

Reading for Wellbeing



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1. Introduction

What is Healthwatch Lewisham?

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. We listen to what people like about services, and what could be improved and we share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

We have the power to ensure that people's voices are heard by the government and those running services. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to improve care for people.

In summary Healthwatch Lewisham is here to:

- help people find out about local care
- listen to what people think of services
- help improve the quality of services by letting those running services and the government know what people want from those services.



2. Strategic drivers

Why did we do the project?

- One of our statutory functions is to provide advice and information about access to local care services. This is to help people make informed choices about their health. We also have a statutory role in involving local people in monitoring local services.
- Libraries aim to provide reliable information to help residents stay well and improve their health. It is part of the NHS approach to helping people improve their lifestyle, and part of 'Making Every Contact Count'.
- One of the key findings from our engagement around the NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) was access to reliable information about healthy nutrition and healthy lifestyle.
- Access to services is one of our priority areas. This project will also help to improve information and signposting which in turn should improve access to services.

We aim to raise awareness of the libraries' role in providing reliable health and social care information, focusing on the Reading Well project.

What is Reading Well?

Reading Well is a scheme that offers a selection of books, to help people to find out more information about their health and wellbeing. The books (fiction and non-fiction) can help people to understand and manage their condition. The books offer practical support for people as well as their carers, friends and families. The books were selected using advice from experts and those affected by the conditions.¹ The Reading Well 2018 survey found that 89% of readers felt the scheme helped them to understand more about their condition.²

There are currently five book lists available:

Adults

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

Children and young people

- Reading Well for young people
- Reading Well for children

¹ <https://reading-well.org.uk/about>

² https://tra-resources.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/entries/document/4164/Reading_Well_infographic_cumulative-1.jpg

3. Methodology

What did we do?

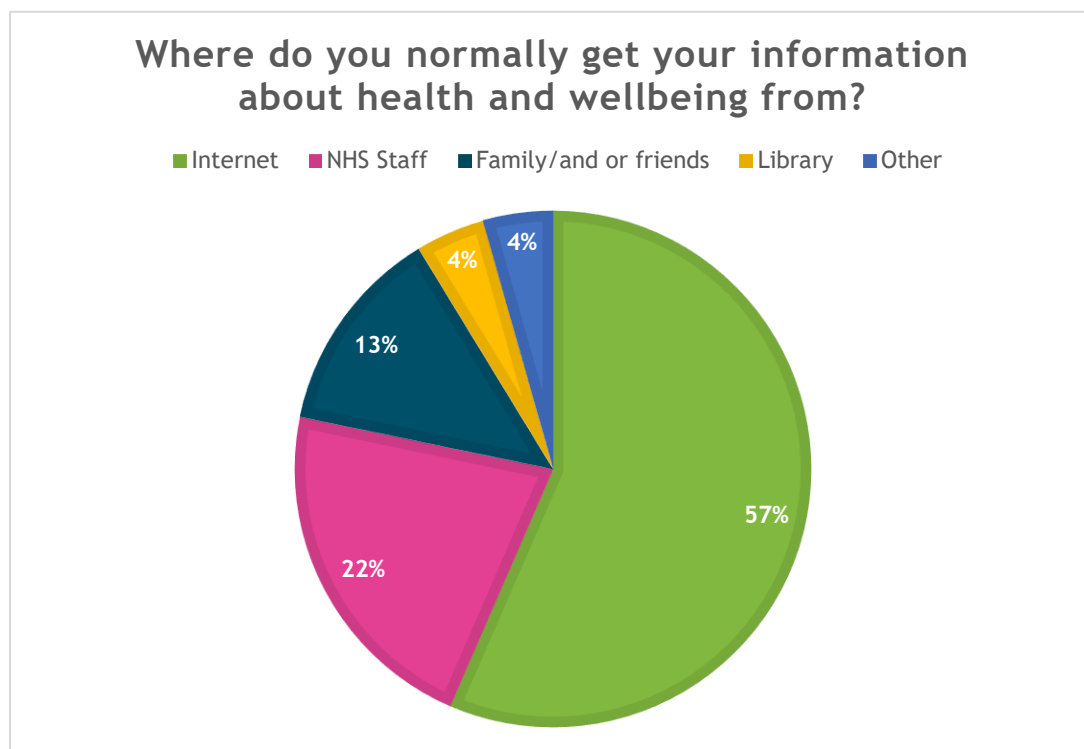
We used a two-pronged approach to carry out the project:

