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*Attached to Tales:
A baseline study exploring librarians' understanding of bibliotherapy
and its application in a school library setting*

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of MPhil Children's Literature

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June 2022

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Abstract

Since 2010, almost 800 libraries have closed across the UK, leaving limited free spaces where young people can access both education and recreation, to the detriment of their wellbeing. Declining mental health in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic will be a further societal challenge that would previously have found support from libraries. Bibliotherapy, the act of reading to improve mental wellbeing, is becoming a popular practice in school libraries across Scotland. This dissertation addresses the question of why this phenomenon has suddenly taken hold, and examines how well-equipped librarians are to lead it.

Based on a constructivist paradigm, this research investigates the role the library profession can play in supporting mental wellbeing. The study was comprised of two parts, with reader response theory being used to explore young people's reactions to participating in bibliotherapy sessions, then, following this, ten librarians were interviewed about their experiences of facilitating bibliotherapy sessions. Reading appeared to improve young people's mood, and the librarians demonstrated confidence in their ability to deliver bibliotherapy based mostly on their expert knowledge of children's literature and the relationships they had fostered with the young people they serve. The implications of these findings are discussed in relation to a wider mental wellbeing context.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Visitors to UK libraries may well encounter examples of “bibliotherapy” with vigour and enthusiasm and conclude that this is a new concept. While not exactly new, reading for wellbeing groups are increasingly popular among patrons, “shelf help” is on offer, and community health and social care often base their services in library spaces. Libraries have been places for wellbeing throughout history, however the ways in which users engage has changed over time. This dissertation will examine the usage and effects of bibliotherapy, and investigate how it is currently delivered in some Scottish secondary school libraries.

My interest in bibliotherapy is rooted in both professional and personal experience. I am a librarian, who has worked predominantly in schools for ten years, putting the librarian mantra of “the right book into the right hands at the right time” into continuous practice. Many library users and readers of such books anecdotally attest that a particular book had a beneficial emotional impact on them, and there is a sense of pride on behalf of the library service that enables such an encounter. In 2014, I participated in bibliotherapy training led by author Magi Gibson at Glasgow Women’s Library, and have since facilitated “reading for wellbeing” sessions for both adults and teenagers in public and school libraries, as well as training school librarians to deliver bibliotherapy to their pupils.

My personal interest was sparked in the very early years of my career after directly experiencing a period of mental ill health. Having always been a ferocious reader, there was no significant impact on my reading whilst I was unwell; I did not read for the purpose of healing, however, I became aware of the themes of certain books altering how I felt, both positively and negatively. One example was Janice Galloway’s *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1991), at the time in 2012 a newly-added core text to the Higher English qualification and thus my motive for reading. The story concerns Joy, a young woman who is experiencing a breakdown, and the treatment she receives whilst in psychiatric care. Her perturbed mental state is illustrated by words running off the ends of pages, jumbled and incomplete sentences, and blank spaces. In the opening chapters I recognised Joy’s descriptions of her emotions as the feelings I was experiencing, and the familiarity brought me comfort, however as the plot progressed and Joy became more frantic I felt an unease and a fear that my feelings would develop into this state.

Although I had previously always read for escapism, I soon began searching for books that reflected my own experience, to know that I was not alone and to give myself hope for recovery. I read non-fiction books, prescribed by GPs, which explained and taught ways of dealing with symptoms, but these did nothing to comfort or cure me, they were too

cold and clinical, and not following the predetermined recovery steps felt like failure. Yet fiction had the opposite effect, giving me uplifting optimism, so I wanted to understand more about these effects.

This dissertation will demonstrate that bibliotherapy is not in its infancy, however school librarians in Scotland, with whom this study is largely concerning, have little experience of delivering it. The study will provide a baseline, examining the potential of bibliotherapy for both pupils and librarians in schools. It will examine the literature that exists on links between reading and mental wellbeing, before moving on to the empirical study.

1.2 Understanding the term “bibliotherapy”

The term “bibliotherapy” will be used throughout this thesis to mean the practice of reading texts for the purpose of promoting positive emotional wellbeing. “Positive emotional wellbeing” is a useful term to express contentment and engagement with life. Although it differs from the term “mental health,” there are similar groundings. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines “mental health” as:

a state of wellbeing in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (World Health Organisation, 2004).

This definition is problematic, however, argue Galderisi et al (2015) in *World Psychiatry*, as mental wellness is not just absence of illness, well people may still experience difficulties in achieving the benchmarks set by WHO. They argue for a preferred use of the term “emotional wellbeing”, which they describe as “happiness, interest in life, and satisfaction”, so advocate for a new definition of mental health as:

The ability to recognise, express and modulate one’s own emotions, to empathise with others, and to cope with adverse life events (pp231-233).

What is evident from the above is that it is difficult to define with exactness mental and emotional health, but these descriptions offer an idea of what the term mean, individually and in relation to each other. Although the Oxford Dictionary defines bibliotherapy as “the use of books as therapy in the treatment of mental or psychological disorders”, this is a more clinical representation than that which is employed within library settings. The focus on emotional wellbeing rather than mental health removes the medical association which is not within the abilities of the library profession to administer.

“Bibliotherapy” is taken from the Greek *biblio* meaning “book” and *therapia*, meaning “healing”. Although the practice has been ongoing since almost the beginning of

civilisation, the actual term is believed to have been coined in 1916, when used in Christopher Morley's novella *The Haunted Bookshop* (McNicol & Brewster, 2018, p3). The name and definition of bibliotherapy has changed over the years, in line, McNicol & Brewster (2018) believe, with changing approaches to mental health treatment, but it has always followed the same premise, that "information, guidance and solace can be found in books" (p3).

The term "bibliotherapy" traditionally refers to printed text, however it should be recognised also as oral storytelling (Hunt, p180). The therapeutic benefits of books do not necessarily come from the act of reading itself, although the feeling of relaxation experienced whilst reading undoubtedly contributes to improving wellbeing, but with the content of what is being read, that is, the story that is being told. Narration is a way to make sense of our experiences, and, as Gamble and Yates (2008) explain, "storytelling is communicating and sharing experiences, which supports us in times of trouble" (pp30-31). They continue to explain that we use "storytelling to shape our lives" (p45).

Reading gives us a sense of world around us and reduces isolation as we invest in others' lives, even if those people are fictional characters, a need that is explained succinctly in the much-quoted line attributed to C.S. Lewis in William Nicolson's play *Shadowlands* (1985): "We read to know we are not alone". Storytelling can also be used as a tool for making sense of life and of the situations we may find ourselves in, and those who access that tool may find it beneficial to their wellbeing. I believe that bibliotherapy is not just the text on the page, but any exposure to storytelling, such as listening to an oral retelling, watching a piece of theatre being performed, or expressing one's own feelings in a verbal conversation.

Despite having existed as a practice for centuries, bibliotherapy research studies can only be dated back to the 1950s, 60s and 70s (Hilger, 2017, p19), and this fits with much of the related literature available. Although positive anecdotal evidence in favour of the subject is strong, Brown (1975) surmised from written research that "bibliotherapy is not a cure-all...but an effective method" (p181). In the 1980s, library consultant Rhea Rubin began to carry out research into the field of bibliotherapy and defined three different types of bibliotherapy, reflecting key elements of practice:

Institutional (located only in "asylums"): distraction and/or re-motivation, recreation, re-socialisation;

Clinical: literature groups in institutions or community to encourage behavioural change; *Developmental*: literature groups to maintain good mental health in people without illness (McNicol & Brewster, 2018, p7).

Later, focussing on bibliotherapy aimed at children, de Vries et al (2017) identified two different types:

Cognitive: creating cognitive-behavioural change using literature that refers directly to anxieties;

Affective: focussing on repressed thoughts and emotional self-exploration (pp48-74)

These examples go some way to helping us understand what bibliotherapy means by demonstrating how it is used, though it is notable that there is no focus on positive feelings. This could suggest that its use is intended solely to cure negative afflictions.

The terms *bibliotherapy*, *reading therapy*, *therapeutic reading* and *reading for wellbeing* will be used throughout this dissertation - in this context, all mean the practice of reading for emotional wellbeing and healing.

Chapter 2 The Reading “Cure”: Literature review

2.1 Medicine for the mind: The history of bibliotherapy

Throughout history stories have been used to explain “mysterious natural phenomena, to unite people, to teach moral lessons, to entertain and to touch the soul” (Chavis, 2011, p93), being passed down through cave drawings, oral legends and fairy tales. There has been a noticeable trend for targeted bibliotherapy practices in libraries around Scotland within the last 10 years (Tyler, 2020). Although bibliotherapy appears to be experiencing a new birth, it has quietly existed for centuries, with its earliest official recording coming from ancient Egypt, whilst research by Reitter and Wellmon (2016) suggested that “the notion that literature can heal and transfigure extends back to the Greeks” (pp11-13). Ancient Egyptians ingested papyrus inscribed with “meaningful words”, perhaps poetry, in order to cure physical ailments as far back as 4000BC (Hilger, 2017, p16), and in 300BC, the Library of Alexandria went as far as proclaiming its contents “Medicine for the Mind” on its main sign (Jack & Ronan, 2008). The Romans also associated medicine and reading, with encyclopaedist Aulus Cornelius Celsus suggesting that “the works of great orators be read to patients in order to improve their judgement...particularly for those who were emotionally disturbed” (Brown, 1975, p13). The physician Soranus also “[prescribed] tragedy for manic patients and comedy for his depressed clients” (Hilger, 2017, p16). It seems, therefore, little coincidence that Apollo was Roman god of both medicine and poetry (Kelly, 2014, p74). However, even early man’s storytelling has echoes of bibliotherapy, with parables, myths, legends all used as early methods of “teaching others how to behave socially, ethically, spiritually and to foster emotional wellness” (Jack & Ronan, 2008, p161).

2.1.1 Nourishing the mind

Pre-nineteenth century, before much medical understanding of mental illnesses, sufferers were believed to be possessed by evil spirits, and often hidden away by family members, or sent to prison-like institutions known at the time as asylums (Levin, 2013, pp89-91). From the Latin *asulos*, meaning “refuge”, an asylum is defined as a place of shelter or protection from danger, and the term is now more commonly used in terms of “granting asylum” to refugees; literally, providing a place of safety (Oxford English Dictionary). However, the asylums of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and partly twentieth century appeared to offer little in the way of protective care, instead being cruel places with harsh environments and treatments. Indeed, the 1787 Prisons Act instructed that such asylums in Ireland be situated in workhouses (Adlam et al, 2013, pp605-613), effectively correlating insanity and poverty. After witnessing horrific treatment of inmates during an 1815 visit to Bethlem Asylum, politician William Wilberforce prompted social reforms

which led to the creation of a new form of asylum, one which moved away from punishment and towards care, and “where patients could be uplifted” (Garton, 2009, pp25-45). Thus, the first asylums for rest and recovery began to open in Britain and the United States.

Dr Benjamin Rush became an authority on treatments for patients after the publication of his 1812 book *Medical Inquires and Observations Upon the Diseases of the Mind*, where he recommended entertaining and amusing books for mentally ill patients and advised reading aloud to enhance the therapeutic effectiveness of the reading material. Reading was a key element of “moral management” in Victorian psychiatric hospitals, pioneered by Dr John Minson Galt II in his 1853 article “On Reading, Recreation and Amusements for the Insane”, where he stated that “reading occupies the mind to the exclusion of morbid thoughts, passes the time, imports instruction”. Galt, had previously called for the creation of libraries in the many similar asylums that were being founded at the time in his 1843 annual report (Levin, 2013, pp89-91) and was the first person to write about bibliotherapy (Brown, 1975, p14). Although Benjamin Rush believed in reading fiction for “diversion”, Isaac Ray, the first superintendent of Butler Hospital in Rhode Island, argued that fiction would “over-excite” patients so recommended “travel books, histories and biographies” (Levin, 2013, pp89-91). There also existed around that time, contention over use of the bible for therapeutic reading. A common reason for admittance to asylums was “religious excitement”, and it was thought that access to bible readings would aggravate such symptoms, however George Chandler of New Hampshire Asylum recommended a daily consoling psalm for those suffering from melancholy (Levin, 2013, pp89-91).

Towards the end of the Victorian era, social teaching was moving away from the idea of lunatic asylums for the mentally unwell, introducing healthcare in the form of psychiatric hospitals, and the medical profession was beginning to accept the benefits of reading therapy “stressing the relaxation, tonic and sedative values of a patient’s losing himself in a good book” (Brown, 1975, p30). In 1904, E. Kathleen Jones became the first qualified librarian to be appointed to stock and manage the library of a psychiatric hospital (her post was based in McLean’s Hospital, Massachusetts) in a move to introduce more trained and specialist staff to such hospitals (Hilger, 2017, p18). This decision placed the responsibility of bibliotherapy in the hands of the library profession. In modern bibliotherapy there is some uncertainty as to whether librarians are best placed to delivery it, or if the clinical expertise of psychologists is necessary, and this is an argument which will be explored later in this thesis.

Advancements were also being made in bibliotherapeutic fields around the same time here in the UK. 1839 saw the opening of The Crichton Royal Asylum Hospital in Dumfries

in Scotland, managed by medical superintendent Dr W.A.F. Browne, who was a great believer in the use of recreational activities, including reading, to treat mental illness. Brown (1975) writes that the hospital's "medical personnel invariably carried a catalog, along with a prescription book, in their daily visits to every patient" (p15). In their book chronicling the history of Gartnavel Royal Hospital (previously Glasgow Royal Asylum for Lunatics), Andrews and Smith (1993) state that "a reading room with periodicals and newspapers, as well as a library, were provided and supplied with materials by benefactors, and by Glasgow lending libraries" (p36). *The Gartnavel Gazette*, the patient magazine of the asylum, reported on the 1853 introduction of a monthly "Literary Club", where staff would read essays or excerpts from books. The gazette reports that the first meeting included a reading of "some Reminiscences of a tour in Germany and Prussia" which included a "brief narrative of a steamboat trip from Hull to Hamburg", complimenting the trend mentioned above in American asylums for reading travel books. There appeared to be much interest in the literary club, leading to the introduction of an "Our Library Table" book review column in the gazette in 1855. *The Annual Report of Directors of Glasgow Royal Asylum for Lunatics*, produced at a general meeting on 14 January 1864 included the following report:

The Directors, on behalf of themselves and of the inmates, have much pleasure in thanking the two gentlemen Patients who take charge of the books, for their great attention towards the Library and the literary tastes and wants of the Patients...The great attention paid to this department has had the pleasing result of increasing the desire for literary pursuits as is evinced by the increased demand for books...among a class not so much accustomed to reading. (The Wellcome Trust, 2018).

This report, which goes on to give the borrowing statistics of 820 library books read during 1863 - an increase of 200 books from the previous year - reveals much about the impact of the hospital library. Firstly, that patients were given responsibility for the library in the absence of a member of staff, and secondly that patients read for enjoyment, in accordance with their "literary tastes and wants". This reading for enjoyment led to a desire for further reading, indicated in the increasing borrowing statistics, and also encouraged individuals who were not previously readers to embrace the pursuit. Reading continued to be encouraged through the gazette, with the introduction of short stories to the publication in 1905, and later a "Books That Have Impressed Me" column in 1913. In more recent years, from 1978 onwards, the hospital was producing a patient magazine entitled *Us and Them*, which, similarly to its predecessor, included short stories (The Wellcome Trust, 2018).

With the onset of World War 1 in 1914, army hospitals on the front line provided books to injured soldiers for “self-esteem, entertainment and to relieve the mind from worry” (Jack & Ronan, 2008). This idea was pioneered by aristocrat Helen Mary Gaskell, who presented her idea of “literary caregiving” to medical and government authorities around the same time, and the practice was then endorsed by the Red Cross in 1915. Gaskell appealed for donations of books to be given to Endell Street Military Hospital where a library was set up and run by author Beatrice Harraden and actress Elizabeth Robins, and where 26,000 wounded soldiers participated in “reading therapy” between 1915-1918. In a later interview, Robins commented: “The best way, often the only way, to get on with curing men’s bodies was to do something with their minds.” Closer to the frontline, the YMCA operated a network of lending libraries for soldiers which also served tea and provided recreation (Haslam et al, 2018). Post-war, Sadie Peterson Delaney, librarian at Veterans’ Administration Hospital in Alabama encouraged recovered shell-shocked patients to work in hospital library, passing on their knowledge of stock (McNicol & Brewster, 2018, p5-6).

The home front also became attuned to bibliotherapy, with readers turning to “light fiction” during wartime and prompting an increase in memberships of subscriptions to Boots the Chemist’s “book lovers’ library”. Conceived in 1899, and running until 1966, the Boots book lovers’ library was the brainchild of Florence Boot, wife of chemist Jesse Boot, who recognised that reading was a growing pastime. Before the Public Library Act 1964, most reading material came from subscription libraries and was therefore only accessible to those who could afford it. Florence Boot believed that reading led to greater social mobility and so offered membership to Boots libraries at a reduced rate. Attracting mainly Boots existing customers, the library offered a book borrowing service in most Boots branches across the UK, relating reading to other health remedies. Boot appointed F. R. Richardson as head librarian of the library service, and subsequently ensured all branches employed a librarian, offering training in book selection. Although a popular service at the time, it is worth noting that it served mostly middle-class, wealthy customers (a point highlighted in the 1945 film *Brief Encounter*, where Laura Jesson’s social class is indicated by her visit to the Boots library), therefore, it could be argued, missing its target demographic (Wilson, 2014).

The practice of therapeutic reading continued to grow throughout the 20th century, and it was around this time that use of the term “bibliotherapy” came into use. Bibliotherapy was used both within and outside psychiatric care, therefore mostly concerning adults, with a Public Health Congress meeting concerning public health in the UK held in November 1930 emphasising the “great therapeutic value of reading” (Clarke & Bostle, 1988, p2), and an address to the American Library Association by Dr. G.A. Ruhberg in the

same year claiming that therapeutic books should also be prescribed to doctors themselves, such was their emotional worth (Brown, 1975, p30). In 1948 *The Lancet* published an article on therapeutic reading in Scottish hospitals (Clarke & Bostle, 1988, p3), demonstrating the impact their bibliotherapy practices were having on the medical world. Until the 1940s, books used for bibliotherapy were unconnected to mental health, but use of themes, such as explaining death to children or helping with despair, was introduced after this time (McNicol & Brewster, 2018, p7-8). The inclusion of such themes in children's books was the first obvious employment of bibliotherapy for children. This perhaps could be linked to the second world war, when many children may have experienced a direct bereavement or had to leave their parents due to evacuation, as well as witnessing destruction around them. The specific use of bibliotherapy for children and young people will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

In more recent years, in the UK, a "Books on Prescription" project was rolled out across public libraries in 2005, following a pilot in Cardiff in 2003, and is now the most widely used form of bibliotherapy in the country, with over 100 local authorities using it in their public libraries (McNicol & Brewster, 2018, p11). This programme sees self-help titles that have been recommended by mental health medical professionals, prescribed by GPs then borrowed from local libraries (p12). Although borrowing figures here show high demand for the titles, the engagement comes mostly from library publicity and not from direct medical prescription (p13). Although previously aimed at adults, the scheme was extended to young people in 2015 (McNicol & Brewster, 2018, p153).

Similarly, the "Reading Well" project, developed in partnership by The Reading Agency and the Society of Chief Librarians, was launched in 2013 as part of a universal public library health offer. It provides specialist non-fiction book lists for mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and dementia, as well as lists of fiction books which deal with young people's mental health. The recommended book collections became available in many public libraries in Scotland as part of a "healthy reading" initiative (The Reading Agency, 2018). The Reading Agency also set up a UK-wide "Reading Friends" programme in 2017, with Scottish Book Trust leading the development of the programme in Scotland, responding to the growing issue of isolation amongst older people, and the impact that has on mental health. The "social reading" programme involves children, teenagers and young adults befriending an older person in their community, perhaps through links with an elderly care home, and sharing books with them - reading aloud, discussing, recommending. In its 2018 press release, the Reading Agency stated:

Reading for pleasure empowers...takes us off into another world and reduces stress, gives us a way of exploring experiences through fictional worlds and

something to talk about and share with others”, embodying the definition of bibliotherapy (The Reading Agency, 2018).

In 2014, Midlothian became the first authority in Scotland to roll out regular bibliotherapy sessions, led by a bibliotherapist, for adults with mental health issues. These “Braw Blether” sessions were evaluated by their participants as providing opportunities for socialising, stimulation, to laugh and forget, to think more positively and to enrich lives (Midlothian Council Library Service, 2018). An official evaluation, carried out by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), reported that the sessions’ biggest impact was the introduction of new members to the libraries, as many bibliotherapy participants had not previously visited the library their session was held in, and also the reduction in social isolation that the participants experienced (SLIC, 2017). The fact this evaluation was carried out by a library body, however, may be why the impact on the library service was seen as a greater benefit than the wellbeing of the participants.

2.1.2 Bibliotherapy for young people

Having previously only been made available to adults, the idea of bibliotherapy for children was introduced in the United States in 1936 (Jack & Ronan, 2008). Although it remained most popular within the older members of society at that time, “the extensive application of bibliotherapy for addressing specific issues of anxiety and bereavement in children saw progression in the late 1960s” (Hilger, 2017, p20). There are few records of bibliotherapy being used for young people since, however, within the last ten years the UK library profession has begun to seriously consider the use of bibliotherapy for children and young adults. Many new initiatives have been introduced in schools and libraries in Scotland as a method to tackle the increasing mental health crisis currently engulfing the younger members of our society. One example followed the successful introduction of bibliotherapy sessions for adults in public libraries in Midlothian when similar sessions were piloted in Beeslack High School in 2017, this time targeting pupils at risk of exclusion. The headteacher wished the school to become a “nurturing school” and believed bibliotherapy sessions would address pupils’ emotion wellbeing support, a key outcome of the Scottish Government’s Getting It Right For Every Child policy (SLIC, 2017). In 2017, the Scottish Government, in partnership with SLIC created the School Library Improvement Fund in response to the high number of local authorities disbanding their school library services due to local council funding cuts. Schools were invited to apply for government funding for a project which would support young people in a library setting. Many councils were successful in their bids to set up “Shelf Help” collections and Mental Health First Aid Kits for pupils, prompting this new wave of bibliotherapy practice in school libraries (SLIC, 2018), and this initiative will be discussed in section 2.5 *Implications of bibliotherapy for libraries.*

The continued practice of using bibliotherapy suggests it has a positive impact. Research into that impact will now be discussed in further detail, with particular focus on its effects on children and young people, who are the main subject of this dissertation.

2.2 Reading and its effects

As demonstrated in the previous section, there is recognition of reading and storytelling as beneficial tools for mental wellbeing. Bibliotherapy can be used to nurture and sustain a healthy society in addition to, though not in replacement of, medical care. Academic studies have been carried out in an attempt to prove that there is psychological worth in reading, although Chavis (2011) points out:

While formal research studies are lacking, there is abundant anecdotal evidence that stories enrich people's lives, promoting illumination and mental health for individuals of all ages (p94).

One example of "anecdotal evidence" comes from the *Arts and Individual Well-being in Canada* executive summary, published in 2010, which stated that book readers, when compared to non-book readers, were more likely to report that they had very good or excellent general health and very good or excellent mental health. From this study, there is a strong indication of the impact that reading has on the workings of the mind.

Writing in 1994, Greenhalgh acknowledged a "crisis" in UK services helping children who experienced emotional and behavioural difficulties (p7). Due to continued cuts to both UK and Scottish government funding, this is still the case almost 30 years on. The Scottish Government has acknowledged "the current mental health crisis engulfing young people" (Scottish Library and Information Council, 2017), and many causes for this are frequently suggested by parents, teachers, politicians, the media, and by young people themselves. These range from the increased use of social media and technology, which can spark unhealthy body images, to the pressures of study and work, and austerity and poorer living conditions (Wilson, 2020). Depression and anxiety are the most commonly reported psychological disorders in children and adolescents (Yuan et al, 2018, pp353-365). Such reports make this dissertation's research into the impact of reading relevant, and this section will explore in further detail the academic findings in this field, in particular with regards to studies involving children and young people.

2.2.1 Stories and storytelling

Before we have gained the ability to read, stories play a part in our early years, often through us being read to as babies. Storytelling occurs in theatres and cinemas, not only by reading text on a page, therefore bibliotherapy need not always refer to the physical act of reading.

Stories can potentially live on in our imaginations, where we are free to develop them, continue them, and change them to apply to our circumstances. Stories become transactional and their messages and morals are passed to the reader.

Storytelling, and indeed story sharing, has links to family happiness, something which is vital to positive mental health. In his article on bedtime stories and reading aloud as a family, Allan (2018) argues that important conversations are sparked by parents and children reading stories together. This is an opinion shared by Chavis (2011), who states that children's stories "are ideal for stimulating adult-child discussions of different life issues" (p108). Speaking at the 2018 Bookbug conference, author and illustrator Debi Gliori said:

Reading a bedtime story allows children to talk about their fears or anything that has upset them during the day, and night time is commonly when these fear come to the fore.

With so much exposure to stories, children and adolescents appear an ideal audience for bibliotherapy. Arizpe & Styles (2016) consider a reason for this:

Could it be that stories not only allow children to explore complex human emotions within a safe fantasy world but also enable them to transfer that knowledge to the real world?" (p157).

With the childhood focus of this dissertation in mind, the experiences of young people will now be discussed.

2.2.2 Children's experiences of bibliotherapy

An example of the aforementioned "transfer of knowledge" appears in Sipe's 2008 study into the use of stories for children's awareness of danger. When reading *Red Riding Hood*, children commented how they would have answered wolf's questions, demonstrating use of their own knowledge to shape opinions of characters (p164). Stories can also help explain what has happened in a situation when those who experienced it can't explain themselves, perhaps through trauma, or simply not understanding what has occurred, as Gauthier (2015) suggests: "The narrative ends in rubble and it is left to us to create the counter-narrative" (p80).

Cattanach (1997), writing extensively on the use of story therapy to aid recovery from childhood abuse, describes the effectiveness of children becoming the storytellers:

Storytelling can act partly as a cooling function. While telling a story can revive a strong experience, it does not usually create the same intensity of feeling as the actual experience...it creates an effect of distance from the terror and trauma of the actual events (p77).

Cattanach (1997) also makes an interesting observation when using story therapy to help children talk about abuse: "Mandy elects not to speak but will tell stories" (p13). In this

instance, a child who has become an elective mute as a result of her trauma will speak about it in the form of telling stories where she can explain her experience through an invented character. Similarly Melrose (2012) discusses mutism, stating: “what is unsaid does not mean unknown” (p25). Children often understand more than they can articulate, and reading can help them to verbalise their feelings.

Character identification

A study carried out by Sipe (2008) found that children link events or characters in a narrative with their own lives. In the study, a group of recently bereaved children read the book *Princess Furball* and after a discussion about people who had died “the children seemed remarkably calm; it is possible that this experience had functioned as a catharsis for their personal anxiety about grief and death” (p161).

Mendel et al (2016) explain that “children can feel validation for their thoughts and feelings in stories when they see characters experiencing situations and feelings similar to their own. Bibliotherapy can be useful in helping children identify and explore emotions that are often difficult to express” (pp535-537). In a similar way, children identified with their own experiences during a study by Miller and Boe (1990). When reading fairy tales, a group of 8 year old girls who had suffered trauma highlighted elements in the tales which seemed to have personal significance for them, and ignored elements which had little significance for them, with the example: “The story of a little girl who had faced absolute evil but successfully came through it was strikingly relevant for Sarah who had been so victimized by her father” (p254).

Reflecting on the reason behind these reactions, Mendel et al (2016) suggest that reading provides the opportunity for the reader to mirror characters’ actions:

Through observation and curiosity about how storybook characters adapt to their experiences, bibliotherapy can teach healthy coping strategies and guide problem solving (pp535-537).

Following the behaviour of someone with a shared experience may be one method of dealing with one’s own issues, particularly if there is little guidance elsewhere, for example, if the reader is isolated or lacks positive relationships. Haig (2018) comments that:

[Reading] was the most profound kind of socialising there was. A deep connection to the imagination of another human being. A way to connect without the many filters society normally demands (p258).

He is here suggesting that the act of reading removes that isolation through the use of imagination to connect the reader to the characters in their truest form; there is no falsehood to the characters, as there can be in real life. Forming relationships with characters may provide the reader with skills that can be transferred to real life situations.

Grabmeier (2012) argues that identification is not the only effect characters may have on readers, stating that “you might actually end up changing your own behaviour and thoughts to match that of the character.” His study looked at “experience-taking changes”, finding that those who read about a character overcoming obstacles in order to vote would then be more likely to vote themselves, and also that those who read about characters of a different race became less racially stereotypical. However, interestingly, Grabmeier found that this only happened when readers were fully engaged with the story, so if they learned late on in the story that the protagonist didn’t share their ethnic or social make-up they would have already engaged with the character, but if they learned of the character’s differences early on in the story they would not engage, suggesting an inability to replace themselves with other characters when not self-identifying.

This in turn also indicated a need for diverse books and characters in order to teach readers to identify with others, as Hakemulder (2000) states: “There is a strong argument to suppose that literature is particularly suitable to enhance ethical reflection...[and] may generate ethical effects of an intensity not encountered in the more popular media” (p23). Hakemulder (2000) reports that character identification enhances comprehension of others’ feelings, though it is not clear whether this comes from reading on its own, or with an accompanying discussion about text, something which would presumably only occur in a group reading session and not when reading alone. Hakemulder also found that reading stories with positive portrayals of “outgroups” leads to a reduction of social distance (p90).

Alongside the positive findings here, Shechtman (2009) acknowledges:

You need to be cautious about presenting characters and situations that are too close to the child’s actual problem, because it may be too threatening and inhibit responses. (p71)

Similarly, Sipe (2008) reported that children of colour who read a story about racial discrimination valued the story but found it emotionally draining and painful (p166). If children can be positively affected when reading, it is logical that they may also be negatively affected, and this is something that should be considered when offering bibliotherapeutic texts to young readers.

Empathy with others

Bibliotherapy can also be an effective tool for children to make sense of and articulate others' distress. Cattanach (1997) gives an example of a child upset by witnessing a parent's mental illness: "Mary loves her mother, but she needed a space to describe how horrible it can be at home" (p109). In this instance the child herself is not experiencing mental illness, but needs support to talk about and deal with what she is witnessing of others. The statement "she loves her mother, but..." suggests a feeling of guilt, and story therapy may help her to be relieved of any unfounded guilt. Mendel et al (2016) state that "children's books can be useful in psychoeducation about mental illness for children and caregivers by offering appropriate language and an ongoing method to discuss difficult topic" (pp535-537).

Making sense of situations

Alongside knowledge and understanding of the self and others, Cattanach (1997) emphasises a further benefit to the humble story:

An important function of a story is the sense of hope and consolation it can bring...Tolkien (1966) considered that by moving to another world the fairy tale enables the reader to regain a clear view of their situations. The placing of objects from our everyday world in a luminous, estranged setting compels us to perceive and cherish them in a new way, to see new connections between past and present. (pp166-167)

The idea of removing oneself from the centre of the action, rather than becoming the focus of it, offers a different insight into how the reader makes sense of a situation - observation, rather than experience, becomes the learning tool here. With the hope that Tolkien suggests there comes excitement and, at times, joy, leading to a positive reading experience. Zunshine (2006) explains that "the awareness of one's mental state makes possible the enjoyment derived from the manipulation of this state" (p17), suggesting that bibliotherapy can be a pleasant experience if one is aware of the possibility of positive change. Where reading is already an enjoyable experience for an individual, bibliotherapy may be met with less reluctance than medications, which can be a source of stigma amongst those with mental illness. Bibliotherapy can reduce the impact of such stigma argue Yuan et al (2018), possibly through the ability to access certain books without others knowing what or why, and it can also reduce the time burdens of attending medical appointments (pp353-365). In Midlothian Libraries' bibliotherapy programme, one participant (a young woman with mental illness) said of the reading sessions offered: "I'm battling all the time, but I don't have to battle here." Another commented that for several weeks, the bibliotherapy sessions were the only time they left the house, apart

from going to their GP, indicating that they valued bibliotherapy equally to a medical appointment (Midlothian Council Library Service, 2018). Where an individual has been prescribed medication and consultations with health professionals, however, therapeutic reading should in no way be a substitute, but rather a support that exists alongside medicine.

Considering the above issues with medicalising bibliotherapy, Cattanach (1997) explains the difficulty of reading for therapy as a medical treatment, where tangible results will be expected:

Like a confession, and like a therapy session, what happens between reader and printed text is a mystery - unless the reader chooses to tell us about it, and even then, there will be much that has occurred in the reading process that will have been below the level of consciousness (p182).

It is not always possible to analyse the effect of therapeutic reading on the individual, with its often invisible impact of which even the reader is unaware. It is also worth considering that, as emotions are such a personal thing, the individual may not always be truthful to others, including researchers, about their account of reading.

2.2.3 Attachment

The power of the reading experience can mean that “children become emotionally attached to stories that match their current psychological concerns” (Alexander et al, 2001). Hopper (2005) supports this idea by stating that adolescents select particular texts to read because they have particular emotional needs; they read “because they are growing up and because they are having difficulty growing up.”

Miller and Boe’s 1990 study into story attachments as social practice looked at links between family attachment and story attachment, such as bedtime stories. Parents reported that their children were attached to books in which they liked the characters, or when they could identify with characters or events. They reported that some children ignored parts of the story that were too scary, and in some cases, where the story was in film format rather than book, the children fast forwarded videos. Children also identified the use of stories “to make them happy”, for example, one child watched *Beauty and the Beast* after being disciplined in a bid to stop herself crying. The study also revealed that prolonged attachments, often obsession in young children’s case, limited a child’s access to the rest of story, as they focussed on one part of the story, or else ignored all other stories.

Similarly, psychologist Sunny Kleo believes that parents talking about and explaining issues that happen in books to younger, perhaps more sensitive children, help them to

understand similar life situations, though in the case of sensitive children she questions how ethical it is to change the endings of stories to make them appear less cruel, as is often done in Disney adaptations of fairy tales (Radio Scotland, 2018). Gamble and Yates (2008) also state that children are given books at bedtime “for soothing” (p5). The bedtime story ritual has other benefits; in their evaluation of Scotland’s national Bookbug programme, Davidson et al (2018) report that parents build relationships with babies through reading and sharing stories, and that book sharing at home allows “ability to connect the narrative with their own life experiences.”

Children identify elements of their own lives in stories, and focus their attentions on this. Miller & Boe (1990) conducted a study with members of hospital staff to examine the use of storytelling in the treatment of psychiatric trauma. They were given a review of the children’s histories and used this information to form a selection of relevant stories for the children to read e.g. featuring abuse, fear, nightmares, abandonment. Children became attached both metaphorically and, in one case, physically to these books, with one child taking his favourite book to bed with him each night (pp247-257). A reason behind such attachment could be explained by the findings of Howard (2011):

Several teens described the fact that they feel “in control” when they are reading: they have the freedom to imagine a character or scene in the way they want and are not constrained by someone else’s perception...For many teens, pleasure reading can be reassuring, making them feel better about themselves and their own lives.

2.2.4 Critiquing bibliotherapy

As noted above, difficulties can arise when using bibliotherapy as a treatment or cure for emotional distress, particularly in the use of fiction. The subjectiveness of reading texts is one such issue, argued by Oatley (1999):

Fiction has become falsehood...psychology has become empirical science. As such, it seems to offer no serious role for fictional literature.

Oatley here appears to be dismissive of the reading of fiction because it is untrue, and cannot be accurately used to evaluate the workings of the mind. As well as fiction being immeasurable in terms of what is being gained from the reading experience, it uses fantasy to convey its message, which Oatley views as experimental and not exact. As readers interpret stories differently, they will get different things from the same story, leading to possible repercussions if a book is unpredictably received negatively by a

reader. An additional issue with reading fiction for life meaning or answers is argued by Currie (1995), who has doubts as to the effectiveness of such bibliotherapy:

Fiction is mostly false. How can we learn from falsehoods?...There is truth - literal truth - in fiction, since most fictional stories play out against a background of facts.

Currie suggests that one would learn “moral instruction” from fiction, as opposed to learning facts from non-fiction, but states that “*it is a claim.*” Oatley (1999) also argues that readers who do not have first-hand knowledge of something may believe false facts told in stories if they are provided with fiction. This is supported by a 2006 study by Marsh and Fazio, who cited an example of a fiction book telling a story of Napoleon winning the Battle of Waterloo, and being taken as truth by some readers (pp1140-1149). Marsh and Fazio suggest that readers need motivation to search out true facts, however those who choose to read fiction may just do so for the enjoyment of the story and not for learning facts.

Oatley (1999) believes that fiction is dismissed by those who want books for facts. But for those who want books for therapy, reading about emotions may help “one reflect on them from the new perspectives of the stories’ circumstances” (p109) and help self-understanding. “Emotions are important in fiction because they arise at the vicissitudes of life, brought on by actions with unforeseen results,” Oatley continues, “Emotions can point to goals. They happen when events occur that relate to one’s goals, to those concerns that are important to one...Emotions that are produced by narration are the participant’s own” (p111). Djikic et al (2009) take a similar view, arguing that “exposure to fiction, unlike exposure to nonfiction, predicts a more positive performance in a variety of social ability measures. Although some might argue that this association is due to the fact that those with better social skill might simply choose to read more fiction” (p28). However, Hogan (2011) disagrees that this is beneficial, arguing that literature provokes “empathic emotions” rather than actual, real emotions so “value of literature is largely limited” (p23), and a study by Gernsbacher et al (1992) showed that the emotion readers feel comes from the description of events, rather than any explicit reference to characters’ emotions. Haig (2018) also advocates fiction for teaching truth: “In a world that can get too much, a world where we are running out of mind space, fictional worlds are essential. They can be an escape from reality, yes, but not an escape from truth” (p257). Although Melrose (2012) argues that the most popular books for teens are “superficial, narcissistic”, giving the novels of Louise Rennison as an example (p111), readers understand that these stories do not present real life, but the themes discussed can help make such issues accessible.

Evidence also suggests that bibliotherapy cannot work on its own. Hakemulder's (2000) text on experiments into the effects of reading refers to bibliotherapy studies by McCloskey (1970), which found reading to be most beneficial to mental wellbeing when carried out alongside discussion and psychotherapy (p41). Fisher (1965) also found that "a "read and discussion" treatment worked better for boys, while the "read-only treatment" worked best for girls" (p48). Similarly Shrank & Engels' findings appear to indicate that reading therapy is most effective when delivered alongside a talking therapy. The use of discussion following reading is central to the research carried out for this dissertation, and its argument that libraries are a beneficial setting for its implementation.

