

Mental Health News

Get Into Reading: The Reading Cure

The Mental Health News e-bulletin is a daily bulletin issued by the Mental Health Improvement Programme (MHIP) containing an item relating to a Mental Health issue, development or outcome in the North West.

The aim is to bring awareness to our stakeholders about service improvement and innovative projects underway in Mental Health across the North West, and to encourage you (the reader) to act as vehicle for ensuring that you or your organisation is engaged with the work where applicable.

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Reading has a remarkable power: it expands our worlds; it gives us new ways of expressing feeling and new ways of understanding.

Get Into Reading is The Reader Organisation's leading social outreach project, which aims to improve wellbeing, build community and extend individual literacy. *Get Into Reading* groups meet weekly and read aloud. Whether it's a poem, a short story, or a whole novel, everything is read aloud in the group, making it accessible, relaxing and enjoyable. The shared experience of diving into the world of the story is the most important part of the process. At certain points, members may 'come up for air', contact each other, share the thoughts and feelings, questions and confusions the experience has thrown up. It's an extraordinary mix of individuality and togetherness. One person's question may help another's confusion. One member's interpretation may challenge the facilitators, widening their own understanding.

Reading group members include looked-after children, company employees, people with learning disabilities, dementia, students, brain injury and other neurological conditions, carers, single-mums, people with mild-severe mental health conditions, excluded youngsters and ordinary folk doing their best to live their lives in deprived communities. *Get Into Reading* group members tell us: "It's like another door has opened and the light has come in", "The reading group mends holes in the net you would otherwise fall through".

Fiona, a *Get Into Reading* beneficiary, is a woman in her thirties who suffers from anxiety and depression, who has been attending a *Get Into Reading* group for two years and has recently started back at work after a long spell off due to illness. She is now taking annual leave to attend her *Get Into Reading* group each week, something "to keep her on track" as she starts back at work.

For more details, please contact Jen Tomkins, Communications Manager at The Reader Organisation: jentomkins@thereader.org.uk or 0151 794 2830 Visit our website: <http://www.thereader.org.uk/>

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