1. Eight **mystery shops** at Lewisham libraries to see how the Reading Well scheme is promoted from the patient perspective. We looked for leaflet displays, health and wellbeing displays and promotion of the Reading Well scheme by librarians.
2. A **survey** promoted via online channels and hubs asking Lewisham residents:
 - How they find information about healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating and exercise
 - Whether they are aware of the Reading Well scheme

4. Findings

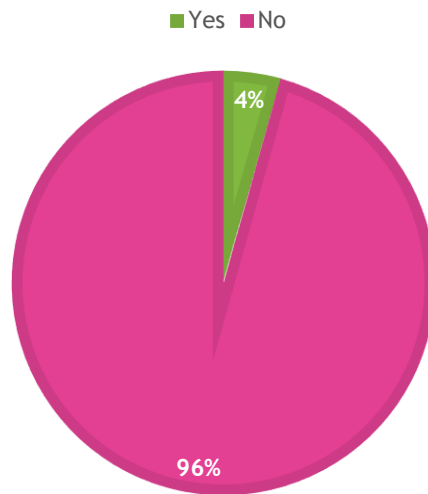
Survey

We collected 23 responses to our survey.



Over 50% of the respondents access the internet to find more information about their health and wellbeing. Out of those many use the NHS website or Google search. Only 4% of respondents told us they would use the library for health and wellbeing information.

Have you heard about Reading Well?



An overwhelming majority of respondents were not aware of the Reading Well scheme. This suggests that further promotion of the service would help residents access the scheme's resources.

Mystery Shops

We carried out seven mystery shops of Lewisham Libraries across the network. A member of our Youth Board also carried out an additional mystery shop. Below is a summary of examples of good practice and areas for improvement.

Good practice

- Health displays in libraries
- Films displays for those who do not enjoy reading or cannot read
- Reading Well displays including printed leaflets and books with 'Reading Well' stickers on them
- Helpful and friendly staff, confident in explaining where health and wellbeing books can be found, online resources and the Reading Well scheme

Areas for improvement

- Training for staff to increase their confidence signposting customers to health and wellbeing resources
- Distinction between sections for children and young people, and for adults
- Recognition that both fiction and non-fiction books can be used as resources for health and wellbeing

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings from our mystery shops and survey, we recommend the following to Lewisham libraries:

- Raised awareness and training to paid and unpaid staff about the Reading Well scheme and resources available (including online reading lists and availability of the books within the wider library network).
- Librarians should be trained on all signs/words that indicate that a person is talking about mental health e.g. stressed.
- Put a selection of books from the Reading Well list in one display (non-fiction and fiction) alongside leaflets. It may also be helpful to have a small sign 'ask the librarians about Reading Well'.
- Clear distinctions between displays for children and young people and adults
- Reading Well stickers on books indicating they are from the scheme may be helpful.
- Providing information in alternative formats helps disabled people such as people with sight loss, people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties (dyslexia) access resources.³ A film display that is relevant to Reading Well and mental health would be useful. A list of suggested film or TV programmes could be displayed if DVDs are unavailable. Availability of the Reading Well audio books would help local disabled residents to access the scheme. Healthwatch Lewisham have contacted the Reading Well team to find out if there are plans in providing the books that are part of the scheme in audio format.
- Availability of the Reading Well scheme in schools would be helpful to young people.

We created a flow chart to help local libraries in supporting customers to seek further information about health and wellbeing:

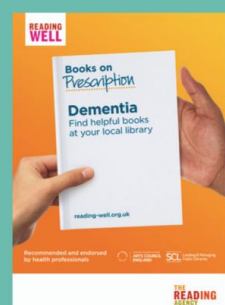
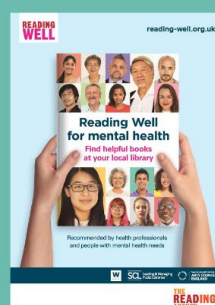
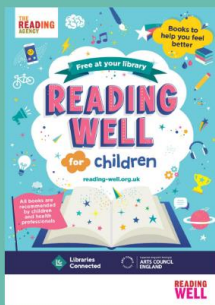
³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

"I/my friend/my family member need help with..."

Diabetes
Pain
Stress
Wellbeing
Breathing difficulties
Anxiety
Autism
Dementia
Sleep problems
Healthy eating
Depression
Body image

Children
or young
people

Adults



Extra tips

- ★ More resources are available at reading-well.org.uk
- ★ All books are available in the Lewisham Library network. Remember both **fiction and non-fiction** books are available!
- ★ Please show the customer any health displays in the library
- ★ Are there any additional resources e.g. films, audio books, podcasts?

healthwatch
Lewisham

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