Yuan et al (2018) studied the impact of bibliotherapy in children and adolescents with depression and anxiety found that bibliotherapy was generally effective, however, it seemed more effective for treating depression than anxiety. This was possibly down to motivation, and the fact that anxiety sufferers may avoid carrying out tasks which they anticipate would be too difficult. The researchers concluded that there is a "need for further research", and that is true of bibliotherapy in general. There are still many issues to resolve around the logistics and therefore opportunities for further research. This section has demonstrated a volume of empirical evidence supporting the impact that books have on their readers, both positively and negatively. Having looked at ways that reading can be used to support emotional and mental wellbeing, the following section will explore the role of the facilitator of bibliotherapy: the bibliotherapist.

2.3 The Bibliotherapist: What's in a name?

2.3.1 Qualifications

Much bibliotherapy work is carried out by librarians, although, writing in 1962, librarian and academic Margaret Kinney stated that “no formal courses devoted solely to the subject of bibliotherapy are described in the catalogs of any of the professional library schools.” This is still the case today; there is no formal qualification to become a professional bibliotherapist, and Cohen (1994) argues that “reading and practice of bibliotherapy has occurred without a basic understanding of the phenomenon.” Indeed, from my own experience and that of my contemporaries, there is not much teaching on books at all in the modern librarianship degree, which focusses mainly on digital systems, intellectual property, and organisation and classification of information. In terms of awareness of literature for young people, Court (2011) states that 5 out of 12 UK institutions offering professional library qualifications offer specialist children's librarian training (p.xviii), so here it appears that building experience in working with young people and children/YA literature is the most common way to gain skills in that area.

In 2017, Liverpool University began offering an MA qualification in Reading for Life, stating in its prospectus that this is not a professional qualification and not linked to librarianship, but one which would “enhance careers in libraries, education and health work” (University of Liverpool). The texts which are used in the course to facilitate bibliotherapy sessions are classics, with no contemporary texts used. If students are using these texts to see their own lives reflected, will that be so of classic texts? Set in a distant past with dated societal norms, classics are unlikely to relate to the lives of today's readers. They also often lack the diversity of our present society, thus not providing the lived experience of many readers.

In America there exists The International Federation for Biblio/Poetry Therapy which provides its own training scheme and awards its own certificates, though it is not linked to any academic qualifications.

Kinney (1962) lists many personal qualities which she deems appropriate for a bibliotherapist, such as being patient, being kind, having a good knowledge of books (pp127-135), but these are general and vague, and could apply to any job. Similarly, Ettinger (2008), writing in *Library Journal*, appears to display a misunderstanding between being a bibliotherapist and a librarian's actual job. He advises engaging library users by finding out their needs and being empathetic, but this is already what is being done in libraries and is just part of common service; not every library is offering a bibliotherapy service by simply assisting borrowers to choose an uplifting book if they are feeling down. Despite this, Levin (2013) claims that “librarians have not proliferated as

practitioners of bibliotherapy (sic), most likely due to the special training and certification required to work with patients in a clinical setting” (p90). This quote refers to bibliotherapy as a medical treatment within a medical setting, however, within the library setting, librarians are becoming facilitators of recreational bibliotherapy sessions, and that role will now be studied in more detail.

2.3.2 The facilitator

Highlighting the importance of a facilitator for bibliotherapy sessions, McNicol and Brewster (2018) explain that the presence of a therapist leads to “repeated contact and encouragement [that] might increase motivation” (p9), so it is clear that someone is required to lead sessions and offer guidance and support.

Perhaps the UK’s best known bibliotherapist is Ella Berthoud, author of *The Novel Cure* (2013) and *The Story Cure* (2016) alongside co-author Susan Elderkin, and public speaker who holds bibliotherapy sessions by appointment in her London clinic. Berthoud is unqualified and earned her credentials by recommending books to others whilst an English Literature student, then making recommending her career. A Cambridge classmate of philosopher Alain de Botton, Berthoud approached him as he was setting up his London-based School of Life and pitched the idea of a bibliotherapy clinic, which would focus on fiction (Dovey, 2015). The School of Life describes itself as a “global organisation dedicated to developing emotional intelligence”, holding classes and workshops on “relationships, work, leisure and culture” (The School of Life, 2018). Following Berthoud’s request, she now runs a bibliotherapy clinic from the school, as well as via Skype and telephone for those outside London, as well as offering training to aspiring bibliotherapists (Dovey, 2015). In an interview with *The Telegraph* in 2016, Berthoud spoke about the moral obligation of selecting appropriate texts for children and young people with mental health issues:

The effect [of bibliotherapy], says Berthoud, can be so powerful that the duo [she and Elderkin] had to seek advice from child psychiatrists when dealing with *The Story Cure*’s heavier ailments. “Anorexia is a good example. Some teen literature can turn into a bit of a manual: how to stay slim, how to avoid being noticed by your parents. We had to think really carefully and chose books that kids could read without getting triggered into worrying behaviour” (1/11/16).

In Midlothian Libraries’ bibliotherapy sessions, the bibliotherapist, who is employed as such, is a creative writing teacher who has a counselling qualification. The role was previously carried out by someone with a psychology degree, so there is no library or book background required for the bibliotherapist, despite being employed by a library service. In the participant evaluation, it was noted that participants felt that the bibliotherapist

was a critical factor in creating the right atmosphere during the session and for managing the group when they shared personal stories, so the presence of a bibliotherapist was beneficial compared to reading alone (Midlothian Council Library Service, 2018).

A bibliotherapy group which was set up in Beeslack High School in Midlothian was led by a probationer teacher who attended bibliotherapy training before facilitating sessions with pupils (SLIC, 2017). Although knowledge of appropriate books is an important trait of a bibliotherapist, it is worth considering Shechtman's (2009) statement on how to use that knowledge:

It is not enough to select a good piece of literature. The therapist needs to identify the major theme of the text that could help children change, and identify the dynamics that he or she can use to lead children effectively in the process of change (p88).

The suggestion here is that the impact of the therapy is reached by reading about a relevant subject. To achieve this, texts must be selected based on their content, therefore the therapist requires deeper knowledge of books which includes main themes and plots. Shechtman's view supports the argument that a literature specialist is in this case better placed to facilitate than a medical specialist, as they are likely to have a greater knowledge of books. Shechtman highlight "the dynamics" and suggests that it is beneficial to understand not only the main theme of a particular book but the intricate detail of the story. Books often contain multitudes of themes, some of which may only be addressed subtly. Thus a specialist who is well read will likely succeed in selecting texts featuring themes affecting readers.

Lapidus is a Scottish organisation formed in the early 1990s that aims to provide "words for wellbeing" for adults offering information, events and networking opportunities for what it describes as "words for wellbeing practitioners". Shortly after its conception, the UK-wide Lapidus International was formed, setting up funding via membership subscriptions, and Lapidus Scotland became a regional branch of this. Members are "anyone with an interest, professional or personal" in facilitating words for wellbeing sessions in community settings. Again, there appears to be no requirement for a qualification in order to become a practitioner here, and no real restrictions on who is eligible. Lapidus International upholds an ethical code for practitioners, obviously aware of the sensitive nature of its work. The words for wellbeing to which it refers are both written and oral. The term "bibliotherapy" is not used in any of its material. In 2019, Lapidus Scotland partnered with the Scottish Poetry Library to set up a project funded by the Scottish Library and Information Council to map bibliotherapy activities taking place in across Scotland in a bid to audit what is happening within the sphere. In late 2020, it

provided an update of its ongoing progress during the SLIC annual showcase event. It reported:

135 separate opportunities for people to join Creative Words for Wellbeing activities in Scotland at the end of 2019. The 135 activities were led by 47 separate Providers. Activities that had specific intended beneficiaries were most often aimed at people with mental health problems (11%), people with chronic health conditions (8%), people at risk of social isolation (7%) and women (7%). However, more than half of the activities (53%) were simply aimed at the general public. Around two thirds (66%) of the activities were set up with the intention to achieve health or wellbeing outcomes, and this was an incidental outcome for around a third (34%) of the activities. The facilitators were most often paid freelancers (48%), library staff (27%) and/or professional writers / artists (15%). The activities were most often Council funded (37%), funded by other grant funding (36%) or unfunded (26%) (Stevenson, 2020, conference speech: 4 December).

It is clear from the above instances, where the library has been the location providing general support for wellbeing, that the librarian has been the ideal facilitator. Identifying themes of books and offering guidance on how to approach the text may be something that can be learned through experience, and bibliotherapy is perhaps not a skill for qualification alone, however, librarians are equipped with such skill as a consequence of the nature of their job. Their role as the best-placed facilitator will now be discussed, taking into consideration historical circumstances and the librarian's qualifications.

2.4 A rose by any other name... Librarian and psychologist as bibliotherapist

As the previous section demonstrated, it is difficult to define a modern bibliotherapist due to lack of qualifications and indeed, lack of actual jobs. However, as there has been a recent move towards hosting bibliotherapy sessions in libraries, and an historical link between such sessions with librarian input, it appears that the library profession is involved in most instances of bibliotherapy.

The first recorded appointment of a librarian as a bibliotherapist was E. Kathleen Jones, stationed at McLean's Hospital in Massachusetts in the US. She reported after her appointment in 1912 that she "had learned that the inclusion of an organised library under a professional librarian was important" for the successful delivery of bibliotherapy (Brown (1975), p16). In the early twentieth century, Dr. G.O. Ireland, a neuropsychiatrist at Veteran Administration Hospital in Washington supported this view, stating that the skills of a professional librarian were needed to select appropriate books (Brown (1975), p49). Unlike America, however, bibliotherapy in UK asylums was being delivered by medical professionals, and it would not be until January 1956 that the first advertisement for a bibliotherapist post would appear in a professional library journal (Brown (1975), p19), signalling a shift in responsibility, and perhaps in knowledge and skills.

The question of whether librarian or health professional was the most appropriate person to facilitate bibliotherapy was first raised in the immediacy of the end of World War 1. In 1939 psychologist and librarianship scholar Dr Alice Bryan asked, "Can there be a science of bibliotherapy?" theorising that there were six objectives to selecting reading materials for patients with psychological difficulties:

- Identification
- Motivation
- Personal values
- Experience
- Avoiding ideas of distraction, or remotivation
- Moving towards self-understanding (McNicol & Brewster, p6)

The ability to suggest such titles would be an appropriate task for a librarian, however aligning such books with patients would be best served by the health professional familiar with individuals' conditions. Writing in 1975, Brown was concerned that librarianship courses focussed mainly on information retrieval and not on books and reading (pp283-284). This is still very much the case today, with increasing emphasis on digital information sources and information laws. A knowledge of books, particularly fiction books, and how to use them with readers is not necessary to qualify as a librarian,

therefore those without a personal knowledge of books will struggle to prescribe appropriate texts for bibliotherapy. Though with so few librarian posts in present times involving books or reading directly, perhaps only those professionals with an interest in reading would apply for such positions.

Brown (1975) argues that “bibliotherapists should know a great deal about the emotional condition of patients” (p285). This requirement seems more appropriate for the duty of a psychologist, though librarians working closely with readers, for example in a school or small public branch library, will be familiar with regular readers and will build up a rapport with them, and will often be privy to many of the reader’s personal details. Hunt (1999) argues that “few librarians are likely ever to know their constituents well enough, or have enough time, to play such a role, which requires both intimate knowledge of the individual and wide knowledge of literature” (p184), however, as the previous sentence explains, with some borrowers visiting a library daily or weekly, library staff form close relationships with their patrons, and frequent interactions with books quickly leads to a sound knowledge of appropriate texts.

Brewster et al’s 2013 study of library professionals found that they felt bibliotherapy should be carried out by librarians and health care staff working together to combine expertise. Such sessions could be carried out anywhere, such as a care home, school or health centre. However, the study also found that the anonymous nature of libraries makes it difficult to know what people get out of books, though presumably this refers to lending only, as many library staff will chat to borrowers about their enjoyment of their selection, and will be approach by borrowers to recommend particular titles. This comment also highlights the importance of the retention of the small branch library, where local borrowers will be well-known and will not feel anonymous. The study concluded that it is “difficult to attribute improvement in well-being to one aspect such as bibliotherapy,” and this has been touched on previously, where social interaction has been noted as a positive influence on the effects of bibliotherapy.

In his 2010 article “Are librarians practicing without a license?”, Pierce states that psychologists are concerned that people will engage with non-fiction books about their conditions and find them not helpful, then refuse other, medical help because of it, which may indicate a failing of reading therapy, however, many patients also refuse medication, so this may be more to do with the individual than the treatments involved. This is certainly an example of an opportunity for library and health professionals to work in partnership alongside the patient to ensure the most appropriate care. Brown (1975) points out that “patients and others in need of therapy are often quick to sense whether the bibliotherapist has their true interest at heart” (p283), suggesting the need for the

bibliotherapist, whichever their profession, to have a genuine interest and care for those in need of such therapy.

Although there are unresolved issues regarding the role of the librarian, it appears to be common practice to hold bibliotherapy sessions in libraries, and so the library as a setting for bibliotherapy will now be discussed.

2.5 Implications of bibliotherapy for libraries

Come, and take choice of all my library

And so beguile thy sorrow

Titus Andronicus Act 4, Scene 1

Reflecting on modern psychiatric care, Andrews and Smith (1993) argue that, since the removal of the asylum, psychiatric wards forming part of general hospitals are now used for the most severe cases of mental ill health, with the more common, short-term illnesses being treated by outpatient appointments. This is still the case almost 30 years later, with additional, non-clinical support being offered in community settings. Thus libraries have become involved in such provision. As the quote above demonstrates, as far back as 1588 William Shakespeare recognised the comfort of a library for soothing the soul, and this section will now explore how libraries can assist with delivering bibliotherapy initiatives, as well as discussing current trends in Scottish libraries to award government funding to support such enterprises.

2.5.1 Bibliotherapy initiatives in the library sector

The use of libraries as a vehicle for social interaction to support mental health is beneficial, however, one cannot discount the barriers that also exist when accessing public services. Court (2011) states that people “living with mental disabilities” are “hard-to-reach” in a library setting (p203), also stressing that, for young people with low self-esteem, that in itself is a barrier to engaging with library staff, although library staff themselves have said that building positive relationships with young people is important to them (p206). Writing in his 2017 social commentary publication, *Poverty Safari*, Glasgow rapper Darren McGarvey acknowledges Scottish public libraries for supporting what he calls “Britain’s underclass” out of poverty through the service and environment they provide. Arguing that poverty and poor mental health are entwined, McGarvey describes the library as a place to “mentally regroup” and to “take you out of social exclusion” by existing without the barriers that exist in many other areas of society, such as economic, cultural and social (p155).

But libraries across the UK are closing and being deprofessionalised with £20million worth of funding cuts experienced in 2020 (Flood, 2020), and this will no doubt have a negative effect on communities who rely on their local library for a wide range of vital services. School libraries are also facing the same funding threats as public libraries, and this is often leading to a reduction in book stock, and the removal of professionally qualified librarians. In 1975, Brown stated that “many school libraries are being converted to

media centres” and that this was taking away the idea of reading for pleasure (p180), and this is still true today (Busby, 2019). Without promotion of and support for reading in schools, young people can become disengaged and eventually stop reading, and there is also a risk that they lose awareness of and access to appropriate books that may appeal to them, or indeed support them (Peerbacos, 2019). In Scotland, there is an attempt being made at tackling these difficulties through Scottish Government funding opportunities aimed at both school and public libraries, where librarians are employed, and an exploration of this follows below.

2.5.2 Bibliotherapy in Scottish school libraries - School Library Improvement Funding

As mentioned in 2.1 *History of bibliotherapy*, the Scottish Library and Information Council began in 2017 to offer annual funding for school libraries to help with a specific project that would aim to raise attainment. Many authorities opted for bibliotherapeutic projects, and they will now be discussed.

- Aberdeen City: In 2017, school libraries have initiated a “Shelf Help” collection as part of their “Healthy Libraries: Shelf Help and the School Library” project, set up to support pupils’ health and wellbeing. Each library promotes their collection in a designated area, with books sitting alongside information leaflets, and pupils are encouraged to “rave and wave” on social media, promoting the Shelf Help books they have found most helpful. The authority has also established a shared reading programme between school pupils and elderly care home residents. This form of bibliotherapy supports both the young people, as they identify appropriate texts, read aloud and discuss themes with others, and the audience of elderly people who have dementia. Pupils received storytelling training for working with people with dementia, and also created story sacks which contain dementia support resources.
- Clackmannanshire: Secondary school libraries focussed on developing their existing mental health and wellbeing book collections in 2017, and also built a collection of books for primary schools. The collection is made up of non-fiction books and the provision of access to information on mental health issues, alongside advice on how pupils can support their own wellbeing.
- East Ayrshire: Mental Health First Aid Kits were created in 2017 using graphic novels, movies, colouring-in books and writing materials which aim to provide distraction, support and advice to pupils dealing with mental health issues.
- East Dunbartonshire: In 2017, pupils and staff were invited to curate a bibliotherapy list which was accompanied by a creative writing anthology entitled *The Book That Saved My Life*. Described in its introduction as “a tribute to the

power of a good story in making us feel less alone”, the collection of writing gives school staff and pupils the opportunity to share personal stories of why a particular book has had an impact on them.

- East Renfrewshire: In 2019, “readfulness” sessions offered to pupils sitting exams, where they are invited to spend time in the library during exam leave reading for pleasure during rests from studying. Refreshments are provided and the library is quiet and peaceful during these times to promote relaxation.
- Edinburgh: The “Escape Connect Relate” reading for wellbeing programme was launched in 2019, with branding and book lists by theme. Senior pupils in each school became mental health ambassadors and facilitated bibliotherapy sessions with younger pupils.

2.5.3 Bibliotherapy in Scottish public libraries

Similarly to the School Library Improvement Fund, SLIC offers regular Scottish Government funding to public libraries run by local authorities, known as the Public Library Improvement Fund, and again, some authorities have chosen to provide bibliotherapy services with this funding.

- Aberdeenshire: “Story cafés” were introduced to branch libraries in a bid to encourage more social interaction in rural villages. The cafés were held in the evenings when a meal could be shared between participants as they listened to a short story being read aloud by the librarian. A follow-up discussion was encouraged, however it did not have to be of therapeutic value, to give the session a more informal feel.
- East Dunbartonshire: Words for Wellbeing project established, introducing targeted communities to bibliotherapy as an aid to self-management and recovery. Sessions are run by a Health Information Co-ordinator and focus mostly on writing for recovery.
- Fife: Walk ON programme set up, hosting various walks which each start and end outside a local library. Although not directly literary-related, walkers are encouraged to discuss recent books they have read whilst they are walking. The project aims to help tackle isolation by providing companionship, as well as promoting physical health through exercise.
- Midlothian: Funds were used to extend the employment of the bibliotherapist who facilitates their existing Braw Blether project.
- North, South and East Ayrshire: Partnered to roll out Reading on Prescription, and also to provide training and promote public library sessions to health and social care professionals in the local communities.

2.5.4 Bibliotherapy in Scottish university libraries

University libraries' main objective is not to provide recreational reading, however, some librarians have begun to offer such services following bibliotherapy successes in public libraries, demonstrating its high regard within the library profession.

- University of the West of Scotland: Introduced the “UWS Big Read 2018” programme as a result of discussions around how to support students who reported feeling a sense of isolation. The programme selected 500 incoming BA Business students and gifted each with a copy of the novel *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine*, which deals with the theme of loneliness and isolation. Students then participated in a discussion on the book's themes with the author who visited the university library.
- University of the West of Scotland: Hosts a “mood boosting” book display in its library, offering both fiction and non-fiction texts to support students dealing with stress. The display was set up as part of the holistic programme of support offered by the library, as staff felt this the best venue on campus to offer such support because it is opened and staffed for long hours daily, and students are familiar with frontline staff, feeling at comfortable with them.
- Edinburgh Napier University: Offers a similar service to the mood boosting books, here entitled “Shelf Help”. The main purpose of the project was to support students during times of stress, such as during the exam diet, and also to support staff and help the university community as a whole become more compassionate towards others.
- Edinburgh University: Offers bibliotherapy to medical students to combat the stress and trauma that undertaking the degree can entail.

Brewster et al (2013) state that bibliotherapy schemes have been offered in UK public libraries since 2001, most formally as part of the “books on prescription” programme, and a reason suggested for the higher uptake of such schemes from both regular and non-regular library users is patient dissatisfaction caused by increased waiting times for psychotherapy. Library books offer quick and easy access to support and explanation, so are an alternative to an anxious wait for a medical appointment, though in some cases of extreme ill health medical intervention would still be necessary. Heath (2017) suggests reading schemes as a solution to “the shortage of mental health professionals and the barriers that impede parents and youth from seeking and receiving mental health care.” This is well-intentioned however becomes problematic when thinking of librarians' health knowledge - their expertise may lie in being able to put the right book in the hands of the right person at the right time, but any additional knowledge relating to specialist

psychiatric care, as suggested by Adlam et al above, is certainly outwith their professional capacities. Bibliotherapy in libraries should therefore ideally provide an additional service to professional medical care.

A reflection on the literature review

The literature review showed a positive view overall of benefits from reading to mental wellbeing. Much of the evidence, however, relied on anecdotal responses from research participants and has acknowledged that this method makes definitive findings difficult. Previous research that has been carried out into bibliotherapy practice, and this section in particular, has studied the ambitions and resources of schools to delivery such practices. It was apparent from existing research, and indeed lack of research, that there was a need for further research into bibliotherapy and the impact that reading for pleasure has on their general wellbeing, particularly involving young people, without a focus on particular mental health issues, and so this became the basis of the empirical research carried out for this thesis. It was felt that this provided a wider conceptual framework for this study. The methodological and analytical frameworks will be presented in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 3 Setting the scene: Research design and methodology

3.1 Research objective and epistemology

The main objective of the study was to find out how school librarians regarded the idea of bibliotherapy and whether they were equipped to deliver it to pupils. I also wished to explore if reading for enjoyment during a weekly lunchtime reading group had any effect on pupils' emotional wellbeing, thereby assessing the impact of bibliotherapy. A school library reading group was set up for pupils to evaluate the emotional impact of reading experiences, and librarians who had delivered bibliotherapy sessions were questioned about their experiences. Twenty participants took part in the study, comprised of ten secondary school pupils and ten librarians.

This research aims to make a case for one of the many library services accessible, and in order to accurately achieve this, a suitable analytical framework was considered, based on my epistemology. My motivation for carrying out this research came from witnessing the recent eagerness within the school library community in Scotland to engage in bibliotherapy practices as a means by which to support pupils' emotional wellbeing. This was particularly evident during the Scottish Government funding application process, with a high proportion of schools choosing to support pupil mental health through library provision (Scottish Library and Information Council, 2019). Given the context in which I work, I conducted the study in a library setting. In her book on research demands within the library sector, Bent (2016) comments that although the aims and purpose of libraries have not changed and their positionality has not moved, society's attitudes towards them has, and it therefore has become necessary to prove their worth (p93). My study will therefore begin to try and prove that bibliotherapy is of benefit to young people, and that librarians have the knowledge and understanding to facilitate this service.

Upon considering my research subject and positionality, I subsequently adopted a constructivist epistemology, the belief that learning occurs when individuals integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge, although this can only occur with the said individual, who is the learner, is actively engaged in the learning process (Tracey and Morrow, 2017, pp55-56). Each individual creates their own meaning of knowledge, based on their own experiences, but meaning may also be constructed from their unconscious (Gray, 2004, p17).

There are three major components of constructivism; firstly that learning may be unobservable, so happening without any noticeable indicators, for example processing information gained from reading. Learning also "arises from a hypothesis-testing experience by the individual" in constructivism, so individuals learn to understand unknown vocabulary from the context of the sentence they are reading. The final

component is inference, or “filling in the gaps”, where a reader may intuit information that is not explicitly stated in the text (Tracey and Morrow, 2017, p56). All of these components can be achieved by the learner (in this case the reader) reflecting on their own experiences.

Constructivism is applicable for my research purposes as it considers the learner to be an active agent who makes their own meaning of the world through personal experiences (Gray, 2004, p17). Similarly, my study investigates young people’s wellbeing through their active participation in reading, where they make meaning of the texts based on their own circumstances. The aforementioned components of constructivism are also all relevant to my research question, and this stance has helped to shape my theoretical framework, positioning my understanding of the research question and leading to the development of my methodology. Rosenblatt’s reader response theory, also known as transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 1969, pp31-49), follows a similar belief - that readers are active learners who have a role in making meaning of the texts they read. With this in mind, I adopted reader response as my main theory, alongside grounded theory.

3.2 Reader response theory

Rosenblatt’s reader response theory is an approach to looking at texts and readers’ responses, and how they emphasise the reader’s role in constructing the meaning of a text. The reader creates meaning of the text by interpreting text in the context of their personal experience, bringing social, emotional and cognitive understanding to the text, so reading is active, not passive (Rosenblatt, 1969, pp31-49). Reading is defined by Rosenblatt (1986) as “a transactional process that goes on between a particular reader and a particular text at a particular time, and under particular circumstances”. Defining her theory, she states that “each reader brings a unique reservoir of public and private significances, the residue of past experiences with language and texts in life situations” (pp122-128).

Rosenblatt (1978) states that, in reader response theory, the reader produces a “virtual text”, which is a reconstruction of the text made by their interpretation. Rothbauer et al (2016) explain this further by stating that “readers adapt and transform the text according to their own desires” (p116). Ultimately, the reader relies on their life experiences in order to understand and engage with the text they are reading, as argued by Sarland (1991) who argues that “reader response theory has shown us that the reader needs to share a knowledge of the world, a cultural repertoire with the text in order to take that text on board” (p94). Readers use “selective attention”, bringing certain aspects of the text to the forefront of their attention, and pushing other aspects to the background, depending on where their attention is focussed (Rosenblatt, 1986).

Rosenblatt's theory argues that there are two types of reading: efferent reading, where the impact of the text is apparent after engagement, and aesthetic reading, where the text is impactful during reading (Rosenblatt, 1986). Similarly, Iser (1972) states that "the literary work has two poles": artistic, where the text is created by the author, and aesthetic, which is the reader's interpretation. The reader uses their own experiences, perspectives and anticipations to involve their past, present and future in the text. By bringing their own experiences to the text, Iser reflects that a second reading will often leave a different impression than the first, often as a result of the changing circumstances of the reader. Iser (1972) also argues for pleasure, prompted by the use of imagination, whilst reading; pleasure being a key focus of the pupil study undertaken for this thesis.

Rothbauer et al (2016) argue that reader response theory is a useful theoretical framework for mental health and wellbeing (p168), suggesting an appropriate method for this study. Likewise, Ruppert (1981) argues that reader response teaches that texts produce a "plurality of meanings" as every reader will take a different meaning from what they read depending on their personal experiences, and this is another key component of my research.

3.3 Grounded Theory

I also considered the grounded theory method as an appropriate framework for this research. Birks and Mills (2011) suggest that grounded theory is used when there is little known about a topic, therefore it is deserving of research (p17). Although there is a growing body of literature regarding bibliotherapy, research is still in its infancy, therefore the use of grounded theory is appropriate in this case. The grounded theory method is described by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) as:

[allowing] the researcher to begin a research study without having to test a hypothesis. Instead, it allows her to develop hypotheses by listening to what the research participants say. Because the method involves developing hypotheses after the data are collected, it is called hypothesis-generating research. (p7)

As the rationale to my research states, I wished to develop a hypothesis which might go some way to explaining a phenomenon that was of great interest to me. As my personal interest stemmed from experience, it was important to acknowledge assumptions and maintain an open mind throughout the research period (Birks and Mills, 2011, p19).

Journaling was valuable in the initial stages of my empirical study, and keeping a written record of my thinking during the research process was a significant step in developing my hypothesis. Utilising journaling for this purpose is suggested by Birks and Mills (2011):

“Using essential grounded theory methods demands that you begin to write from the very beginning” (p129).

I viewed my participants as a source of knowledge, considering them to be experts as they would be directly experiencing the research context, a concept which fits with grounded theory method (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003, p7). With the research question focussing on children, Sipe’s (2008) grounded theory of literary understanding of young children is also relevant. Sipe acknowledges five categories of response:

Analytical response - narrative meaning through plot, setting, characters, theme and style - distinctions between fiction and reality

Intertextual response - children make connections between book being read and other stories (other books, tv shows etc)

Personal response - linking text to own life

Transparent response - children have entered storyworld - their lives and characters’ lives are transparent

Performative response - children manipulate story for their own creative purposes (pp181-183)

All responses described here are pertinent to the results of the research study, detailed in the following sections of this chapter, demonstrating grounded theory as an appropriate framework. Following the principles of grounded theory methods, theoretical coding was the main analytical tool (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003, p7) and is described in further detail below.

I decided that a pilot study of the pupils’ data collection activity would first be carried out in order to assess and evaluate the logistics before collecting meaningful data. This took the advice of Swann & Pratt (2003): “Even if there is no previous empirical research to go on, situational logic can offer reasonable foresight about the possible consequences of policy, by imagining “what would happen if...” and taking steps to anticipate undesired outcomes” (p63).

Research design and method

3.4 Research Instruments

Four different research tools were used for data collection. This section gives an account of each instrument and how it was used.

Surveys

Surveys compared and contrasted pupil participants’ gauge of their emotions before and after a period of private reading. Participants were asked to describe their mood, rating

it on a scale, before explaining any possible reason behind that mood. I felt surveys to be the most effective method to gather this information owing to their ability to “gather data at a particular point in time...determining the relationships that exist between specific events” (Cohen et al, 200, p169). Emojis, popular digital images which are used to express emotions in text messages and internet communications, were used here to appeal to participants’ interests and engagement. The use of surveys was appealing in a school setting in terms of flexibility and accessibility (Hartas, 2010, p258). As there was a limited length of time to gather information - half hour lunchbreaks - individual survey completion by pupils ensured all participants were submitting the required information under necessary conditions. As suggested by Bell (2005), the survey was designed after I was clear on what information I was looking for (p136), focussing on the reasoning behind the participants’ feeling at a particular point in time.

Thought tracking

Whilst reading their chosen book, pupils were asked to keep track of their thoughts, feelings and emotions by attaching sticky note beside the resonating pages of what they were reading, as inspired by Mackey’s 2011 study where young people tracked their reading with sticky notes in order to help prompt future discussions about the text (p36). The objective of this activity was to examine participants’ responses to text, evaluating how their emotions were affected by plot, theme or characters, and any possible reason for this. The comments provided by pupils during this activity was beneficial in understanding their connection to their chosen text, so are discussed in Chapter 5.

Peer interviews

Peer interviews were chosen as a further method of data collection for pupils as they would allow the participants to speak more broadly about the subject area, answering questions that were not asked in the surveys, and to provide more personal information (Hobson and Townsend, 2010, p227). Interview was also an appropriate data collection method for both grounded theory and reader response theory, being an “open-ended, in-depth exploration of an area in which the interviewee has substantial experience” which allow “the interactive space and time to enable the participants’ views and insights to emerge” (Charmaz, 2014, p85). Butler (2015) also supports the opinion that interviews provide the information required for the researcher in reader response theory:

Reader response theory focusses on the reader and their experiences in the act of reading, and considers the text as the stimulus to this action. More specifically, it explores how the form of text influences the reader as they make sense of the text, and with what possible effect. As a result, the reader response frame offers

the prospect of providing valuable insights into our engagement with the product of much narrative-based research: verbatim transcripts (pp166-167).

The interviews were audio recorded. A challenge of analysing audio is the chance of missing non-verbal communication and messages shared between the speaker and listener through body language, facial expressions, however intonations of speech can often be picked up in recordings thus conveying meaning (Thody, 2006, p135). In addition to listening to the recordings, the interviews would be transcribed by myself and read back. An advantage of reading the transcripts is described by Butler (2015), who explains that when engaging in reading a fiction novel, similar gaps in speech and information to verbal conversation may occur, so readers fill in these gaps themselves, using their own experiences, almost co-creating the narrative. Similarly, with the reading of interview transcripts, the researcher understands more after reading because they have used knowledge of the participants and experience of the subject to fill in blanks.

The participants' responses closely identified with Bishop's (1990) "mirrors, windows and doors" metaphor for literature that implies that what we read can mirror our own life, allow us to view someone else's, and give us access to others'. As Botelho and Rudman (2009) found: "The mirror invites self-contemplation and affirmation of identity. The window permits a view of other people's lives. The door invites interaction" (p.xiii).

Attention was paid in the analysis, however, to the possibility that participants could "favour the interviewer" and give answers to questions that they thought would please the interviewer but that perhaps would be economical with the truth (Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). There was also a risk that one participant in the pair would dominate the conversation leaving the other little chance to speak out (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2012).

Focus group

Following the peer interviews, a focus group was used to collect more data from pupils, allowing me an opportunity to probe the interview responses in further detail (Hobson and Townsend, 2010, p227). The focus group had a clear goal in mind, and used "predetermined questions" to achieve this (Wilkinson, 1998). By following the peer interviews, where participants would work in pairs, the focus group ensured the participants felt comfortable in an already familiar group (Wilkinson, 2005).

A second focus group was formed by a group of librarians and was used for a discussion on their opinions and experiences of bibliotherapy. I believed the focus group to be the most efficient method of data collection in this instance as it would utilise the participants' time effectively during a training day.

Focus groups fit the grounded theory method, as explained by Charmaz (2014):

In addition to picking up and pursuing themes in interviews, we look for ideas through studying our data and then return to the field and gather focussed data to answer analytical questions and to fill conceptual gaps (p86).

3.5 Ethics

Because of the nature of the study, in which teenagers were sharing potentially sensitive information, responsible research implementation was taken into consideration. Ethical approval at university and local authority level was sought and received, and clearance was gained from the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee for both the pilot and main study. It was recognised that “when children are research participants the research clearly is a matter that affects them” (Brooks, 2014, p48). Respect for participants’ rights was acknowledged during the ethics process by ensuring their voices were heard and not dismissed, in a safe and nurturing environment. As the focus was on emotional state and reasons, the methods of data collection were designed to minimise any possible risk of distress to participants (Hill, 2005, p81). In addition to open-ended questions where participants could control how much or how little personal information they offered, care and support was provided for any distress in the comforting, peaceful surroundings of the library.

Participants were recruited during lunch breaks in the library where pupils who had expressed a keen interest in reading for enjoyment gathered. Pupils who had previously requested that a book group be set up by the librarian were identified, and the premise of the study explained. During the recruitment process, participating pupils and their parents were consulted when the purpose and methodology of the study was explained in order to ensure informed consent (Cohen et al (2013) p51). This was administered through the use of Participant Information Sheets (see Appendix a); although separate sheets for pupils and parents, the same information was provided on each. This followed guidance from Brooks (2014) that “all research should ensure that children themselves are fully informed about the research and have the right to assent or dissent” (p48).

There was a concern on my part for the sensitivities of pupils, with participants being asked about their emotions, and so awareness of the power inequalities between the adult researcher (in this case an experienced school librarian) and participants was considered. Children and young people often offer responses that they think will please adult researchers, almost as though they want to give the “right answer”, so I had to become aware of avoiding unintentionally leading responses. Consideration was also paid to the possibility of vulnerable participants with heightened sensitivities who may have found being the focus of a study a stressful experience (Hill, 2005, p63). Reflecting on

my own experience in the school library setting helped to address these issues during the planning stage.

Confidentiality was vital because of participants' "right to privacy" (Cohen et al, 2013, p62). This was ensured through anonymity in this thesis of both the pupils and librarians, and on the pupils' research materials. On their individual surveys, pupils were asked to select their favourite book character name to be used as a pseudonym. This made the research process fun for participants, as they wrote their pseudonym in a "top secret" section of their survey. A difficulty encountered with regards to anonymity arose when pupils were interviewing each other. In this case I asked them to use their real names when recording their chat, then changed the real names to the pseudonyms for transcripts and written analysis. Similarly, during the librarians' focus group real names were used, but amended to Librarian A, B, C etc for the thesis.

3.6 Analysis

In order to interpret the findings of pupils' surveys, a summary sheet was used to tally mark how many participants identified with particular emotions (Bell, 2005, p205), followed by the use of analysis coding, where similar responses were grouped together (Pope and Round, 2014). The first step was to find out which participants experienced a change from a negative to positive mood after reading; who changed from positive to negative; and who remained either positive before and after reading, or negative both times. I introduced a colour code at this point, with a different colour for each of the four responses. From this it was clear that the continued positive mood before and after reading was the most common response of the participants. I then broke this down further by examining the reasons participants gave for their moods, grouping the responses by mood change. The codes used here were the following: having the opportunity to read; the content of the book they were reading; the atmosphere of the library; and personal reasons, divided by school and home incidents. Where the participants reported their moods remaining the same after reading as before they began the session, I used the scale mark they had provided to assess whether that mood had increased or decreased. A colour code was again used to separate responses into reading and book-related answers, and other reasons. I could therefore see at a glance that the most common influence on mood was reading.

Similarly for the peer interviews and librarian focus groups, responses were "clustered", setting similar comments into categories (Cohen et al, 2000, p283), using grounded theory coding. Transcribing the interviews allowed the opportunity of reading for recurring themes (Bell, 2005, p226). Charmaz (2014) emphasises that balance is needed in grounded theory to hear participants' stories and analyse them in terms of the research

question (p86), therefore it was clear that the interview responses would be the primary sources, providing the most valuable information which best responded to the inquiry. Coding shapes the analytic frame, as described by Charmaz (2014):

Coding means categorising segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each piece of data. Your codes show how you select, separate, and sort data and begin an analytic accounting of them (p111).

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) state that “the coding method is a procedure for organising the text of the transcripts, and discovering patterns within that organizational structure” (p31), however Campbell et al (2013) describe the challenges of coding the peer interviews as “interpreting what respondents mean in their answers to questions”.

To effectively code the transcripts, relevant text was first selected by being highlighted and copied to another document. Matching ideas were then discovered by grouping together related passages of text in the new relevant text document, and this step was repeated to construct second and third theme. The subject of these themes provided me with the coding titles. I included the group “other”, which contained miscellaneous comments that were not used repeatedly as I was aware of the possibility that only one participant could have experienced something, but which was no less significant by the fact it was relatable to that one person (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003, p54).

Once this had been completed, the hypothetical construct could be developed by following a similar practice. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) describe this process as moving the analysis from the description of subjective experience found in repeating ideas and themes to a more abstract and theoretical level (p67). The document that contained the list of themes used to construct the coding titles was referred to here, and a new file created for the list of theoretical constructs, using the first theme as the starter for the first theoretical construct. The same steps were taken as had developed the coding titles, and this then enabled me to name the theoretical constructs.

