



I decided to do something meaningful with my frustration and I set up Words for Wellbeing

Leeds Community Foundation, in partnership with UnLtd and with support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation offer Awards to social entrepreneurs with sustainable ideas to help older people to live positive, independent lives in local communities. Julie is one of the latest recipients to receive an Award.

If you have an idea like Julie, visit www.leedscf.org.uk

Hello I'm Julie

I have always loved reading and have a great curiosity for what makes people tick, so I've been really lucky in being able to combine my two passions in life – reading and engaging in a meaningful way with those who are experiencing mental health issues.

Bibliotherapy is the use of fiction and poetry to support and increase positive outcomes for people with mental health and wellbeing issues.

Words for Wellbeing was born out of my frustration that, after 8 years working as a Bibliotherapist with Kirklees Libraries, the service was being drastically reduced. I knew there was a growing interest in Bibliotherapy as an intervention in clinical, as well as in community, settings and saw that there was a need for training to ensure good practice. After a total of over 14 years working in the field of Bibliotherapy, I had built up a bank of resources that included many interactive activities using the written word that can be used to engage with a person, no matter how poor their mental health or concentration. I also had the advantage of an understanding of mental health issues as a former Community Psychiatric Nurse.

So I decided to do something meaningful with my frustration and I set up Words for Wellbeing, which offers training for organisations or individuals interested in Bibliotherapy. We also offer the facilitation of book-chat groups in West Yorkshire and a weekly texting service for those who are lonely and isolated.

With the money from my UnLtd Award, I am delivering Bibliotherapy sessions in a care home and a day care centre for older people in Leeds, in order to demonstrate the value of this intervention, which could then result in staff in care homes, and possibly volunteers throughout Leeds, accessing our training so they can deliver Bibliotherapy in their own settings. The money has been so useful in contributing to the capital costs involved in setting up a social enterprise, for example, legal advice, accountancy, office equipment such as laptops, marketing materials and resources (in my case many books). Besides that, there is also the opportunity to access high quality training in matters relevant to a new start up and the chance to have a mentor from business to guide you along the path to success!