people with mental and physical health problems. It is widely seen to have beneficial outcomes but there is still disagreement about how best to deliver bibliotherapy in practice. This article explores one method of delivering bibliotherapy which has evolved over the past 20 years in the North of England, the Kirklees approach. Using a multimethod qualitative research design including reflective observations, interviews and document analysis, the article examines how bibliotherapy has been delivered to people with mental health problems and dementia in a volunteer-led scheme. As an inherently flexible and adaptable approach, bibliotherapy in practice in Kirklees is best defined by its ethos, rather than a prescriptive list of its activities, as is the case for many alternative approaches to bibliotherapy. It is an approach to bibliotherapy which is person-centred; avoids value judgements of texts and

responses to them; is often co-produced with group participants; is about making a contribution (in a variety of ways); and emphasises social connection. This separates it from other current models of bibliotherapy operating in the UK, and demonstrates how it may be tailored to the requirements of those experiencing diverse mental and physical health conditions. A more responsive form of bibliotherapy, as outlined here, has the potential to provide support across the community. Data are available upon reasonable request. Deidentified participant data that underlie the results reported in this article are available to researchers with a methodologically sound proposal, to achieve aims in the approved proposal. Proposals should be directed to e.brewster@lancaster.ac.uk. Data requesters will be required to sign a data access agreement.

Davis, P. & Magee, F. 2020. **Sudden Dignity in the Act of Reading**. *Lit Med* 38(2) 262-281. 10.1353/lm.2020.0021

This essay argues that it is literature, and the serious reading of literature, which offers a sudden emotional experience of human dignity, realized anew through the care of its language. Case histories are provided from the work of The Reader, a charitable organization bringing live shared reading to hard-to-reach communities. The research was conducted by the Centre for Research into Reading, Literature and Society (CRILS), at the University of Liverpool. CRILS analysed the effect of literary texts on the heightened language of the participants themselves in the reading groups, revealing often neglected inner resources stirred by literature to bear the troubles and indignities of existence. These ordinary non-academic readers are able to register that emergent transformation from trouble into achievement not only vicariously through the texts they read at the time but also by seeing, later in interview, filmed excerpts of their own creative responses during the reading sessions.

Jones, S. & Harvey, K. 2020. **Participation, Perplexity and Plurality: Exploring the Shared Reading of a 'Difficult' Poem**. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education* 27(1) 34-49. 10.1080/1358684X.2019.1702455

In this article, we explore how adults in a community shared reading group discuss the notoriously difficult poem 'The Emperor of Ice-Cream' by the American poet Wallace Stevens. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's notion of action, we explore how participants negotiate the poem, actively constructing meanings from their shared personal experiences rather than simply reading off meanings contained in and bounded by the poem, a text which continues to be divisively contested by literary 'experts'. In enabling them to act collectively in such a purposive and immersive fashion, shared reading, we suggest, constitutes a public space where participants experience the plurality that Arendt argues is central to the human condition. At a time when tolerance of difference has been compromised by divisive politics, a focus on the collaborative aspect of shared reading contributes to a greater understanding of the role it can play in supporting inclusive, participatory arts practices in communities. © 2020, © 2020 The editors of Changing English.

The Impact of Reading Groups on Engagement and Social Interaction for Older Adults with Dementia: A Literature Review. Dawn DeVries, Angela Bollin, Karley Brouwer, Alexandra Marion, Hannah Nass, Amanda Pompilius. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal* Vol. LIII, No. 1 • pp. 53–75 • 2019

<https://doi.org/10.18666/TRJ-2019-V53-I1-8866>

The purpose of this review is to explore the impact of therapeutic shared reading groups on the engagement and social interaction of older adults with dementia. Us-ing a

systematic process to search a variety of databases, research articles that examined reading groups, and in particular a format known as shared reading, were identified and examined related to older adults with dementia. The results indicate a variety of benefits that impact older adults in the areas of engagement and social interaction, as well as other areas such as quality of life and cognitive skills. No specific studies were found within the recreational therapy profession, even though reading groups are frequently utilized by recreational therapists working in skilled nursing facilities and other older adult settings. A protocol is included based on the existing research on shared reading groups to aid in the development of evidence-based practice within recreational therapy.

Gillam, T. 2018. **Enhancing public mental health and wellbeing through creative arts participation.** *Journal of Public Mental Health* 17(4) 148-156. 10.1108/JPMH-09-2018-0065

Purpose The purpose of this paper is to explore how participation in creative arts activity can enhance public mental health and wellbeing. It is informed by both the author's clinical practice with service users and carers and by research.