The research design and methodology responded to the main object of the inquiry: to investigate librarians understanding and practice of bibliotherapy, and whether engaging in reading for pleasure improves young people’s mood. In the following chapters, exploring pupils’ response to reading, librarians’ experiences of bibliotherapy, and an analysis of the books read during the study, the methods employed to find this will be discussed.

Chapter 4 Reading in Action

4.1 The pilot study: Applying the research design and instruments

JH: I want to find out if reading makes you feel good.

Hermione: Miss, you don't need to do a study, I'll tell you right now, it does.

Three months before the main study, a pilot study was carried out to identify any unexpected challenges (Bell (2005) p205). I had expected this to be a rehearsal run of how the main study would unfold, for example what I would say to participants, but I took the opportunity to trial different surveys in order to assess which would give me more informative responses. Opportunities also arose to identify logistical changes. This section will now discuss the outcomes of the pilot and amendments that were made before implementing the main study.

4.1.1 The school

The research took place in a secondary school in the south of Glasgow. The school used was a six year Roman Catholic state school, with just over 1100 pupils from south west of the city attending. The pupils came from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, including Chinese, Japanese, Polish and Russian. Some students whose first language was not English receive additional language support and the school library participated in this support (O'Neill, 2019). There was a high level of deprivation in the area. The school had recently seen an improvement in attainment and library provision, so was chosen because of the positive impact of the school librarian in encouraging pupils to read for enjoyment and participate in reading groups. The same school was used for both the pilot and main studies as there were possibilities of closures of other school libraries in the local authority in the interval between the studies. Using the same school provided the opportunity to build positive relationships with school staff and for pupils to become familiar with my presence around the school, leading to a positive rapport with study participants.

The school followed Scotland's national curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence (Education Scotland, 2004), which was first implemented throughout the country in 2010. The curriculum focusses on four capacities of education that provide opportunities for children and young people to develop as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Each curriculum area offers "experiences and outcomes" promoting skills and knowledge to be developed and achieved from ages 3-18. Relevant for this study were experiences and outcomes in Literacy and English, Literacy Across the Curriculum, and HWB, covering the strands *Reading: enjoyment and*

choice, and *Mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing*, respectively. By the early secondary stage, pupils are expected to have achieved the following:

I regularly select and read texts for enjoyment, and I can express how well they meet my needs and expectations and give reasons, with evidence, for my personal response (LIT 3-11a).

During the course of the study, the participants were asked to select a text that they would enjoy, using previous reading experience of authors and genres to help inform their decision, then to discuss their reaction to what they had read, therefore fulfilling each component.

With regards to mental and emotional wellbeing, the following outcomes were expected to have been achieved:

I am aware of and able to express my feelings and am developing the ability to talk about them (HWB 0-01a / HWB 1-01a / HWB 2-01a / HWB 3-01a / HWB 4-01a).
I understand the importance of mental wellbeing and that this can be fostered and strengthened through personal coping skills (HWB 0-06a / HWB 1-06a / HWB 2-06a / HWB 3-06a / HWB 4-06a).

In the case of the study, participants would be asked to discuss their feelings in relation to the books they would be reading. The overall purpose of the study was focussed on the possibility that reading could be used as a coping skill for emotional distress, reflecting these outcomes.

It was important before beginning the study to collaborate with other library professionals in order to plan the study and to select an appropriate setting (Bent, 2016, p43). This ensured the expertise of staff, which included the head of the school library service in the local authority where the research was taking place, to select the school that would best suit the needs of the study. Having previously worked under the library service's manager, she was aware of the working styles and personalities of the librarians, and could assess who would work well as part of a team, as well as providing knowledge of what successes were occurring in the school libraries and which librarians had the most positive relationships with pupils. Once the setting had been selected, based on the school's positive reading culture and pupils' willingness to engage with reading activities, as well as a supportive librarian, I attended a staff meeting with the school's head teacher, depute head and librarian to discuss how the study would be carried out. School staff were positive and supportive of the research project, which was helpful for the overall planning and running of the study. (Bent, 2016, p45).

4.1.2 About the participants

The participants met in the school library once a week for around 30 minutes during their lunch break. The sample size in the pilot study was 4 pupils; this took into consideration the number of pupils available (i.e. those who had expressed a wish to participate in a library reading group), and those who felt comfortable to speak about often sensitive information. As described previously, the sensitivity of the information was based on pupils' reported personal feelings, and all who volunteered to take part said they were willing to talk about this. The number was also considerate of the time constraints on myself, including the reading and analysing of each pupil's chosen book, and the transcription of pupils' notes and recorded interviews.

The four participants consisted of Alfie, Count Olaf, Hermione and Lottie: two boys and two girls who were all native English speakers, and who were regular visitors to the library for book borrowing. They were all in S1, the first year of Scottish secondary schooling, so aged approximately 12-13. Two other children also expressed an initial interest in participating, however withdrew before the pilot started - with the study taking place at lunchtimes, it clashed with many other social activities and groups in which pupils were involved. The participating pupils chose their own pseudonyms based on their favourite book character. It was essential to build a rapport with participants before officially starting the study so that they would be familiar with me and feel comfortable answering questions about their emotions honestly. On arrival to the school, I was introduced to pupils as "Miss Horan", as is the customary address in schools, however when working with the group of participating pupils, I felt that it would be more open and less intimidating for pupils to call me by my first name. Although I offered this suggestion to them, the participants naturally addressed me as "Miss" throughout, appearing to feel most at ease using that form. I visited the library for three lunchtimes before officially starting the study and joined pupils informally whilst they were privately reading to chat about their books and share recommendations and favourite authors, travelling around the library as pupils occupied the same room, with some reading individually at tables, and others congregated in groups. I made a point of speaking to all pupils in the library, and not just those interested in the study as it felt important to demonstrate an interest in every child's reading in order to encourage and endorse their library visits. I also had the chance to work on the library issue desk, which presented further opportunities to engage in conversation with pupils, and for them to see me as a librarian and fellow book-lover, and not just someone here to question them. This also provided an opportunity to "gain prior knowledge of participants" as suggested by Bent, 2016 (p191).

For the first official session of the study, an introduction to the reading sessions was necessary. As an ice-breaker between myself and the participants, I began by asking what

reading meant to them. Lottie explained, “I read lots - I’d rather read than play on the Xbox. I started reading *Harry Potter* after I had a dream I went to school at Hogwarts, then I woke up and thought, “I have to find out what happens!” Alfie told me, “I used to read a lot in primary school, but then I didn’t read for a while because I didn’t get any new books, but now I feel ready to read again - I need a reason to read.” For Count Olaf, “Reading relaxes me. My favourite books are horror, I started reading horror when I turned 12. I only read some days but I go to the library a lot. I like the library because there are lots of genres and choice. My new year’s goal is to write a horror book.” Lastly, Hermione commented, “I read before bed and during the day when I’m not doing anything else. I read series and always have another one lined up for when I finish because I really like reading.” These responses suggested not only engagement in reading, but an understanding between participants that reading was important and so was given a priority in their lives, particularly when Lottie chose to read over playing computer games, when Alfie returned to reading as a hobby after previously abandoning it, and when Count Olaf continued to visit the library, even when not reading. All comments, perhaps with the exception of Alfie’s, suggested an existing positive relationship with reading and, in Lottie’s case, an emotional attachment. Hermione became the most animated and passionate when describing her love of reading, and invited me to read her own short stories that she had written. Although Count Olaf stated that he felt relaxed by reading and Hermione that she read for entertainment, Lottie and Alfie did not comment on any particular reasons for their engagement in reading, however, Alfie’s comment that he “needed a reason to read” suggested an unconscious awareness of such a need, explaining his present return. His remark that he had not been reading because he had no new books was interesting as it suggested he waited for books to be given to him rather than seeking them out. However, that he said he felt ready to read again could suggest that his main reason for not reading had been because he just didn’t want to, and for whichever reason he has now reached the stage where he wished to resume reading. It may also suggest that the secondary school library provided a much wider selection of reading material than what he had previously had access to. Of the four, Count Olaf was the least-able reader; he had difficulty decoding text and read at a slower rate than his peers. This did not deter his enthusiasm, proven by his everyday borrowing from the school library and regular visits to the local public library.

4.1.3 Participants’ book selections

After the introduction, the participants were invited to select a book to read during the future reading sessions, the only prerequisite being that it should be a title they would expect to enjoy, or something that had brought them comfort in the past. All participants, except Count Olaf, chose a book with which they were familiar. Lottie and

Alfie had both read their books before, and Hermione was working her way through a series. Count Olaf requested help from me to select a book, and I asked him to tell me what authors and genres he had previously enjoyed reading, before offering a selection for his perusal. As we had previously discussed that he preferred reading horror or crime, I had selected three novels of that genre that I knew to be popular - two were from the general fiction section and one from the quick fiction (or “easy reading”). We read through the synopses and first pages of each book together before Count Olaf opted for the easy reading book that he had not read previously but which had a horror-style cover that appealed to his interest in that genre. Self-selection was deemed most appropriate, rather than one specific book for all pupils in order to avoid an “implied audience” (Zipes, 2002, p44), where the one theme or character situation would be assumed to appeal to all four participants. Tastes and interests among young people vary, and it was important, based on the literature discussed in the previous chapter, that pupils were engaged with their texts so that they would enjoy the reading experience, as well as being given the chance to read a book that may match their personal experiences. I had intended that I would offer support to any pupils struggling to select a book, and only Count Olaf required such support. Although, as Styles & Arizpe (2009) acknowledge, there can be adult instinct to control what children read (p4), I was committed to ensuring that pupils were leading the search for a text and that I was not simply giving them a book to read without their input of decision-making. The books chosen and participants’ comments explaining their reason for selection are shown below.

Lottie chose *Katy* by Jacqueline Wilson (2016). *Katy* is a modern re-telling of the children’s classic *What Katy Did*, focussing on Katy’s rehabilitation after falling from a tree swing and breaking her spine. Unlike the original novel, *Katy* is not “cured”, but instead learns to accept her new state of being, as well as strengthening her relationship with her step-mother. The book’s themes include coping with disability and step-families. Lottie chose this because: “I really like Jacqueline Wilson, and I’ve read the original *What Katy Did* book and I really liked it. My favourite bit is when she falls out the tree but then starts getting better.”

Alfie chose *Esio Trot* by Roald Dahl (1990). *Esio Trot* is the story of a shy man who is secretly in love with his neighbour, but she only has eyes for her pet tortoise, leading him to hatch a plan to win her love by helping grant her wish that the tortoise grows a bit bigger. The main themes are those of loneliness and companionship. Alfie chose this because: “I remember reading this before and it was really good.”

Count Olaf chose *Granny* by Anthony Horowitz (2009). Joe dislikes his evil granny and must work to thwart her plan to create clones of herself using his own extracted enzymes.

Themes included in this tale are those of family dynamics and bravery. Count Olaf chose this because: “It looks like a good horror.”

Hermione chose *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003). In the fifth book of the series Voldemort’s threat is growing stronger as the Ministry of Magic falls. Harry begins to secretly teach his class mates to defend themselves and others from the growing conflict, whilst trying to evade the tyrannical new headmistress, Professor Umbridge. Themes of good versus evil and coping with bereavement feature heavily. Hermione chose this because: “I’m almost half-way through. I’m reading all the *Harry Potters* in order.”

4.1.4 The reading sessions

In order to assess the impact of reading on the participating pupils’ emotional wellbeing, surveys were completed by each pupil before and after the reading sessions. It was intended that two of the four pilot participants would fill them out before and after each session, with the remaining two participants completing only one initial survey before starting the study, and one at the very end. This would help to give me an idea of which pattern of survey completion would provide me with the most data to assess the impact of the reading experience in preparation for the main study. Lottie and Hermione completed surveys before and after each reading session (although due to illness Hermione missed one of the two reading sessions), while Alfie and Count Olaf each completed one survey at the start of the study, and one at the end. Participants selected their current emotion from a list of emojis, then scored that emotion on a number scale, which could be more easily interpreted than through individual descriptions of feelings. When recording their initial feelings, Lottie (on day 1) and Hermione did not comment on their emotional feelings, but physical - both were tired from the school day, from running during a P.E. lesson. Alfie was bored because he had had an uneventful day. Count Olaf and Lottie (on day 2) both reported feeling calm due to the relaxed atmosphere of the library. After reading Lottie reported being excited on both days due to anticipation of what was coming next in her book. Hermione recorded several emotions relating to what was happening in the plot of her book: “I am happy because I love *Harry Potter* and excited to see what happens next. angry at Umbreg (sic). Upset for Harry.” The reasons for the post-reading feelings were not always necessarily to do with the context of the stories pupils were reading - Alfie and Count Olaf recording feeling calm and content respectively, with both believing the act of reading had relaxed them.

Alongside surveys, thought-tracking was used as a tool for collecting data, although this exercise was not as effective as I had hoped as participants viewed it as a separate activity and not one which was linked to the surveys and later interview. From the notes taken,

Lottie felt excitement when reading page 25 of her text, *Katy*, as “they’re going to the secret garden”. Hermione recorded many changes of emotion over a few pages in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*: excited during Harry’s adventure, angry at Professor Umbridge for her punishment of Harry, then upset on Harry’s behalf. Alfie and Count Olaf did not record any thoughts whilst reading. On reflection the lack of success of this part of the study was an oversight on my part for not clearly explaining how all activities used in the study would be linked, so this led to an alteration for the main study.

During the final session, when the reading activity sessions had been completed, peer interviews were used, allowing pupils to chat freely in pairs, giving an overview of the whole reading experience (Appendix *b*). This style did not constrain them in answering the set questions of the survey where they could only comment on how they felt and why, and so were not afforded the opportunity to reflect on links to their personal reading and emotional wellbeing in general. The interviews were sound recorded on iPads, which added some excitement for the participants who enjoyed using the technology. With only four participants, their choice of partner was limited, however as two participants arrived earlier than the remaining two, having finished their lunch sooner, I used that opportunity to pair them together so as not to waste the limited time. Beforehand, I had a conversation with the participants to plan some of the questions they would ask in order to provide a starting point. The main themes of how reading made them feel, their opinions on books, the library space, and the conduction of the study were selected for questions. Reflecting on their feelings when reading, Count Olaf said that he felt relaxed and calm, with reading taking his mind off things when he was worried or anxious because “it helps me get rid of the real world”. Alfie also confirmed that he could “forget about an annoying day” when reading, so this reduced his stress levels. This was also the response from Hermione: “Reading helps me feel like I’m in the book and I just have no worries and if I have a really, really messed up day I can just sit down and read and forget about everything and read for, like, hours on end”. Hermione believed that the themes of books accentuated the readers’ emotions, suggesting readers choose a title that reflects how they want to feel: “Whenever you read a book that is funny then you feel, like, every single page you get better and when you read something sad or, like, not happy that’s about to make you feel upset you’ll probably feel more upset, but if you feel like you want to be happy then read a happy book not a sad book.” For Count Olaf, being “interested and thrilled” was an important outcome of reading. When considering the library space, Lottie believed it to be a place of comfort, feeling that, as a reader, it was a place she “fitted in”, unlike when she was in the “outside world”. Finally, when asked to reflect on their participation in the study, Lottie said that filling in the mood surveys before and after reading made her reflect on her feelings and realise how reading

affected her. Alfie, however, was fully immersed in his reading and only considered his feelings retrospectively when he was filling out the final form. The interviews were both short, with participants asking very few questions, which did not leave me with much to discuss in this section. This also led to alterations in the main study. All responses to the questions asked were positive, which did not leave room for argument or balance, so it was clear that the phrasing of questions in the main study would have to be examined in order to allow negative responses.

4.1.5 Alterations for main study

As mentioned throughout this section, some modifications were made ahead of the main study based on challenges encountered in the pilot. When given free choice to select their own books for reading, participants appeared to opt for popular, predictable titles. Although I felt free choice is important for bibliotherapy, I also believed strongly that young people should have access to a wide and varied choice of reading material that deals with sensitive issues, and so for the main study I wished to work with participants to compile lists of books by theme, from which they would make their choice of what to read during the sessions. In order to fully assess how the chosen books have impacted on the participants' emotions, I decided to read and analyse each book used, focussing on the main themes and what emotions I expected the participants to be affected by.

I felt that the completion of surveys before and after each reading session gave a more discernible result than using only one survey before the study and one after, so the former was carried out in the main study. It was decided, based on the methodological literature consulted and discussed in section 3.1, that the main study would also include one extra survey, completed during a reading interruption in the middle week of study in order to assess how pupils felt whilst in the midst of reading, where the same questions would be asked, but this time during their reading as well as before and after. This would allow me to assess how participants were reacting instantaneously to the texts. I concluded that I should have more involvement in guiding the conversation during peer interviews. During the pilot study the conversation between pupils stalled after a few minutes with them unable to think of any other questions beside the initial ones we had discussed together, so more formal questions were set for the main study. I also decided to sit in on their interviews, though only speaking if necessary, for example if there was a lull in conversation, as pupils seemed comfortable to talk openly in my presence.

It was noted that participants seemed to lack the necessary vocabulary to express their emotions and why they felt a particular way, and this perhaps indicated why they struggled to sustain conversation in the interviews. In order to support participants in understanding how best to speak about emotions, both in asking questions and answering

them, a modelled discussion was planned for the potential new participants of the main study.

4.2 The main study

4.2.1 Situating the study

The same school was used for the main study and, reflecting on the results of the pilot study, an alternative method of participant recruitment was used for the main study. As only S1 pupils had expressed an interest in participating in the pilot study, which had been open to S1 and S2 pupils, only S1 pupils were approached to participate in the main study. I visited the school prior to commencing the study in order to promote and explain what I would be doing, and also to recruit interested participants, and the school librarian, with support of the English department, displayed posters around the school and advertised it during lessons. Eleven pupils in total signed up to participate, but one pupil was unable to take part because of absence. Some pupils who had wished to join the pilot study in the middle of its run, and who had therefore been unable to do so, were regular lunchtime visitors to the library, so were keen to be involved in the main study when they heard about it. Some pilot study participants asked to take part again but could not, so this gave the librarian the incentive to set up a future reading group which would include those pupils.

Initially the reading group was planned to take place each Friday lunchtime for six weeks, however this was disrupted as the library was being used for exams and meant that for a few weeks a different day had to be used. In order to ensure the participants could remember which days the reading group was running, I made bookmarks on which the dates were printed and gave them to each pupil. The daily school announcement system, which was made just before the start of lunchtime, also reminded pupils to attend. Some participants missed an occasional session as they were absent from school, but attendance of the sessions overall was positive. A specific space was set up in the library for the purpose of the study, utilizing a quiet corner by the book shelves with comfortable seating. This was away from the door of the library, the issue desk and the computers. My previous experience of working in school libraries made me aware of busy lunchtimes and the popularity of computer use and recreational space over book selection, so I was assured of the ideal positioning of the space for the participants' needs.

4.2.2 About the participants

Ten pupils took part in the main study, comprising of four boys and six girls, all aged between 12-13 years old. Seven of the ten participants were native to Glasgow, and three had recently arrived in the country from Eastern Europe. The participants' nationalities were considered during the analysis, observing Hill (2005): "Viewpoints of minority ethnic children may be downplayed when their numbers are small" (p68). In order for me to

gain an understanding of their attitudes towards reading and the impact they believed it had on them before I began analysing their responses to the study, the participants were asked about their life as readers; how long they had been a reader (if, indeed, they considered themselves to be one) and what they felt reading brought to their lives. They were also asked about the books they had chosen to read for the study, which would hypothesise any possible emotional reaction.

Aragon

Aragon said that he was only motivated to read when he was enjoying a book. He felt it could take him a while to find a good book, but he determinedly kept looking for books that he might enjoy, trying different ones. He liked that he could be gripped by a story anywhere - he would take a book to read when he was going out. For the study he read *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris as he was going to visit Auschwitz during the forthcoming summer holidays and his mum had recommended he read it first. He was learning about Auschwitz from the book and found the printed maps helpful for visualising the site in his mind.

CJ

CJ spoke at length during the study period about his great love of reading and how much being able to read meant to him: "I learned words from my teacher in primary school and then I could read. Reading about Kipper, Biff and Chip were the only things that made me happy when I was stuck in the classroom - they went on adventures like the underground." He chose a graphic novel, *The Girl Who Owned a City* by O.T. Nelson, with the help from the school librarian. He was attracted by the cover image and the synopsis of the plot.

Draco

Draco didn't start reading for pleasure until the year the study took place because she hadn't found it interesting until then. She then appreciated reading to pass the time, and was trying different themes to find what genres and authors she enjoyed, but was most keen on action stories. She chose *Ferryman* by Claire McFall as she was interested in the afterlife themes, comparing it to the horror movies she enjoyed watching. This was an interesting observation as she repeatedly referenced films during her peer interview, and linked books and reading to films she had watched - film appeared to be her chosen narrative medium.

Georgia

Georgia's interest in reading was ruled by her current mood: "Sometimes I read, but sometimes I'm too bored to read, so it depends on my mood. If I'm sad I'll take to a book, but sometimes I'll just want to read it all the time if the book's good, instead of YouTube. On Wednesday something bad happened and I just took a book off my shelf to read it to distract myself from thinking about it, and I had finished it by Thursday". She chose *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas because she had read it before and really liked it: "It teaches you you're never too old to stand up for things that are wrong, and sometimes your friends aren't really your friends."

Hannah

Hannah had always loved reading and spoke about using the Wattpad app to store ebooks and write her own book. She would read when she had nothing to do, in order to pass the time. She felt that she learned about other people's emotions and knew what they were feeling from reading. Hannah chose *13 Reasons Why* by Jay Asher because she had watched the TV series and enjoyed it.

Hermione

Hermione admitted to not being a big reader, but admitted she would find herself hooked on a book if it was an interesting story. She believed "it's a good idea to read to calm yourself down before sleep, to learn stuff like how to look after a pet, to wind down after a long day". She also advocated that "books make you think and widen your vocabulary". Hermione chose *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* by J.K. Rowling because she had previously seen the films so knew she would like the books. She liked the detail in the book, saying, "You can use your imagination so you can decide what characters look like, rather than have it decided for you in the films". After reading this book, she was keen to read the rest of the books.

Luna

When Luna was younger she didn't like reading and thought it was a waste of time, but she tried it again when she was older and found she liked it. Her recurring read was *Harry Potter* as she liked to read series of books and the *Harry Potter* series contains seven books, so it could keep her occupied for a long time. She found it easier to concentrate on reading when she listened to music as she didn't like silence. Luna chose to read *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K. Rowling during the study as she found it so magical. She was keen on the idea of school Houses, which are prominent in the *Harry Potter* series, and that everyone fits in somewhere. She also liked the concept that

“Harry has flaws, Neville loses stuff, Ron’s poor but he’s not a bad character”. Her favourite characters were Hermione and Luna.

Rin

Rin was an enthusiastic reader, going through one or two books each week. He had always liked reading but couldn’t explain why, only that he found stories intriguing. His favourite genre was Manga graphic novels. He chose the Manga graphic novel *One Piece* by Eiichiro Oda because he had enjoyed reading from the series previously.

Starr

Starr had always enjoyed reading, explaining, “Sometimes I read fast, sometimes I take forever. I’ve always been a reader - when I lived in Hungary I had to read every day at school and in the house - I had a closet full of books. I kept on reading when I came here, it keeps your mind of anything bad that’s happening, and when it’s sunny, reading outside relaxes you.” She chose *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas because she had seen the film and wanted to see how people are treated differently if they are a different race.

Yukio

Yukio described himself as “not a massive bookworm”, but said he read a book whenever he was intrigued by it. He was keen to expand his reading habits after recently realising how enjoyable he found reading - he felt it was expanding his knowledge and was good for film directing, which is what he had ambitions to do upon leaving school. He chose *The Last Dragonslayer* by Jasper Fforde as he wanted to try something a bit different to his usual genre, and thought the synopsis sounded interesting and quite funny.

4.2.3 Introducing the theme

Before the participating pupils began the reading activity, I felt it was important to ensure they properly understood and had the vocabulary to talk about their emotions in order to give me the best responses they could. I therefore held an introductory session with participants, modelling a book group discussion. Using images from Oliver Jeffers’ picture books *Lost and Found*, *How to Catch a Star* and *The Incredible Book Eating Boy*, pupils were presented only with illustrations and no text, and used Jeffers’ distinctive facial illustrations - simply dots for eyes and no mouth - to collate a word bank of emotions that they may have felt appropriate to use when filling out their own emotion surveys, or when participating in the peer interview. It was important for pupils, who worked in groups of three, to firstly discuss what they thought was happening in each illustration in order to be able to relate emotions to the depicted events. The images and corresponding vocabulary lists collated by the participants are shown below.



Fig.1: scared, excited, confused, anxious, unsure



Fig.2: confused, interested, contemplative, puzzled, astonished



Fig.3: uncomfortable, disappointed



Fig.4: happy, over warm (sic)



Fig.5: homeless, solemn, lonely, sea-sick, sad, not sefft (sic - safe), scared

Although the pupils came up with a wide and interesting range of vocabulary, they did not put it into practice during the survey completion or interviews. A possible for reason for this could be the complexity of articulating emotions in the moment; it may be easier to focus one’s mind on generating vocabulary for an isolated task. In the surveys and interviews that followed, participants’ focus became relaxed and they spoke in the simplest terms. Despite this, I believe just bringing a suggestion of new expressions to their awareness was beneficial in focussing their attention on the emotions one can experience in particular situations. (See Appendix c for participants’ completed word banks.)

4.2.4 The reading sessions

41 reading sessions were completed: five sessions ran for 10 participants, however not all participants attended every session. Pupils were asked to state their mood before reading and scale it, giving a reason for their mood, then do the same after reading (Appendix d). The analysis found the following:

From negative to positive	9
From positive to negative	3
Both positive	25
Both negative	4

Reasons for feelings were organised into three categories: relating to reading, relating the being in the library, and other reasons.

	Reading	Being in library	Other
From negative to positive	8	0	1 no reason given
From positive to negative	2	0	1 had fallen out with others in the group

Both positive	21	1	2 personal reasons
Both negative	0	0	3 personal reasons, 1 couldn't explain

For those who reported remaining the same emotion, a numeric scale of their feelings was studied:

	Increase during session	Decrease during session	Remained the same
Positive	9	3	13
Negative	0	1	3

The high number of reports of positive responses suggest reading does have an impact in general emotional wellbeing. Positive reactions far outweigh negative feelings. Looking more closely at the reasons why such feelings were displayed, it appears that the overall reading experience was the most common cause. Although one participant reported a negative feeling at the end of a session after starting positively, this occurred when they had been distracted from the reading experience by a dispute with another in the group. For those who remained in a negative state of mind throughout the session, only one described feeling less negative at the end than the start. No one from this group reported feeling more negative. The opposite was apparent within the positive group, where only three out of 25 felt their mood decrease.

Further examination was carried out into the reasons for increases or decreases of scale for those who remained the same emotion at the start and end of sessions. Most feelings were directly influenced by the reading, with pupils feeling more content at the end of the session. When asked why he had stated an improvement in positive mood, one participant answered simply, "Because I'm reading books, that's how."

Where negativity was recorded, one participant beginning the session feeling anxious about a character and ending the session, although still anxious after reading another chapter, less so, as an issue had been resolved. In an instance where less positivity was recorded, the participant felt over-excited upon entering the session but was calmer after reading, so although still reporting a positive mood, it had decreased.

A common response of increased positivity took place during the Friday afternoon sessions. As they neared the end of the school day by the time the session was finished, participants commented that they were excited for the weekend.

4.2.5 Thought tracking

Pupils were asked to keep track of their emotions whilst reading and to record any changes or any significant feelings they experienced on sticky notes, which they would then stick to the corresponding page. I intended to retain my own copies of their notes, copied from the pupils' books after each reading session. (Following a consultation with the school librarian, it was decided that the books would be kept securely in the library between sessions to avoid pupils forgetting them if they were to take them home at the end of the day.) The idea of this activity was to keep track of and discover how emotions change during reading, and to correlate emotional changes with the plots of the books. However, not everyone did this, and some who started stopped half-way. This was caused by some pupils being too engrossed in the story to stop to take notes and by some not knowing what to say, so perhaps being unaware of how their emotions were changing, if indeed they were. Only one pupil completed the task each time she read, and these were what she used when completing her surveys, so rather than sticking the notes to her book, she stuck them on the answer boxes of the surveys. Four pupils kept sticky notes at some point during the reading sessions, displaying Sipe's *personal response* (2008, pp181-183), as discussed as part of grounded theory method, as they linked the texts to their own lives. They recorded the following thoughts:

Draco, when reading a description of her main character's *unruly hair*: "That's me! It's relatable."

Starr, when reading a description of her main character's dad: "I feel like she is talking about my dad."

Yukio: *I sighed. This is my life.* - "Her current misfortune makes you feel empty." Yukio was almost critically evaluating the text; his other sticky notes recorded: "This shows a dramatic shift." and "This shows that not all creatures are the same."

CJ, when reading the printed letter informing the main characters about their parents' deaths: "I feel sad about mums and dads dying - it makes me think about my mum and dad dying and I feel sad." Then when reading about the characters holding a meeting: "I like this because they want to defend themselves against the gang. I like that they're standing up to bullies - their mums and dads would be proud of them."

When asked their opinion on the thought tracking activity, the pupils who had completed it said that it helped to keep them focussed on the book, as well as helping them if they were stuck to remember how they had felt when it came to completing the survey. Some also used it when they had forgotten what had happened in book during the previous reading session, and some found it helpful as a summary of what they had previously read,

without having to go back and read a full page. Thought tracking appeared here to be used as a practical tool for understanding and following the plot, and not for acknowledging emotions. When preparing questions for the focus group, I reflected that the surveys and interviews had not provided the participants much opportunity to discuss the content of the books they were reading, so the thought-tracking notes suggested a direction for me in which to lead the conversation, and a prompt for question development, asking participants to expand on the thoughts they had experienced during reading.

4.2.6 Analysis of pupils' responses

Pupils participated in paired peer interviews followed by a collective focus group (Appendix e), both of which provided them with the opportunity to express in further detail their attitudes towards reading in relation to their wellbeing. Although originally given freedom to set their own questions, it became apparent through observation that they were struggling in knowing what to ask so I offered guidance questions, still allowing pupils freedom in their usage of the questions and in how the conversations developed. This technique supported grounded theory method as the pupils were viewed as experts of their individual reading experiences, therefore suited to leading the questioning and discussion. The main questions asked were: *What did you like/dislike about participating in the study? Any preconceived ideas before participation? Had you read for wellbeing before/will you in future? Did participating change your thoughts about reading?* Following the peer interviews, I carried out extension interviews, asking pupils to expand on points of particular interest they had made.

When reflecting on the impact of their reading experience as part of the study, the most frequent reaction was escapism. Pupils stated that reading had been a “distraction” from stress, had taken “focus away from my own problems”, and “got stuff out of my head”. These experiences suggest benefits to wellbeing as they counteract the negativities of daily stress, summarised in a further comment that reading was “relaxing”. Reading had also helped “express emotions” including being empathetic towards characters experience grief and injustice. One participant remarked: “Happy endings make you feel happy.” The emotional release reported by participants is a further indication of wellbeing, previously explored in the literature review.

It was clear that the emotional response to reading, though evidently present in all pupils, varied in each individual. Starr didn't feel different after reading but emotionally connected with the text during reading, and Georgia was aware that reading affected her emotionally but “couldn't understand” the experience. Rin demonstrated an understanding of the transformative effect of reading, commenting that he used reading

as a way to “control his emotions” following incidents of class disruption, perhaps suggesting that reading made him feel calm.

Aragon, CJ and Draco had all felt the impact of the text after engagement, demonstrating Rosenblatt’s (1986) efferent reading, whereas Luna, Starr and Yukio felt the impact of the text during reading, demonstrating aesthetic reading. Exploring responses to reading further, CJ and Draco displayed Sipe’s *performative response* (2008, pp181-183), becoming creators of their stories by drawing scenes from their books after reading. Throughout all stages of data gathering, Draco also displayed Sipe’s *intertextual response* (2008, pp181-183), where she connected books discussed to films or television programmes she had seen. Although film and television appeared to be her passion, Draco demonstrated an emotional connection with storytelling in general, suggesting a deeper consideration for her own and others’ experiences as a result of exposure to both printed and visual storytelling. Aragon perhaps experienced the most visceral response to his text, as he visited Auschwitz after reading about the concentration camp. He reflected that reading the personal story helped him to imagine the conditions at the time and “that it actually happened”. He believed he “made a connection”, between his book and reality, displaying Sipe’s *analytical response* (2008, pp181-183), and shared the photographs of his trip with me.

Yukio enjoyed the reading experience more than he enjoyed the content of the book, reflecting, “I was going to a completely different place and therefore being able to get my mind off the real world. I think that’s what improved my wellbeing”. His comment that “you have to enjoy the book to engage emotionally” supported evidence found in the literature review. This response led me to reflect on Iser’s theory regarding reading for pleasure (1972) and responses were analysed in relation to derivation of pleasure.

Draco described being forced to read in class as “not fun”. Similarly CJ said he would feel “angry” if forced to read a book he wasn’t enjoying, but that he used reading as a way to calm down when angry - presumably reading a book he enjoyed. Yukio took the opposite view; his preference was to read at school where it was viewed as a reward, whereas at home he didn’t feel he “deserved” to read. From these responses it is clear that participants found pleasure to be a key motivation for reading. Their engagement appeared to be low when not enjoying texts, which the literature review suggests would prohibit wellbeing benefits. Enjoying their chosen books therefore further supports participants’ comments that they found the reading experience to improve their wellbeing.

It can be concluded that overall, reading was seen by the participating pupils as beneficial for their emotional wellbeing. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences of

reading in general for wellbeing purposes, and the majority responded by reflecting on times they had experienced a positive mood after reading. Georgia reported that she went “from being sad to being a wee bit happy because it just took my thoughts off what I was thinking about.” Similarly Hermione said, “If I’m having a bad day and I read a book, it makes me feel better.” CJ agreed with this, stating that participating in the study was the first thing to make him feel happy after his grandfather’s recent death. Given his reason for this was that his chosen book had made him feel happy, it is interesting to note that during the thought tracking exercise (4.2.5) he was concerned about the deaths of the young characters’ parents. It may be that reading about family deaths offered him comfort in solidarity. Draco did not specify mood, but spoke of feeling “accomplished” after reading, which suggests positivity. Yukio provided a more comprehensive response, supporting reader response theory: “A lot of them [films] lead you to react, but with books you just make up your own mind, and that’s how I think reading for wellbeing is really important.”

Reflecting on the participants’ responses to reading, there were links to Bennett’s (2013) description of interpretation of texts as interaction (p22). Although he describes reading interaction as different from social interaction as it is not face-to-face, the findings of bibliotherapy research discussed in the literature review suggest it is truly effective when readers discuss and interact with each other. The reading experiences of the participants led them to this interaction, and their discussions during interviews led them to consider improvements in their own wellbeing. So a conclusion of this part of the study may be that the direction of post-reading discussion does not only have to focus on the content of the book but on the evaluation of the readers’ emotions in order to be effective bibliotherapy.

Having studied young people’s responses to engaging in bibliotherapy sessions, the dissertation will now examine how such sessions are implemented in schools by studying librarians’ understanding of the practice.

Chapter 5 Book Doctors: Librarians' experiences of bibliotherapy

For the next stage of the research I moved from investigating young people's reactions to reading for bibliotherapy and focussed on its implementation by librarians in schools. This will be discussed under three themes; first how librarians themselves define bibliotherapy, and next their own experiences of delivering the practice to their pupils and a study of their choices of appropriate books. Finally a bibliotherapy guide will be presented along with a justification of its contents, and a discussion on the expectations of librarians regarding its use.

About the participants

Ten librarians, nine females and one male, volunteered to participate. Eight participants were recruited from local authorities in Scotland that had introduced the delivery of bibliotherapy to their school librarians' remit. Two were librarians in England whose organisations were also delivering bibliotherapy. The group comprised of eight school librarians, one college librarian (formally employed in a school) and one head of service for young people who had responsibility for the school library service. Although there was a gender imbalance, school librarianship is mostly a female-led profession, with few men taking up the position. All participants had been trained to deliver bibliotherapy in schools, and the school librarians were actively implementing sessions as part of a local authority initiative. The research was conducted during an inset training day, however, not all participants were available to join a focus group, opting instead to be interviewed one-to-one, or send replies by email at a later date (Appendix f). The table below provides further details.

Participant	Job	Gender
Librarian A	School Librarian	Female
Librarian B	School Librarian	Female
Librarian C	School Librarian	Female
Librarian D	School Librarian	Female
Librarian E	School Librarian	Female
Librarian F	Head of Service	Female
Librarian G	School Librarian	Female
Librarian H	School Librarian	Female
Librarian J	School Librarian	Male
Librarian K	College Librarian	Female

5.1 A book hug: How librarians define “bibliotherapy”

In order to assess their understanding of the role of the bibliotherapist, I wanted to know if the librarians viewed themselves as bibliotherapists following their training and regular implementation of the practice. I began by asking them for a definition of bibliotherapy in their own words, which provided an overview of their interpretation. Although everyone gave a different definition, there was much similarity in their meanings, suggesting an agreement of the fundamental elements behind bibliotherapy. The definitions were as follows:

Librarian A: Reading to aid mental health.

Librarian B: Using books as a way of addressing mental health issues but also to experience different situations and develop empathy.

Librarian C: Reading to relax and to build empathy.

Librarian D: The help you could get by reading. That can be identifying yourself into the story and finding comfort out of it or enjoying a reading that helps you to escape from your reality.

Librarian E: The sharing of stories to promote positive effects in participants.

Librarian F: The use of books and reading to improve mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Librarian G: Reading to improve our mental wellbeing...both for relaxation and inclusivity.

Librarian H: The use of books to offer help and guidance to people dealing with specific issues.

Librarian J: The exploration of own thoughts and feelings through reading and as a tool to aid mental wellbeing from reading.

Librarian K: The supported use of books to promote mental health and wellbeing.

Six of the ten participants related bibliotherapy directly to mental health, with another three believing it to concern “dealing with issues”. Only one mentioned relaxation. During the exchange with Librarians A, B and C, I reflected that I personally regard bibliotherapy as the act of being comforted by reading. This led to a description by

Librarian C as it being a “book hug”, and a realisation that using storytelling for comfort was something that we all did with films and television programmes. When it came to collating the reading list for their authority’s “Read, Escape, Connect” bibliotherapy initiative, however, Librarians A, B and C displayed a firm idea that bibliotherapy should be used as a method for understanding and dealing with issues that may occur in life:

JH: It’s quite interesting, we spoke earlier about naming bibliotherapy, and sometimes it being just to make you feel better. I went for the more kind of comforting angle.

