



# Bibliotherapy with Exeter UNESCO City of Literature:

Bibliotherapy in the Community and  
Introduction to Biblio-Counselling Skills course



[www.exetercityofliterature.com](http://www.exetercityofliterature.com)  
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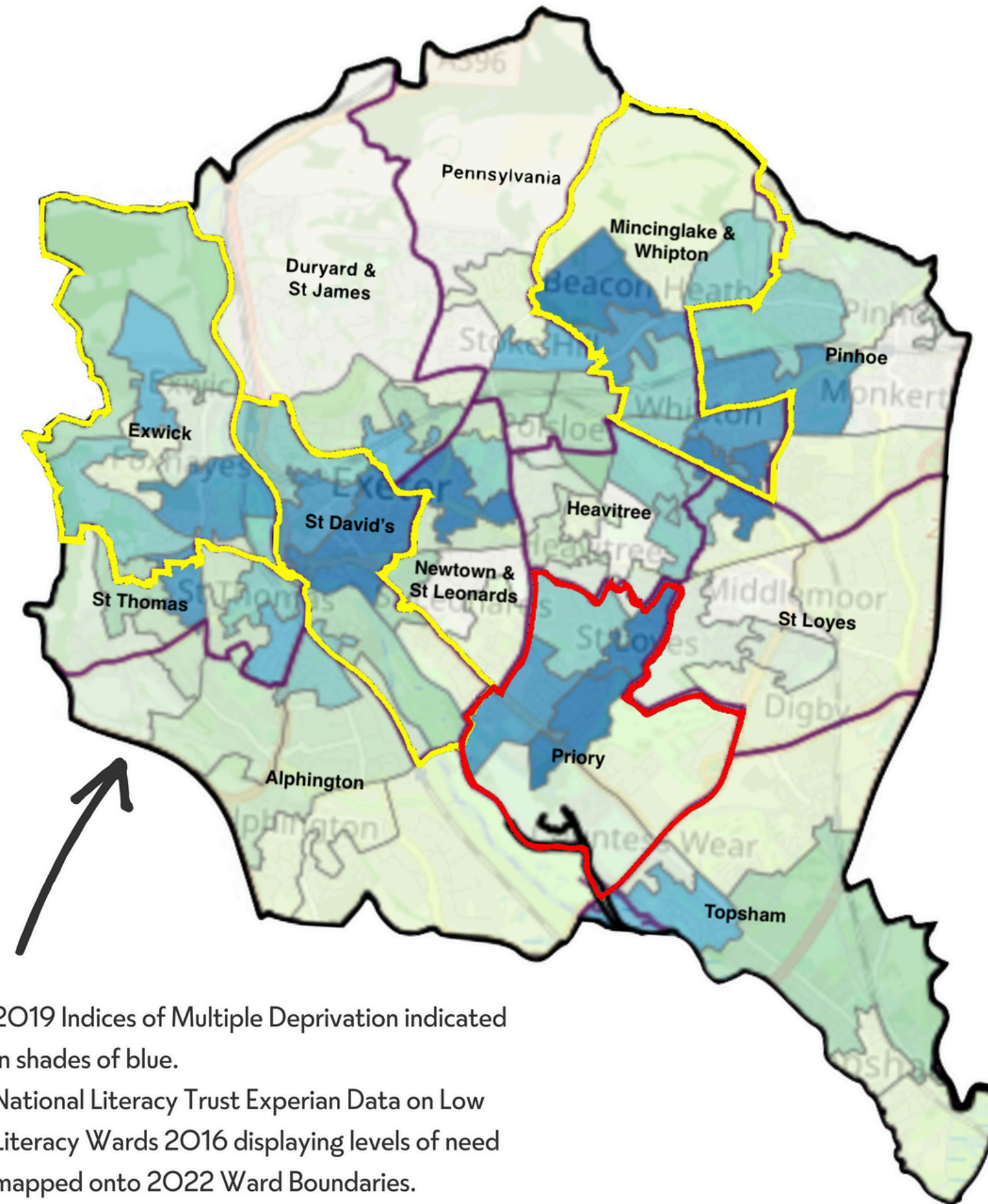


# Local Literacy Levels

- **1 in 6** (16.4% / 7.1 million people) adults in England have “very poor literacy skills”
- Parts of Exeter & Devon have some of the **lowest-literacy wards** in England including Mincinglake & Whipton, Priory, and Barnstaple
- Low literacy costs the UK an estimated **£81 billion** a year
- Adults with lower literacy less likely to interact with **political processes**



*National Literacy Trust  
- Mapping Literacy*



2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation indicated in shades of blue.

National Literacy Trust Experian Data on Low Literacy Wards 2016 displaying levels of need mapped onto 2022 Ward Boundaries.

Exeter  
City of  
Literature





# Bibliotherapy Research

## Reduces stress

- Reading **reduced stress levels by 68%** after reading for 6 minutes: higher than listening to music [61%], having a cup of tea [54%], or taking a walk [42%]
  - *Mindlab International, University of Sussex 2009*

## Increases self-esteem and ability to cope with problems

- Those who read for just 30 minutes a week are **18% more likely to report higher self-esteem.**
  - *'The Benefits of Reading for Pleasure' - Dr Josie Billington, 2015*

## Reduces feelings of loneliness

- “One in five [19%] of readers say that **reading stops them feeling lonely.**”
- “One in four readers [23%] say that **a book has helped them realise that other people have gone through the same thing** as them and therefore to feel better about their situation.”
  - *'The Benefits of Reading for Pleasure' - Dr Josie Billington, 2015*