Design/methodology/approach The approach taken is to draw selectively on research in the field of creativity, creative arts and wellbeing, focusing in particular on the use of music and creative writing, and to incorporate learning from clinical experience to explore what is understood about the health and wellbeing benefits of creative arts activity.

Findings There is evidence that creative arts activity is beneficial to mental health and wellbeing. Arts activities that involve active participation appear to offer the greatest benefits. Creative arts participation can help people with diagnosed mental health difficulties to recover from mental illness. Moreover, creative arts activities can also promote wellbeing in the general population.

Research limitations/implications The paper does not provide a comprehensive review of the literature in this field.

Practical implications The paper suggests that if nurses and other mental health professionals are to play a full role in facilitating flourishing then they will need to learn more about using creative arts in practice and will need to become involved and encourage others to do so.

Social implications The paper suggests it is important that creative arts activities should be participatory, so they become a vehicle not only for self-expression but also for participation in groups and communities, increasing connectedness and social inclusion.

Originality/value This paper fulfils a need for a wider understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits of creative arts activity.

Billington, J., Farrington, G., Lampropoulou, S., et al. 2017. **A comparative study of cognitive behavioural therapy and shared reading for chronic pain.** *Medical Humanities* 43(3) 155-165. 10.1136/medhum-2016-011047

The case for psychosocial interventions in relation to chronic pain, one of the most common health issues in contemporary healthcare, is well-established as a means of managing the emotional and psychological difficulties experienced by sufferers. Using mixed methods, this study compared a standard therapy for chronic pain, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), with a specific literature-based intervention, shared reading (SR) developed by national charity, The Reader. A 5-week CBT group and a 22-week SR group for patients with chronic pain ran in parallel, with CBT group members joining the SR group after the completion of CBT. In addition to self-report measures of positive and negative affect before and after each experience of the intervention, the 10 participants kept twice-daily (12-hourly) pain and emotion diaries. Qualitative data were gathered via literary-linguistic analysis of audio/video-recordings and transcriptions of the CBT and SR sessions

and video-assisted individual qualitative interviews with participants. Qualitative evidence indicates SR's potential as an alternative or long-term follow-up or adjunct to CBT in bringing into conscious awareness areas of emotional pain otherwise passively suffered by patients with chronic pain. In addition, quantitative analysis, albeit of limited pilot data, indicated possible improvements in mood/pain for up to 2 days following SR. Both findings lay the basis for future research involving a larger sample size.

Exchange, T. K. 2017. **Social prescribing (In focus)**. Discusses social prescribing, outlining what it means, how it is delivered and its impact. Explains that social prescribing is a means of linking patients with non-medical treatment, either social or physical, provided within their community. Highlights some existing models, including: Arts on Prescription, Books on Prescription/bibliotherapy, Education on Prescription, Exercise on Prescription and Green Gyms/gardening clubs. Notes that there are currently more than 100 schemes running the UK. Reports on the benefits to patients of social prescribing, including improvements in quality of life and emotional wellbeing, mental and general wellbeing, and levels of depression and anxiety. Notes that benefits have been particularly pronounced for marginalised groups such as mental health service-users and older people. Considers the benefits to the healthcare system and economy. Highlights that the positive health and wellbeing impacts can lead to reduced use of health services, saving the NHS money. Reports that the Rotherham Social Prescribing pilot led to reductions in patients' use of hospital services, including reductions of up to a fifth in the number of outpatient stays, accident and emergency attendances and outpatient appointments, and had a return on investment for the NHS of 50 pence for each pound invested. Highlights the challenges for engagement. Summarises examples of good practice in provision, including generic services, nature-based, arts-based and reading-based interventions.

Gray, E., Kiemle, G., Davis, P., et al. 2016. **Making sense of mental health difficulties through live reading: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of being in a Reader Group**. *Arts & Health* 8(3) 248-261. 10.1080/17533015.2015.1121883

AbstractBackground: Reader Groups (RGs) involve a skilled facilitator reading aloud complex literature in a group setting, followed by group discussion of the text. This paper explores the experience of eight individuals with mental health problems participating in general community RGs, relating this to making sense of life experiences and relationships inside and outside the group. Method: Semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Results: Five master themes emerged from the analysis: Boundaries and Rules of Engagement, Literature as an Intermediary Object, Self as Valued, Worthy, Capable, Community and Togetherness in Relational Space, and Changing View of Self, World, Others. Conclusion: The findings are discussed in relation to existing research and psychological theory, highlighting the literature as a key mediator in psychological processes involved in participants' experiences of RGs

Billington, J., Longden, E. & Robinson, J. 2016. **A literature-based intervention for women prisoners: preliminary findings**. *International journal of prison health*. 12(4) 230-243 Purpose The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether Shared Reading (SR), a specific literature-based intervention, is transposable to a prison context and whether mental health benefits identified in other custodial and non-

custodial settings were reported by women prisoners.