Librarian B: We went a bit hard-core, and I think a lot of that came from where I came at it to start with, I was coming at it from personal experience of having to deal with a daughter who was falling apart and I didn’t know how to fix it, we’re used to fixing things and I couldn’t fix it, so I was coming at it from that angle, I didn’t want to happen to any kids I knew what had happened to [daughter]. I wanted, not that it would cure it, but I think it provides a toolkit that young people can use, and it should mean they have good information as well as good reading in there, so I think that if you come at it from reading as just being comforting, I think they can live side by side, it’s just... can you imagine if we tried to create a list of comfort reading?

JH: Well comfort’s subjective.

Librarian C: You know when kids in school are harping back to something like the *Harry Potters* or the Jacqueline Wilson books because they first read them when they were in, like, primary 6 or primary 7 [aged 10-11] and they really identified with them then and they’re still reading them, but just because it gives them that comfort zone and they’re not that adventurous in their reading anyway so they want a little bit of a book hug and that’s where they go to.

It was of interest that Librarian B affiliated her definition to her experience with her daughter, providing a direct link to mental health. This led me to explore whether the participants’ definitions were influenced by where they had initially come across bibliotherapy.

5.1.1 Librarians’ introduction to bibliotherapy

I set the question:

When did you first encounter bibliotherapy, either the term or the practice?

Librarian B confirmed:

Librarian B: My daughter, who now has a diagnosed anxiety disorder, self-diagnosed herself as bipolar through using a website she found online. This sparked my interest in what I learnt was called bibliotherapy as I immediately saw the potential for young people where we could combine good issue driven fiction and ‘good’ information sources

Alongside this, she had also completed a postgraduate certificate in Collaborative Working: Education and Therapy at Queen Margaret University where she had “become aware of adults being prescribed books - predominantly self-help - to help with various issues.”

Librarians A and C were then made aware of bibliotherapy when Librarian B presented about the subject at their authority’s in service meeting, therefore associating it with mental health. Furthermore, following this meeting, Librarian C said that “I also took part in the Mental Health and Literature MOOC from Warwick University a few years ago, which a few of our school librarians also did... And the Scotland’s Mental Health First Aid for Young People course, which I think almost all of our school librarians have now done.” This may have led to the authority initiative being firmly rooted in mental health support.

Librarian E first encountered the term when working in libraries where it was implemented, however, gained her understanding when studying for her librarianship degree:

Librarian E: I think the definition was along the lines of using books for wellbeing as part of the social impact of libraries.

She related the social impact to the effect bibliotherapy has on its participants by reflecting on her own experience of attending a bibliotherapy session:

Librarian E: I saw that the two group leaders weren’t dominating the discussion, but were opening it up to all participants. I realised it was less about the particular texts and more about the connection people were making with each other through sharing their opinions.

Librarian D emphasised the concept of receiving “help” from reading. She had previous clinical experience of bibliotherapy whilst working as a library assistant in a Florentine hospital:

Librarian D: We were trained about how books could have helped them [patients].

So having received the training whilst working in a hospital, Librarian D’s definition was influenced by the medical connection. Similarly, Librarian F, who emphasised mental health in her definition, had first encountered bibliotherapy through her role in her library

service steering the first book prescription scheme for young people in Scotland in collaboration with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and medical professionals. Librarians G and H also referred to mental health, and had both encountered bibliotherapy through initiatives in their authorities, therefore suggesting that library services are focussing on a clinical mental health element. Librarian K also defined bibliotherapy in relation to mental health, and had first encountered the term while working as a school librarian. She related it to a pastoral role:

Librarian K: I noticed that my pastoral role within school was almost as important as my librarian role and began to explore ways of supporting students who were dealing with anxiety/stress due to exams and issues at home.

Librarian H did not mention mental health specifically in her definition of bibliotherapy, instead emphasising support for “issues”. She had first encountered the practice through the Reading Agency’s programme, which focusses on a broad range of wellbeing topics, and is not limited to mental health.

There appeared here to be a correlation between perceived definitions and varying introductions to bibliotherapy. The responses suggest that the participants were influenced in their definitions by their previous encounters with bibliotherapy, and the differences in definition again raises the question addressed in the literature review of the varying terms used to describe bibliotherapy, that can lead to a general misunderstanding of the practice.

5.1.2 Reflecting on understanding

Following this conversation and reflecting on their conceptual understanding of bibliotherapy, the participants were asked if they felt confident in delivering sessions. This was based on how they viewed their professional position.

Training

Librarian A felt confident, relating it to the school librarians’ role as a confidante to young people:

Librarian A: Yes, to some extent, as pupils have always brought their ‘issues’ to us, plus we have the backing of both school procedure and our own training regarding Mental Health First Aid.

Here she reflected on not only on her existing skills gained from years of professional library experience, but the new skills she had acquired through additional training, in this instance mental health first aid training.

Librarian C also felt confident, explaining that she “knew where to get more information following procedures if needed.” This may be a reflection on the aforementioned additional training, or indeed the training offered by authorities to all school staff.

Librarian E commented on the specific bibliotherapy training she had received prior to delivering sessions:

Librarian E: I do feel confident in delivering these kind of sessions, because I have had the training and have seen how a well-run session should be facilitated. I receive training in child protection at my school and am very clear on what to do should pupils report a situation in which I feel they are at risk.

Again, like Librarians A and C, she remarked on the child protection training received in school as being beneficial to dealing with any sensitive issues that may arise during sessions. Librarian K, a former school librarian now employed in a college library, had not received formal bibliotherapy training, however was able to transfer skills and experience gained from other training:

Librarian K: I have also had mental health training at the college where I presently work; as I read widely and facilitate a YA reader’s group, I feel confident recommending suitable material and sharing this in a safe group setting. Confidentiality, signposting and understanding my own sensitivities are important things to consider. The YA reader’s group requires a fine balance as a couple of the members are church-goers and have a value set which is different from most other students (and my own). It is important to be respectful of their views but also promote understanding and tolerance of the differences which emerge.

Knowledge of literature and information

Reflecting back on Librarian B’s reaction to her daughter’s experience where she emphasised the need to provide “good information as well as good reading”, this directly relates to the librarian’s skill of providing access to accurate information and developing readers’ skills to identify such information. Librarian F’s confidence came from engaging in this professional area of expertise:

Librarian F: The role of the librarian was that of a recommender only. I also had one-to-one ad-hoc discussions with young people, usually round a book that I

recommended, and feel that being a non-clinician allowed me to withdraw judgement and listen, then possibly think about referring for serious issues.

Here she highlighted that librarianship requires strong interpersonal skills, including the abilities to communicate well and to be approachable, and that these skills are vital to fulfil the caring role of the bibliotherapist. She clearly demonstrated, however, an awareness of the need for clinical expertise in regard to possible medical issues.

Librarian H also raised the issue of not having specialist mental health knowledge, but demonstrated an awareness of her own limitations, expressing “trust that books help in a whole host of situations”, and an ability to “guide students towards them”. Her personal experiences were the basis of her own practice:

Librarian H: When I’ve struggled with various issues in the past, I’ve found books to be a valuable source of information, guidance and comfort. As a foster carer I used books to inform myself of issues my foster daughter was dealing with and shared them with her too. We would both read a book, fiction or non-fiction, and then discuss it - I found this a useful way of giving her space to have difficult conversations.

Librarian K took a different approach, based on a bibliotherapy conference she had previously attended, learning that “clients seem to benefit far more from accessing fiction and poetry than “self-help” books or those with a clinical basis”. Her knowledge of children’s literature, she found, was beneficial when working with dementia patients:

Librarian K: [Dementia patients] benefit from both the visual stimulus of illustrated material and ephemera which may have a connection to their past lives and experiences. I supported one elderly woman who was fascinated by Michael Palin and his *Around the World in Eighty Days* series, particularly the desert episodes. We shared the children’s picture book *The Wooden Camel*, which she loved looking at and talking about.

Concerns and the physical space

Some librarians, although they did feel somewhat confident with the practical aspect of delivering bibliotherapy, expressed concerns. Librarian G was the only one who was worried about what to do when pupils “are triggered” - when they negatively respond to relatable content in their reading material. She felt she had not received sufficient

training on how to effectively deal with this, and this led to anxiety about approaching certain subjects with pupils.

Although Librarian B felt confident in dealing with any arising issues and had no more concerns about delivering bibliotherapy than “any activity when working with teenagers”, her concerns involved the physical practicalities of delivering sessions in school as “we have some issues in [school] about getting a quiet space to work in.”

Librarian D also reflected on the physical space and the busy nature of both the school library and the school day:

Librarian D: I think it could be quite challenging to find an appropriate time and space to have the tranquillity required.

Both suggested by their responses that they believed in the need for a quiet space in order for bibliotherapy to be effective, possibly concerned that a lack of privacy and calm would be a hindrance for pupils.

5.1.3 Summary of responses

Reflecting on the participating librarians’ understanding of bibliotherapy, it was evident from the opening discussion that all had an existing awareness of bibliotherapy. It was defined mostly as a tool for mental health support, so wellbeing links had been formed. Interestingly, each librarian’s definition of bibliotherapy was based on where they had initially encountered the practice, suggesting their understanding was shaped by their exposure. It is also worth noting that many participants encountered bibliotherapy during professional development opportunities, including library conferences, so it is apparent that the practice is becoming prominent within the library profession.

Reflecting on bibliotherapy training, many participants had received specific training, and were utilising job-related training including child protection. Their existing knowledge of books, key to their professional role, was a strength of their understanding, as was their understanding of the relevance of the physical library space for offered sanctuary during bibliotherapy delivery. There was a small worry from some participants over the lack of specific training available, and this raises the question of how this can be achieved when, as discussed in the literature review, no formal bibliotherapy qualification exists.

Having demonstrated their understanding of bibliotherapy, the following section will now explore the methods employed by librarians to facilitate the practice in schools.

5.2 Exploring the use of bibliotherapy in schools

Following the discussion on what they considered bibliotherapy to signify, the librarians were asked about their own role, and how they facilitate effective sessions.

5.2.1 The librarian's position

It has previously been established that librarians are not psychologists so lack clinical expertise, therefore the question was asked:

How do you feel your position as a librarian, and not a health professional or psychologist impacts your delivery of bibliotherapy?

The responses split into two camps; that librarians bring a knowledge of literature, and that the physical library provides a safe space for sensitive matters to be discussed.

Knowledge of literature

Most participants believed their strength to be their awareness of books, both in content and theme, as Librarians A, D and G stated:

Librarian A: Well we've always been recommending books for pupils and staff to read, this just takes it one step further.

Librarian D: I believe that in my position as school librarian impacts my delivery of bibliotherapy and in small context has happened that we used books/reading to help pupils dealing with difficult situations.

Librarian G: One of the strengths of librarians is the knowledge of books, which can be extremely useful in this case.

Librarian B expanded on this, citing the librarian's role as an information professional:

Librarian B: Books, and the accessing of information, are our core 'business'. We have always recommended 'good' books to read and have combined it with our knowledge of the young people we work with. Bibliotherapy is a natural extension of this especially coupled with our training as Mental Health First Aiders.

It was discussed in the previous section that Librarian B felt very strongly about providing access to accurate information based on personal experience. She was the only participant to reflect on information, despite it being a core role of the library profession. A reason for this may be the emphasis on fiction for bibliotherapy. Librarian B also highlighted the knowledge of colleagues in her authority with regards to mental health. Similarly, Librarian H was aware of the limits of her knowledge of mental health so concentrated on book content:

Librarian H: I've had no training in mental health so I try to be aware of my own limitations. I'm not an expert and never pretend to be, I suppose that really I just trust that books can help in a whole host of situations and try to guide students towards them in the best way I can.

Alongside the knowledge of literature is the librarian's personal knowledge of pupils' backgrounds and needs. Where this differs from a health professional's knowledge is the ability to make contact with pupils every day, building relationships. Librarian C acknowledged that pupils also feel more comfortable speaking to a librarian, perhaps trusting the confidentiality:

Librarian C: It enables us to have conversations with pupils about books and themes that might be distressing them. Often this is in a one-to-one situation, so pupils feel confident that the rest of the class isn't listening in.

Librarian F also spoke about the librarian's ability to hold 1-1 conversations, and made an interesting comment about her position:

Librarian F: The way it was implemented in my authority was that the books were all available through school and public libraries but the role of the librarian was that of a recommender only. GPs were also "prescribing" our books on the list. I also had one-to-one ad-hoc discussions with young people, usually round a book that I recommended, and feel that being a non-clinician allowed me to withdraw judgement and listen, then possibly think about referring for serious issues.

She referred to the opportunities for collaborative working with health professionals that bibliotherapy presents.

Library as a "safe space"

Linked closely to confidential conversations with library staff is the idea of the physical library as a "safe space". Librarian G highlighted the school librarian's duty of care in providing a service to pupils:

Librarian G: I think as a librarian I have a duty to provide a safe space for students. It is fundamental that they feel there is a space in school where they can just be themselves and share their concerns in a safe environment. It is also a very good tool to use to talk about topics that are a bit difficult sometimes, and to develop empathic skills.

This view was echoed by Librarian E, who also mentioned the separation from the assessed curriculum that the school library provides, and the voluntary nature of many school library services:

Librarian E: The library is recognised as a safe space within school by both pupils and staff. The physical space is important as it is separate from the dedicated learning environment of a classroom, removed from the pressures and associations of tests, exams and the ‘right’ answer. The staff recognition is of the library as a safe space is of key importance, as I need the support of Guidance and Health & Wellbeing staff to deliver bibliotherapy sessions. Running the sessions at lunchtime and making them non-compulsory also helps encourage pupils who want to take part but who may not feel confident in larger groups.

Librarian H demonstrated awareness of possible reluctance in pupils when it came to borrowing items on sensitive subjects:

Librarian H: We place them by the door to try to normalise their content for all, the location is a natural area for students to congregate and we find that they pick up these books more than others. It also means that anybody with particular issues doesn’t have to look for books... The books being at the front of the library also means it is easier for students to take them without having them issued. Although I should say that I hate books being stolen, actually I’d much rather this happen if a student doesn’t feel able to borrow properly.

Librarian J was of the opinion that participants may view librarians less formally than clinicians, therefore feel more at ease when discussing their feelings:

Librarian J: I feel as a librarian that those practicing bibliotherapy with me are more relaxed and do not feel they are being judged in discussions.

This view was echoed by Librarian H, who commented on the privacy of library borrowing:

Librarian H: [We] have a prescription system where the wellbeing team will suggest a few titles that might be of use to individual students [both fiction and non-fiction]. The students can then bring the prescription to me and I’ll find and issue the book to them, with the agreement that no questions or comments are made.

5.2.2 Training: reflecting on library skills and experience

The participants were asked to reflect on their professional skills and experience, and how that impacts on their delivery of bibliotherapy. Librarian G felt that it had made her reconsider her role, and how others view it:

Librarian G: By delivering bibliotherapy I was able to appreciate more the various nuances of being a librarian. It’s a bit of an in-between role. We are not teachers,

but neither are we friend-like figures. We are more similar to mentors, and I think through bibliotherapy I was able to see how much students consider the library to be a safe space.

In Librarian A, B and C's conversation, they reflected on the practical advice given as part of their bibliotherapy training:

Librarian C: The practical examples were great and I have used some of them already - reading prescriptions, mindfulness sessions, readaxation and storytelling cafes. It reinforced other training that I've been on.

Librarian A: At the training it was helpful to have a mixture of theory and the practical examples.

Librarian B: I think it just reinforced what we already do. It was very useful because we could focus on the practicality of running bibliotherapy sessions. Learning about practical examples, real books to use and the book recommendation services was what I have taken forward.

JH: Was there anything not covered that you thought should have been? Or was there anything you would have liked to know more about?

Librarian A: More practice using variety of bibliotherapy tasks, maybe videos of sessions?

Librarian C: Ooh, I like that! Video examples of a session would have been fab!

Librarian B: Yes, more practice and learning from the experience of others, what has worked and what hasn't.

Librarian B felt that bibliotherapy delivery was already what librarians do as part of their professional duties, but receiving that reinforcement removed any worry or doubt in their abilities and allowed them instead to focus on delivery. In terms of furthering their learning, all focussed on the practical. Similarly, Librarian H did not view her work as "officially bibliotherapy", although it was similar to initiatives being implemented by other librarians under a bibliotherapy title. These response indicate that delivering bibliotherapy is already closely linked to the librarian's role.

5.2.3 Bibliotherapy examples and expectations

Next the participants were asked to consider the practical sessions of bibliotherapy that they had delivered, first looking at their expectations, then providing examples. Most of the participants had not had any expectations so were approaching bibliotherapy from a fresh perspective.

Librarian C: I had been thinking about mindfulness and readaxation for a while. I hadn't thought that teens would be interested in being read a story, so was happily surprised to see them enjoy it.

Librarian A: I didn't really know how pupils would react, but at our pupil ambassador training, I was blown away by the responses to texts from the story café sessions.

Librarian B: I did not anticipate the popularity of the titles and how open the pupils are to the idea of reading as a help for some of the issues they are facing.

Librarians H and J expressed negative expectations, however these were quashed after experiencing their sessions in practice:

Librarian H: I thought that students would be much more reticent than they have been. The book seems to offer a way of diverting attention and allowing students to discuss issues in a more comfortable, less direct manner.

Librarian J: I was not expecting great results from the group I was working with as they were very disengaged with school, but they began to open up and soon were sharing stories with each other.

Librarian K highlighted the issue of possible censorship; the library profession promotes access to all texts, however there can be discord when working in schools and fulfilling the duty of care to young people.

Librarian K: I had very few expectations of what bibliotherapy could achieve; in fact, I did encounter resistance from some school staff who were concerned about "inappropriate" subjects being discussed and the vulnerability of the students who might be involved. These are things which need consideration but my experience (and students') has been overwhelmingly positive. One student in my secondary school group wanted to call our group "Reading for Survival", as that was what the experience meant to her. She had a very complicated blended family, a lot of responsibility at home and little privacy or sense of self.

All participants reported positive examples of bibliotherapy:

Librarian A: I have been running weekly readaxation sessions. In the future, I hope to run more targeted Story Cafes and get Therapets involved. As a school, looking at mental health is a huge focus this year. I am on the Health and Wellbeing group looking into this, and the school wants to look to see what can be

done to open up mental health initiatives up to a wider group of pupils as possible - Escape, Connect, Relate fits the bill perfectly. We also hope to have an interactive, erm, online resource, but that's to be continued!

Librarian C: I have run story cafés reading *The Snowman* by Michael Morpurgo and Debi Gliori's *The Night Shift* - very different themes, one was a comfort Christmas read and the other is about depression. One pupil revealed that her dad suffers from this and said, "Oh that must be how my dad feels. Now I understand how he feels."

Librarian H: We spend a session at the start of the year discussing the benefits of reading for pleasure. Students always start by focusing on academic benefits, but we then guide them to thinking about wider benefits such as relaxation, learning how other people deal with emotions. We suggest at the start of every silent reading session that students choose their benefit, the thing they want to get out of reading that session. At these times I find it useful to show the relaxation benefit of reading by saying they have my permission to fall asleep if that's where reading takes them...One Y8 [aged 12] boy, who wasn't a "traditional reader" even told his entire class that he'd started to use books at night because he struggled to sleep.

Librarian J: We used bibliotherapy with in a nurture group environment. It was not following a routine of a passage from a book, rather it was a personal choice of what a person was reading, exploring how they felt at the time and thoughts around what they were reading... pupils discussed feelings, fears, expectations. They enjoyed the session in an environment where they didn't think others saw them. You had to be coming to the library in the corridor it was located.

Librarian K: One of my most successful examples of how bibliotherapy can be effective and build self-esteem was several years ago when I used Jackie Kay's poem *Double Trouble* with my KS4 reader's group. A few of the group members (all girls) had confidence and anxiety issues. They had to prepare for the spoken part of their GCSE English exam, so we managed to incorporate this into our sessions, practising reading the poem - which they chose - aloud. We also talked about the themes contained within the poem and they then decided as a group that they would like to present their rehearsed reading at Year 10 assembly. To see them overcome their nerves inspired other students and also helped me, as I

am not confident speaking in public. I have resurrected this and hope to do something similar with the group I currently facilitate at college.

(It should be noted that KS4 is the term used for the two years of school in England when GCSEs are undertaken. It incorporates Years 10 and 11 of secondary school, with pupils aged between 14-16.) Librarian K identified a further effect of bibliotherapy, when she herself was encouraged to overcome a personal challenge after witnessing others experience a similar situation.

There were occasions where initial bibliotherapy ideas did not engage pupils, however the librarians were able to adapt and empower pupils, as Librarian C explained:

Librarian C: I have tried mindfulness colouring in and doodling lunchtimes but they were not greatly successful, readaxation worked better. I have a weekly lunchtime session where pupils choose which of the above activities we will be doing.

Similarly, Librarian B encountered difficulties in implementing bibliotherapy sessions, so again adapted her delivery, in this case by promoting literature and information to those in need:

Librarian B: We have a problem creating a quiet space in the library at lunchtime so I have focussed on promoting the toolkit to suggest fiction titles & websites. I am also moving forward with the personal book shopper and the book referrals that we got from the training. We're planning a push for Mental Health Week where we will promote the use of the Escape, Connect, Relate books and toolkit with both pupils and staff.

It was clear also that there was a concern over funding; Librarians A, B and C worried that they would not be able to carry out bibliotherapy initiatives successfully without additional budgets, as they had relied on Scottish Government funding to introduce bibliotherapy to their authority.

5.2.4 Bibliotherapy books

Naturally the focus group discussion led to books that the participants felt to be appropriate for bibliotherapy. A book list was curated by the librarians following a discussion about each title's theme and suitability. They began by listing books they had read themselves or shared with pupils:

Librarian A: *Thornhill*. Beautiful, that was an amazing book dealing with bullying...*Unstoppable*, deals with gang culture...a lot of it also deals with family issues.

Librarian B: *The Boy at the Back of the Class*, my kids have liked that as well, it's refugees.

Librarian A: I think one of the books that you recommended, Jennifer, that resonated with all of us is *The Island*...That has been so powerful.

JH: And really topical too.

Librarian A: I'd say that that has been one of the biggest successes.

Librarian G: I think *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak is very good because of the child's perspective.

Librarian J: *Frozen Charlotte; All the Bright Places; Before I Die; We Come Apart; The Smell of Other People's Houses; Salt to the Sea; Hospital High; The Bower Bird; Orangeboy; and Moonrise*... It's books which allow the reader to have empathy and explore a character's situation and how they feel about what the character is going through throughout the narrative of novel.

Reflecting on the book list I had compiled myself and supplied as part of the bibliotherapy guide (which will be discussed in further detail in the following section), Librarian F made an observation based on content:

Librarian F: On the book list I noticed *White Rabbit, Red Wolf* by Tom Pollock: I found this book rather stressful and would not recommend it for anyone with anxiety. Great book though!

She expressed concern that the novel's theme of anxiety would be triggering to readers personally dealing with similar feelings, therefore experiencing the opposite of the desired effect of bibliotherapy. Librarian G was also concerned about content, though the way the themes were presented in the listed books, and so made similar suggestions:

Librarian G: Some of the books that I think are extremely appropriate are *The Paper and Hearts Society* by Lucy Powrie, which has social anxiety and cyberbullying, *What Magic is This?* by Holly Bourne with self-harming, friendship and body image, *The Truth Pixie* by Matt Haig - depression, bullying and inclusivity, and *Heartstopper* about LGBTQ positivity. These are books not included in the original list. I have noticed that most of the books featured in the list are very sad and tough, and these books listed still tackle very difficult topics, but are very uplifting at the same time, which I think is also important.

Librarian K struggled to suggest individual books that would be appropriate for bibliotherapy, using the early years as an example (in this quote, KS1/2 refers to pupils in Years 1-6 of primary education in England, aged between 5-11 years old):

Librarian K: I think any books can be considered for bibliotherapy sessions, depending on the group and its dynamic. As with any reader's group, the librarian should know the material they are introducing. Younger pupils likely require a different approach; I haven't worked directly with KS1/2 pupils, though I was asked to curate a primary collection dealing with bereavement and loss when I was a secondary school librarian.

She emphasised the role of the librarian in displaying awareness of the titles they suggest, and how they are used. As all fiction books contain a theme of some description, it is perhaps possible that any book can be used, depending on its need. This opinion was supported by Librarian H, who advised:

Librarian H: Any that work. I think that every reader is different, so different books will work for them. On the whole though I feel that books with a person of a similar age dealing with the same situation have biggest impact. Self-help style books, in the style of Nicola Morgan or *The Anxiety Gremlin*, are also great, but harder to get students to engage with initially.

The suggestion of titles without emotional issues or themes, for example gang culture, brought the discussion round to how books for bibliotherapy are classified in the library:

Librarian B: We had a huge debate about what categories should be in and what shouldn't. I remember going round the tables with [another librarian] for weeks about "is that really an issue?", because we got ourselves tied up with what was an issue, and some of the stuff isn't an issue but it's a mental health concern and something that people might want to find out about.

Librarian A: Because we've got LGBT, racism...

Librarian B: Have we got rape culture?

Librarian A: We called it abuse.

It was of interest that Librarians A, B and C, when compiling reading lists for their authority's bibliotherapy initiative, chose books that not only dealt with mental health, but with other issues with which young people may be seeking support. This demonstrated a deeper understanding of the purpose of bibliotherapy and that it is not only suitable for those suffering from poor mental health.

5.2.5 Summary of responses

From this conversation, it was evident that the skills required to facilitate bibliotherapy were those already being utilised in the daily work of school librarians. The most prominent of these was the knowledge of literature. Participants commented that the basis of the job has always revolved around the ability to recommend suitable books for pupils' specific circumstances. They have a unique knowledge of quality and relevant literature. There is also a strength in the school librarian's ability to build relationships with pupils. Through coming in contact with the same pupils everyday, and often being a confidante to these pupils, librarians form an understanding of pupils' interests and needs. A further reported benefit of bibliotherapy facilitation by the library profession was young people's perception of the physical library as a safe space. As a place where vulnerable pupils report feeling confident and removed from the discomfort of the wider school environment, the library is a suitable setting for the sensitivity of bibliotherapy.

The overarching response from the participants was that their professional experience brought confidence that aided bibliotherapy delivery. All reported seeing positive responses to bibliotherapy, and for some that changed their initial view of the practice.

The following section will now look in more detail at participants' responses to book suggestions, as part of a bibliotherapy guides, along with the guide as a whole.

5.3 A librarian's guide to bibliotherapy in schools

It was apparent that no formal guide to delivering bibliotherapy in schools had been produced. In order to ensure all participating librarians were adhering to the same ideas when being part of the study, a document was devised (Appendix g). I felt it was initially important to define bibliotherapy in a library context and explain how school libraries could contribute in a non-clinical way. It also consolidated the most effective methods that I had found in research and from my own experiences of delivering the practice, and this allowed me the opportunity to reflect whilst writing.

I entitled my document an “introductory” guide, as I did not feel in the position to offer a definitive example. Although I have been trained to delivery bibliotherapy, and have trained library colleagues (indeed, I had previously delivered training to most of the participants) I still carried a degree of “imposter syndrome”. This may be influenced by the dispute raised in the literature review regarding the definition of bibliotherapy, with my opinion of its potential for use in schools being for comfort, relaxation, and to introduce themes and explore in more detail, but not to “cure” a child who is genuinely ill.

After producing the document I shared it with the school librarians in my focus group, asking their opinions on its authenticity and usefulness, and inviting suggestions of items for further inclusion. Their responses will now be discussed, arranged by common themes.

5.3.1 Sensitive information

I included a short paragraph advising what to do should any pupils disclose any sensitive information during a session. As all librarians who work in school and public libraries complete mandatory Child Protection annually from their employer, they are equipped to deal with it such occurrences, so guidance to follow a familiar school procedure was appropriate. The necessity of stressing confidentiality to other pupils participating in a shared session was also emphasised, however, in my personal experience no child has disclosed anything, so I am only able to offer that advice. I felt that the avoidance of stigma was paramount in supporting pupils' wellbeing, and highlighted the enjoyment and relaxation elements of bibliotherapy rather than the “curing ailments” factor. Librarian A immediately acknowledged this section of the guide:

Librarian A: Well, I think it's really important about the disclosure information and how it's important that we follow the school and local authority child protection procedure, because you never know what might come up.

5.3.2 Practical examples

Guidance was offered on how to facilitate a bibliotherapy session, based on the training I had received, as well as some thoughts from my own experience of working in school libraries. I provided an example of how a session can be run, and also listed activities I have done myself and have found to have been successful, however, these are only ideas; I stressed that it is up to individuals to deploy methods that work effectively for their school and pupils. Reflecting on the suggestions, the following thoughts were received:

Librarian E: I think the guide is excellent and could only benefit from being longer. It might be useful to provide links to case studies for the 'Tried and Tested' session, so librarians could find out more? The practical tips are brilliant, and outline clearly how to start your own sessions.

Librarian G: I think the bibliotherapy guide is very useful however a brief description/definition of the various things to do during a session would be useful in the tried and tested section.

Both participants felt that more details of appropriate sessions was required, though Librarian E was the only librarian who reflected on the theory behind the sessions, requesting more information on bibliotherapy research.

Suggestions were made that the guide would work well as an introduction to bibliotherapy for practitioners who had not received formal bibliotherapy training:

Librarian J: It's a very clear and concise guide on how sessions should take place and the format of the session.

Librarian K: I think the guide is a brilliant resource for a librarian/library worker or teacher who is considering the use of bibliotherapy as it highlights how reading can be a positive experience. It addresses all the key questions which might arise, debunks what some people might mistakenly think (that it can "fix" an issue or problem); the book list is very helpful and can also be used as a jumping-off point.

Similarly to myself, but unlike the other participants, Librarian K did not believe bibliotherapy to be a cure. She also regarded the book list as not definitive, but as a provider of ideas for similar titles and themes. Librarian C's view differed again; she felt that the guide would supplement librarians' training by offering additional support:

Librarian C: I like the example of the sessions as well, because I think some people may be a bit nervous about how to approach doing the session.

Librarian H favoured the suggestions of practical examples, saying they:

Librarian H: [make] me feel like this is something we can do, rather than just a theory.

5.3.3 Online

The suggestion in the guide of offering bibliotherapy online, perhaps through a school library website or social media feed. Such an approach was not raised during the focus group discussions, and only Librarian B drew it to attention:

Librarian B: I liked suggesting an online presence, I think that is essential if it can be managed because so many young people, the thought of actually speaking to someone about anything like that, unless it, you know, gets to crisis point, and they interact with technology so much easier than us, yeah.

Here she highlighted young people's digital skills and interest, something which I considered myself; social media is a preferred method of communication for young people and it may be advantageous to engage them with bibliotherapy through this medium. Since this conversation, the country has experienced the Covid-19 pandemic, and a subsequent prolonged lockdown situation, which has accentuated the need for online access to resources. It has also given rise to increased mental health issues, and an easily accessed online presence could be beneficial to bringing support to young people.

5.3.4 Manual

Many felt that the pamphlet helped to reinforce what they already knew, therefore they wanted more detail. They felt that the pamphlet was too short and it would be more beneficial for the information to be expanded and presented in a manual. A suggestion was made that the definitions of listed sessions would be helpful:

Librarian A: I think maybe it needs...I don't know if there's opportunity to expand on it...

Librarian C: Expand because a lot of people might not know what you mean by "story café"

A separate document containing the book list was also suggested. As previously mentioned, Librarian E requested information on previous research into the impact and effects of bibliotherapy, and this is something that could be included in a manual. An electronic copy was also suggested, as a way to include more information:

Librarian B: I know that when I tried to do something similar it's the constraints of space, you're trying to get everything onto such a small space, so whether you would want to create something like this electronically, so that "story café" would be a hyperlink that you click on it and it takes you away to explain what it actually is?

Librarian C: Or having a second pamphlet with the book lists on, so you can expand on that and expand on what you mean by your story café and whether it's personal reading for staff's mental health and wellbeing or for their awareness of what's going on with kids in school.

As the focus group conversation progressed, Librarians A, B and C discussed the implications of producing a pamphlet over a manual:

Librarian C: If I was a practitioner that hadn't come across this before I would be more likely to pick up a pamphlet than I would a manual.

Librarian B: But if it referred you on to something else...

Librarian C: Yeah, if it said, "Come here for examples of..."

Librarian A: Or if there was something on there which said, "Please contact someone for more information", or a website.

Librarian C: You know, if I was at a conference like the Autumn Gathering or something, I wouldn't want to be breaking my back or anything picking up manuals, but I would pick up a leaflet.

Librarian B: Also the cost of printing those was astronomical, but, you know, if you're printing leaflets that's fine. I mean you could even just reduce every section.

A suggestion was made that scope for collaboration should be included, for example with health professionals or existing education partners:

Librarian A: I think it's just as important that we, that the aspect of working with other departments, either within school, or the authority, or with, like, NHS, or something like that, I think it's really important that we get to grips with that.

5.3.5 Further training opportunities

Some participants felt that the guide should expand the readers' knowledge of bibliotherapy, providing information on further training:

Librarian E: I think including some information on how librarians could find bibliotherapy training would also be good, as I know I wouldn't have the same confidence in running sessions if I hadn't had training first.

Librarian E referred to librarians who had not received initial training, however Librarian A felt that even those who had been training may still benefit from continued learning, as did Librarian D, commenting on her own confidence:

Librarian A: It's certainly good for someone who's already done the training, it's a trigger to remember, but if they've not done the training it's still interesting but it needs a bit of expansion. Or maybe just even explaining other types of groups that are available that you can co-operate with.

Librarian D: I think it's really helpful and well thought. I feel these topics are still quite blurry for us, so definitely some guidelines will help.

5.3.6 Summary of responses

It was evident from this section of the conversation that the participants were continuing to utilise their existing professional skills when evaluating the guide. As previously discussed, child protection training was adhered to when dealing with sensitive information. A large part of the discussion centred on books, again demonstrating the participants' existing skills in book selection.

The guide was viewed by some participants as a beneficial introduction to bibliotherapy for practitioners who had not received formal training. It was viewed by others as a supplement to formal training; a practical guide following training theory. Suggestions were made on how to improve the guide. There were requests for it to provide more depth, including case studies, bibliotherapy theory and research. These were valid suggestions in the absence of formal training and access to research, which can be difficult to obtain if not working in academia. Reflecting on expanding the guide, my personal thought following the discussion was that a glossary of terms may be useful. It was worthwhile to consider the possibility of online bibliotherapy, as since the focus group occurred we have experienced the Covid-19 global pandemic where the majority of interaction was forced to take place online.

The practicalities of the guide were also discussed, with debate over its size and whether it should be a pamphlet, as provided, or a more detailed manual. The discussion concluded that its size would depend on its use, so indeed there may not be a solution that suits all.

The overall response to the guide was positive, and suggestions for improvement, based on the practicalities of the profession, were well grounded. The professional expertise

of the librarians was a strength when offering advice on the content of the guide, demonstrating the participants' validity as bibliotherapists.

5.4 Analysis of librarian's responses

From the discussion, all participating librarians demonstrated a positive response to bibliotherapy based on their experiences of observing or experiencing sessions. It was clear that bibliotherapy has become a popular component of the library profession with awareness being raised through conference sessions and direct funding opportunities. This move is research-based, using evidence found in research studies of the effectiveness of bibliotherapy to develop library services. Such a development demonstrates the academic rigour which has historically driven the library profession forward.

Key findings

The main aim of the research was to find out how bibliotherapy can be implemented in school libraries and how librarians can facilitate it. A recurring theme throughout the whole discussion was the transferable skills that the librarians brought to bibliotherapy facilitation, supporting the suggestion previously made that they are best place to deliver the practice. Indeed it could be argued that the library profession has more skills in common with bibliotherapists than the medical profession, the alternative provider of bibliotherapy. The most common benefits of library-led bibliotherapy from the participants were: knowledge of literature, physical space and librarian's role (how they were viewed by pupils). All participants believed knowledge of literature was essential. Four participants highlighted the physical space of the library, describing its status as a peaceful, safe and relaxing place as an appropriate setting for bibliotherapy. Five participants felt the role of the school librarian was a benefit, stating the key responsibility of encouraging reading for enjoyment and relaxation. It was also noted here that pupils often view their librarians as confidantes and trusted members of school staff who are less authoritative than teachers, therefore making them more likely to discuss sensitive matters. Finally, three other responses were given: the school library is seen as a wellbeing link that's ethos fits with school's mental health focus, a number of school libraries engage with therapy pets for relaxation, and librarians have the ability to enact partnership working, for example alongside the NHS. These responses could be categorised together as "ability to offer general wellbeing support". The strong focus on appropriate books demonstrates the excellent skills of librarians to deliver the key element of bibliotherapy, knowledge of which is unlikely to be shared by other professions in such volume. This combination of key reasons given by participants supports the validity of librarians as bibliotherapists.

It became apparent during the discussion that participants had varying experiences of training as, coming from different authorities, staff training is not standardised across the country. Some participants had accessed specific bibliotherapy training, some had

accessed Mental Health First Aid, however all had received annual Child Protection training and safeguarding within their workplaces. Mental health was a key feature of the discussion, and interestingly the participants who felt further training was required were all individuals who defined bibliotherapy in terms of mental health. As all participants believed their literature knowledge and physical library space was appropriate for delivering bibliotherapy, it could be suggested from this link that what the participants are looking for is more detailed mental health training, not necessarily more bibliotherapy skills. I make a distinction between mental health and bibliotherapy skills here. Through the course of the discussion, some librarians indicated that bibliotherapy was not a cure for mental illness, that will have been medically diagnosed, but it acts as a support for emotional wellbeing, which is a necessity for everyone, regardless of health. Therefore, as discussed in the literature review, the skills required to facilitate bibliotherapy do not require in depth knowledge of mental health.

However, the request for additional support should not be ignored. In order to ensure librarians can continue with appropriateness to facilitate bibliotherapy, their requirements must be regularly evaluated. Taking into account the responses of the participants, a regularly updated online toolkit of training and advice could be offered, which would be accessible to all regardless of physical location, and cost-effective. Although not suggested by the participants, an online librarians' forum may also be of benefit to allow for support and collaboration between colleagues. Wider collaboration with health services should also be considered.