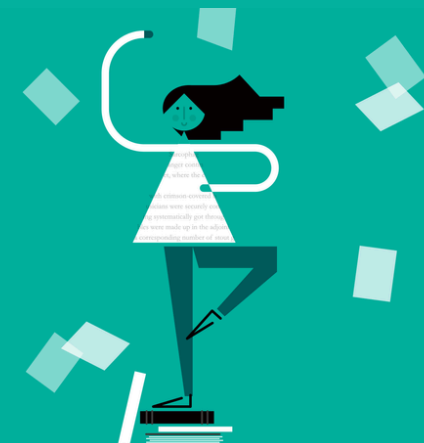




# Introduction to Biblio-Counselling Skills Course

*Bibliotherapy is the use of books & reading to enhance well-being*

- **Quality Checked** by the National Counselling & Psychotherapy Society
- **10-week** evening course
- **Curriculum split:** 50% therapeutic skills / 50% literary knowledge
- **Co-taught** by a qualified psychotherapist & a literature expert
- **Immersive practice session** with a community group
- Aimed at professionals who can **embed bibliotherapy skills** in their work



# Introduction to Biblio-Counselling Skills Course



- **What is bibliotherapy?**

- The history of bibliotherapy and existing scientific research.

- **What is counselling?**

- Definitions of counselling and therapy, where the concepts meet or differ.

- **Core counselling skills**

- Explore foundational counselling skills – both the theory and how to use them.
- Such as active listening, paraphrasing, reflecting, effective questioning, contracting, summarising, and ending.

- **Wide/diverse reading**

- Explore the importance of reading beyond your comfort zones, examining and challenging biases and unconscious choices in reading selection, and explore the significance of reading in a diverse way with particular emphasis on their practice.

- **Embedding skills**

- The difference between embedded bibliotherapy skills and stand-alone bibliotherapy practice.





# Trainee Feedback

**“I use the skills I learned on the course literally on a daily basis** (both at home and at work) and have revisited a lot of the course content over the past year. My own experience of reading and my reading journey has deepened too. It’s been really wonderful.”

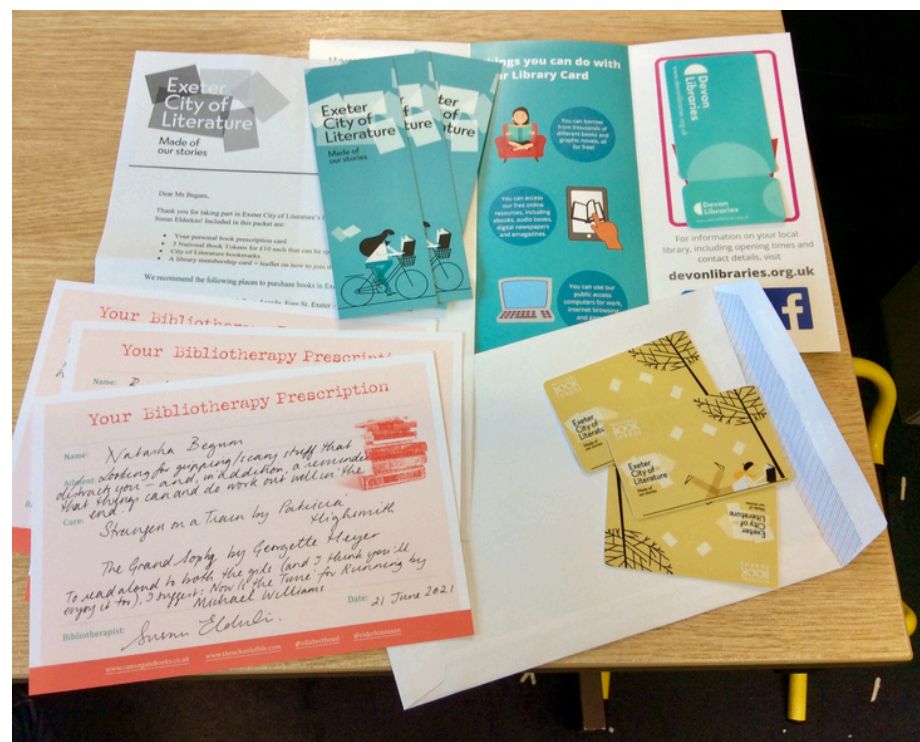
“When starting this course, I thought I had meaningful conversations with people about books and reading - **I did not realise how much more I could learn that could enhance these conversations**, making my listening skills and my general understanding so much better.”

“Not only was I learning something new, **I was able to combine my love of literature with my interest in therapeutic practice** - the perfect combination. This course is a great culmination of fantasy and reality, with a real purpose and skills that can be used both professionally and personally.”



# Bibliotherapy in the Community

- Free bibliotherapy sessions for community groups, or paid bibliotherapy sessions for businesses offering staff well-being services (pay it forward model).
- Promotes reading for pleasure and offers diverse recommendations so that different audiences and those less engaged with reading can participate.
- Bibliotherapy in the Community provides skills development for the trainees of the course.





# Community Feedback

“...having time with the bibliotherapist opened my mind to how much time my son and I could have together reading...it inspired me to start reading again. They mentioned **if I read, it will encourage [my son] to read more.**”

“A **really positive experience.**

We'd highly recommend other organisations opening their doors to a bibliotherapy session.”

“**I had a fascinating chat with someone who was able to adapt to my health-related needs** and completely engage me, overcoming the limitations of my short-term memory, drawing me back toward my enjoyment of storytelling.”





# Find out more



[www.exetercityofliterature.com/current-projects/bibliotherapy-skills-course](http://www.exetercityofliterature.com/current-projects/bibliotherapy-skills-course)

[www.exetercityofliterature.com/current-projects/bibliotherapy-in-the-community](http://www.exetercityofliterature.com/current-projects/bibliotherapy-in-the-community)

## Any questions?