Design/methodology/approach In all, 35 participants were recruited within an all-female maximum security prison and attended one of two weekly reading groups. Qualitative data were collected through researcher observation of the reading groups; interviews and focus group discussions with participants and prison staff; interviews with the project worker leading the reading groups; and a review of records kept by the latter during group sessions. **Findings** Attendance rates were good, with nearly half of the participants voluntarily present at =60 per cent of sessions. Two intrinsic psychological processes associated with the SR experience were provisionally identified, "memory and continuities" and "mentalisation", both of which have therapeutic implications for the treatment of conditions like depression and personality disorder. **Research limitations/implications** Limitations included the small sample, lack of control for confounding variables, and constraints imposed on data collection by the custodial setting. **Originality/value** Although more controlled research is required, the findings indicate that women prisoners will voluntarily engage with SR if given appropriate support, and that the intervention has potential to augment psychological processes that are associated with increased well-being.

Gray, E., Kiemle, G., Davis, P., et al. 2016. **Making sense of mental health difficulties through live reading: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of being in a Reader Group.** *Arts & Health* 8(3) 248-261. 10.1080/17533015.2015.1121883

AbstractBackground: Reader Groups (RGs) involve a skilled facilitator reading aloud complex literature in a group setting, followed by group discussion of the text. This paper explores the experience of eight individuals with mental health problems participating in general community RGs, relating this to making sense of life experiences and relationships inside and outside the group. **Method:** Semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. **Results:** Five master themes emerged from the analysis: Boundaries and Rules of Engagement, Literature as an Intermediary Object, Self as Valued, Worthy, Capable, Community and Togetherness in Relational Space, and Changing View of Self, World, Others. **Conclusion:** The findings are discussed in relation to existing research and psychological theory, highlighting the literature as a key mediator in psychological processes involved in participants' experiences of RGs.

Hollins, S., Egerton, J. & Carpenter, B. 2016. **Book clubs for people with intellectual disabilities: the evidence and impact on wellbeing and community participation of reading wordless books.** *Advances in Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities* 10(5) 275-283. 10.1108/AMHID-08-2016-0020

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to introduce the social and scientific rationale for book clubs, whose members read wordless books together, and give examples of storytelling with picture books in libraries and other community settings for people with intellectual disabilities and autism.

Design/methodology/approach: The authors consider the impact of book clubs reading picture books without words, alongside an understanding of the underlying neuroscience (see Table I for search strategy). The authors compare differences in the neuroscience of information and emotion processing between pictures and words. Accounts from book club facilitators illustrate these differences in practice. **Findings:** Many readers who struggle with reading and comprehending words, find pictures much easier to understand. Book clubs

support community inclusion, as for other people in society. A focus on visual rather than word literacy encourages successful shared reading. Research limitations/implications: No research has been published about the feasibility and effectiveness of wordless books in community book clubs or shared reading groups. There is very little research on the impact of accessible materials, despite a legal requirement for services to provide reasonable adjustments and the investment of time and resources in developing storylines in pictures, or “translating” information into easy read formats. Practical implications: Book clubs whose members read picture books without words are growing in number, especially in public libraries in the UK. Expansion is dependent on funding to pay for training for librarians and volunteer facilitators. Social implications: There is a shortage of fully accessible activities for adults with intellectual disabilities in mainstream community settings with a primarily social purpose. Originality/value: To the authors’ knowledge, this is the first paper describing the theory and impact of wordless book clubs for people who find pictures easier to understand than words. © 2016, © Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Longden, E., Davis, P., Carroll, J., et al. 2016. **An evaluation of shared reading groups for adults living with dementia: preliminary findings.** *Journal of Public Mental Health* 15(2) 75-82. 10.1108/JPMH-06-2015-0023