Although still very much in its infancy with Scottish school libraries, the conclusion reached by library professionals on the facilitation of bibliotherapy was that libraries are suitable places for bibliotherapy, and librarians best placed to facilitate. Librarians have access to and respond to research regarding the profession. They demonstrate extensive knowledge of literature and offer a trusted space. As stated by one participant, bibliotherapy is simply what the library profession has always done, but now it has been recognised by others.

There now follows a short discussion on the books chosen by the pupil participants, which analyses their themes and discusses the responses of pupils and librarians.

A note on participants' selected books, and responses of librarians

The empirical section of the thesis focussed firstly on a small group of young people's reactions to their reading experiences, then on librarians' knowledge and understanding of the practice of reading for emotional wellbeing. In order to fully explore the pupil participants' emotional assimilation, the content and attributes of their selected titles will now be briefly considered. The thoughts of the librarian participants on the suitability of these books for bibliotherapy will also be discussed.

As the reading period only lasted approximately two hours (five lunchbreaks, each lasting under half an hour), the pupil participants, who had all begun reading new books from the start, were not able to advance particularly far in the books during the study. Not all librarians had read the full selection of books; although I had provided them with the list of titles, I felt it would be too onerous to ask them to read all in advance, on top of their heavy workload. Although I have read the books in full and have recorded the emotions I experienced throughout, it is recognised that the participants may not have experienced the full range of these emotions as they were only able to read and reflect on the first few chapters of their books.

The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris (read by Aragon)

It is difficult to assess the bibliotherapeutic qualities of a book that is problematic in its depiction of a vitally important historical event, as the theme can not be separated from the content. This raises questions of whether such a book should be recommended. As with all fiction focussing on the Holocaust, there is a message of hope throughout *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* that may be helpful to young readers who are struggling to process troubles in the world today.

As an S1 pupil, Aragon was aware of the holocaust and of concentration camps such as Auschwitz, but had not yet been taught about it in great detail during school, as it is covered in the S2 history curriculum in Scotland. He demonstrated understanding from the descriptions and inference in the novel, and spoke about being "horrified" by the description of the camp in his mood survey. He twice described feeling "blown away" by what he was reading, almost unable to comprehend what had happened. He also remarked that he felt "thoughtful" about "how the book changes emotion so quickly"; although it was a relatively short book, there was much information provided at a quick pace - my own reading of this book took place in one sitting over the course of a few hours, so his feelings of being overwhelmed were conceivable. However, as he had read the book in small segments over the course of a few weeks, a different reaction from mine was plausible.

The historical accuracy of the text was a concern raised by Librarian G, and she questioned its suitability based on that, however felt unable to comment further as she had not personally read the novel. The necessity of having background knowledge was emphasised by Librarian D, who surmised that the novel's context "needs to be explained to the pupils" to ensure their understanding of the facts. She also commented that pupils "can have different reactions to it [the novel]", suggesting varying sensitivities that may again require that understanding of fact.

For Librarians A, B and J, the book was a key text in helping young people understand "man's inhumanity to man", and as a possible preventative instrument. A suggestion was also made of reading a short section of the novel in order to demonstrate the general conditions of the camp, which could possibly avoid any problematic passages.

The Girl Who Owned a City (graphic novel) by O.T. Nelson (read by CJ)

The theme of parental death introduced in the text may be opportune with regards to bibliotherapy, helping to demonstrate to readers the ability to cope with the loss of a loved one. The challenges faced by the orphaned characters may also be reflective of challenges presented by grief. *The Girl Who Owned a City* also deals with the subject of bullying and intimidation, as well as violent conflict, and may help young readers to gain confidence to stand up to bullies. The novel highlights the need for comradeship and teamwork to achieve success, and could therefore be constructive to readers who are facing relationship breakdowns yet are required to work together, and who wish to mend friendships. By highlighting the delegation of appropriate roles to Lisa's army in their new settlement, readers are made aware of individual strengths and weaknesses, and of opportunities to use their own skills to their advantage.

CJ was captivated by all aspects of the book. He appeared to be extremely affected by the death of Lisa and Todd's parents, describing being "upset". During several conversations I had with him, he continuously referenced this, voicing his worries about his own parents dying and being left on his own. He relaxed later in the book when the characters "are doing great at their houses", and reacted strongly to the injustice of bullying by the rival gang, exclaiming, "That's shocking," and "I can't believe they did that!"

No librarians had read this title, so were unable to comment.

Ferryman by Claire McFall (read by Draco)

Although death appears to be the theme of this novel, the plot does not particularly focus on death and dying, however, it does touch briefly on grief. Dylan's realisation that she will never again speak to her parents may be used for bibliotherapy in order to explore

grief and bereavement, and help young readers understand feelings of loss. Themes of bravery and courage are also explored, and may be used to help readers deal with a variety of issues where courage could be an asset.

Draco recorded only that “the book was so relatable”, however discussed with me that she recognised Dylan’s feelings towards her body image and frizzy hair, exclaiming “That’s me!” when reading

A brush through her brown, shoulder-length hair created the usual frizzy mess.
(p11)

In conversation, Draco reacted with excitement for Dylan meeting her dad, and expressed an interest in how their relationship would develop. The romantic element of the plot sat uneasily with me, considering Dylan as a young teenager and Tristian essentially a grown man, however Draco appeared immersed in the familial relationships of the book and did not comment on the romance.

This text provoked a mixed response from the librarians. Although she had not read the book, Librarian C believed it would be beneficial in order to explore the theme of death:

Librarian C: We’ve got the bereavement group in school so I’ve passed on the bereavement books for that, but also I want to look wider at the sort of different cultures’ beliefs.

This was the only occasion during the data collection when a comment on wider school collaboration, in this case a bereavement group, was mentioned.

The brevity of the theme of grief was problematic for Librarian F, who was “unsure” of the bibliotherapeutic qualities of the book, as “grief has to be recognised”. She expressed concerns that the plot would “confuse some in terms of life after death.” Similarly she was troubled by the relationship portrayal, commenting, “It left me a little uncomfortable.”

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas (read by Georgia and Starr)

There are many themes explored in this title that could be used for bibliotherapy, most notably that of dealing with racism. This may be of use to both young readers who may be victims of racism, and to those who witness it. The portrayal of Starr’s despair when facing injustice demonstrates her concern about the racial discrimination experienced within her community, and her bravery and tenaciousness may help young people to persist if they have grievances. Grief is described effectively, and additionally the aftermath of witnessing death and extreme violence. Such fierce depiction of Starr’s bereavement may be of comfort to readers who have experienced loss and who are

looking for reassurance that their emotions are natural. Although a lesser-explored matter in the novel, the theme of changing friendships may resonate with readers who have experienced challenges in relationships. This is common for teen acquaintances, and reading about how Starr deals with Hailey's behaviour may give encouragement to readers who have ended problematic friendships and are anxious about forming new amicable relationships.

Georgia demonstrated great empathy in regards to the oppressive treatment of the black characters, and reflected on the early party scene, where Starr's schooling is considered, explaining, "I got to the page where it was about black and white people and sometimes I am thinking why the peoples are so mean." She was aware of the language which suggested the living conditions of the black characters in comparison with the white, and the anger and frustration this made the protagonist feel.

Starr (participant) was interested in the description of "how some people have to live" in the novel, indicating an awareness of the injustice experienced by many groups in society. This gave her perspective, making her think of the issues raised and allowing her to step away from her own problems.

Librarian C, who was involved in selected books for her authority's bibliotherapy reading list, believed that the novel had a "strong theme." She reflected that bibliotherapy can mean reading a book simply for comfort, or reading one that "resonated with a meaning", and thus felt that *The Hate U Give* "comes under bibliotherapy for that reason." Librarian F was also in agreement that the novel's theme offered "quite a powerful and empowering read", interpreting that same idea of meaning. Librarian J thought the theme of racial injustice was "a must for the current society". However, Librarian H, who was the only librarian of colour, praised the novel for relaxation, but not for dealing with the subject matter.

13 Reasons Why by Jay Asher (read by Hannah)

Similarly to *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, *13 Reasons Why* is a problematic book, and consequently is difficult to recommend for bibliotherapy. It is clear that Hannah, the suicide victim who narrates her story via cassette tapes, has many emotional issues that have led her to this point, but it may be wise to avoid focussing on her actions, as they are often not dealt with appropriately by the author. The theme of the aftermath of the suicide is one which can be explored, along with the grief that comes from experiencing such a shocking event. Readers who have been affected by unexpected incidents may find some recognition in Clay's reaction, although his own grief is not examined. Although the book ends with Clay realising he has the ability to help another in Hannah's situation, the novel did not offer much hope, therefore reaffirming my belief that it is not suitable

for bibliotherapy. My personal feeling during the reading of this novel was one of frustration and concern for young readers. I was at times exasperated by the blame Hannah placed on others, which I felt to be manipulative. I also felt uneasy with the slow build-up to the final act, with the knowledge of the impending conclusion, though I believe this to be the author's intent, and similarly with the description of Hannah's suicidal planning. I believed it to be unfair on the characters to continuously focus on the missed signs of Hannah's mental state, as readers may have had personal experienced of this and should not be made to feel responsible for another person's actions, as the tone of the text may suggest.

Hannah (participant) displayed deep empathy for the characters, explaining that she "knew their emotions" because she had read about them and understood what they were experiencing. She understood the motives of the characters, clarifying that "I like to feel other person's feeling and what they think." Reflecting on the issues explored in the text, including bullying and emotional abuse, she commented: "I can see my problems are nothing nearly to them...If they have a problem and I have the same problem I can see which way I can see is the best." This comment could suggest that she had considered the actions of the characters in the book, particularly the actions of Hannah, and had evaluated the consequences; although the character's response to her problems was suicide, the participant Hannah saw another way. In her later peer interview Hannah observed: "If you kill yourself, what's gonna change?...Your problems are going to finish but the other person's problems gonna survive." Here she demonstrated an awareness of the author's ploy of placing such responsibility on the other characters, but could see the flaws in this. In her survey, Hannah recording going from feeling *anxious* to *calm* after a reading session, attributing this shift to "discovering what happened" in the book, and suggesting that she felt so deeply involved in the plot that she genuinely experienced concern for the characters during the elapsing periods between reading, and therefore relief when she returned to the text.

During their focus group conversation, Librarians A, B and C spoke favourably about the novel, and confirmed it was on their authority bibliotherapy reading list. Librarian D also felt that it was suitable for bibliotherapy, as "it could be a good book to talk about suicide and bulling."

Librarian G, however, had reservations, regarding both the content of the novel and its appropriateness for bibliotherapy:

Librarian G: I am honestly not sure about this one. I have read it, and I think this is a very delicate topic. It is very hard not to glorify teenage suicide, and I think I should receive more training for this. Especially if it triggers students.

Here she displayed self-awareness regarding the need for further training when encountering a novel that could incite an extreme reaction in its readers, and her worry of encountering this response was possibly leading to her avoidance of using it. Librarian H was also wary of using this title, “largely because of the furore surrounding the TV show”, and Librarian J expressed concern about the unknown background of participants and the triggering content.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by J.K. Rowling (read by Hermione)

The Goblet of Fire is viewed as a pivotal book in the series in terms of developing the darker narrative, and contains many themes suitable for bibliotherapy. The teenage characters are growing up and experiencing the relationship and hormonal changes that accompany that stage in life. They become interested in dating and Harry faces the coming-of-age ritual of teen heartbreak after inviting classmate Cho to partner him at the Yule Ball, before discovering she is going with someone else. He also must compete with Cedric during the Triwizard Tournament, and his close friendship with Ron is tested when their trust is broken. Many young readers will relate to the romantic crushes and falling out with friends, and will be helped to understand that these are emotions experienced and overcome by all teens. Experiencing trauma and witnessing death is briefly explored towards the end of the novel, though features more prominently in the next book of the series. Grief is a focus in each book of the series, revolving around Harry’s parents’ premature deaths and his navigation of life without them, but it is not always death that is a cause of grief, and Rowling examines this well through the broken relationship Harry has with his aunt and uncle. There are several subplots in the book that also make for appropriate bibliotherapy focus, including the main protagonists struggling with school work-load and exam preparation. This is a concern that is likely to be on young readers’ minds, whether they are currently at that stage of schooling, or are thinking of the future. Social justice is also explored in (character) Hermione’s campaign to liberate House Elves, perhaps encouraging readers who participate in activism. Harry’s reaction to lies being printed about him in the press can also be seen as reflective of young readers dealing with rumours at school and on digital platforms, which can be difficult to escape.

Hermione (participant) did not comment on the issues raised in the novel, but instead reflected on the comfort she felt when watching the films, which had led to her enjoying the novel. This familiarity with a text has previously been described as a key factor of bibliotherapy.

Librarian B reflected on the benefits of comfort and familiarity for bibliotherapy, commenting:

Librarian B: I think the *Harry Potter's* good because we all have that comfort book, probably from our childhood that you go back to.

Reflecting on the various issues raised in the novel, Librarian G commented on its usefulness for initiating conversations:

Librarian G: I think Harry Potter books are a very good tool to use for different reasons which include talking about child abuse, bullying, poverty, in a figurative way white supremacy (Voldemort and his followers are racist about non-pure blood wizards), grief and bereavement. Hermione is a very independent and intelligent girl. I particularly like her when in the *Goblet of Fire* she tries to protect the rights of what is considered to be a 'lesser class' - House Elves. A very good discussion could stem from this.

Similarly, Librarian D commented that the book could be used to introduce discussions about friendship and death, however, raised a concern about that "it's considered to be junior fiction, but younger readers may not feel confident enough to talk about these topics." Librarian J agreed that "passages can be used to look at grief, anxiety, friendships."

Librarian K was initially surprised by the appearance of this title, before reflecting on the broad themes of the series:

Librarian K: The *Harry Potter* books aren't ones I'd have thought of in this context, though they do address issues of isolation, family and loss. I can see the fantasy elements of the series being a gentler lead-in than *The Ferryman* or *Thirteen Reasons Why*. It's interesting that almost these books have film/television counterparts, so I wonder if this is why they were chosen.

She was the only participant to comment on the link between the titles and film adaptations, raising an interesting question about why they were selected by pupils. Having been given freedom to select a book that offered comfort, it appeared that the pupils were seeking familiarity, and possible enjoyment, from something they had previously seen dramatised.

Only Librarian F felt the book was unsuitable for bibliotherapy as "the characters have no real power, they are victim of a trap."

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban by J.K. Rowling (read by Luna)

The prevalent theme running throughout the novel is dealing with fears, and bravery for overcoming them. Many, if not all, readers will doubtlessly have experienced fear, whether small, like Ron's fear of spiders, or more menacing. Harry's determination to overcome his reaction to the dementors may encourage readers to overcome their own fears, whilst helping them to understand that it is not an easy process. The dementors also represent depression. There is a subtle message delivered throughout the novel that failure is a natural occurrence, and should not deter perseverance. Harry also fears the unknown Sirius Black, having heard rumours that Black is searching for Harry with plans to kill him, and, as in all books of the series, the threat of Lord Voldemort looms. The focus on more serious threats may support readers who are anxious about matters outwith their control, such as climate change or the current political situation to understand that they are not alone in their worries. The theme of relationships is also important, as Harry searches for a sense of belonging, looking for a loving family, for guardianship, and for close friendships. This may support readers who are also building new relationships to feel comfort in that need for companionship, and provide assurance that families take on many different forms.

Luna was influenced by the message of acceptance in the book, commenting that although the characters all have flaws, they are welcomed by their friendship groups, citing examples of Ron's poverty and Neville's forgetfulness. She was comforted by the fantasy theme, as she felt it removed her from the reality that she was facing in her own life. Similarly to Hermione, who had read another novel from the same series, she found comfort in the familiarity of *Harry Potter*; she had read the series multiple times and continued to find enjoyment in returning to them.

Again, as with the previous book from this series, Librarian F was "not sure that this book would help", explaining:

Librarian F: I found the idea of the Dementors very scary and no alternative was offered to fend them off. I guess it could go both ways but I would be weary of using it.

However, Librarian D believed it to be "really good for a younger audience, especially talking about resilience and different family issues," and Librarian J highlighted the opportunity "to explore loyalty of friendships, loss, betrayal."

One Piece Vol. 1: Romance Dawn (Manga) by Eiichiro Oda (read by Rin)

In this action-driven plot, there is more concentration directed towards the fighting scenes than emotional development, however, the early scenes with their focus on Luffy's

perseverance may be appropriate for bibliotherapy. Young readers who are eager for new experiences that they are perhaps unprepared for may find comfort in the character's tenacious attitude, and it may help them to understand patience.

Rin reacted positively to the humour of the illustrations, however, did not feel an affinity with any aspects of the plot.

Librarian D highlighted the novel's theme of resilience as a component for bibliotherapy.

The Last Dragonslayer by Jasper Fforde (read by Yukio)

The bibliotherapeutic themes in this novel are subtle and may not necessarily be picked up as main themes by young readers. The most prominent of these is the theme of coping with responsibility and dealing with challenges. Jennifer, although only a young girl, is the sole person responsible for saving an entire world, and her trials may help readers who feel a liability in their lives. Jennifer encounters peer pressure when forced to make a moral decision, and readers may relate to this if they have experienced a pressure from their contemporaries to act or look a certain way with which they may not have felt comfortable.

Yukio appeared to be critically analysing the text in his notes highlighting sentence structure and tone, at one point noting: "This paragraph shows a dramatic shift." He demonstrated an awareness of protagonist's mood, explaining that he had his mind opened by the change in Jennifer, "from fame to depression." He appeared to empathise with Jennifer's despondent mood when her business was struggling, commenting: "Her current misfortune makes you feel empty." Yukio also reflected on the fast-paced plot, describing the feeling of "a million thoughts racing through my mind" after each reading session. He was "enchanted and intrigued" by the fantasy world about which he was reading, and commented that he felt encouraged to read more because he was finding out about new people.

This was another book that had not been read by any of the librarians, so they were unable to offer an opinion on its suitability.

Summary

It was clear that there were many differing opinions amongst the pupils, librarians and myself as to what books may be considered effective for bibliotherapy. For the most part, I did not share with the pupils their same emotions when reading, so this may suggest that bibliotherapy is subjective, what works for one person may not work for another. Librarian E summed this up, by reflecting that:

Librarian E: As a school librarian I think you often have to judge the suitability of material based on the pupils you have in front of you.

She reflected on the need to recognise and be familiar with individual pupils' needs, and this relationship, which allows librarians to interact with pupils every day, is perhaps different from that of a clinical relationship. Librarian K had a similar view, again emphasising the librarian's role in being aware of the contents of books, and the audience:

Librarian K: I think any books can be considered for bibliotherapy sessions, depending on the group and its dynamic. As with any reader's group, the librarian should know the material they are introducing. Younger pupils likely require a different approach.

The content of the study described thus far set the basis of the inquiry. The dissertation now evaluates the findings of the study described above, considering the methodology and analytical framework outlined previously.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Findings

This research set out to establish librarians' understanding of bibliotherapy and how it is applied in the school library. Although the research uncovered in both the literature and empirical parts of the study was largely positive regarding the impact of reading on mental wellbeing, it was also inconclusive. It is difficult to measure the effect of reading when results are based on emotions. As library professionals we witness the transformative power of books when readers tell us they have experience it, but examining such an impact from a research perspective proves problematic. The overall findings are summarised below.

6.1.1 Pupils' responses

Based on the survey responses, peer interviews and focus group discussion, the pupils studied believed that reading benefitted their wellbeing. Responses overall were positive, and direct links were made between positive moods and the reading experience. It should be noted, though, that findings in the literature review suggested that bibliotherapy is only effective in certain circumstances, which brings into question whether it is the act of reading that is of benefit, or other conditions. This may be an area for further study.

6.1.2 Librarians' responses

All participants stated that they had witnessed positive effects on young people from bibliotherapy. Although half of the librarian participants defined bibliotherapy in direct relation to mental health, the distinction between clinical and non-clinical support was not apparent in the responses. This resulted in most participants describing the library profession as best-placed to deliver bibliotherapy, reflecting on child protection training, experience of working alongside the young people who partake in sessions and relevant literature, and access to other service providers. The role and perception of the librarian was also viewed by participants to be a beneficial tool for the delivery of bibliotherapy, and the protective environment of the library was a suitable setting for its delivery. When asked to consider why they thought the library to be appropriate for bibliotherapy, all participants commented that the strength of the librarian lay in their knowledge of literature. The second most common response, with four of the ten participants, was the safe setting of the library.

On examination of the Bibliotherapy Guide, most participants felt the practical examples of a bibliotherapy session to be the most beneficial information provided. Many requested further examples, requesting a manual rather than the available leaflet, suggesting that

this was the most relevant part of the guide for them. Information on further professional training was also a common request, suggesting a commitment to having robust knowledge to deliver sessions.

6.2 Challenges in analysis

Based on my own experience of working with young people, and on literature regarding research with children, it was important for me to allow pupils a position of power, offering them involvement. I expected this to be mostly achieved during the peer interview activity where they worked in pairs, independent from myself, and set their own questions. This, however, proved problematic in terms of responding to the initial research inquiry and therefore the analysis. By asking their own questions, which they had discussed as a group beforehand, participants used mostly closed questions and focussed mostly on the previous reading sessions. Although I wished to find out their thoughts on and experience of these sessions, their responses did not provide much more information than that, and without room to expand there was only a small volume of data to reflect upon. On occasion, some participants' responses drifted away from the question and then provided me with far more detailed insights into the impact of reading on their personal experiences, and it was from these responses that I found the most valuable data for the research inquiry. In anticipation of such an occurrence, I had decided in the planning stage that I would return to the school at a later date to carry out follow-up interviews, along with a focus group, allowing participants to expand on their answers by directing them to their original responses. I also felt it would be valuable to find out if there had been any impact on the participants' wellbeing in the intervening period between my visits.

6.3 Final thoughts

This was a positive initial study into the early stage of bibliotherapy practice within Scottish school librarianship, but it highlighted the complexity of the subject at various levels including the practical. Small numbers of participants and limited sessions resulted in limited data, and the reliability of results was compromised as participants' personal responses were difficult to scientifically measure. Although many librarians offered their participation in the study, I found that most were unable to answer questions as they had either only recently begun facilitating bibliotherapy, or were in the planning stage. More time is needed for the development of their skills in order to evaluate the practice effectively. The strength of the librarians' delivery lay in their knowledge of books and the pupils they worked with, which could lead to another study focussing on effective training. With more implementation of bibliotherapy in libraries there is potential for a future PhD, studying the long-term impact on individuals who participate in sessions.

Findings in the literature review of bibliotherapy's effectiveness being based on the individual's engagement with reading raises an issue regarding its accessibility to those who do not enjoy reading. A further direction for future research could investigate if non-readers are disadvantaged in terms of gaining positive results from bibliotherapy, or if participation is simply not an option for them.

Such findings would be of benefit to the library profession as it continues to adapt to a changing world where mental wellbeing is increasingly relevant.

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University
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Pupil participant Information Sheet

Title of project and researcher details

Title: *Can reading for pleasure positively affect young people's emotional wellbeing?*

Researcher: *Jennifer Horan*

Supervisor: *Dr Evelyn Arizpe, Dr Maureen Farrell*

Course: *PhD Children's Literature*

I am interested in finding links between reading for enjoyment and emotional wellbeing, and I'm asking you to help me because you enjoy reading.

Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the information on this page carefully while you are in the library and ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take this sheet home and discuss it with your parents/carers - they will also be given an information sheet to read. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What's in it for you?

I want to find out how reading for enjoyment affects teenagers' emotional health and wellbeing.

If you'd like to take part I will ask you to read a book you enjoy over the course of six lunchtimes in the library, and to keep a note of any thoughts or feelings you have as you read. I will ask you to complete a short survey about how you are feeling emotionally before and after you read, then during the final session I will ask you to ask each other some questions about how you felt during the reading experiences using a voice recorder so I can listen back to it. You don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to. I will be working with you during the month of May 2019.

You don't have to take part in this study if you don't want to, and if you change your mind about taking part once you have started, just let me know and I won't use any information you have given me.

Keeping information confidential (private)

I will keep the information I get from the reading activity and chat in my office, which is kept locked, and on an encrypted pen drive, and will keep it for 10 years for data protection. I will also keep your consent form locked away, but will shred this once I have written my thesis. When I write about what I have found out, your name will not be mentioned - you can choose a pseudonym, which is another name for me to use when I am writing about what you said, and no-one other than me will know which name you have chosen. However, if during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that you might be in danger of harm, I might have to tell the appropriate school staff who need to know about this.

When you are talking to each other about the reading experience I will ask you not to tell anyone else what you, or your partner, spoke about in order to keep that information confidential too and protect others' anonymity. You can use your own names when speaking to each other so as not to share your pseudonyms, but I will change your real names to the pseudonyms when I'm writing about your responses.

What happens after?

When I have gathered all of the information from everyone who is taking part I will write about what I have learned in my thesis (like a really long essay!), which will be read and marked by my university tutors. I will destroy all of my notes and recordings when the project is finished.

I will tell you and the other pupils who have taken part what I have found out about what you think about reading and emotions. There is a possibility that other people, such as researchers and librarians, may wish to read my thesis, and will request to do so. They will only be able to read the completed thesis, which will contain your pseudonyms, so no one will be able to identify you. I will also give a presentation of my findings to librarians across Scotland, however you will not be identified. Your thoughts on reading may be used in future to help other young people to look after their emotional health.

Review of the study

This study has been reviewed and agreed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

Contact for further Information

If you have any questions about this study, you can ask me, Jennifer (j.horan.1@research.gla.ac.uk),

or my supervisors Evelyn and Maureen (evelyn.arizpe@glasgow.ac.uk) (maureen.farrell@glasgow.ac.uk)

or the ethics officer for the College of Social Sciences (Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk).

Thank you for reading this!

Appendix b

Peer interview: Hermione and Alfie (pilot study)

JH: On you go. (Pause) So what do you think about all the reading you've been doing these few days?

Alfie: (faintly) Erm, I think it's making me, like, erm (pause, inaudible)

JH: Tell the koala!

Alfie: I guess it makes me, like, you know, forget about, like, if I've had an annoying day, you know (inaudible)

JH: So if something not very nice has happened during the day you can just forget about it when you read your book?

Alfie: Yeah.

JH: Is that a good thing?

Alfie: Yeah because it doesn't make me, you know, feel stressed, you know.

JH: Okay, what about you [Hermione]?

Hermione: Erm, reading helps me feel like I'm in the book and I just have no worries and if I have a really, really messed up day I can just sit down and read and forget about everything and read for like hours on end.

JH: You're complete lost then? No housework for you! Just read your book. And do you think, when you've been doing the study this week, I've been asking you to think about how you feel, has that changed the way you've been reading to how you would normally read?

Hermione: No, not at all.

Alfie: I haven't really thought about it when I was just reading because I was just reading the book then I thought about what I was feeling when I did the form.

JH: When you did the form, that was when you thought about it?

Alfie: Yeah.

JH: Is there anything else you want to say to the koala about your thoughts on reading and about taking part in this wee experiment?

Hermione: Whenever you read a book that is funny then you feel, like, every single page you get better and when you read something sad or, like, not happy that's about

to make you feel upset you'll probably feel more upset, but if you feel like you want to be happy then read a happy book not a sad book.

JH: Do you think what you read changes how you feel as well?

Hermione: Yeah.

(Pause)

JH: Anything you want to say [Alfie]?

Alfie: Erm, no, not really.

JH: Not really, okay, thank you. Let me stop this then check it's worked. (End)

Peer interview: Lottie and Count Olaf (pilot study)

Lottie: So [Count Olaf], how do you feel when you're reading?

Count Olaf: I feel, erm, relaxed and calm and it helps me take my mind off things when I'm worried or anxious.

Lottie: Cool. So, like, what type of books do you like to read and how do they make you feel?

Count Olaf: Books that make me, like, interested and thrilled, like mysteries or thrillers.

Lottie: Cool. I quite like, like, mystery books as well.

(Long pause)

JH: Think about the past few days when you've been here - has that changed your opinion, is there anything different about reading here than normal?

Lottie: When you read in a library and you're all surrounded by books it's, like, comforting because, like, you're in a place where, like, if you're reading then you fit in with everything rather than in the outside world.

JH: Do you think it's been different because you've been reading for a purpose and I've been asking you all the time to think about how you feel? | Have you been conscious of how you feel because you've been made to think about it?

Lottie: Probably, like, more, like, thinking, oh shall I write that down, like, everything, like, it makes you more, like, it shows you, like, what feelings you have when you're actually reading.

JH: Do you think, [Count Olaf], do you think that that's a good thing, that you're always thinking about it, or do you think it would be better if you just read your book and didn't bother thinking about anything else?

Count Olaf: Mentally, reading books, like, erm, it helps me get rid of the real world and just...because I'm very imaginative, if that's a word?

Lottie: Yep.

JH: So you can kind of get lost in your book almost?

Lottie: Yeah.

Count Olaf: Yeah.

JH: Good. (Pause) Have you got any other final thoughts you want to say?

Lottie: Erm, just, like, if you think you want to read a book then at least try, don't say, like...because usually I don't really like horror books and scary things but I tried, erm, a murder mystery book and now it's my favourite series of books that I absolutely adore, its, erm, *A Murder Most Unladylike*.

JH: Oh yeah!

Lottie: And it's really good.

JH: Anything you'd like to say [Count Olaf]?

Count Olaf: Erm, nothing really.

JH: Nothing really? Okay, thank you. Now let's stop this - I hope it's been working the whole time.

(End)

Appendix c

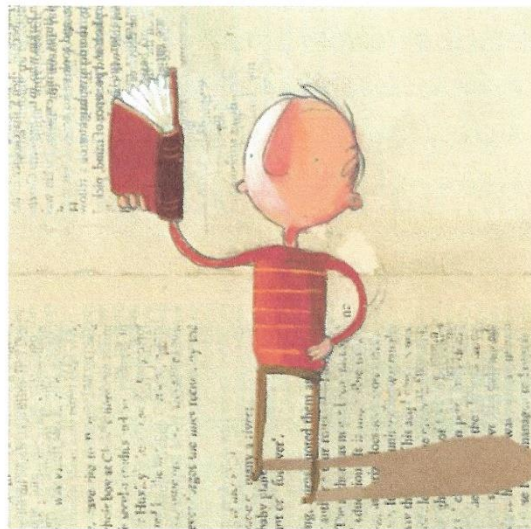
Fig 1



scared, excited, confused, anxious, unsure

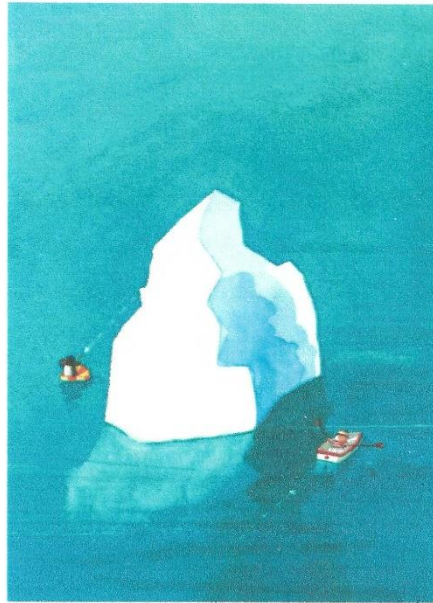
c

Fig 2



confused
interested in ~~the~~ subject
contemplative
puzzled?
astonished

Fig.3



uncomfortable, disappointed

Fig. 4



happy over warm,

Fig. 5



Homeless Sad, Lonely, Sea-sick

Sad, not selft scared.

4

After reading

Have a think about how you feel right now. Circle the emoji that best describes your current emotion.

Content Upset Angry Bored Calm Thoughtful **Excited** Anxious



Scale of that feeling:

A little bit

A lot

1

2

3

4

5

What has made you feel that way?

I'm not so tired anymore, by reading this book and being transported to this world I feel quite calm and Excited at the same time.

Thank you -- see you next week!

Appendix e

Peer Interview: CJ and Draco

CJ: What did you like and not like about this reading group?

Draco: I liked the fact that we got peace and quiet to read but sometimes you could get distracted when other people sat next to you and started talking to you.

CJ: Uhm, tell me about a time reading a book made you feel better.

Draco: So, in a movie the main character, one of the main characters that played a pretty big part, got killed off and it made me really sad so I read a book and after the book I was kinda happy and, erm, it made me feel so much better.

JH: Did the book have anything to do with the movie or was it a completely different book?

Draco: Completely different - I couldn't read the book again cause I couldn't see Marco die again.

JH: So you just wanted something to distract you from the film?

Draco: Yep.

CJ: So tell me about a time when reading a book made you feel worse.

Draco: So I was reading a book and in the book they were talking about how she got bullied in the past and that, and it made me really sad - they bullied her all the way up and she was so sad, and it made me feel sad cause of hearing about what happened to her.

CJ: Did you feel different after doing this reading group?

Draco: Yeah because at the start of reading I usually felt tired but after it, cause it leaves you on a cliff-hanger, I was really excited to see what happens next. Because one time I was left when she just got on the train and she was gonna meet her dad and I didn't know what was gonna happen but then I found out and was so excited to see if she's ever meet her dad and that, and it was so exciting and that's where I'm at just now - she's in the tunnel just now.

CJ: Did you think this would happen?

Draco: Like, I thought it might make a difference but I wasn't sure it would make this much difference. Like, because usually you can just change when you're in the middle of it but I was excited to see what was gonna happen because, like, the different times

so I'd have to wait til tomorrow to know what happened it was so excited to know what's gonna happen.

CJ: Will you ever read to make yourself feel better in the future?

Draco: Yeah probably because I like reading and it just takes your mind off the world and it gives you a little place to sit and distract you from everything that's going on.

CJ: Uhm, anything else you want to say about reading?

Draco: Like, sometimes reading can make you feel better, sometimes worse, it just, like, all depends on what type of book it is. Like, sometimes it could be so happy you cry...

JH: Yeah, sometimes that happens.

Draco: And sometimes it can be so sad you cry. Sometimes it can just be a mystery and it leaves you on this really big cliff-hanger like a movie and you really want to know what happens but, like, you don't know what happens yet and, like, you want to watch all the trailers and that, or read about what's gonna happen next so...

JH: It just gives you a wee flavour, doesn't it?

Draco: Yeah.

CJ: Yeah.

Draco: And then you just can't wait for the actual movie, you start counting down the days!

CJ: (laughs) Oh yeah, that's what I did!

JH: What movie are you looking forward to then? That sounds like you're looking forward to one coming out soon!

Draco: Erm not really, cause there was movies that I've liked but I know they're not gonna make a second film and that's really sad. I'm watching a series just now, it's like a series, and they've left it at the part where Ace - Ace is a really big part - but we still don't know who he is and it's six seasons and they might be bringing out a new one to finally reveal who it is and I'm so excited to finally see who it is.

JH: What series is that?

Draco: *Pretty Little Liars*.

Researcher: Oh is it? I haven't seen that.

Draco: Because it's like seven seasons and we still don't know who it is and there's, like, so many different people in it but we've not see the main person yet and I'm so excited to find out.

JH: Okay, excellent, thank you. Do you want to ask now?

Draco: Yep, okay. So what did you like about and what did you not like about this reading group?

CJ: Uhm, I liked when we were reading - I thought it helped my reading skills and helped me with my words and helped me when I pronounced my words and it helped me feel like how I feel, except see the part I do not like? It's when some of the people, what you said about it, like some of the people when they were talking. Last week it was hard to concentrate and after that I get a bit put off and after that I just tried to find the page I was on again, so yeah, that's the one thing I didn't like.

Draco: What time did a book make you feel better?

CJ: When, uhm, what book made me feel better... when I was reading the book, uhm, after the mum and dad were gone, not to protect them, when the kids needed to survive and after that, after this gang came over and it was a bad gang and after that they're, like, doing up their houses up just, like, to defend themselves and turning their windows into boarded up windows.

Draco: Like barricades?

CJ: Yeah, and that's what I liked about it because they're, like, defending themselves from being bullied and getting robbed and attacked.

Draco: Was that a series?

CJ: It was in a book. No, they never made a series or a movie it was just a book.

Draco: It sounds like a really old series that I watched a few weeks ago with my auntie when I stayed at her house - all the adults disappeared. Tell me about a time when reading a book made you feel worse.

CJ: Uhm, when the gang came in a book I was reading, after it made me feel like, "That's just shocking that those gang hurt innocent little kids!"

Draco: Still sounds like a series!

CJ: It's not, it's from a book I'm reading now.

Draco: But it's a series though - all the adults just disappearing and it's just children, and the children make gangs and all that, and they run about getting other children.

JH: Maybe the series is based on the book that CJ's reading?

CJ: Oh yeah, I remember it is a programme and in the end they're trying to get their parents back.

Draco: Yes! And then they see through a loophole and you see all their parents.

CJ: Yeah, and they're teenage.

Draco: Yeah, they're kids up to the age of 14 or 15.

CJ: Oh wait, I know what you're talking about! I seen that except I wish I got to see it again.

Draco: My auntie turned it on and I started watching it, it's only four years older than me.

CJ: Uhm, so after they're, like, attacking the people and the big gang after one day when they come back after they've built the building they burnt it on fire and I was, like, angry, like, "How dare those gangs burn their village down!" and there was one part I liked where they went to their school to live and that's one place kids don't like! (laughs) School!

Draco: In the series they went to a hotel!

JH: Oh that would be better than going to school, I think.

CJ: Yeah.

Draco: Okay, so did you feel different after doing this reading group?

CJ: Yeah I did, it made me feel calm and relaxed and I really liked it and it made me feel happy about the book I was reading, that's what it made me feel.

Draco: Did you think this would happen?

CJ: Uhm, yeah (pause) because sometimes when I read a book I get calmed or chilled or relaxed because you get that feeling after you read a book because you feel a bit tired and I just like that feeling because it's, like, a really nice feeling because after that I just stretch my body when I feel like I need to stretch, so yeah.

Draco: Will you ever read to make yourself feel better in the future?

CJ: Yeah course I would, I really like reading because when I was in primary the first time I started reading it was hard for me, so it was hard to pronounce it and say it because I was new back when I was first time reading it, but after, when I was in P7 I got good at it and I just loved reading, I really did. Like, it tells me about what

happens, about Kipper and Biff and Chip, Wilma and they go on adventures, and I just like the adventures they go on and I think it skipped the period til lunchtime because back then I was ready for my lunch and I'd be like, "Oh school's boring" in primary school except in high school it's fun, you get to do everything you want, you eat food, you're on your phone, everything.

JH: So do you think reading kept you going if things were boring?

CJ: Yeah, yeah, and after I moved here I know some of the words in the book and I was happy because it means I could read books, from comics or long books or small books so I really enjoyed it.

Draco: Anything else you want to say about reading?

CJ: I love reading because it's, like, really good and I just really enjoy reading cause it tells me stories and it tells me about what happens in comic books and the ones that has the movie in it - after I've read the book I'll just watch the movie and I just really enjoy it. They make really good books like David Bowie's *Grandpa's Great Escape* - I really enjoyed that book, it's about a grandpa and his grandson except it was really sad at the ending because after the grandpa goes upside down and lets the grandson out he disappears and he doesn't come back so they think he might have died from the shot down from those jets so it's really sad. But in the ending, see the person who was the church person? It's the same person from the old folks home and it was funny - they were like, "Get off me!" (laughs) Because the police were holding her handcuffed. "Get off of me!" (laughs) So I just liked the book and after it was finished I was like, "Aww, I was enjoying that!"

Draco: Do you ever feel like drawing after you read?

CJ: Oh yeah!

JH: Drawing, like what you've been reading about?

Draco: Yeah.

CJ: I made a comic strip about that.

Draco: Sometimes I want to draw the characters or make my own characters up.

CJ: Yeah! That's what it makes me feel.

Draco: And then you try to draw but you realise you can't draw but you still draw anyway.

CJ: Yeah.

JH: You should still draw.

CJ: Yeah that's what I did, so yeah.

JH: Okay, thank you.

CJ: Thank you and peace out.

Peer interview: Georgia and Hermione

Georgia: Okay Hermione, right now I'm going to ask you a few questions about the reading club.

Hermione: Okay.

Georgia: What did you like and dislike about taking part in the reading group?

Hermione: I liked that I got to take a bit of time out of my day and sit and, like, calm myself down and read and, like, take my thoughts off, like, one time I had a test before it and I, like, read to not make me as nervous as I was to begin with. I liked that I got to try something different and it was very interesting and I don't think I really disliked much from it.

Georgia: Okay, so had you read for wellbeing before?

Hermione: Well, yes, sometimes, if I was either stressed or bored even, then yeah, I read and it did help, like, calm me down, so yeah.

Georgie: Okay. Were your emotions changed how you expected to happen?

Hermione: Erm, not really, no. I didn't really know what to expect, so no.

Georgia: Okay. Will you read in future to help wellbeing?

Hermione: Yeah, I think I will, when I think I need something to calm me down or take my mind off of things.

Georgia: Tell me about a time reading a book made you feel better.

Hermione: Erm, well, one time I remember I had homework and I didn't understand it and I read a book and then, like, because I was getting quite upset, like not upset but just frustrated that I didn't understand it, so I just read a book, calmed down, and then I went back to it.

Georgia: Tell me about a time reading a book made you feel worse.

Hermione: One time I had this very, very boring book and I told myself "I'm gonna start reading that book" and it was really boring so I just got frustrated with it, so that put me off for a little bit.

Georgia: Did you feel different after doing this reading group and did you think this would happen?

Hermione: Uhm, while I'm in it I do feel different because as I said it's like a wind down from your everyday life, and I did expect it because usually when I read it does, but I did have a little bit of a surprise feeling, so yes.

Georgia: So last question: anything else you want to say about reading?

Hermione: Uhm yeah, I think reading is a great way to calm yourself, take your mind off stressful things, maybe even nothing that stressful, just feeling excited. It's a good pastime for, like, travelling for example because everyone's going on holiday soon so if you're on an aeroplane you might want to read, and for some people, like, summer they don't go on holiday so that can also be a pastime, and it's just a good way to take your mind off things, and it expands your vocabulary and everything, so yeah. Okay, so I think now that's your turn. It is? Okay, so what did you like and dislike about taking part in the reading group?

Georgia: I liked that I had my (inaudible) like, I could read a book that I really loved and my dislike is that (whisper, inaudible)

Hermione: Yeah, I think it's good because you, like, have to read. Okay, have you read for wellbeing before?

Georgia: Yes, I did.

Hermione: Okay. Did the reading group change you or your thoughts?

Georgia: Yes, before starting the reading group, I wasn't too choice-y about reading, sometimes when I was really bored or I had nothing to do, but if I was, like, for example if I was, like, struggling I wouldn't, like, get a book with me to read but now I would.

Hermione: Okay, that's good. So were the change in the emotions what you expected to happen?

Georgia: I don't know about that one!

Hermione: That's fine. Will you read in future to help wellbeing?

Georgia: Yes I would in future.

Hermione: Tell me about a time when reading a book made you feel better.

Georgia: So the time was when something happened to one of my animals and I was really sad about it so I just got a random book, I didn't even thought about it, so the title, I just found it really fancy, I was like let's see this book and see how it is and actually it made me smile a wee bit.

Hermione: That's good, that's actually happened to me before too (laughs). So tell me about a time when reading a book made you feel worse.

Georgia: Okay, this thing happened recent.

Hermione: Okay.

Georgia: Erm, certain things have happened with the animals and I had this book in my house, and didn't even thought about it and it was, like, *Care For Your Pet* and the pet, it actually happened.

Hermione: Aww.

Georgia: And I was starting reading that book and it made me feel worse.

Hermione: Aww right, so yeah. Did you feel different after the reading group? Did you think this would happen?

Georgia: Yes I feel a wee bit different but I didn't think this would happen.

Hermione: Okay. Will you ever read to make yourself feel better in the future?

Georgia: Yeah I will read to make myself feel better in the future.

Hermione: Okay, so anything else you want to say about reading?

Georgia: I would recommend that you take a book with you whenever you're bored or, like, going on a trip, that'd be, like, a really good idea, or when you're feeling worse and to make yourself feel better.

Hermione: Mm-hm.

Georgia: Just take a book and read it.

Hermione: Yeah. So that's it.

Peer Interview: Hannah and Starr

Hannah: Starr, what did you like and dislike about taking part in this reading group?

Starr: I liked taking part because it made me feel more calm and not to think about anything and, yeah, I didn't dislike anything.

Hannah: (laughs) Before you started your reading, did you have any thoughts about how you would feel during it?

Starr: Uhm, no, I just read and it made me feel calm.

Hannah: Had you read for wellbeing before?

Starr: Yes.

Hannah: What do you think about the book?

Starr: My book?

Hannah: This book (inaudible). Oh, did this reading group change your thoughts?

Starr: Uhm, just made me feel more calm and relaxed, yeah.

Hannah: Were your emotions what you expected?

Starr: Uhm, no.

Hannah: Will you read in the future to help wellbeing?

Starr: Yes.

Hannah: Alright. Miss, we're finished.

Researcher: What questions have you asked?

Hannah: I asked Starr.

JH: Okay, has Starr asked you?

Hannah: No.

JH: Okay, is it still recording?

Starr: Yeah. What did you like and dislike about taking part in the reading group?

Hannah: I liked everything, I like reading books.

Starr: Before you started reading did you have any thoughts about how you would feel during reading

Hannah: No, I just...

Starr: Had you read for wellbeing before?

Hannah: No.

Starr: Did this reading group change you or change your thoughts?

Hannah: Yes.

JH: So what changed?

Hannah: Like, I read *13 Reasons Why*. The book is talking about a girl who kills herself and it explained that if you kill yourself, what's gonna change? You're just gonna kill yourself, your problems are going to finish but the other person's problems gonna survive.

JH: That's what happens, isn't it? All the other people that are left behind are all struggling because they all feel really bad.

Starr: Were the emotions that changed what you thought would happen?

Hannah: Yeah.

JH: Tell us why, tell us a bit more.

Hannah: Because the book...I feel some other person's emotion

Starr: Will you read in the future to help wellbeing?

Hannah: Yes.

JH: Why? What would make you do it? (long pause) What was it about reading that you think has helped your wellbeing in some way? Or has it?

Hannah: Yeah.

JH: It has? In what way? Can you think in what way it's helped?

Hannah: In my thoughts.

JH: And what about your thoughts?

Hannah: I don't think like before - I don't know how to explain that.

JH: Okay, but you feel it's made a difference.

Hannah: Mm-hm.

JH: What about you Starr?

Starr: It's just made me feel more calm.

JH: So do you think in the future if you're a bit kinda worried or worked up you might take yourself off and read a book for a wee while to calm down?

Starr: Yes.

JH: Is that something that you've done before?

Starr: Sometimes.

JH: Sometimes. Okay, is there anything else that you want to tell me about your general thoughts on reading and books, anything you've not said? (pause) Okay, thank you.

Peer Interview: Luna and Rin

Luna: What did you like and not like about the reading group?

Rin: I liked how it was relaxed.

Luna: What did you hate about it?

Rin: Erm (pause) the amount of time we had.

Luna: Hm. For me I liked how we just read books and we just kinda, you know, read them. It also helps us with our language and everything (inaudible) words you learn. I don't really dislike it, but I guess the amount of time as well, like you don't really have enough time to read a chapter or, you know, read multiple chapters. Tell me about a time when reading a book made you feel better.

Rin: Erm, when I was really angry at a teacher I went outside and read a book and I was calm.

Luna: For me, me and my mum and dad were having an argument about something, I know what it was but... It made me really upset so I just ran upstairs and got my *Harry Potter* book out and read like five chapters because, like, I didn't think about the reality of the world, I thought about how it, like, was different and I was in the book. Tell me about a time reading a book made you feel worse.

Rin: Erm, I was in a really happy mood, everything was going great so I thought I'll read a book because I had time and someone died in it and I was not very fond of it.

Luna: That was the same with me - Dobby died then that made me really upset. Uhm, do you feel different after doing this reading group? Did you think it would happen?

Rin: Yeah I feel more like accomplished, more in control.

Luna: Yeah I think I'm more, I guess I'm just more dedicated to reading my books, and like, you know, reading I guess. Erm do you think you'll ever read a book to make yourself feel better in future?

Rin: Erm, I will read better in future to make myself feel better.

Luna: Yeah same, like I said I feel like reading a book helps you a lot with literature and also like I heard that if you read more books you get better handwriting so... uhm would you ever, sorry, anything else you want to say about reading?

Rin: Erm, no.

Luna: Same. Erm, how old were you first started enjoying reading books?

Rin: About (pause) since I started reading which was since I can remember.

Luna: Uh-huh. I think I was about 9? I didn't really like books but that was just reading words but now I love it. But what would you say is your favourite book?

Rin: Erm...

Luna: Don't say *American Psycho*!

Rin: Erm probably *Tokyo Ghoul* or *Attack on Titan*.

Luna: Did it make you feel a certain way?

Rin: It made me feel happy.

Luna: Okay

Rin: What about you?

Luna: What?

Rin: The question you just asked me.

Luna: Oh I started reading when I was like...

Rin: No, your favourite book.

Luna: Oh my favourite book? The *Harry Potter* series. I don't know why, I just love how it's all magical and it makes me, like, it expands my imagination and makes me really happy to think about things. (Shouts) We're done. I don't think it's still recording.

Rin: It is. (pause)

JH: (inaudible) Thank you. Do you think there is anything else you could ask maybe? What questions have you done?

Luna: All of them, and some of ours.

JH: And some of yours. Are there any there that you haven't done?

Luna: We haven't done any of those.

JH: Okay I'm just thinking that that looks quite a short bit of time.

Rin: We could...

JH: Could you talk a bit more about how you think reading does or does not help with wellbeing?

Rin: Yup.

JH: Or any examples maybe of books you've read or times it has or hasn't helped you?

Luna: Oh, I've got one - what was a book that you really didn't want to finish reading?

Rin: Mmm... *One Punch Man*, that was horrible.

Luna: What was it about?

Rin: It was just, like, such a bad plot but this was, like, the better version of it so they were just testing out ideas and I luckily got (inaudible) it wasn't that good but it's quite good now. You?

Luna: I would say *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. A lot of people like it and if you like it that's fine, I just think it's such a dumb book.

Rin: Hmm.

Luna: Like, it has such dumb little things, I haven't even read the whole series because I just didn't want to. Do you think there's something negative (inaudible)

Rin: I think, see if you don't enjoy it, maybe try it once or twice, but if you don't enjoy it don't push yourself to like it cos it won't work.

Luna: Okay but is there any negative ways that a reader enjoys reading books?

Rin: Sometimes when you're reading a character that you like gets killed off.

Luna: Hm, would you say that books have changed you emotionally?

Rin: Yes, they've helped with language, like how I talk. Erm, is there any book, like, you hate, that you wish never existed? Other than *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. And how did you feel reading it?

Luna: Okay, my friend was really into this book *Attack on Titan* so I was like I'll just try it cos it was the only one I saw in the library so I took it and I hated it because basically it's just about monsters and people trying to kill them, and yeah it's okay I guess, yeah it's anime and I don't mind that and I don't mind Manga, I don't know it had such a weird plot.

Rin: Nah, they're actually killing Titans and that really helped in my thoughts a lot because everything, like the character, he never really fit in and had different opinions in the society and...

Luna: It was good that he was different, like everyone's not the same.

Rin: Yeah.

Peer Interview: Yukio and Aragon

Yukio: Okay this is Yukio, and you are?

Aragon: Aragon.

Yukio: Aragon, okay. What did you like or dislike about taking part in the reading group?

Aragon: The reading group was very good for letting you express your emotions through reading and being able to get stuff out of your head by having that reading period.

Yukio: Yep. Okay, question 2: before you started reading did you have any thoughts about how you would feel during it?

Aragon: I knew the book that I was reading was quite sad because it's about Auschwitz, but I never knew how bad it actually would be so I was kinda underestimating it.

Yukio: Okay. Had you read for wellbeing before?

Aragon: Only sometimes. It's quite hard for me to find a book that I enjoy a lot so it all depends. It usually takes me about a month to find a really good book.

Yukio: Okay. Did this reading group change you or change your thoughts?

Aragon: Yes, because before it I wasn't reading too much - I'd only read, like, maybe at night, and that would only be, like, two pages before it conks me out, but, erm, I got a full 45 minutes to read, so it's changed my emotions when I read.

Yukio: Were the change in your emotions what you expected to happen?

Aragon: Yes, but as I said before I underestimated how much it would change my emotions.

Yukio: Final question: will you read in the future to help wellbeing?

Aragon: Yes - if I find a really good book then yeah, but there is always a chance that I won't find a book for quite a while.

Yukio: Like one of those feel-good books?

Aragon: Yeah.

Yukio: Okay. So now this is Aragon interviewing Yukio.

Aragon: What did you like and dislike about taking part in the reading group?

Yukio: I liked the fact that it was just you and a whole bunch of other people who were interested in doing the same thing. Like, reading for wellbeing is definitely a positive

on my count because by maybe not, by maybe absorbing yourself in this world will help you to forget about the other world and all your worries, and it's a way that you can sort of release your tension and all your emotions, and I think that's a very good thing so...I don't really have any dislikes about it, it was all really positive for me.

Aragon: So, before you started reading, did you have any thoughts about how you would feel during or after it?

Yukio: I imagined I'd feel quite changed, and, uhm, there are definitely a few things I've learned so I think I'm partly right, I think it would sort of change me and it's something I want to do in the future, it's something that I'm definitely glad I took part in.

Aragon: Yeah?

Yukio: Because it...because I'm always up for trying new things and this is one of the most enjoyable things I've did in quite a while so, yeah.

Aragon: Had you read for wellbeing before?

Yukio: Not necessarily wellbeing, but maybe to help in class maybe - in Scotland we have this First Minister's Reading Challenge where basically, uhm, I wanted to read so much for that but never really got on the right track. I read this one *Pokemon Manga* and I read the whole thing and absolutely loved it, but then I sort of, I realised I want to do more reading but just can't be bothered and it's like, for example, when I'm about to read a book I'm dreading it but after I've read it I want to do it more but I always forget the emotions I feel after or during reading a book so, uhm, I didn't really do it for wellbeing before but maybe to improve my intelligence.

Aragon: Did this reading group change you or change your thoughts?

Yukio: Maybe not change my thoughts but maybe just change my opinion of reading and how vast the world of reading actually is - it's like you can , it changes your sort of, it changes your mind's focus from one thing to another, otherwise you'd be focused on reality and the real world but, uhm, now basically you're focussed on this world and the fact that there's no pictures or anything and it's not, like, moving allows you to think more about it, so it has actually, because it has actually changed me in a way - it's made me think a lot more about reading in general and reading for fun and wellbeing.

Aragon: Yeah. So were your emotions and the change in your emotions what you expected to happen after you'd read this book?

Yukio: Yeeeah, I mean, it's like, I've never read this book and I was trying desperately to find a book that I would really, really enjoy, so I found this one and basically it did

kinda change my emotions and, uhm, I did kind of expect it to be slightly like this but, uhm, I'm glad I took part in it anyway, I mean I wanted to experience those emotions so I wouldn't let the fact that I knew what would happen sort of take away from that.

Aragon: Will you read in the future to help wellbeing?

Yukio: I think yeah, I definitely would because I definitely experienced some sort of different things whilst reading - it's very, very vague but, uhm, absolutely if I ever find a good book and ever find myself stressed out I'll read a book because it took my mind off absolutely everything which I understood more during this period of time, so yeah I definitely would.

Aragon: Yeah. Well one last question for both of us: what was the book that you were reading?

Yukio: My book, eh, the book that I read was *The Last Dragon Slayer* and it's a sort of, it's like a parody sort of fiction book basically about this sort of organisation called Kazam. Basically its set in the Ununited Kingdoms (laughs) so basically, uhm, Kazam is the sort of wizard corporation but basically they don't just deal with wizardry, they offer sort of, like, advice, it's like Childline with dragons, that's the way I would describe it.

Aragon: (laughs) Oh right?

Yukio: It's like Childline, it's advice, but with dragons and it's really, well I didn't get that far in the book but I absolutely loved it, I'm gonna read the rest.

Aragon: Yeah.

Yukio: Whenever I can. So what did you read?

Aragon: I read *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* which is a true story from one of the men that tattooed the numbers onto the prisoners of Auschwitz.

Yukio: Yeah.

Aragon: Uhm, he also wrote... it's a true story and he met his to-be wife in Auschwitz, and it was really interesting.

Yukio: Oh wow.

Aragon: And it still is really interesting to read.

Yukio: Yeah.

Aragon: I would highly recommend it if you enjoy books that are true and that change your emotions fully.

Yukio: Yeah.

Aragon: In every way possible so...yep.

Interview extension: Aragon

JH: [Aragon], can you tell me a bit about your visit to Auschwitz?

Aragon: Well obviously it was a really emotional place, you could feel what happened there. It was a double-trip to Auschwitz and Birkenau.

JH: Oh right.

Aragon: So it was more, it was smaller than you would expect it to be.

JH: Right.

Aragon: There was maybe only about ten buildings left in it, but obviously the main gate, that was all there and it was really weird to see what you thought it would be like.

JH: Yeah.

Aragon: 'Cause there was a museum there and you could go and see all the belongings of all the prisoners and that. So there was prosthetics, shoes and all that that you could see and it was... it didn't feel right to be there.

JH: Yeah.

Aragon: Hm.

JH: Was it like the book?

Aragon: Yeah, you could see where... you could kinda feel where it would have happened because you could say, "Oh right, this might have been where this scene happened in the book" or whatever, so...

JH: I remember you saying the maps - you really liked the maps.

Aragon: Yeah.

JH: So when you saw it were you like, "Oh that looks like those maps"?

Aragon: Yeah. So, I took the book with me.

JH: Okay.

Aragon: And I used the maps just to see where there were things missing and that, and there was about maybe about 50% missing, just, like, on that map that you could see in the book, but obviously it was much bigger -

JH: Yeah.

Aragon: - during the war and that, so it's really deteriorated.

JH: Do you think it helped you having read it before you visited?

Aragon: Definitely because it was a personal story of what happened so you could really think, “Wow, that really did happen, that’s what the conditions were like”, and you could go and you could see, whereas if you just went without reading the book then you might think, “Oh okay, but there’s nobody that’s really been there and said how the conditions have been and all that”, but because obviously it was a true story - the author of the book, they interviewed the person, the tattooist, and it was really weird. It made it a much better visit ‘cause I could...

JH: You could have a connection?

Aragon: Yeah, because you could obviously see where some stuff happened and that, and then when we went to Birkenau you could see the rails and all that, and you thought, “That’s really where the prisoners really did come in, so that’s where everything would have happened”, so...

JH: Yeah. Do you think you’ll read it again now that you’ve been?

Aragon: Well, there’s a second book out -

JH: I saw that, yeah, it’s the lady’s story.

Aragon: Yeah, it’s the girl’s story, and I’ll probably read that and I’ll see the different views of what really happened.

JH: That’s excellent, thank you.

Aragon: I’ll show you my pictures (shows photos on phone) - that’s the rail tracks, and that was the sleeping area, so they were just lying on those shelves, and that was the gas chambers.

JH: Oh my goodness, that’s awful. How did it feel to see that, quite overwhelming?

Aragon: It was weird, we have no idea of their suffering.

JH: It was a dreadful time in history.

Aragon: Yeah. (Closes phone) That’s it.

Interview extension: CJ and Draco

JH: [Draco] and [CJ], tell me a bit more about the drawings that you create after reading - do you use the same stories and characters that you've read, or do you make your own ones up?

Draco: Sometimes, but if you just really admire a character it makes you want to draw them, or sometimes it just inspires me to sit and draw something and it'll end up like a monster.

JH: So the story that you've read inspires you?

Draco: The story I've read, yeah, like monsters and stuff like that, and fictional. It's, like, it just inspires things.

JH: Can you think why that's something you enjoy doing after reading?

Draco: I feel, like, it just brings more of your imaginary side out, 'cause sometimes I'll even write after I've read.

JH: The same kind of story?

Draco: Something completely different just, like, inspired by that one story.

JH: What about you, [CJ]?

CJ: Erm, see after reading a book or a tune or a made-up tune or a scary tune, I just like to draw - I like to, erm, draw, like, whatever I like to draw.

JH: Why do you think that inspires you to draw?

CJ: 'Cause it inspires me because it helps me because how I feel, like, what to do.

Draco: Just distracts you?

CJ: Yeah, thanks, yeah, it does that and after that it makes me feel like I want to write something 'cause sometimes I like to make my own stories or books after if I've read something or think about something or in my mind or in my own world.

Draco: And you just think of a nice story in your head and daydream about it?

CJ: Yeah, or something, 'cause I kinda like something scary or something cool or funny, except the most thing I like is scary.

Draco: I like scary too.

JH: You like your horror movies!

Draco: Yeah, I think it's just, like, harder to write a comedy or draw something funny because some jokes are just, like, you get them so much and you're just like, "How did they think of that?! It's so hard to think of good jokes and getting it to be so relatable to people, so I think it's just easier for me personally to draw something scary or something scary because I know so much about it.

JH: Okay, thank you for that.

CJ: Can I say something before you turn it off?

JH: You can say something before I turn it off.

CJ: See when I like to... see before when I used to be... I never used to watch it except when I was at the age of 12, and one time I watched one and I loved it! I loved the gruesome -

JH: Is this horror?

CJ: - the horror - yeah, like the gruesome -

Draco: What was the first movie you watched?

CJ: Erm, *Jeepers Creepers*.

Draco: Oh, mines was *Jason*.

CJ: I absolutely loved it when the bird went (squawking sound) - the vampire bird, whatever called it.

JH: Okay, thank you.

CJ: And after that it makes me feel like I want to, erm, write a scary book.

JH: You feel inspired?

CJ: Mm hm.

JH: Okay, thank you for that.

Interview extension: Hannah

JH: Okay [Hannah] and [Draco] again - [Draco's] back for more, like a chat show guest. [Hannah], you told me about Wattpad, so tell me a bit more about your app, your Wattpad app. What do you use it for?

Hannah: To read.

JH: So can you download books?

Hannah: Yeah, a lot of books, and make your own books.

JH: So do you read more downloaded than physical books?

Hannah and Draco: Yes.

JH: You do? So do you prefer them?

Hannah: Yeah, we prefer them.

Draco: It's just so much easier then carrying books around 'cause everything is all in your phone - to be honest I have 1870 books in my phone.

JH: Oh my goodness!

Draco: And that's only in my private library. [Looks at phone] Oh yeah, 1875 books.

JH: And do you think you'll manage to read them all?!

Draco: Well, I'm actually almost done.

JH: Oh!

Draco: I have, like, 58 to read.

Hannah: You have two to read.

Draco [to CJ]: Oh, high five!

CJ: No, it's a question.

Draco: Oh! (Laughter) This is awkward now! (Laughter)

CJ: So far when you're reading it, are you enjoying it?

Draco: Yeah, very much so.

CJ: Up to a scale of ten, how are you enjoying it?

Draco: A million.

Hannah: Yeah.

JH: Okay, so what about writing, can you tell me about stories that you write when you're using it?

Draco: Yesterday I wrote a chapter - 2000 words exactly. Sometimes it's about a show but you write it in your own way as if, like, you add your own character or you write your own books, it just depends.

JH: And you said now it costs you money to use it?

Draco: It just costs you money to download all your books but you can use it offline for free, but £58 is, like, a year and you get it all, like, you can just have your entire library.

Hannah: You can read offline every book or with wifi on your phone.

Draco: Yeah, and you can add as many books as you want to your private library and you can make lists as well and you can have lists so you can organise them depending on genres as well.

JH: And do you do that? Use the lists?

Hannah: No, just mix everything.

Draco: Mix everything.

JH: Anything else you want to tell me about Wattpad? Do you think I should download it?

Hannah: Erm, yeah.

Draco: It doesn't have actual books because it's more of an app where people write about books if they were in it or someone else was in it, so people -

Hannah: There's books on Amazon as well.

JH: Oh right, so is it like fan fiction?

Hannah and Draco: Yeah, fan fiction.

Draco: There's lots and lots of them.

Hannah: It's fan fiction I don't like.

JH: Do you not like fan fiction?

Hannah: No.

JH: What do you not like about it?

Hannah: One time I read a fan fiction book about Shawn Mendes now I hate Shawn Mendes.

JH: Shawn Mendes?

Draco: He is amazing!

Hannah: No, I don't like him because of the fan fiction.

JH: So reading the book put you off him?

Hannah: Yeah.

JH: Oh!

Draco: But it's what people say though sometimes.

Hannah: I know, but I don't like him anymore - I like his music, but I don't like him!

JH: Okay, thanks.

CJ: I have a question.

JH: Uh huh?

CJ: See this app, is it for free on IOS as well?

Draco: It's free for iPad, your iPhone, your android - pretty much anything.

Interview extension: Luna

JH: I don't know what you remember about your wee interview that you gave, but you said that you really enjoy reading series of books -

Luna: Yes.

JH: You were reading the *Harry Potter* one and you'd read other series - do you like series more than stand-alone books? Do you prefer to read series?

Luna: Yeah I prefer to read, erm, I think I prefer to read series but, yeah, because I just like when there's a cliff-hanger then I know, like, if there's a cliff-hanger I can just go to the next book but if there's a cliff-hanger in the first book then you're just dying to know because, like, if there's no other book you're like *sigh*, you know?

JH: So if a book on its own finished without a cliff-hanger, would that be okay or would you be like, "I want more!"?

Luna: I want more!

JH: Okay cool. A lot of the books when you and [Rin] were talking about recommending books to each other, a lot of the ones you said you said you liked them because your friends had read them?

Luna: Oh?

JH: Do you remember saying that?!

Luna: No.

JH: Nah?! I was just wondering if that's an important thing to you, what other people think of books?

Luna: No, it's just really my opinion.

JH: Your opinion? Does anything sway you towards a book?

Luna: Well something magical like wizards and stuff, *Harry Potter*, then yeah it would; I'd be like, "I must read!"

JH: What about if someone read a book they really enjoyed and told you about it? Would that make you -

Luna: Yeah, I would, I'd read it and see, you know...?

JH: Give it a go?

Luna: Yeah.

JH: Cool, okay. So thinking a wee bit more about your emotional response to reading - we worked out that you really enjoy getting lost in the story and you always wanted to find out a bit more?

Luna: Yeah.

JH: Is there anything else about the way you feel you connect emotionally to reading?

Luna: Like, I get really... if there's a character, like, every single book I read there's always one character that, like, relates to me, like Luna Lovegood in *Harry Potter* (laughs). I don't know why I'm so obsessed with her, it's just that we have so many similarities, myself and Luna, so like, if something happened to the character or if the character, like, moved away or something and is not in the book anymore, that kinda makes me sad, like, if the character's there it makes me feel like, "Oh, it's okay."

JH: So why's that important to you to like a character?

Luna: Uh because, like, then you kinda know yourself, you kinda know what you like and stuff, like related to... I don't know to be honest.

JH: No that's okay, that all sounds fine. I think that's all I have to ask you so thanks!

Interview extension: Starr

Starr: My book was about black people getting abused and bullied and it was saying, like, one girl - I can't remember her name - do you know?

JH: Starr?

Starr: Starr. Yeah, erm, how she went to school and how people treater her, so...

JH: So how did you feel?

Starr: I felt bad for them, like, sad.

JH: Because of what was happening to them?

Starr: Yeah.

JH: Is there any other way that you felt it impacted on you?

Starr: Erm, I can't really remember it.

JH: But you just remember that you felt sad?

Starr: Yeah.

JH: Have you had experiences like that before when you've read something?

Starr: Not really.

JH: Are you a big reader?

Starr: Erm..!

JH: Sometimes?

Starr: Yeah sometimes.

JH: And do you think that what we did in the group is something you'd go back and do again?

Starr: Yeah probably because I have so many books that I don't read and this would help me to read more, so yeah, I probably would.

JH: And do you think it has changed you and your wellbeing?

Starr: I'm kinda the same.

JH: The same? So if you were feeling a bit down would reading be something you'd go particularly to search out or would it not really affect you like that?

Starr: I don't know.

JH: That's okay, that's okay. Is there anything else you want to say?

Starr: No.

JH: No, you're okay? That's fine.

Interview extension: Yukio

JH: You spoke a lot about your wellbeing improving because you just enjoyed the reading experience rather than the actual content of what you were reading, so tell me more about that.

Yukio: I think essentially the fact that... I think it's more to do with the fact that I was doing something different and I was going to a completely different place and therefore being able to get my mind off the real world and the world I'm actually in. I think that's what improved my wellbeing, and it's sorta like when you're watching a TV show and there's an advert, or maybe it ends off with a cliff-hanger - I like the idea of books because it's essentially just leaving off somewhere then being able to come back to it later, so you're going away from all your struggles when reading a book and later you'll be able to go back to those when you're ready, and that's why I think that reading... and personally for me that's the way I feel about reading when it comes to emotional wellbeing.

JH: Okay, so you've told me how you think it affects your wellbeing, so you have any other hobbies that make you react the same way that reading does?

Yukio: I think watching movies and making movies, because I'm a big film buff, and when I think about films it makes me personally very happy because I just get to imagine and think about, "Okay, is this well written: Is it well written, is it well directed?" Even if it's a really, really bad film, I personally just like to skim through it and think, "Okay, what makes this bad?" It may seem weird to a lot of people, but it's what I like doing and also, uhm, things like listening to music and getting my mind off things personally, and generally just, erm, for me reading is the same thing as listening to music because reading and music are essentially the same - you can just listen to music for a while then pick up on your problems later.

Draco: Do you ever just put on music then start writing a script for a movie?

Yukio: Yes, that's how most of my scripts start getting written because it's usually like, "Okay, I kinda want to put this song in the movie, but what sort of thing can I associate it with, and how can I sort of put it in the soundtrack?" So songs are my main motivation for writing scripts because, "Okay, this song will be good in the soundtrack but what moment?", and then therefore I come up with this new idea and, yeah.

Draco: Do you ever think about making your own beat for a song, like, your own opening and your own movie and that?

Yukio: Well, uhm, yeah - sorry, do you mean, like, music?

Draco: Yeah, if you have your own songs, like a show or musical?

Yukio: Yeah, well I have a band and we're just, like, working on some stuff right now, so I'm thinking my band could write an original soundtrack for some of my movies.

JH: Okay, thank you.

Pupil focus group

JH: First of all I want you to think back to when you were having your wee reading sessions and you came in and you just sat, and there wasn't anything to do with school work, it was just you reading for a bit of fun, and can you, or can anyone describe to me how you feel when you read in school, just reading for pleasure, not for school work, compared to when you read at home?

Draco: So, it just depends on how you feel. Sometimes it's, like, it's quiet and it's nice and you just want to escape, and at home its just so much easier to read because it's not as loud and you have your own place to read, and you can kinda just walk off as well, but in school, sometimes it can be loud, sometimes it's not, sometimes you just watch all your friends, sometimes you don't. It just depends when you want to read, and sometimes it's annoying trying to read.

JH: To read in school?

Draco: Yeah. And when you're forced to read in the class then it's just not fun at all.

JH: Why is it not fun at all?

Draco: 'Cause you don't want to read that book sometimes, and it's just not your style of reading, and you just hate the book so much.

JH: So is that if you get a book in class that is a book you have to read, that you've not picked yourself?

Draco: Yeah, if you've not picked it and you're forced to read it, it's not enjoyable.

JH: Okay, thank you. Anyone else?

CJ: Erm, sometimes when I like to read it helps me because...just because it helps me because, erm, see sometimes I'm not that good in the mornings, sometimes I wake up and I feel like, "Urgh, I don't want to wake up today" and sometimes books kinda help me because after that I get...see when I'm reading so far of it, I'm trying...I'm enjoying it, like, getting into it, like, like...

JH: Engrossed?

CJ: Mm hm, and, like, this and that, and sometimes I can pick cool books and they're quite good and they're not bad and they're okay.

JH: So you like picking your own books too?

CJ: Mm hm, except, see if, like, I get forced all of a book I didn't like, I would just get out and just have a five minute deep breath because I would go bonkers and so angry, like, "I don't want this book."

JH: Okay.

CJ: Just sometimes, like.

JH: It's okay to do that sometimes, it's not your choice, it's fine.

CJ: If someone told me to read this I don't want to get forced.

JH: Are you going to say something, [Yukio]?

Yukio: (faintly) Yeah, I think -

JH: Woah, woah, hold on.

Yukio: (clearer) I think when it comes to, uhm, I personally think when it comes to my personal preference, I think I like reading in school a whole lot more just because sometimes, say in a class, okay you're done something then you get to read a book. I think it's good because it gets you that moment to just sort of calm down, because, like, maybe you've just sort of finished a test, maybe you don't think you've done too well, or maybe you've had struggles trying to remember a lot of things and you feel like you may not have remembered everything, so just reading a book, even in school, is almost a complete escape and that's why I think reading is school's really good for me, for my personal preference, I can't speak for everyone, but for me personally I feel it's very good. When it comes to reading at home, I don't find it as enjoyable as reading in school, because I don't feel as though I've deserved it, or I don't feel as accomplished to read a book, but nonetheless I still enjoy it because I am a big fan of literature and what not so, yeah, it's more of a hobby when I'm at home but when it comes to being in school it's more of a sort of, "Okay, you're okay now", just as a sort of relaxation.

JH: I'm interested when you said an accomplishment as well - do you think it's because you've achieved something in school so you can then go on and read?

Yukio: Yeah.

Draco: (inaudible)

JH: The thing about school is...?

Draco: That if you read your books online it's much harder to read because you're not allowed to read them in your classes, and then you can't finish your book and it gets annoying, so you get a new book and then you forget the one you're already reading.

Aragon: But in school you've got as many distractions, because at home you might, like, you might want to do something else, or maybe your mum or dad want you to do something, whereas if you're in school you've not got that.

CJ: See, this is the thing, this is why it helps me to read - it helps you pass the time and because if you're angry and you just feel like you don't know how to calm yourself down, all you do is just read a book and it just helps you pass the time and think about...because after you read the book you feel like you're in your own little world, like, you feel like what you wanted to do.

JH: Okay, thank you for those, will we move on to another question? I'm going to ask the girls to start off first, and I'm going to ask you a very broad opening question: what do you think it means to enjoy reading, and can you think what it looks like if a person enjoys reading? So if you're out in the street and you see someone, can you think, "Oh, they look like they're enjoying reading"?

Georgia: They're just focussing on the book and not concentrating on what's going on around them.

Hermione: Yeah, they're, like, smiling, like, their expressions and stuff like that - you can tell they're happy.

Starr: Yeah, I wanted to say the same - they're laughing and stuff, smiling.

Hermione: Surely it depends on the books though, if you burst out laughing they just look at you!

JH: Has anyone done that on the bus? Just burst out laughing at your book?

Hannah: Yeah! (laughs)

JH: Have you done that [Hannah]?

Georgia: (laughs) Yeah, and people look at you!

JH: And sometimes I've cried on the train, if I've got to a really sad bit in my book, and I think, "Oh, this is so embarrassing!"

Georgia and Hermione: Yeah!

JH: At least when you've got a book, though, people can tell you're laughing at the book. Sometimes when people are talking on their phone, but it's just the earphones and you think, "Who are you talking to? What are you laughing at?"

Draco: Oh, that's me.

JH: So have a think and tell me: who is the best reader that you know?

CJ: I know a good writer -

JH: A reader, not a writer, a reader.

CJ: Oh...

(pause)

Georgia: I don't know any readers.

JH: You don't know any readers? What about everyone sitting round the table?!

Hermione: [Draco] and [Hannah].

Hannah: I don't read.

JH: What makes you think that [Draco] and [Hannah] are the best readers?

Hermione: Because they're always reading.

Georgia: Yeah, they're always on their phones reading books and stuff.

(inaudible)

Draco: I really want to tell everyone about Wattpad 'cause you can just read, but they updated it and now you have to, like, pay -

Hannah: Oh yeah.

JH: [Hannah], I'm going to ask you later to tell me a bit more, because you started telling me about Wattpad and I didn't know what it was, so I'll ask you in a few minutes to tell me a bit more. So do you think you could be - oh, [Rin], I forgot all about you, you're sitting so quietly in the corner. You can answer the next question - someone pass the iPad up to [Rin]. If you see other people reading books, people who you like or are friends with, or people at home, do you think it can inspire you to read when you see other people reading?

Rin: No, not really.

JH: No? What inspired you to read, do you think?

Rin: Boredom.

JH: Just if you're bored, you just pick one up? Yeah? Okay, the last thing I'm going to ask you is to tell me - can we move the iPad back a bit? Can you tell me what emotional wellbeing means to you? Can you describe what it means?

Yukio: I personally think emotional wellbeing is knowing when to laugh, knowing when to cry, and know the perfect moments for what emotions, and I think, erm, and it's

okay to laugh at something that you should have cried at and cry at something you should have laughed at because it's human nature to often switch and I don't think it's really bad if you switch it about, even by mistake. I just think, erm, when it really comes down to it, emotional wellbeing is knowing what to do in certain situations and, erm, reacting in ways that personally make you feel happy and in ways that you're happy with reacting with, and if someone doesn't agree with the way you've reacted, uhm, just don't care. It's mainly about you and the way you perceive things, and so you perceive your emotional wellbeing.