Purpose – Although there is a growing evidence base for the value of psychosocial and arts-based strategies for enhancing well-being amongst adults living with dementia, relatively little attention has been paid to literature-based interventions. The purpose of this paper is to assess the impact of shared reading (SR) groups, a programme developed and implemented by The Reader Organisation, on quality of life for care home residents with mild/moderate dementia. Design/methodology/approach – In total, 31 individuals were recruited from four care homes, which were randomly assigned to either reading-waiting groups (three months reading, followed by three months no reading) or waiting-reading groups (three months no reading, followed by three months reading). Quality of life was assessed by the DEMQOL-Proxy and psychopathological symptoms were assessed by the Neuropsychiatric Inventory Questionnaire. Findings – Compared to the waiting condition, the positive effects of SR on quality of life were demonstrated at the commencement of the reading groups and were maintained once the activity ended. Low levels of baseline symptoms prevented analyses on whether the intervention impacted on the clinical signs of dementia. Research limitations/implications – Limitations included the small sample and lack of control for confounding variables. Originality/value – The therapeutic potential of reading groups is discussed as a positive and practical intervention for older adults living with dementia.

Shipman, J. & McGrath, L. 2016. **Transportations of space, time and self: the role of reading groups in managing mental distress in the community.** *Journal of Mental Health* 25(5) 416-421. 10.3109/09638237.2015.1124403

AbstractBackground: The practice of reading and discussing literature in groups is long established, stretching back into classical antiquity. Although benefits of therapeutic reading groups have been highlighted, research into participants’ perceptions of these groups has been limited.Aims: To explore the experiences of those attending therapeutic reading groups, considering the role of both the group, and the literature itself, in participants’ ongoing experiences of distress.Method: Eleven participants were recruited from two reading groups in the South-East of England. One focus group was run, and eight individuals self-

selected for individual interviews. The data were analysed together using a thematic analysis drawing on dialogical theories. Results: Participants described the group as an anchor, which enabled them to use fiction to facilitate the discussion of difficult emotional topics, without referring directly to personal experience. Two aspects of this process are explored in detail: the use of narratives as transportation, helping to mitigate the intensity of distress; and using fiction to explore possibilities, alternative selves and lives. Conclusions: For those who are interested and able, reading groups offer a relatively de-stigmatised route to exploring and mediating experiences of distress. Implications in the present UK funding environment are discussed.

Jones, S. & Harvey, K. 2015. **'He should have put them in the freezer': Creating and connecting through shared reading.** *Journal of Arts & Communities* 7(3) 153-166. https://doi.org/10.1386/jaac.7.3.153_1

Abstract Shared reading involves reading short stories, poems, novels and plays aloud with groups of people who meet in a range of settings. Readings are conducted by a facilitator, after which the group members share their responses to the texts. The social and therapeutic benefits of shared reading have been well-documented, often with an emphasis on the role of literature in improving the well-being of individuals. In this article, we bring together our backgrounds in the study of sociolinguistics and literacy education to discuss the work of an inner city shared reading group with which we are both involved. The emphasis in the shared reading we present is on the members' active and agentive participation in the co-construction of meaning through shared reading and the discussion of texts. We argue that a focus on the collaborative aspect of shared reading contributes to understanding of the role it can play in supporting inclusive, participatory arts practice in communities.

Longden, E., Davis, P., Billington, J., et al. 2015. **Shared Reading: assessing the intrinsic value of a literature-based health intervention.** *Medical Humanities* 41(2) 113-120. [10.1136/medhum-2015-010704](https://doi.org/10.1136/medhum-2015-010704)

Public health strategies have placed increasing emphasis on psychosocial and arts-based strategies for promoting well-being. This study presents preliminary findings for a specific literary-based intervention, Shared Reading, which provides community-based spaces in which individuals can relate with both literature and one another. A 12-week crossover design was conducted with 16 participants to compare benefits associated with six sessions of Shared Reading versus a comparison social activity, Built Environment workshops. Data collected included quantitative self-report measures of psychological well-being, as well as transcript analysis of session recordings and individual video-assisted interviews. Qualitative findings indicated five intrinsic benefits associated with Shared Reading: liveness, creative inarticulacy, the emotional, the personal and the group (or collective identity construction). Quantitative data additionally showed that the intervention is associated with enhancement of a sense of 'Purpose in Life'. Limitations of the study included the small sample size and ceiling effects created by generally high levels of psychological well-being at baseline. The therapeutic potential of reading groups is discussed, including the distinction between instrumental and intrinsic value within arts-and-health interventions.