JH: Okay, thanks you. Anyone else got - yep, [Draco]?

Draco: Emotional wellbeing is just how you react and how you think and how your mind works, so sometimes, it's just, like, say there was something that you should cry at, like, say *Titanic*, but you laugh at it? It's just the way your mind works, because sometimes things are unrealistic, and sometimes it's because they're really realistic - it's just your preference and how your mind thinks in the situation, it just all depends on how you feel and how your mind works and what you like, what you dislike.

JH: Does anyone have anything different about what you think it means?

CJ: Well, sometimes if I see, like, a comedy movie, like, something funny like, erm, let me think, what can we do?

Draco: *Brooklyn 911*.

CJ: What?

Draco: *Brooklyn 911* - it's a crime show and it's really funny.

CJ: Aww, yeah it's like, erm, one time I seen a part of it and it's really funny and I couldnae stop laughing, and I was like, sometimes I just laugh too much.

JH: I laugh too much all the time, but you can never laugh too much.

(laughter)

CJ: And see when I used to be little and I seen the movie *Titanic*, I would cry in the end when Jack died because, just because, because, just because it was sad, because she lost his boyfriend, and this and that...

JH: Do you think that's your emotional wellbeing?

CJ: Yeah, and see, I really can't stop watching *Titanic*, I've watched it a million times.

JH: Is that your favourite?

CJ: Yeah, it's my most favourite sad movie.

JH: Okay, what else have I got to ask you? So a lot of you said to me that you thought reading improved your wellbeing, so can you tell me what did you mean by that - how did it improve your wellbeing?

Georgia: Maybe from being sad to being a wee bit happy because it just took my thoughts off what I was thinking about.

JH: And [Hermione], what did you mean when you said it had improved your wellbeing?

Hermione: Like, sort of like what [Georgia] said, like, making me happier, for example if I'm having a bad day and I read a book, it makes me feel better.

Draco: It makes you feel more accomplished, the closer you come to finishing the book, and when you get to the last few chapters you get so desperate to finish it, and then you try and read every moment you have, and sometimes that's hard and sometimes it's just the easiest thing in the world to do - I think it just depends on how you feel, sometimes you can get happy, sometimes you can get sad 'cause you think about the movies and the books and you just feel so sad if something sad happens, and you can feel joy, laughter, whatever you feel it's just up to you, it just depends on how you feel.

JH: What about you, [Hannah], how do you feel?

Hannah: It just changes your mood.

JH: [Yukio]? And then [Rin], before you fall asleep. Were you up all night watching the election?

(laughter)

Draco: I was up to 2am watching it.

Yukio: Erm, I recently read the book *I am Thunder*, it's an amazing book, it's amazing, because it's a political statement but it's also, like, a coming-of-age story, and I think for my emotional wellbeing it's the book I needed to read, because it made you feel happy and at the same time it made you feel sad, but when it comes to emotional wellbeing during reading, as to when, erm, okay, you can cry at this bit and you can laugh at this bit, but it doesn't really push it on you, and that's why my book...personally I think it's really important for emotional wellbeing because it lets you perceive it in the way you want to perceive it, it's not really like, "Okay, you have to feel sad at this bit because something's happened to the characters", or, "Oh, no no", no, it's not really like that, erm, it's a book that lets you... and it's about the way people react in certain situations and how people react to the media and a lot of racism and terrorism and stuff.

JH: Very relevant to today then?

Yukio: Yeah, I think it's one of those stories that, despite being timeless, might be more important now than ever. Yeah, emotional wellbeing, specifically in that book and in a lot of books, is good because a lot of them leave you to react how you want, and usually in a film you'd have very dramatic music to be like, "Okay, you're meant to cry at this bit", but no, with books you just read it and just think about it and just make up your own mind, and that's how I think reading for emotional wellbeing is really important.

JH: Okay, thank you. [CJ]?

CJ: You can go first.

Draco: Okay. I feel that it helps your wellbeing because it's just so relatable. Sometimes it'll be out of guilt and sometimes, like, you've did something wrong and you feel so bad about it but someone else is getting the blame but you still feel so guilty, and sometimes maybe (inaudible) that one person that laughs at everything but also cries, and it just really depends how well you can relate to a book - sometimes that's what makes you want to read, it can just make you in the best mood in the world because, like, you have someone to relate to.

JH: So that helps your wellbeing as well, being able to relate to other people?

(At this point Rin leaves the group as he is feeling unwell.)

CJ: Before I joined this, last year this December, it was before the new year, I was having a great time and before that, see I was having a good time and one day after a game, a football game, one time I woke up my mum told me, "[CJ], I have some bad news - Papa passed away", and after hearing that I was so, so upset and I felt really, really depressed and, ooft, when I was at his funeral it was really sad and after that I just felt depressed and I just feel like I can't able to go to school I just felt like, "I don't want to go to school anymore because what's the point?" I lost all my joy and this and that, and after one time when [librarian] told me about - what's this thing called?

JH: This wee group that we're in?

CJ: Yeah.

JH: Just our reading group.

CJ: It helped 'cause when I found my book for once it actually made me happy, I didn't felt depressed anymore and it helped that much that I could do this and that, so this really helped.

JH: Excellent, that's a really good example. The last question I'm going to ask you is: do you remember the surveys I gave you to fill in, they had the wee emojis and I asked you to rate them?

Various: Yes.

JH: What did the survey questions mean to you? Did you think they made sense, could you answer them? I won't be upset if you say they were rubbish!

Draco: Well, the emojis were a bit confusing.

Hermione: I don't remember the questions.

Draco: It was how do you feel before, how do you feel after and the little emojis and then you signed it with your fake name.

JH: Then I asked you if you could give me a reason for how you felt, and some of you didn't and that's fine because sometimes it's hard to know why you feel a certain way, but I'm just wondering if you felt those were good questions to get across how you were feeling, if you were happy to answer them?

Yukio: I think it was particularly important to do those, and the questions were good, especially for your university project. I think those were really important because it gives you a more personal stand point towards the actual pupils, and individually their preferences on storytelling and their preferences on emotional wellbeing - generally how they feel about reading. I thought that was really important and really well done because, just because it's, like, how reading can actually change your mind and how just by reading a story or just being open to a different world or a different timeline or even something in the past, I think it changes you and I think that was really well shown and I think therefore the questions and the emojis and the surveys, they were really important.

JH: Okay, thank you.

Aragon: I think they were really good because it allowed you to look over what happened that day and what was making you feel that way, whether it was happy or sad, whatever, then you could take your mind off that and then go back to it at the end and think, "That's not bothering me that much anymore" because you've read.

JH: Okay thank you. Girls, do you want to say anything? No? Are you all just waiting for the Christmas holidays to start?

Various: Yes.

JH: Okay.

Appendix f

School Librarian focus group - Librarians A, B and C

JH: So to start us off, how would you define “bibliotherapy”?

Librarian A: Reading to aid mental health.

Librarian B: Using books as a way of addressing mental health issues but also to experience different situations and develop empathy.

Librarian C: Reading to relax and to build empathy.

JH: When did you first encounter bibliotherapy, either the term or the practice?

Librarian B: I had started my PgCert at QMU and needed to decide on a curriculum project. At the same time I became aware of adults being prescribed books - predominantly self help - to help with various issues. Alongside this my daughter, who now has a diagnosed anxiety disorder, self diagnosed herself as bipolar through using a website she found online. This sparked my interest in what I learnt was called bibliotherapy as I immediately saw the potential for young people where we could combine good issue driven fiction & ‘good’ information sources. A casual conversation with [other librarian] led to use realising that we were interested in the same thing & our journey into bibliotherapy began.

Librarian A: That was how I came across it - [Librarian B] and [other librarian] presented at an Edinburgh School Librarian’s inset day about their experience.

Librarian C: Me too with the inset day. I also took part in the Mental Health and Literature MOOC from Warwick University a few years ago, which a few our school librarians also did.

JH: Oh yeah, I did that.

Librarian C: And the Scotland’s Mental Health First Aid for Young People course, which I think almost all of our school librarians have now done.

JH: That’s interesting about the mental health first aid, I’ve heard a few school librarians from different authorities talk about that. So do you have any personal experience of bibliotherapy?

Librarian A: Only reading for relaxation, and what has become apparent, reading to gain empathy.

Librarian C: I read to aid sleep and relax in general, build empathy and very occasionally for information on yoga exercises, mindfulness, things like that.

Librarian B: Only reading as a timeout and also returning to the comfort books which always touch us. I have used bibliotherapy with my daughter, encouraging her to read when she needs a break and accessing reliable sources of information.

JH: How do you feel your position as a librarian impacts your delivery of bibliotherapy?

Librarian A: Well we've always been recommending books for pupils and staff to read, this just takes it one step further.

Librarian C: It enables us to have conversations with pupils about books and themes that might be distressing them. Often this is in a one-to-one situation, so pupils feel confident that the rest of the class isn't listening in.

Librarian B: Books, and the accessing of information, are our core 'business'. We have always recommended 'good' books to read and have combined it with our knowledge of the young people we work with. Bibliotherapy is a natural extension of this especially coupled with our training as Mental Health First Aiders.

JH: So you've all been trained in the Mental Health First Aid? (Nodding) Okay, now think about the bibliotherapy training you received: was there anything you learned that you didn't already know based on your library skills and experience?

Librarian C: The practical examples were great and I have used some of them already - reading prescriptions, mindfulness sessions, readaxation and storytelling cafes. It reinforced other training that I've been on.

Librarian A: At the training it was helpful to have a mixture of theory and the practical examples.

Librarian B: I think it just reinforced what we already do. It was very useful because we could focus on the practicality of running bibliotherapy sessions. Learning about practical examples, real books to use and the book recommendation services was what I have taken forward.

JH: Was there anything not covered that you thought should have been? Or was there anything you would have liked to know more about?

Librarian A: More practice using variety of bibliotherapy tasks, maybe videos of sessions?

Librarian C: Ooh, I like that! Video examples of a session would have been fab!

Librarian B: Yes, more practice and learning from the experience of others, what has worked & what hasn't.

JH: So now do you feel confident in delivering bibliotherapy to pupils?

Librarian A: Yes, to some extent, as pupils have always brought their 'issues' to us, plus we have the backing of both school procedure and our own training regarding Mental Health First Aid.

Librarian C: Yes, it's not the most comfortable part of the job, but I am confident to deal with anything that comes up and know where to get more information following procedures if needed. We made a tube map of books by theme and that is very useful as an initial point of reference.

Librarian B: I basically feel confident although we have some issues in [school] about getting a quiet space to work in.

JH: Do you have any concerns about delivering sessions?

Librarian B: There is always the 'what if...' feeling, but that could be in any activity when working with teenagers.

JH: Yeah, we are confident to them! Can you give me examples of how you have used bibliotherapy in school, or any ideas you have?

Librarian A: I have been running weekly relaxation sessions. In the future, I hope to run more targeted Story Cafes and get therapists involved. As a school, looking at mental health is a huge focus this year. I am on the Health and Wellbeing group looking into this, and the school wants to look to see what can be done to open up mental health initiatives up to a wider group of pupils as possible - Escape, Connect, Relate fits the bill perfectly. We also hope to have an interactive, erm, online resource, but that's to be continued!

Librarian B: We have a problem creating a quiet space in the library at lunchtime so I have focussed on promoting the toolkit to suggest fiction titles & websites. I am also moving forward with the personal book shopper and the book referrals that we got from the training. We're planning a push for Mental Health Week where we will promote the use of the Escape, Connect, Relate books and toolkit with both pupils and staff.

Librarian C: I have run story cafés reading *The Snowman* by Michael Morpurgo and Debi Gliori's *The Night Shift* - very different themes, one was a comfort Christmas read and the other is about depression. One pupil revealed that her dad suffers from this and said, "Oh that must be how my dad feels. Now I understand how he feels."

JH: Aw, bless.

Librarian C: I have tried mindfulness colouring in and doodling lunchtimes but they were not greatly successful, readaxation worked better. I have a weekly lunchtime session where pupils choose which of the above activities we will be doing.

JH: That's good they have that ownership. Did you have any expectations of the pupils before you used bibliotherapy?

Librarian C: Not really, I had been thinking about mindfulness and readaxation for a while. I hadn't thought that teens would be interested in being read a story, so was happily surprised to see them enjoy it.

Librarian A: I didn't really know how pupils would react, but at our pupil ambassador training, I was blown away by the responses to texts from the story café sessions.

Librarian B: I did not anticipate the popularity of the titles and how open the pupils are to the idea of reading as a help for some of the issues they are facing.

JH: That's really positive. So before we move on to talking about the books, can you just finish by telling me anything about your experience of delivering bibliotherapy sessions with pupils, or is there anything else you want to add?

Librarian A: The most positive thing for me, other than being able to apply and receive funding for our Escape, Connect, Relate project, was getting pupil ambassadors on board. How they just 'got' the concept and ran with it. The pupils at [school] were so brilliant, they presented at staff and parent sessions, and to John Swinney. It was great to have him ask questions about it.

Librarian C: Escape, Connect, Relate has been fantastic and my ambassadors have been great. I'd love to have training again for a new batch as about two thirds of mine have recently left school. They did assemblies to all year groups this term to promote the pupil toolkit and reading collection. We now have a bereavement group in school and they have a list of the books we have available. I am a member of the Equalities group, that's pupil led, and am promoting bibliotherapy with them too.

Librarian B: I agree with [Librarian A], the most positive thing was getting the funding we needed to finally take the Escape, Connect, Relate project forward. We had been working on it for over four years but always hit the wall of who would pay for it. The funding allowed us to purchase resources, train staff and ambassadors and professionally promote the new 'service'. We talked about developing an app, but it was just too expensive, so that was disappointing because the pupils wanted it, but who knows, there may be other developments in the future.

JH: Okay, thanks for that, that's really helpful. Will we take a break now, then we can chat about the book recommendations and guide?

(Pause)

School Librarian focus group transcript - Librarians A, B and C

Reflection on pupils' book choice, and other suitable books for bibliotherapy

Librarian C: I'm gonna ask a question back to you - what use were your pupils giving you these books for? Were these books that they'd read that would want to be added to a list, or were they good for story cafes?

JH: I gave them the option to read something that they'd enjoyed in the past that would bring them some sort of comfort, so a few of them went for, like, the *Harry Potter* ones were kids who just loved *Harry Potter*.

Librarian C: Okay, so they weren't reading it because they were thinking of Harry Potter being an orphaned child -

JH: No.

Librarian C: - or with that kind of purpose in mind, it was just pure enjoyment?

JH: Yeah. And then some of them who couldn't think, we just said, "Oh, what are your interests?"

Librarian A: So what about the *Ferryman*? I've read that - it's obviously life after death and sort of, obviously death occurs, sort of thing.

JH: So this was a girl who loved horror movies so it was something when I said, "Oh, this might fit in with horror", but she got a lot more from it when she started reading as well, she was saying, "Oh, the character's really like me" and "I've had experiences like this", so she was getting the kinda purpose from it. So *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, [Librarian B] you recoiled.

Librarian B: Well I got myself into a whole Auschwitz train when I read it.

Librarian C: I've not read it yet - does that mean it's awful?

Librarian B: No, it's not. Well, I'm a historian as well so I did the SS as my sixth year studies dissertation at high school and that, bringing back that real horror, and at the time there was lots of things on the television about people, now I've forgotten the name of the concentration camp, the man who died recently...

Librarian A: Oh was it, erm, was it...?

Librarian B: There's *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* then there's somebody else just died recently, and they went back to the concentration camp he was in before Auschwitz, actually it was worse than Auschwitz.

Librarian A: Hard to believe!

Librarian B: There was certainly a documentary and that whole series of reading that and things on the television and doing stuff for Holocaust Day, it was a culmination of man's inhumanity to man, you know, and getting kids to actually read through stuff like that, we do quite a lot of it for Holocaust Memorial Day and encourage them to read that kinda stuff, because at any point we could go back, and it could start with you just picking on someone because they've got a haircut you don't like, or they're wearing the wrong kind of trainers, you can get into that mind set of, you know, how horrible we can actually all be to each other, so we encourage, I mean not every kid will read the stuff and give proper consideration -

Librarian A: But that would be a good, you know, a short section of that would be good to read to the kids.

Librarian B: I think especially, I'm trying to remember, there's one bit where he meets his future wife when he's tattooing her and it's a really, really...well they both survived Auschwitz, but it's, erm, and there's other ones. I read *The Librarian of Auschwitz* -

JH: I've not read that one.

Librarian B: So it's a girl who's in the children's camp at Auschwitz - I didn't know anything about this - so it was a barracks that was just for the children and they had collected books, and they were books that were nothing to do with anything and she was put in charge of these books so nobody got a hold of them. So children were taught and they were read to, they weren't suitable necessarily for children, but there was this task she had, and she did survive Auschwitz as well, or there wouldn't have been a story, but it's getting kids to think about, you know, what happened in the past and could happen again if we're not mindful of it. So I read the two right after each other, and there's been a whole series like *Cilka's Journey* -

Librarian C: (inaudible) *The Wave*.

Librarian B: Yes, uh huh.

Librarian C: I watched the film of that recently with my nephew, he's 14, and we went through the whole thing being absolutely appalled and horrified, and at the end of it they all had this, like, secret signal and he did it to me when the film ended and I said,

“No never do that to me again, just, like, you’re completely freeing me out” because it’s so believable. It was a class - have you read it?

JH: Yeah.

Librarian C: And just how they start ostracising one person in the class who just won’t conform to what the teacher’s doing and how badly they treat her and how that makes her feel, and it’s just, oh.

Librarian B: There’s a bit, I mean you could introduce *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* along with *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*.

Librarian C: Uh huh.

Librarian B: So you could bring in fiction as well, you know we’ve got fiction based on fact as well, and there will be others out there as well that at the moment are not springing into my head but they will at three in the morning!

JH: Any other thoughts on the other books?

Librarian B: I think the *Harry Potter*’s good because we all have that comfort book, probably from our childhood that you go back to. Mine’s *The Silver Sword* - I sound like a world war obsessive now!

Librarian A: We’ve certainly got *The Hate U Give* and *13 Reasons Why* on our list, if that’s the ones that you want to comment on, then they are on our list.

Librarian C: I haven’t read *Ferryman* yet, I know it’s an older book but it was one that passed me by, so now I think, “Oh, I might actually get that” because we’ve got the bereavement group in school so I’ve passed on the bereavement books for that, but also I want to look wider at the sort of different cultures’ beliefs, and we’d looked at things like *Sabriel* and the ringing of the bells and the crossing of the water and guiding people to the dead, like *The House with Chicken Legs*, but that’s a bit different for Baba Yaga, it’s a bit more approachable, but that might be another one to add to that.

Librarian A: Claire McFall said that she actually wanted to finish that in a different way.

JH: Oh, okay.

Librarian A: But the publishers said no, it was too depressing!

(Laughter)

Librarian A: But now there’s been a sequel to it.

JH: Yeah I've read the two - it's a trilogy - the two other ones, and they're good, but I felt like they took away the magic of the first one.

Librarian C: I think they can force you into a trilogy when it could have just been a stand-alone book.

Librarian A: Yeah, maybe. She was a teacher in Peebles High School.

Librarian C: So yeah, *The Hate U Give* and *13 Reasons Why*, and those two are definitely on our lists.

JH: So you think that they're quite suitable?

All: Yeah.

Librarian C: Yeah, they certainly have a stronger theme - your task you gave your pupils was for a comfort book, it wasn't about a book that resonated with a meaning, or something that, you know, comes under bibliotherapy for that reason.

Librarian A: Are you wanting us to give you ideas of other books?

JH: Yep, yeah.

Librarian A: I mean obviously the black picture one -

Librarian C: *Thornhill*?

Librarian A: *Thornhill*. Beautiful, that was an amazing book dealing with bullying.

Librarian B: *The Boy at the Back of the Class*, my kids have liked that as well, it's refugees.

Librarian A: This book here, *Unstoppable*, deals with gang culture, which you might think is, as well as, sort of a lot of it also deals with family issues and the bit that I was going to highlight to you is the bit about the boy reminiscing about his grandmother and how she always supported him because she could see that he wasn't getting as much attention as his twin because, although they were both sort of elite athletes as such, they were pushing his sister more than him and that's how he ended up getting into the gang culture and stuff like that.

Librarian B: Because we had a huge debate about what categories should be in and what shouldn't. I remember going round the tables with [another librarian] for weeks about "is that really an issue?", because we got ourselves tied up with what was an issue, and some of the stuff isn't an issue but it's a mental health concern and something that people might want to find out about.

Librarian A: Because we've got LGBT, racism...

Librarian B: Have we got rape culture?

Librarian A: We called it abuse.

Librarian B: The books that came out talking about rape culture, I had a moment.

Librarian C: But it exists.

Librarian B: Yeah.

Librarian C: And when you bring it down to everyday sexism, it's throughout our culture.

Librarian A: So it is there.

JH: It's quite interesting, we spoke earlier about naming bibliotherapy, and sometimes it being just to make you feel better. I went for the more kind of comforting angle.

Librarian B: We went a bit hardcore, and I think a lot of that came from where I came at it to start with, I was coming at it from personal experience of having to deal with a daughter who was falling apart and I didn't know how to fix it, we're used to fixing things and I couldn't fix it, so I was coming at it from that angle, I didn't want to happen to any kids I knew what had happened to [daughter]. I wanted, not that it would cure it, but I think it provides a toolkit that young people can use, and it should mean they have good information as well as good reading in there, so I think that if you come at it from reading as just being comforting, I think they can live side by side, it's just... can you image if we tried to create a list of comfort reading?

JH: Well comfort's subjective.

Librarian A: "Oh, why's this not in it?!"

Librarian B: There would have been the fights - [another librarian] loves Louise Rennison and I personally *blurgh*

Librarian C: You know when kids in school are harping back to something like the *Harry Potters* or the Jacqueline Wilson books because they first read them when they were in, like, primary 6 or primary 7 and they really identified with them then and they're still reading them, but just because it gives them that comfort zone and they're not that adventurous in their reading anyway so they want a little bit of a book hug and that's where they go to.

Librarian B: You're much kinder, I just say, "They're too easy", reading the same book over and over again.

Librarian C: I suppose I need to recognise that not everybody has the same appetite for reading as I do. If your appetite for reading is not a voracious then it is just a book hug that they're after, I don't think it's... well it's a wee bit of both.

Librarian A: I think one of the books that you recommended, Jennifer, that resonated with all of us is *The Island*.

Librarian B: Oh, that was -

Librarian A: That has been so powerful.

JH: And really topical too.

Librarian A: I'd say that that has been one of the biggest successes.

JH: Have you put that under a theme?

Librarian A: It's not under a theme at the moment because it was one of the ones that we bought latterly which has to be classified into the sections which we've not done yet which is a job!

JH: What do you do for your cataloguing, do you catalogue by theme?

Librarian C: Well it's just adding keywords.

Librarian A: I suppose we all have put it under -

Librarian B: If we ever get an integrated library management system across the whole city -

Librarian C: Because none of us catalogue in the same way - we don't use the same keywords, we don't have the same system, God, you're all going to hate my cataloguing style - I put as many keywords as I fancy.

Librarian A: I'm sure I do as well.

Librarian C: We just don't do the same, I mean even under Dewey we don't put the same numbers because some books you can put under two or three different ones.

Librarian B: Or you think, "I'll go with where it's used most." I have stuff that should be maybe in biography but it's not in biography because the kids would never go there.

Librarian C: Like football books, like, I've got the *Ultimate Football Heroes* series which is written about in the third person, it's not "I am doing this", it's "*he* is doing this", and I have that in a totally different section because I can't cope with it. I have other football biographies in the football - it's like a story about a footballer and I'm

not sure how factual it is or if it embellished bits so I have it in different sections. The kids all know where it is so they -

Librarian B: I always treat it as a football book because it's got a footballer on the front.

Librarian C: Oh, it drives me mad. But yeah, comfort books could be football books, no matter which footballer it is, they are the most sought-after books in the library, after *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, because they don't want to read much. I was gonna say "much else" but I stopped at much because actually they don't want to read much!

JH: Yeah, I was thinking last night, I love the *Hamish Macbeth* books and I saw -

Librarian A: Oh, she died.

JH: Yeah, she died, so this weekend when I'm on my own in my new flat I'm gonna get the DVDs on!

(Laughter)

JH: It's just nice and comforting, you don't need to think too much about them.

Librarian B: That was me watching *The Sound of Music* on New Year's Day.

Librarian C: That's the kind of thing I'll put on when I'm doing the ironing when I don't have to focus too much on what's going on, I'll watch that or *Shetland*.

Librarian B: I watched *Little Women* for that.

Librarian C: But for comfort reading I would definitely say the football books, *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, unfortunately -

Librarian B: I think that's where school to school we differ.

Librarian C: It'll be different, yeah.

Librarian B: And I hate to say, a lot of it, their comfort books, it tends to be if the English department have been pushing a book it drops off the comfort list, like, my kids used to love *Noughts and Crosses* until they taught it in English.

Librarian C: Ah, see my lot don't teach it and they've suddenly started re-reading it, I don't know why -

JH: It's going to be on the telly.

Librarian C: Is that what it is? Maybe they've picked up on that before me, but for the last six months it's suddenly started going out, because I had, like, three copies of each title and I was thinking, "I'll just get it down to one", then they all started going out.

Librarian B: You need to be careful of that because you have to read the whole, you can't read *Crossfire* without reading the trilogy that's now at book five! With a sixth, because if you've read *Crossfire* it's infuriating, it doesn't finish.

Librarian C: You see, I felt that, I finished *The Secret Commonwealth* yesterday and it's not even pretending to be a cliff-hanger, it's half way through a book, and it just stops and says "to be continued" and you feel, "Philip Pullman, I want to kill you!"

Librarian B: *Crossfire's* like that.

Librarian C: You have to wait another year for the next one.

Librarian B: It's like, "the next one's coming", you're going, "really?"

Librarian C: "When is it coming?" "Not soon enough!"

Librarian B: I would hope she's got it written and she's just waiting for it to be published, whether it goes straight to paperback, I don't know.

Librarian C: I like the idea, I'm thinking of some of my most avid readers, and asking what their comfort read is and maybe having a wee wall of comfort books?

Librarian B: We did it one year for World Book Day - asked staff for their favourite book ever, their favourite childhood book and the book they've never finished, and then when you hear conversations of people arguing. I had one with the former headteacher because my never finished book is *Catch 22* and it was his favourite ever and the conversation we had: "But how can you actually like that?!" I couldn't even finish it, I tried several times, so it's a really interesting thing, and I've used it with the adults putting it up on their door and then kids could ask them about it and have that conversation about "how can you possibly like that?" I might do it again for World Book Day because that was a while ago we did that and they'll all have forgotten about it, and it's actually a really easy one to do, you just send out an email to staff and say, "Right: favourite book, favourite children's book, book you've never finished, get back to me" and see what comes up. Some of their answers were, "That's ridiculous."

JH: One year I did a competition, I got teachers' favourite books and got the kids to identify the teacher - nobody managed it!

Librarian B: That's something else you could do, those three categories but they've got to guess. It's hard. Kids would say to me, "That's ridiculous", because obviously I've read everything! Oh no I haven't. It's funny, I don't know about you but the kids all assume that I've read all the classics, and actually I like Jo Nesbo, Cathy Reichs, all the dark Scandinavian stuff and the kids are like, "What?!" but that's the stuff I read. I don't like anything that too hard, anything you have to really concentrate on. I was

saying to [Librarian A], I don't know if you've heard of Netgalley? It's a thing you can subscribe to and they send you books electronically, all you have to do is give them feedback, but I'm reading one at the moment and I think it's... there's not really a timescale but it's a world where vampires cultivate humans for food.

Librarian C: Sound like *Piggies*, there was a book years ago called *Piggies* and it was all about them raising humans like piggies in pens, and the front cover was just like a blood bag.

Librarian B: This is called *Violet Fire*. I'm not that far into it but there are some people who are sort of born to it so they're quite happy to have their master, and to be picked as one of his supply units is kind of an honour, whereas the girl who's the main character's been pulled into it so she's always trying to escape.

Librarian C: And do they bleed them dry or do they just take enough?

Librarian B: Take enough and keep them going, but once the girls get to a certain age they're sent away to a kind of breeding unit to breed more, to keep the supply going. I'm not that far in.

Librarian C: Sound good though, sounds up my street.

Librarian B: Because I got it for nothing it's even better.

JH: Have you watched the new *Dracula*?

Librarian C: Not yet, has it started?

JH: I think it was on New Year's Day.

Librarian B: Do they actually go to Whitby with it?

JH: I don't know, I've not watched it myself.

Librarian B: I'll be very upset because the first time I went to the abbey in Whitby it was a really misty day and [husband and daughter] stayed in the car park and I said, "No, I'm going out" and I was walking out going, "You could believe this." The fact that half of the graveyards disappears over the cliff at the same time.

Librarian C: We went there on school trips (laughs), we were like, "Yay let's go to Whitby for the day!"

Librarian B: We used to be down in sort of Scarborough way in the October holiday and then go, and Whitby would be getting ready for the big gothic thing they have at Halloween - I've never been there at Halloween but they were getting themselves ready for it.

Librarian C: They love it. I have friends that go and they have a football tournament with the locals.

JH: Have we exhausted our thoughts on biblio?

Librarian B: I think it's the right time to be doing this, the time is right to be looking at stuff about mental health and I think it's another string to our bow - we're not just dispensers of books to make the English literacy curriculum, but, like, what we were talking about, being the safe adult, whether the powers that be want to acknowledge it or not, we're often the person in school who picks up on, you know. the kid who suddenly isn't with their pals.

Librarian C: Or that isolated kid who has been so joyful with their pals and all of a sudden they come into the library looking miserable.

Librarian B: Or the boy you've not seen for a year and a half and suddenly he's with you every break and every lunchtime, you're going, "Hang on", and I think because we've all been in our own schools for enough time now, you can sit down beside them and say, "Come on, what's up?" and they're more likely to tell you, whereas I know I'm a bit concerned, especially some of our new staff and the probationers, I don't actually know why they've gone into teaching.

Librarian C: Do you mean teaching staff rather than librarians?

Librarian B: No, I think we've been very fortunate with the ones we've acquired from the public libraries.

Librarian C: I think if it didn't suit them they left pretty quickly, we had a couple who changed jobs when they realised it just wasn't for them.

Librarian B: And I think the argument we've had with our new masters for a long time, although the job title is the same, the job is not the same, and I'm not decrying our public library colleagues, but to take them and just drop them into a high school -

JH: I think you need to be a certain type of person to work in a school.

Librarian B: And any of us could cover anyone else's school, you might not know the mechanism but you get the kids, and I remember having a conversation with [other librarian] at [other school] and he needed help with the system and I tried to talk him through it on the phone but I went to sort it out, and there was a kid came in and asked him something and I answered and he goes, "How can you do that?" and it's just because I've worked with teenagers for twenty-odd years - put any teenager in front of you and they know that you know how to speak to them.

Reflection on bibliotherapy guide

JH: So thank you for reading the guide, I'd just like to hear any thoughts you have on it.

Librarian A: Well, I think it's really important about the disclosure information and how it's important that we follow the school and local authority child protection procedure, because you never know what might come up.

Librarian B: I liked suggesting an online presence, I think that is essential if it can be managed because so many young people, the thought of actually speaking to someone about anything like that, unless it, you know, gets to crisis point, and they interact with technology so much easier than us, yeah.

Librarian C: I like the example of the sessions as well, because I think some people may be a bit nervous about how to approach doing the session?

Librarian B: Yeah.

Librarian C: So having a little example is actually really useful for them.

Librarian B: I'd like to try the staff one, you know the one for staff, especially get the English staff reading more. I know our staff say, "We always do this and this", unless it's a class set...

Librarian A: Is that staff reading for their own wellbeing?

JH: Yeah.

Librarian A: I think [another librarian] has done a lot of that?

Librarian B: Yes, poetry and all sorts of stuff.

Librarian A: Uh-huh. The other thing, I think it's just as important that we, that the aspect of working with other departments, either within school, or the authority, or with, like, NHS, or something like that, I think it's really important that we get to grips with that.

JH: And if you hadn't been familiar with it, or done the training before, do you think the guide would have been helpful to you?

Librarian A: I think maybe it needs...I don't know if there's opportunity to expand on it...

Librarian C: Expand because a lot of people might not know what you mean by "story café"

JH: Okay.

Librarian B: I know that when I tried to do something similar it's the constraints of space, you're trying to get everything onto such a small space, so whether you would want to create something like this electronically, so that "story café" would be a hyperlink that you click on it and it takes you away to explain what it actually is?

JH: Yeah, yeah.

Librarian B: Because the thought of trying to -

Librarian C: Or having a second pamphlet with the book lists on, so you can expand on that and expand on what you mean by your story café, and whether it's personal reading for staff's mental health and wellbeing or for their awareness of what's going on with kids in school.

Librarian A: One thing we saw at the SLIF meeting was, uhm, how Education Scotland had got together some, uhm, a new website as part of Glow where that might be an opportunity to put something up, to put the hyperlinks on there.

Librarian B: Although accessing Glow is a challenge!

Librarian A: Yes! But it's certainly something that was demonstrated to us that day, and they were trying to get us to all use Glow again, but we moved away from Glow years ago, but if it's going to be a resource that we can all tap into, the whole of libraries in Scotland, then we shouldn't be dismissing it.

Librarian B: No. And I think [authority] would be foolish to say, "We're having nothing", if we could then say, "We're putting our resource onto Glow and then everybody..." - that's what we wanted to do from the start, say, "Here's a resource that we've created that everybody can use", none of this "It's ours so you cannae have it" - we want to sell it.

Librarian A: But it didn't cost them money, did it? They didn't fund any of it.

Librarian C: Does it cost money for Glow?

Librarian B: Oh sorry, I thought you meant Escape, Connect, Relate.

Librarian A: It was just our time, really. Well, they got their name on the poster!

Librarian B: Unless you can prove you've done it entirely in your own time, the council will claim -

Librarian A: I meant to send you this before, there's new SLIF funding coming up and I'm due to have a conversation with [manager] to see if we can apply for extra funding

for the same thing, to see whether we can try to push it out nationally. I mean, I don't know, there's lots of people doing lots of different things connected with mental health...

JH: [Names another librarian] was telling me that SLIC are really keen to get mental health-related bids in so there's obviously a desire for it.

Librarian C: They've knocked back my dyslexia bid.

Librarian A: Oh, have they?

Librarian C: Yeah, they knocked it back.

Librarian A: Oh, that's a shame.

Librarian C: They said that it's covered by the Scottish Book Trust thing because they've put a Barrington Stoke book into their Teenage Book Prize, so that covered all aspects of Asperger's and dyslexia, and the other book they can't read because it's got 300 pages in it, so it's not fully inclusive, but yeah, it got knocked back.

Librarian A: Don't be despondent, try a different angle.

Librarian C: I'm very despondent, I don't even want to look at it just now but I will go back to it.

Librarian B: Get [Librarian A] to put it in.

(All laugh)

Librarian A: With a different term!

Librarian B: Because I put together another one. We do a thing "Read for the stars" and mine got knocked back, but the one that we'd done before that had [Librarian A]'s name on it went through!

Librarian C: It had therapists, and was all about creating confident readers and equality, but no. They said that Dyslexic Scotland were going to do some training for us and the training was expensive, but that was the quote for the training. Too expensive. Anyway...

Librarian A: That was beside the point! But that's a shame.

Librarian B: So I think everything else is, mm-hm?

Librarian C: Yeah, just a wee bit of expansion, because I can look at that and think, "Oh yeah", because you showed us that.

Librarian A: It's certainly good for someone who's already done the training, it's a trigger to remember, but if they've not done the training it's still interesting but it needs a bit of expansion. Or maybe just even explaining other types of groups that are available that you can co-operate with?

JH: Okay, yeah, yeah.

Librarian B: When you do the Mental Health First Aid Training you get a manual that actually we cannibalised a lot for our information sources because it's got a wealth of websites and everything. So it's the Scottish Mental Health First Aid For Young People.

Librarian C: That was really good, I enjoyed doing that. It made me feel very confident at the end of the training, especially talking about people with suicidal thoughts, like what's that things to ask and what's not the right thing to ask - which is nothing. It's just, "Have you got a plan yet? You know, how serious is this?" And it can be worrying talking about characters who have suicidal thoughts, but it won't encourage them, because if they're already thinking about it, they're already thinking about it. And the other thing I was going to say about your pamphlet was that your "example of session" seems to be an example of a story café?

JH: Okay.

Librarian C: But the way that I've read it seems to be that you've put "story café" as an idea after it, so I would maybe swap those round and give that as a story café example.

JH: Okay.

Librarian B: Because obviously that reading referrals and the personal reading service is something that I've personally used, but to include that in this, you're never going to have enough space, so if there's some way of -

Librarian C: Linking it.

Librarian B: Linking it to something.

Librarian C: The council do one called Dr Book and my kids loved that! You get a box and it's got a lab coat in it and glasses and working stethoscopes and stuff, and pens with bones and it has a prescription pad and it's the same idea but they've just put some thought it to making it look nice. But it's quite gimmicky and the kids quite like that.

Librarian A: The other option is to put your book list somewhere else and may be expand upon the...

JH: Yeah. So do you think perhaps a manual instead of a pamphlet would be more beneficial?

Librarian B: Yeah, we gave up trying to condense everything - our thing that kids use -

Librarian A: I'm sorry, I was going to bring it today, I had it in my bag!

Librarian B: If I hadn't have got locked out of school this morning you would have had mine. So our kids' one is, what? A forty-page display book. We've not quite filled it, there must be about 30 categories, so some are two, three, four pages, and then the staff toolkit is a big ring-binder with a lever lock that's got master copies of everything in the kids' toolkit, it's got ideas for sessions, it's got...yeah.

Librarian C: And that will keep growing and growing, so we need something digital, because that's going to expand so much.

Librarian B: Because at the moment all we're going to do is keep re-printing because we've got a digital version of it.

Librarian C: So we can just upload that and everyone can print their own one off and it's much more manageable than putting together the folders again because that was quite a big...

Librarian A: Oh it was mental!

Librarian B: So we built the toolkits just going round a table. The kids' ones were back-breaking because you just picked up -

Librarian A: There was just three of us doing that one.

Librarian B: It was slot, slot, slot - you stood up at the end of it and went, "I'm now broken." It was very cathartic! So yeah, we went with a manual rather than pamphlet.