Latchem, J. M. & Greenhalgh, J. 2014. **The role of reading on the health and well-being of people with neurological conditions: A systematic review.** *Aging and Mental Health* 18(6) 731-744. [10.1080/13607863.2013.875125](https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2013.875125)

Objectives: Little research has been conducted that investigates the benefits of reading for people with neurological conditions despite its age old use to improve well-being. The aim of this study was to identify and review the evidence of the effect of lone reading, reading aloud and shared reading groups on the health and well-being of people with neurological conditions in clinical and long-term care settings. Methods: A literature search was conducted incorporating a systematic search of electronic databases, internet searching, snowballing technique from references of relevant studies and consultation with clinicians and academics in the field. Results: Twelve studies (five quantitative, three qualitative and four mixed methods) met the criteria for inclusion in the review. No randomised controlled trials were identified. Significant heterogeneity in the results of the quantitative studies precluded statistical data synthesis. Thematic analysis and synthesis was applied to the three qualitative studies and the qualitative data of the mixed-method studies. All but one of the quantitative studies reported that the reading interventions had a positive effect. The evidence from the qualitative studies demonstrated multiple positive effects of shared reading groups. Conclusions: The effect of lone reading, reading aloud and shared reading groups on the health and well-being of people with neurological conditions is currently an under-researched area. Although this review reports encouraging results of positive effects, the results should be viewed with caution due to the lack of randomisation, the small numbers of participants involved, and the limited and heterogeneous evidence base. © 2014 Taylor & Francis.

Lynch, B Neale, G. 2014. **The Power of Shared Reading**. *Therapy Today* Volume 25, Issue 1. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/bacp-journals/therapy-today/2014/february-2014/>

Bernadette Lynch and Gina Neale describe the therapeutic benefits of reading groups.

Billington, J., Carroll, J., Davis, P., et al. 2013. **A literature-based intervention for older people living with dementia**. *Perspect Public Health* 133(3) 165-73. 10.1177/1757913912470052

BACKGROUND: While several studies have explored the impact of literature and reading on mental health, there has been relatively little work done on how a literature-based intervention might impact on the behaviours of those living with dementia. The present report addresses the effect that a specific literature-based intervention - Get into Reading, designed and practised by national charity The Reader Organisation - might have on the health and well-being of people living with dementia. AIMS: This present study arises out of a service evaluation that specifically assessed to what extent the shared-reading intervention impacted upon behaviours symptomatic of dementia. Its aims were: (1) to understand the influence that reading has on older adults with dementia in different health-care environments; (2) to identify staff perceptions of the influence that engagement in a reading group has on older adults living with dementia; and (3) to investigate any changes in dementia symptoms of older adults participating in a reading group. METHODS: The study employed a mixed-method design conducted within three health-care environments: three care homes, two hospital wards and one day centre. The Neuropsychiatric Inventory Questionnaire (NPI-Q) assessed staff views of any changes in dementia symptom severity for participants in reading groups conducted in the care homes. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were then conducted with staff who attended the reading groups and/or had extensive knowledge of service users involved in all of the health-care settings. Responses to questions were recorded verbatim and then subject to thematic analysis. RESULTS: 61 service users and 20 staff members took part in the overall project. The NPI-Q

results indicate that symptom scores were lower during the reading group period than at baseline. These findings were supported by the qualitative interviews, which suggested that three themes were perceived to be important to effective engagement with the reading groups: (1) the components of the reading group intervention; (2) enjoyment, authenticity, meaningfulness and renewed sense of personal identity; and (3) enhancement of listening, memory and attention. CONCLUSIONS: In light of quantifiable data of limited but indicative status, together with strongly corroborative qualitative evidence, engagement in reading-group activity appeared to produce a significant reduction in dementia symptom severity. Staff interviews indicated the contribution of reading groups to well-being.

Dowrick, C., Billington, J., Robinson, J., et al. 2012. **Get into Reading as an intervention for common mental health problems: exploring catalysts for change.** *Medical Humanities* 38(1) 15-20. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1136/medhum-2011-010083>

There is increasing evidence for the efficacy of non-medical strategies to improve mental health and well-being. Get into Reading is a shared reading intervention which has demonstrable acceptability and feasibility. This paper explores potential catalysts for change resulting from Get into Reading. Two weekly reading groups ran for 12 months, in a GP surgery and a mental health drop-in centre, for people with a GP diagnosis of depression and a validated severity measure. Data collection included quantitative measures at the outset and end of the study, digital recording of sessions, observation and reflective diaries. Qualitative data were analysed thematically and critically compared with digital recordings. The evidence suggested a reduction in depressive symptoms for Get into Reading group participants. Three potential catalysts for change were identified: literary form and content, including the balance between prose and poetry; group facilitation, including social awareness and communicative skills; and group processes, including reflective and syntactic mirroring. This study has generated hypotheses about potential change processes of Get into Reading groups. Evidence of clinical efficacy was limited by small sample size, participant attrition and lack of controls. The focus on depression limited the generalisability of findings to other clinical groups or in non-clinical settings. Further research is needed, including assessment of the social and economic impact and substantial trials of the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of this intervention.

McLaughlin, S. & Colbourn, S. 2012. **A reading group in acute mental health care.** *Nursing Times* 108(44) 14-15

Training provided by The Reader Organisation enabled Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust to run reading groups for people in acute inpatient mental wards. A five-week pilot project provided an opportunity for patients to spend some time off the wards to enjoy reading together. The group offered a therapeutic engagement and self-expression.

Weston, M. & McCann, E. 2011. **Get into reading with Mersey care NHS trust.** *Mental Health and Social Inclusion* 15(1) 12-16. 10.5042/mhsi.2011.0053

This article describes the Mersey Care Reads, a collaborative project between The Reader Organisation and Mersey Care NHS Trust. Service users and staff read literature together in weekly groups that promotes confidence, raises mood and helps to develop communication and social skills. © Pier Professional Ltd.

International Results

Andersen, T. R. 2022. **Regaining autonomy, competence, and relatedness: Experiences from two Shared Reading groups for people diagnosed with cancer.** *Front Psychol* 13 1017166. 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1017166

This study explored 12 cancer patients' experiences from participating in an online and on-site Shared Reading group for 16 weeks in Norway. Shared Reading is a practice in which prose and poetry are read aloud in small parts and discussed along the way. The study is a qualitative evaluation study with a particular focus on how the participants experienced the reading group supported their life living with cancer. The study was mainly based on the data collected from focus group discussions with the participants, which was analysed qualitatively through open coding. In total, four themes were identified: (1) open space, (2) disconnecting through connecting, (3) community, and (4) resonances and echoes. The participants expressed that the RG helped them to "balance life and cancer", and "disconnect" from their illness. The cognitive effort needed was beneficial for the participants as a form for "cognitive training." Since many of the participants had, due to their illness, completely stopped reading books, the reading group also brought literature back into the participants' lives. Furthermore, it was essential for the participants to feel they contributed to a community, to feel useful and valuable for others. The texts were also important, as some of them resonated strongly with the participants in the way of activating memories and connecting a text to own experiences. After a session, a text could still have an impact as an echo. The results are synthesised, discussed, and supported through the framework of self-determination theory and, more specifically, the basic psychological need theory. The reading group was experienced as a support for autonomy, competence, and relatedness and promoted a feeling of intrinsic motivation that brought about new dimensions in the participants' lives. The study wishes to increase our knowledge of the benefits of integrating Shared Reading groups as a low-cost, literature-based psychosocial support in cancer organisations.

Tangerås, T. M. 2022. **Moments of meeting: A case study of Shared Reading of poetry in a care home.** *Front Psychol* 13 965122. 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.965122

There is a growing research interest in the value of participative arts-based strategies for enhancing wellbeing amongst adults living with dementia. One such intervention, centred around literature, is the group activity called Shared Reading. The purpose of this case study of weekly Shared Reading sessions of poetry in a care home in Merseyside is to investigate instances of how participants with mild to moderate dementia collaborate in processes of meaning-making that allow them shared experiences of being moved by poetry. An under-thematised aspect of psychological wellbeing is the capacity for being moved and for sharing such moments. This article addresses the following question: how can the specific multimodality of the text (participants have a copy of the text before them, the poem is read aloud and there may be use of non-verbal aids) in the Shared Reading model help to bring about such experiences? Using Stern's concepts of Now Moments and Moments of Meeting, this case study discusses various instances of unpredictable, surprising and spontaneous intersubjective moments between participant and poem, participant and reader leader, participant and staff, participant and relative.

Christiansen, C. E. & Dalsgård, A. L. 2021. **The Day We Were Dogs: Mental Vulnerability,**

Shared Reading, and Moments of Transformation. *Ethos* 49(3) 286-307.