Librarian C: But I like the idea that...if I was a practitioner that hadn't come across this before I would be more likely to pick up a pamphlet than I would a manual.

Librarian B: But if it referred you on to something else...

Librarian C: Yeah, if it said, "Come here for examples of..."

Librarian A: Or if there was something on there which said, "Please contact someone for more information", or a website.

Librarian C: You know, if it was at a conference or the Autumn Gathering or something, I wouldn't want to be breaking my back or anything picking up manuals, but I would pick up a leaflet.

Librarian B: Also the cost of printing those was astronomical, but, you know, if you're printing leaflets that's fine. I mean you could even just reduce every section, even just a couple -

Librarian C: It's heartbreaking: "I'll have that book in, I really like that one!" One of the things I wanted with Escape, Connect, Relate was to have an editable tube map so that I could just have the books I have in the library so when kids say, "Where's that one? It looks really exciting." Erm, I actually don't have that one. "But it's on the map!" And I'm like, "Yeah, it's on the map as an idea but I can get it from somewhere else", and sometimes that delay is just a delay too long.

Librarian B: Mind you, if you're like me and I have most of the books, but most of them are out - because we created a separate display and it was like, woosh, and I ended up with about six books left in my display!

Librarian A: Because they look so attractive as a display, don't they?

Librarian C: They look fab.

Librarian B: Because we've got a banner and we've got a shelf heading. We maybe should give you a copy of the tube map?

JH: I think [other librarian] was going to send it and I can't remember if she did or not.

Librarian A: I'll forward it.

Librarian B: That was definitely one of those conversations where [other librarian] and I, because I'd seen it on Twitter, a simplified version of "if you liked David Walliams, try this."

JH: Yeah, I've done one like that.

Librarian B: So [other librarian] and I thought, "It'll be dead easy, just get a tube map." So we'll print out a tube map and we'll be able to do it, but then it wasn't working, so her husband is a graphic designer so we just asked for his help.

(Laughter)

Librarian B: We were gonna do it and he was gonna help us, and suddenly it was done and it was amazing!

Librarian C: If you joined up absolutely everything -

Librarian B: We really tried.

Librarian C: It just looks like Spaghetti Junction, it looks like a bowl of spaghetti, it's all over the place, so can you imagine how difficult that would be to read it? Simplicity, it's nice and easy.

Librarian B: Whereas we did try to do that, we tried to connect everything.

JH: Like the connecting stops.

Librarian B: But there'd be a book on every list. It's an example of if you want something done give it to the expert.

Librarian C: Give it to somebody who's not actually got his heart in the project so he can make that editing choice.

Librarian B: We just downloaded a tube map and thought, "Oh, we'll be able to take the names out and put..." but no. And we even tried to link the colour, so we wanted the black line to be depression...but leave it to the expert. It does help if a colleague is married to the expert!

(Laughter)

Librarian B: Things magically happen.

JH: Thank you for that.

School Librarian focus group - Librarian D

JH: How would you personally define “bibliotherapy”?

Librarian D: I personally define “bibliotherapy” as the help you could get by reading. That can be; identifying yourself into the story and finding comfort out of it or enjoying a reading that helps you to escape from your reality.

JH: When did you first encounter bibliotherapy, either the term or the practice?

Librarian D: I used to be a volunteer as a library assistant in a Florentine hospital. We used to move a trolley full of books around different departments of the hospital and borrow books both to the patients and the family. Therefore we were trained about how books could have helped them.

JH: Do you have any personal experiences of bibliotherapy yourself, outside of work?

Librarian D: Except for the example before, I don't have any other experiences of bibliotherapy.

JH: How do you feel your position as a librarian impacts your delivery of bibliotherapy?

Librarian D: I believe that in my position as school librarian impacts my delivery of bibliotherapy and in small context has happened that we used books/reading to help pupils dealing with difficult situations.

JH: Did you learn anything you did not already know based on your library skills and experience when you did the bibliotherapy training?

Librarian D: Not really, I've got some nice ideas though, like the staff well-being reading group.

JH: So was there anything that wasn't covered that you think should be?

Librarian D: Probably a better understanding of how bibliotherapy has impacted on young people mental health, maybe with more examples.

JH: Do you feel confident in delivering bibliotherapy to pupils now, and do you have any concerns?

Librarian D: Honestly, I feel more confident to use bibliotherapy with younger pupils, even if in such a busy environment as the library where I work, I think it could be quite challenging to find an appropriate time and space to have the tranquillity required.

JH: Can you give me examples of how you have used bibliotherapy in school, or any ideas you have to use it in future?

Librarian D: We have a book club in the morning that has lost many participants and since one of the few left is dyslexic, we thought to change the structure of the club into a “high voice reading” club. Let’s see how it works! My library assistants and I developed a “shelf help” corner in the library and that meant looking at books that could support the pupils with their mental health. We also worked on putting a label on the spine of the books which are LGBTQI related - could that be considered bibliotherapy?

JH: I think it could. Did you have any expectations before you used bibliotherapy with your pupils in the school library?

Librarian D: No, not really.

JH: Can you tell me anything about your experience of delivering bibliotherapy sessions with pupils, or share your thoughts, either positive or negative?

Librarian D: I haven’t delivered any bibliotherapy session yet in the library, so I can’t really have any thoughts about it.

JH: What books do you feel are most appropriate for bibliotherapy purposes?

Librarian D: I personally believe it depends on the person’s needs. I appreciated the different purposes lists we were suggested at the training. I would probably look into it.

JH: For the bibliotherapy guide, can you let me know your thoughts on its usefulness and suitability.

Librarian D: I think it’s really helpful and well thought. I feel these topics are still quite blurry for us, so definitely some guide lines will help.

JH: Great, thanks. Can you share your thoughts on the bibliotherapy suitability of the books used by the pupil participants in an earlier part of my study? (

Librarian D: *The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris* - I think this could be a really good book, but it needs to be explained to the pupils, who can have different reactions to it.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban by JK Rowling - This book can be really good for a younger audience, especially talking about resilience and different family issues.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by JK Rowling - Some extracts from this book can be used to talk about friendship and death, I would probably struggle to find a suitable age range, because it’s considered to be junior fiction, but younger readers may not feel confident enough to talk about these topics.

13 Reasons Why by Jay Asher - I haven't read it, but I've watched the TV series (bad on me) and discuss about it with the pupils and I think it could be a good book to talk about suicide and bullying, again just some extracts can be more than enough.

One Piece (Manga) - I've read it many years ago, so I feel I should dive into it again, but I think resilience it's what I would use it for.

School Librarian focus group - Librarian E

JH: How would you personally define “bibliotherapy”?

Librarian E: The sharing of stories to promote positive effects in participants.

JH: When did you first encounter bibliotherapy, either the term or the practice?

Librarian E: I first encountered the term when I worked as a library assistant in Glasgow Libraries, and explored what it meant in more detail when I was studying for my MA in Librarianship in 2012 - 2013.

JH: How did they define it during the MA?

Librarian E: I think the definition was along the lines of using books for wellbeing as part of the social impact of libraries - though I remember getting the impression that it was through a formal book group. It interested me at the time but we didn't go in depth.

JH: Do you have any personal experiences of bibliotherapy yourself, outside of work?

Librarian E: Yes - I attended a session on James Kelman's work run by Open Book at the Edinburgh Book Festival a few years ago. I went to hear more about the writer and gradually realised the session was actually bibliotherapy. For me it ignited a real interest in the possibilities of sharing stories for wellbeing - and in the Open Book model of doing so.

JH: So what effect did it have on you to make you realise it was bibliotherapy?

Librarian E: I realised it was bibliotherapy when I saw that the two group leaders weren't dominating the discussion, but were opening it up to all participants. I realised it was less about the particular texts and more about the connection people were making with each other through sharing their opinions. I remember feeling energised and inspired at the end.

JH: How do you feel your position as a librarian, and not a health professional or psychologist impacts your delivery of bibliotherapy?

Librarian E: The library is recognised as a safe space within school by both pupils and staff. The physical space is important as it is separate from the dedicated learning environment of a classroom, removed from the pressures and associations of tests, exams and the 'right' answer. The staff recognition is of the library as a safe space is of key importance, as I need the support of Guidance and Health & Wellbeing staff to deliver bibliotherapy sessions. Running the sessions at lunchtime and making them non-

compulsory also helps encourage pupils who want to take part but who may not feel confident in larger groups.

JH: Thinking about the training you received before delivering bibliotherapy, did you learn anything you did not already know based on your library skills and experience?

Librarian E: Yes - and I recognised this before delivering bibliotherapy sessions in the library. It's different from a book group, or an English classroom. I secured funding to receive staff training from Open Book on how to run a shared reading session, and learned how to facilitate a session, how to deal with troubleshooting issues, and how to encourage genuine discussion.

JH: Is there anything you would like to know more about or was there anything that wasn't covered that you think should be?

Librarian E: I found the training to be incredibly useful in my work, starting a club for S1 pupils called Share a Story which is based on Open Book's shared reading model of bibliotherapy.

JH: Do you feel confident in delivering bibliotherapy to pupils? Do you have any concerns?

Librarian E: I do feel confident in delivering these kind of sessions, because I have had the training and have seen how a well-run session should be facilitated. I receive training in child protection at my school and am very clear on what to do should pupils report a situation in which I feel they are at risk.

JH: Can you give me examples of how you have used bibliotherapy in school, or any ideas you have to use it in future? And are there any reasons you have chosen to do it this way?

Librarian E: As well as setting up the club for S1s, where we have shared poems, short stories and learned about storytelling as well as writing group poems and individual stories, I have also run shared reading sessions with S3 and S5 pupils in order to support them run their own shared reading sessions in community settings - we do them in our local library and a primary school. In future I am keen to widen the Share a Story club to other year groups. I chose to run the club for S1s because I hoped it would be a useful transition from primary to secondary school. I have seen pupils make friends because of the club, and develop their confidence in reading aloud, and sharing their opinions. I think the current S1s would make brilliant mentors if they stayed with the club into their second year, and buddy up with new S1 pupils.

JH: Did you have any expectations before you used bibliotherapy with your pupils in the school library?

Librarian E: I have to admit I did. Everything I've read and experienced about bibliotherapy has been highly positive, and I was keen to see how our pupils would respond to these kinds of sessions - which are unlike anything else they are currently offered in school. The S1 Share a Story group has continued to grow in number, through word of mouth, and there are participants who come every week, and others who come every so often. The club is run so that everyone is welcome and can join in right away, no matter how often they attend.

JH: Can you tell me anything about your experience of delivering bibliotherapy sessions with pupils, or share your thoughts, either positive or negative?

Librarian E: I've loved being involved in delivering bibliotherapy sessions to our pupils - it has been one of the highlights of my career as a librarian. Pupils who feel they are being listened to, and not being judged for a 'right' or 'wrong' answer - they have sparked genuinely compelling discussions about texts, creativity and have made me see things I would never have seen had I not shared these stories.

JH: What books do you feel are most appropriate for bibliotherapy purposes?

Librarian E: Honestly, any book. Short passages, complete short stories and poems have worked the best for us, but I like taking suggestions from pupils about what they've enjoyed discussing, and have often tied texts into a theme. For example, for Hallowe'en we read a Neil Gaiman poem illustrated by Chris Riddell, and then had a go at illustrating our own poems.

JH: You've had a read of the "Bibliotherapy Guide" that I provided - can you let me know your thoughts on its usefulness, its suitability, and anything you think is missing?

Librarian E: I think the guide is excellent and could only benefit from being longer. It might be useful to provide links to case studies for the 'Tried and Tested' session, so librarians could find out more? The practical tips are brilliant, and outline clearly how to start your own sessions. I think including some information on how librarians could find bibliotherapy training would also be good, as I know I wouldn't have the same confidence in running sessions if I hadn't had training first.

JH: Can you share your thoughts on the bibliotherapy suitability of the books used by the pupil participants in an earlier part of my study?

Librarian E: I think all of the titles would be suitable - as a school librarian I think you often have to judge the suitability of material based on the pupils you have in front of you.

School Librarian focus group - Librarian F

JH: How would you personally define “bibliotherapy”?

Librarian F: The use of books and reading to improve mental health and emotional wellbeing.

JH: When did you first encounter bibliotherapy, either the term or the practice?

Librarian F: When I moved to my local authority in 2008. It was the first council to extent the “Healthy Reading Scheme” to children and young people. I was part of the steering group which reviewed the initial scheme and drew the book list.

JH: Can you tell me more about the scheme?

Librarian F: It was the first book prescription scheme for children and young people in Scotland. A “multidisciplinary” steering group was set up comprising professionals within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, librarians, Health Improvement Officers, a school counsellor and clinical psychologists. A resource list of 19 books, one audio book, one DVD, two CD-ROMs and one CD was compiled based on the recommendations from CAMHS professionals. These were chosen so that they would cover a range of ages, literacy levels and address problems most commonly encountered by health professionals, namely anxiety, eating disorders, sleep problems, depression, stress and behavioural problems. Parenting books were included, as well as books for children, young people and adults. All libraries had two full sets of the resources on the list, and “prescription pads” were sent to GPs and CAMHS professionals. It was felt that other professionals who work with children and young people such as school guidance staff, social workers and educational psychologists should also be able to make use of the resource in their work, so they became “recommenders. Evaluations of the scheme were carried out and perceptions of the scheme were overwhelmingly positive; 86% of the prescribers stated that they would use the scheme in the future while users reported that the resources were helpful. The majority of resources borrowed from the healthy reading scheme related to depression, anxiety and parenting. As a result of the evaluation, the reading list was reviewed and changed and books were made available in school libraries, and other relevant settings. Training was offered to school librarians.

JH: Do you have any personal experiences of bibliotherapy outside of work?

Librarian F: No

JH: How do you feel your position as a librarian impacts your delivery of bibliotherapy?

Librarian F: The way it was implemented in my authority was that the books were all available through school and public libraries but the role of the librarian was that of a

recommender only. GPs were also “prescribing” our books on the list. I also had one-to-one ad-hoc discussions with young people, usually round a book that I recommended, and feel that being a non-clinician allowed me to withdraw judgement and listen, then possibly think about referring for serious issues. No training was ever given to me!

JH: Did you have any expectations before you used bibliotherapy with your pupils in the school library?

Librarian F: No

JH: What books do you feel are most appropriate for bibliotherapy purposes?

Librarian F: Non preachy books which use the power of storytelling to convey a message in a light way. Also use of graphics to convey feeling - Debi Gliori’s *Night Shift* or Shaun Tan’s *The Red Tree* for example - I remember showing the latter to a teenager who just said “This is me!”. I feel that it is not because a book features people with an issue that it will help sufferers of that issue - it also has to empower, validate, or show an alternative.

JH: Thanks for that. Can we chat about the guide? What are your thoughts on its appropriateness for librarians who want to introduce bibliotherapy to their schools?

Librarian F: I quite like the fact that there are several ways of doing a session. I would like to see an introduction of self-help for kids who would prefer to choose a book for themselves and not take part in sessions as such. You could also include other forms of therapies such as Lego-Therapy and mindfulness which can also use stories. On the book list I noticed *White Rabbit, Red Wolf* by Tom Pollock: I found this book rather stressful and would not recommend it for anyone with anxiety. Great book though!

JH: (Laughs) Yeah, I liked it too. Okay, that’s all helpful. Now, thinking back to books you’d use, can you share your thoughts on the bibliotherapy suitability of the books used by my pupil participants?

Librarian F: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by JK Rowling: Not sure that this book would help - I found the idea of the Dementors very scary and no alternative was offered to fend them off. I guess it could go both ways but I would be weary of using it.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by JK Rowling: Again I would not choose to use it. The characters have no real power, they are victim of a trap.

Ferryman by Claire McFall: It left me a little uncomfortable and can confuse some in terms of life after death - I’m not sure about it.

JH: I also felt uncomfortable with Ferryman and the relationship bit. And there was no grief about her death, just when she couldn't see him, but she didn't seem that bothered about her mum and dad!

Librarian F: Exactly! Grief has to be recognised.

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas - I reckon that it is quite a powerful and empowering read.

JH: Yeah. Great, thanks.

School Librarian focus group - Librarian G

JH: How would you personally define “bibliotherapy”?

Librarian G: I think bibliotherapy is reading to improve our mental wellbeing. I associate it with the therapeutic side of reading, both for relaxation and inclusivity.

JH: When did you first encounter bibliotherapy, either the term or the practice?

Librarian G: I first encountered bibliotherapy when I started this job, in November 2018.

JH: Do you have any personal experiences of bibliotherapy yourself outside of work?

Librarian G: No.

JH: How do you feel your position as a librarian impacts your delivery of bibliotherapy?

Librarian G: I think as a librarian I have a duty to provide a safe space for students. It is fundamental that they feel there is a space in school where they can just be themselves and share their concerns in a safe environment. It is also a very good tool to use to talk about topics that are a bit difficult sometimes, and to develop empathic skills. One of the strengths of librarians is the knowledge of books, which can be extremely useful in this case.

JH: Think about the training you received before delivering bibliotherapy: did you learn anything you did not already know based on your library skills and experience?

Librarian G: I learnt a lot. I was new to the post of school librarian when I started, so everything was new to me.

JH: Can you tell me anything specific you learned about your role as a librarian in delivering bibliotherapy?

Librarian G: By delivering bibliotherapy I was able to appreciate more the various nuances of being a librarian. It’s a bit of an in-between role. We are not teachers, but neither are we friend-like figures. We are more similar to mentors, and I think through bibliotherapy I was able to see how much students consider the library to be a safe space.

JH: Is there anything you would like to know more about or was there anything that wasn’t covered that you think should be?

Librarian G: I would like to know more about how to deliver the one on one sessions and referrals.

JH: Do you feel confident in delivering bibliotherapy to pupils? Do you have any concerns?

Librarian G: By now I feel confident, however I know that there is so much more I have to learn. My concerns are more related to when students are triggered, and what to do in that case.

JH: Can you give me examples of how you have used bibliotherapy in school, or any ideas you have to use it in future?

Librarian G: Since September 2019 I have closed the library at lunchtime for Bibliotherapy Wednesdays. I have between 12 and 15 students signing up every week and we have had story cafes, readaxation sessions and have even watched the movie *The Hate U Give* and discussed it. (I know that movies are not part of bibliotherapy, but we talked about race after a story café featuring *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds, and the students were very keen to learn more about the #blacklivesmatter movement, so we decided to watch the film.) Some of the books used have been *The Truth Pixie* by Matt Haig, *Sad Book*, *Fangirl*, *Long Way Down*, *George* by Alex Gino. In the future I would like to branch out more, maybe liaise with guidance to have referrals and one on one bibliotherapy sessions. But I need more information on this.

JH: Did you have any expectations before you used bibliotherapy with your pupils in the school library?

Librarian G: Not really, I was just excited to see the reaction of the students and how it would go.

JH: Can you tell me anything about your experience of delivering bibliotherapy sessions with pupils, or share your thoughts, either positive or negative?

Librarian G: When I have integrated a bibliotherapy session during class time it has been hit or miss. A couple of times it went well, other times it went terribly - the class was very difficult. However, bibliotherapy during the club at lunchtimes has been very successful, and students who don't usually read always come which is such a pleasure to see! What I found to be most difficult when integrating it during class time was the complete lack of interest and apathy, and I did not know how to deal with it.

JH: Do you think maybe this was because they were being forced to do it, whereas at lunchtime they're coming because they want to?

Librarian G: Absolutely. I do think that was the reason why. The atmosphere is just so different.

JH: What books do you feel are most appropriate for bibliotherapy purposes?

Librarian G: Some of the books that I think are extremely appropriate are

- *The Paper and Hearts Society* by Lucy Powrie (social anxiety, cyberbullying)
- *What Magic is This?* by Holly Bourne (self-harming, friendship, body image)
- *The Truth Pixie* by Matt Haig (depression, bullying, inclusivity)
- *Heartstopper* (LGBTQ positivity)

These are books not included in the original list. I have noticed that most of the books featured in the list are very sad and tough, and these books listed still tackle very difficult topics, but are very uplifting at the same time, which I think is also important.

JH: When you say the original list, do you mean the guide I asked you to look at? (nodding) Okay, let's look at that now. What are your other thoughts on it, either positive or negative?

Librarian G: I think the bibliotherapy guide is very useful however a brief description/definition of the various things to do during a session would be useful in the tried and tested section.

JH: Okay thanks, that's helpful. I have a list here of the books my pupils used during my earlier study - can you share your thoughts on their bibliotherapy suitability if you've read them?

Librarian G: *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris - I haven't read this, but I think *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak is very good because of the child's perspective. I have also heard that this book is not historically accurate, but because I haven't read it I can't really comment on it.

I think Harry Potter books are a very good tool to use for different reasons which include talking about child abuse, bullying, poverty, in a figurative way white supremacy - Voldemort and his followers are racist about non-pure blood wizards -, grief and bereavement. Hermione is a very independent and intelligent girl. I particularly like her when in the *Goblet of Fire* she tries to protect the rights of what is considered to be a 'lesser class' - House Elves. A very good discussion could stem from this. I think *The Hate U Give* is a great read to raise awareness about black people's experiences and how white privilege truly is blinding. But *13 Reasons Why*, I am honestly not sure about this one. I have read it, and I think this is a very delicate topic. It is very hard not to glorify teenage suicide, and I think I should receive more training for this. Especially if it triggers students.

School Librarian focus group - Librarian H

JH: How would you personally define “bibliotherapy”?

Librarian H: The use of books to offer help and guidance to people dealing with specific issues.

JH: When did you first encounter bibliotherapy?

Librarian H: I think that in practice it’s something that school libraries have long offered, certainly since the start of my career in 2004 I’ve tried to provide individual students with books that would assist them in dealing with issues they were experiencing. Beyond the usual benefits of reading. I think I first encountered the term itself a few years ago, when the Shelf Help programme was started, that’s the first time I can remember being aware of it.

JH: Do you have any personal experiences of bibliotherapy yourself?

Librarian H: I use books for relaxation regularly, though contradictorily I do sometimes find reading harder during times of stress and upheaval. I’m not sure if it counts, but when I’ve struggled with various issues in the past, I’ve found books to be a valuable source or information, guidance and comfort. As a foster carer I used books to inform myself of issues my foster daughter was dealing with and shared them with her too. We would both read a book, fiction or non-fiction, and then discuss it - I found this a useful way of giving her space to have difficult conversations and express her emotions. I would also provide and suggest books I felt would be of benefit to her.

JH: How do you feel your position as a librarian impacts your delivery of bibliotherapy?

Librarian H: I’ve had no training in mental health so I try to be aware of my own limitations. I’m not an expert and never pretend to be, I suppose that really I just trust that books can help in a whole host of situations and try to guide students towards them in the best way I can.

JH: Can you give me examples of how you have used bibliotherapy in school, or any ideas you have to use it in future?

Librarian H: I have a series of picture books based on emotions that we do shared reading of with SEN groups, these provide good conversation openings and allow students to discuss issues in an indirect manner. Building on that, during weekly SEN storytimes staff will sometimes ask me to focus on books that deal with certain topics to start conversations and show ways of dealing with problems in an indirect manner.

The first display of books you see in my library is “Reading for Wellbeing” - these are by the door and the first collection students see. A range of issues that students deal with are covered, including depression, LGBT, anxiety, anger, eating disorders, family problems, self-harm, things like that. We place them by the door to try to normalise their content for all, the location is a natural area for students to congregate and we find that they pick up these books more than others. It also means that anybody with particular issues doesn’t have to look for books. We work with the school wellbeing team to promote these books through displays, assemblies and booklists, and have a prescription system where the wellbeing team will suggest a few titles that might be of use to individual students. The students can then bring the prescription to me and I’ll find and issue the book to them, with the agreement that no questions or comments are made. The books being at the front of the library also means it is easier for students to take them without having them issued. Although I should say that I hate books being stolen, actually I’d much rather this happen if a student doesn’t feel able to borrow properly. Better that the book is used by somebody that needs it, than sitting on a shelf! There are a few titles that I know I have to replace at least a few times a year. I’m also aware that certain subjects can be triggering for some students, so place warnings on the LMS and front cover where appropriate. Furthermore, eating disorder and self-harm books are dealt with by the wellbeing team differently, as we know that reading about these things can be more dangerous than helpful for some sufferers.

JH: That all sounds amazing - giving me loads of ideas for my new school! Did you have any expectations before you used bibliotherapy with your pupils in the school library?

Librarian H: I thought that students would be much more reticent than they have been. The book seems to offer a way of diverting attention and allowing students to discuss issues in a more comfortable, less direct manner,

JH: Can you tell me anything about your experience of delivering bibliotherapy sessions with pupils?

Librarian H: I’m not sure I deliver official bibliotherapy sessions, but in reading groups when we have used books that tie with mental health, I’ve been surprised and pleased by the impact and conversation starter. Don’t know if this counts, but a Y11 student confided a few years ago that the Pride display we had up in the library had been a factor in her having the courage to come out. She said that if it was up in the library it made her feel like it was okay. In reading lessons for all Y7 and Y8 we spend a session at the start of the year discussing the benefits of reading for pleasure. Students always start by focusing on academic benefits, but we then guide them to thinking about wider benefits such as relaxation, learning how other people deal with emotions. We suggest

at the start of every silent reading session that students choose their benefit, the thing they want to get out of reading that session. At these times I find it useful to show the relaxation benefit of reading by saying they have my permission to fall asleep if that's where reading takes them. Obviously, there'll be a few silly snores at first, but slowly they start to see the benefits. One Y8 boy, who wasn't a "traditional reader" even told his entire class that he'd started to use books at night because he struggled to sleep. You can imagine how much I grinned!

JH: (laughs) Yeah, you're amazing with those ideas! Do you have any books that you feel are most appropriate for bibliotherapy purposes?

Librarian H: Any that work. I think that every reader is different, so different books will work for them. On the whole though I feel that books with a person of a similar age dealing with the same situation have biggest impact. Self-help style books, in the style of Nicola Morgan or *The Anxiety Gremlin*, are also great, but harder to get students to engage with initially.

JH: Looking at the Bibliotherapy Guide, can you tell me your thoughts about if it's useful or if there's anything you think should be there that isn't?

Librarian H: It's really useful! It's accessible and explains the terms really well, and it doesn't feel overwhelming. The suggestions of activities and book makes it feel like this is something we can do, rather than just a theory.

JH: Thanks. Can you share your thoughts on the suitability of the books used by my pupil participants?

Librarian H: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* wouldn't be my go-to, but great for reading for relaxation, I have a friend who revisits the audiobooks in difficult times as a source of comfort. Same with *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. (Checks phone) Now I know I've read *Ferryman*, Goodreads confirms it, but for the life of me I can't remember it. Probably says more about my rubbish memory, but if I find a book so forgettable, I'd be unlikely to recommend it to anyone. *The Hate U Give* wouldn't be my first choice, but not a bad option at all. It's a gripping, immersive read so good for reading for relaxation. As for certain issues that it could be used for - racism, resilience, empathy, finding your own voice. *13 Reasons Why* is an odd one...it's a popular book in my school but one I'd be wary of using with a group. Largely because of the furore surrounding the TV show. Whilst I think the book handles the subject matter more responsibly and less gratuitously, I'd still steer clear of it for groups. I haven't read the others - God, I feel very poorly read now!

JH: (laughs) Not at all! Thank you.

School Librarian focus group - Librarian J

JH: How would you personally define “bibliotherapy”?

Librarian J: Bibliotherapy is the exploration of own thoughts and feelings through reading and as a tool to aid mental wellbeing from reading.

JH: When did you first encounter the term or the practice “bibliotherapy”?

Librarian J: I first encountered it through a Support for Learning teacher who felt the nurture group in school could use the technique as part of their course.

JH: Do you have any personal experiences of bibliotherapy yourself?

Librarian J: Although I’m an avid reader, I’ve not used techniques of bibliotherapy outside of work.

JH: How do you feel your position as a librarian impacts your delivery of bibliotherapy

Librarian J: I feel as a librarian that those practicing bibliotherapy with me are more relaxed and do not feel they are being judged in discussions.

JH: Did you receive training before delivering bibliotherapy?

Librarian J: No, no formal training.

JH: Can you give me examples of how you have used bibliotherapy in school?

Librarian J: We used bibliotherapy with in a nurture group environment. It was not following a routine of a passage from a book, rather it was a personal choice of what a person was reading, exploring how they felt at the time and thoughts around what they were reading. It was a very informal session, usually involving hot chocolate, tea & biscuits.

JH: Did you have any expectations before you used bibliotherapy with your pupils in the school library?

Librarian J: I was not expecting great results from the group I was working with as they were very disengaged with school, but they began to open up and soon were sharing stories with each other. One pupil was reading *Frozen Charlotte* by Alex Bell and this opened up a talk around personal fears and what makes us scared.

JH: Can you tell me anything about your experience of delivering bibliotherapy sessions with pupils, or share your thoughts - either positive or negative?

Librarian J: Negative came from school as time wasn’t always given, and pupils didn’t want to be “seen talking about books” in the library at lunchtime. But the positives -

when they did engage the pupils discussed feelings, fears, expectations. They enjoyed the session in an environment where they didn't think others saw them. You had to be coming to the library in the corridor it was located.

JH: What books do you feel are most appropriate for bibliotherapy purposes?

Librarian J: *Frozen Charlotte; All the Bright Places; Before I Die; We Come Apart; The Smell of Other People's Houses; Salt to the Sea; Hospital High; The Bower Bird; Orangeboy; and Moonrise.*

JH: Great range! I don't know *Hospital High* or the bird one.

Librarian J: (laughs) It's books which allow the reader to have empathy and explore a character's situation and how they feel about what the character is going through throughout the narrative of novel.

JH: Yeah. That's great, thanks. You've had a look at the Bibliotherapy Guide - what do you think about its suitability?

Librarian J: I wish I had this guide when I was told to lead sessions by a teacher. It's a very clear and concise guide on how sessions should take place and the format of the session. I would love to still be in the school where the nurture group is being held and show it to the teacher who began the sessions and then handed them over to me.

JH: What do you think about the suitability of the books used by my pupil participants?

Librarian J: I've read some. In *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, readers will catch a glimpse into the most horrific 20th century human history. In this darkness they can discuss the hope and feelings of love against all odds in the book. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* would allow the participants to explore loyalty of friendships, loss, betrayal. *The Goblet of Fire* is similar, there are passages that can be used to look at grief, anxiety, friendships. *Ferryman* would allow for a lot of discussion - death, love...participants could possibly discuss and share thoughts on the existence of the soul and afterlife. It allows the group working with this to develop their thinking and opinion. *The Hate U Give* will allow readers to explore racism and the injustice people face through the colour of their skin. I think this is a must for the current society we find ourselves in. I would use *13 Reasons Why* if I had a good background knowledge on all attending the group as I would be wary of any triggers from the themes explored in this novel. It allows exploration and discussion around bullying and suicide, hence my caution if I didn't know attendees.

School Librarian focus group - Librarian K

JH: How would you personally define “bibliotherapy”?

Librarian K: I’d define bibliotherapy as the supported use of books to promote mental health and well-being

JH: When did you first encounter bibliotherapy, either the term or the practice?

Librarian K: I first encountered the term and practice of bibliotherapy while working as a secondary school librarian in 2006. I noticed that my pastoral role within school was almost as important as my librarian role and began to explore ways of supporting students who were dealing with anxiety/stress due to exams and issues at home.

JH: Do you have any personal experiences of bibliotherapy yourself?

Librarian K: I haven’t had any personal experiences of bibliotherapy outside work, though reading and being able to access literature (particularly poetry) has helped me cope better during times of personal conflict and stress.

JH: Did you receive? training before delivering bibliotherapy?

Librarian K: I have received some bibliotherapy training via Kirklees Libraries and attended a bibliotherapy conference in Huddersfield in 2014. The main thing I learned is that clients seem to benefit far more from accessing fiction and poetry than “self-help” books or those with a clinical basis; also, that a wide range of people can find this approach valuable. In addition to YA, my main experience has been with dementia patients, who benefit from both the visual stimulus of illustrated material and ephemera which may have a connection to their past lives and experiences. I supported one elderly woman who was fascinated by Michael Palin and his *Around the World in Eighty Days* series, particularly the desert episodes. We shared the children’s picture book *The Wooden Camel*, which she loved looking at and talking about.

JH: Wow, incredible.

Librarian K: I have also had mental health training at the college where I presently work; as I read widely and facilitate a YA reader’s group, I feel confident recommending suitable material and sharing this in a safe group setting. Confidentiality, signposting and understanding my own sensitivities are important things to consider. The YA reader’s group requires a fine balance as a couple of the members are church-goers and

have a value set which is different from most other students (and my own). It is important to be respectful of their views but also promote understanding and tolerance of the differences which emerge.

JH: That sounds amazing work. Can you give me other examples of how you have used bibliotherapy, or any ideas you have to use it in future?

Librarian K: One of my most successful examples of how bibliotherapy can be effective and build self-esteem was several years ago when I used Jackie Kay's poem *Double Trouble* with my KS4 reader's group. A few of the group members (all girls) had confidence and anxiety issues. They had to prepare for the spoken part of their GCSE English exam, so we managed to incorporate this into our sessions, practising reading the poem - which they chose - aloud. We also talked about the themes contained within the poem and they then decided as a group that they would like to present their rehearsed reading at Year 10 assembly. To see them overcome their nerves inspired other students and also helped me, as I am not confident speaking in public. I have resurrected this and hope to do something similar with the group I currently facilitate at college.

JH: This is fab! Did you have any expectations before you used bibliotherapy with your pupils in the school library?

Librarian K: I had very few expectations of what bibliotherapy could achieve; in fact, I did encounter resistance from some school staff who were concerned about "inappropriate" subjects being discussed and the vulnerability of the students who might be involved. These are things which need consideration but my experience (and students') has been overwhelmingly positive. One student in my secondary school group wanted to call our group "Reading for Survival", as that was what the experience meant to her. She had a very complicated blended family, a lot of responsibility at home and little privacy or sense of self.

JH: I love "reading for survival"! What books do you feel are most appropriate for bibliotherapy purposes?

Librarian K: I think any books can be considered for bibliotherapy sessions, depending on the group and its dynamic. As with any reader's group, the librarian should know the material they are introducing. Younger pupils likely require a different approach; I haven't worked directly with KS1/2 pupils, though I was asked to curate a primary collection dealing with bereavement and loss when I was a secondary school librarian.

JH: Thank you, that was so insightful. Thanks for looking over the guide - can you tell me your thoughts on it?

Librarian K: I think the guide is a brilliant resource for a librarian or library worker or teacher who is considering the use of bibliotherapy as it highlights how reading can be a positive experience. It addresses all the key questions which might arise, debunks what some people might mistakenly think (that it can “fix” an issue or problem); the book list is very helpful and can also be used as a jumping-off point.

JH: Great, thanks. Can I have your thoughts on the books used by my pupils for their bibliotherapy exercise?

Librarian K: The Harry Potter books aren't ones I'd have thought of in this context, though they do address issues of isolation, family and loss. I can see the fantasy elements of the series being a gentler lead-in than *The Ferryman* or *Thirteen Reasons Why*. It's interesting that almost these books have film/television counterparts, so I wonder if this is why they were chosen.

JH: Yeah, I think there was a bit of that. Thank you for your help.

BIBLIOTHERAPY:

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “BIBLIOTHERAPY”?

Bibliotherapy is the use of reading to improve emotional wellbeing. Books may be used to teach coping strategies to readers dealing with circumstances, to help the reader understand that they are not alone, or to promote reading for relaxation. When used in a library setting, it is not a clinical treatment, but offers potential support.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

Librarians can support reading groups and provide a safe and nurturing environment for pupils to share opinions openly. They can also promote the relaxation benefits of reading, and offer a wide selection of books on differing themes. They are not here to cure ailments, but to promote reading as a positive experience.

This leaflet offers some practical advice for facilitating bibliotherapy sessions in schools, along with suggestions of some (by no means all) books you may wish to share with pupils.

If a pupil should disclose anything, follow your school or local authority Child Protection procedure.

HOW TO FACILITATE A SESSION: GUIDELINES

- Use fiction/poetry, not self-help
- Not a book group – no forward planning/reading between sessions
- Lunchtime rather than break
- Be aware of size – below 4 is too small, 20 too big
- Respectful listening – reading aloud/sharing personal stories
- Give handout of passage to be read – include cover – put passage into context
- Range of cultures/timeframes/genres

SOME THOUGHTS...

- Work with Guidance/Pastoral Care
- Health and Wellbeing departments?
- Get involved in any school or authority mental health initiatives
- P7/S1 visits – read for relaxation
- Parents’ night or Open Days/Evenings
- Online presence for pupils who don’t want face-to-face?

EXAMPLES OF SESSIONS

- Leader reading aloud, rest following written text
- Volunteering to read aloud
- Poetry can be read around the table – everyone reads a line (though remember some member of group may struggle with reading)
- After passage has been read: reflect, allow time to share personal stories/thoughts
- Reassurance of confidentiality

TRIED AND TESTED

- Story Cafe
- Staff reading for wellbeing
- Reading referrals
- Personal reading service
- One-to-one bibliotherapy sessions
- Reading dog (Therapy pet)
- Readaxation
- Inter-disciplinary learning opportunities

BOOK LISTS



Anxiety

Am I Normal Yet? – Holly Bourne
White Rabbit, Red Wolf – Tom Pollock

Bereavement/Grief

One – Sarah Crossan
Grandad's Island – Benji Davies
Ostrich Boys – Keith Gray
Dead Fathers Club – Matt Haig
The Afterwards – A.F. Harrold
A Monster Calls – Patrick Ness

My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece – Anabel Pitcher

Sad Book – Michael Rosen

The Boy Who Sailed the Ocean in an Armchair – Lara Williamson

Bullying

7 Days – Eve Ainsworth

Piglettes – Clementine Beauvais
Looking Glass Girl – Cathy Cassidy
Malarky – Keith Gray

Silence is Goldfish – Anabel Pitcher
Gloves Off – Louisa Reid

Depression

Undone – Cat Clarke

Becoming Dinah – Kit de Waal

Night Shift – Debi Gliori

Rock – Anthony McGowan

Panther – David Owen

Black Dog – Levi Pinfold

Family Break-up

Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth – Frank Cottrell Boyce

Sophie Someone – Hayley Long

Missing Arabella – Kathryn Siebel

Fire Colour One – Jenny Valentine

Loneliness

The House with Chicken Legs – Sophie Anderson

Artchoke Hearts – Sita Brahmachari

Rooftoppers – Katherine Rundell

Young carers

The Weight of a Thousand Feathers – Brian Conaghan

Who Let the Gods Out? – Maz Evans

Broken Soup – Jenny Valentine