10.1111/etho.12319

This article builds on ethnographic fieldwork in shared reading groups for mentally vulnerable young people in Denmark. Shared reading is a technique in which prose and poetry are read aloud with breaks, allowing time for discussion. It is increasingly used in Denmark for mental health improvement. In our analysis, we employ Louise Rosenblatt's notion of the poem as event and the concept of *Stimmung* coined by the literary scholar Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. Drawing on detailed examples from reading group sessions and interviews, we show how participants tuned into an atmosphere of presence that arose from the collective engagement in a literary text. Such moments of presence were significant events for the participants, whose everyday lives otherwise were marked by mental illness and a sense of being different from others. The transformation on which this article focuses relates to the brief disappearance of the troubling sense of self with which the young people had to contend daily. © 2022 by the American Anthropological Association

Harel, D. & Ayalon, L. 2022. **A Bibliotherapeutic discourse on aging and masculinity in continuing care retirement communities.** *J Aging Stud* 63 101033.

10.1016/j.jaging.2022.101033

This paper examined how the use of literary works in bibliotherapy groups for older men promotes discourse on aging and masculinity. Two groups of men from two different CCRCs in Israel participated in the study. Each group underwent 10 bibliotherapy sessions. Following reading aloud of literary works on aging, the participants were invited to share their reflections upon their life, inspired by the creations. An abductive analysis pointed to the central role of the literary elements in encouraging self-expressions among the participants. A qualitative content analysis revealed three themes, which indicate that the literary elements: (a) Encourage the expression of loss; (b) Allow participants to express aspects of positive aging; and (c) Promote insights regarding the acceptance of the aging process. In addition, an analysis focusing on aspects of form revealed four responses to literary elements: (a) Direct metaphors in line with the literary works' interpretations; (b) Creating new meaning for the original metaphors; (c) Expressing conflicting emotions through oxymorons; and (d) Relying on the authors' biographies as an extra-textual context for reflections. The study reflects an inter-disciplinary approach to promote expressions of aging masculinity, and to understand them in bibliotherapeutic groups of older affluent men.

Ohlsson, A., Ingemansson, M., Forslid, T., et al. 2018. **Book talks among people with chronic non-cancer pain. Literary meaning making in a shared reading group.**

Working Papers in Medical Humanities 4(1) 1-22.

<https://journals.lub.lu.se/medhum/article/view/18843>

This paper reports findings from a pilot study for the research project SHARP – Shared Reading After Pain Rehabilitation. SHARP explores the feasibility and effect of Shared Reading, a group-based reading intervention, as a way to improve the quality of life for people with chronic non-cancer pain who have undergone a pain rehabilitation programme (5 weeks) at Skåne University Hospital in Sweden. The paper has a methodological focus. Drawing on discursive reception studies (Eriksson Barajas 2015), it aims to explore the usefulness of Judith Langer's theory of literary meaning making to analyse book talk in a Shared Reading chronic non-cancer pain context. Langer's key concepts envisionment building and stances (Langer 2011) will be used to trace instances of group members taking others'

perspectives, such as those of literary characters or fellow group members.

Pettersson, C. 2018. **Psychological well-being, improved self-confidence, and social capacity: bibliotherapy from a user perspective.** *Journal of Poetry Therapy* 31(2) 124-134. 10.1080/08893675.2018.1448955

ABSTRACT This article in the field of bibliotherapy investigates how participation in a reading circle can contribute to psychological well-being in people with mental illness such as long-term depression and anxiety. The perspective employed is user-centered and focused on the users' statements about their health and well-being. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the study which the article is based on, showed that participants had short-term improved psychological well-being after participating in a guided reading circle. Interviews clarified that their social well-being had been positively influenced in various ways, including greater self-confidence and increased social interaction. The choice of ? short stories and poetry ? was significant to the positive results achieved by the participants, as were the discussions about the texts, the presence of a circle leader with good leadership qualities, and the opportunity to be included in a group whose membership remained constant throughout the series of sessions.

McLaine, S., & MacKenzie, E. (2018). The benefits of shared reading groups for those at risk of homelessness. In S. McNicol & L. Brewster (Eds.), *Bibliotherapy* (pp. 105-116). Facet. doi:10.29085/9781783303434.008

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/bibliotherapy/benefits-of-shared-reading-groups-for-those-at-risk-of-homelessness/110ACA4AC98A000CD7936E86F338704C>

An integral part of the evolution of bibliotherapy in Australia has been the development of partnerships with local organizations across sectors including community-aged care, residential-aged care, mental health, health, carers and public housing to deliver reading groups in community settings. Initial contact showed that local community-based service providers were attracted to the idea of branching out and working with others through a partnership with their local library. This chapter examines the role of collaborations in bibliotherapy focusing on a partnership developed between State Library Victoria and Prague House, a low-care residential facility of St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia. Prague House offers specialized care in a home-like environment for its residents who mostly experience chronic mental illness and have backgrounds of homelessness. Prague House, as a low-care facility, offers residential support for people who still enjoy mobility and a degree of independence; their care needs are low, in contrast to people who require a high degree of assistance with mobility and personal care, and therefore a higher ratio of nursing and care staff.

At Prague House, a weekly reading group was introduced in 2010 and delivered by Susan McLaine, a leading advocate and provider of bibliotherapy in Australia. The reading group was facilitated by Susan along with Elizabeth Mackenzie, Prague House Activities and Wellbeing Programme Coordinator. Prague House is home to 45 male and female residents, many of whom have experienced homelessness or are at risk of it. Many of the residents experience chronic mental illness or have an alcohol-related acquired brain injury, and may have cognitive impairment as a consequence.

In planning the reading group, we took into account the routines of the care facility and scheduled the group around morning teatime, an unalterable ritual for residents living in this care facility. Approximately eight participants regularly attended the reading group each week, with others dropping in and out at times, depending on

their health or as people entered or left the facility. Extra care was taken to provide fresh coffee and biscuits as familiar and comforting features of morning teatime, as well as a warm welcome and sense of inclusion. Taking the time to set up the room before the group members arrive provided seamless movement from coffee and biscuits to sitting down with the readings easily accessible from each chair.

al, M. K. e. 2012. **A self-help behavioral activation treatment for geriatric depressive symptoms.** *Aging and Mental Health* 16(5) 625-635 This study investigated behavioural activation (BA) bibliotherapy as a treatment for late-life depressive symptoms. BA bibliotherapy was administered using Addis and Martell's Overcoming depression one step at a time as a stand-alone treatment that was completed by 26 participants over a 4-week period in Alabama, United States. Results of an immediate intervention group were compared with those of a delayed treatment control group and treatment response for both groups was evaluated at 1-month follow-up. Findings indicated that symptoms on a clinician-rated measure of depressive symptoms were significantly lower at post-treatment for those who received immediate BA bibliotherapy compared with those who were in the delayed treatment control condition. However, self-reported depressive symptoms were not significantly different. Self-reported depressive symptoms were significantly lower from pre-treatment to 1-month follow-up. The authors concluded that BA could be useful in treating mild depressive symptoms in older adults.

Appendix: Search strategy

Database:

Social Policy and Practice <202210>

#Query	Results from 8 Feb 2023
1 "shared reading".mp. [mp=abstract, title, publication type, heading word, accession number]	13
2 Bibliotherapy.mp. [mp=abstract, title, publication type, heading word, accession number]	51

Scopus

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("shared reading group" OR "shared reading in libraries" OR "shared reading in sheltered accommodation" OR " shared reading in the community") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("The Reader organisation" OR "Reading for wellbeing"))

CINAHL

S3 AB "shared reading" OR AB "shared reading group" OR AB Shared reading in the community" Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects
 Narrow by SubjectGeographic: - uk & ireland
 Narrow by SubjectAge: - all adult
 Search modes - Boolean/Phrase Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases
 Search Screen - Advanced Search
 Database - CINAHL Complete 6

S2 AB "shared reading" OR AB "shared reading group" OR AB Shared reading in the community" Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects
 Narrow by SubjectAge: - all adult
 Search modes - Boolean/Phrase Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases
 Search Screen - Advanced Search
 Database - CINAHL Complete 28

S1 AB "shared reading" OR AB "shared reading group" OR AB Shared reading in the community" Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects
 Search modes - Boolean/Phrase Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases
 Search Screen - Advanced Search
 Database - CINAHL Complete 123

Medline

Link:

[Click to run search](#)

The above Jumpstart will only work for users who have access to this specific database.

Database:

Ovid MEDLINE(R) and Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process, In-Data-Review & Other Non-Indexed Citations and Daily <1946 to February 07, 2023>

#Query	Results from 8 Feb 2023
1 "Shared Reading".mp. [mp=title, book title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, floating sub-heading word, keyword heading word, organism supplementary concept word, protocol supplementary concept word, rare disease supplementary concept word, unique identifier, synonyms]	174
limit 1 to (english language and yr="2012 - 2023" and ("adult (19 to 44 years)" or "young adult and adult (19-24 and 19-44)" or "middle age (45 to 64 years)" or "middle aged (45 plus years)"))	28

or "all aged (65 and over)" or "aged (80 and over)")	
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