

News and views from the Engage Befriending team



engage
befriending

February 2026

www.engage-uk.org

Engage Befriending Drop-In

The Engage team would like our volunteers and Engage friends to come to our Engage Befriending drop-in



Thursday 12th February
in the Atrium Café

Thursday 12th March
in the Atrium Café

Thursday 9th April
in the Atrium Café

From 10.30am to 12 noon
Pop in for a cuppa, say hello and meet other volunteers, Engage Befriending friends, and the team.

We'd love to see you there.

The **Atrium Café** is at Greyfriars Church, Friar Street, RG1 1EH



Artist of the month at the Atrium Café March 2026 - David



David, who regularly attends our monthly drop-in coffee mornings, will be the artist of the month in the Atrium in March, displaying his drawings.

You may remember seeing his pen and pencil drawings in the December 2024/January 2025 Newsletter.



Meet the team... drop-in volunteer Jennie



I was a primary school teacher for many years.

When I decided to go part time I became involved with a volunteer visiting scheme called The Link, run by Jeremy Sharpe, from Woodley Baptist Church. This is now operating country wide.

I've worked with blind and partially sighted people, and for a while helped co-ordinate at Engage Befriending.

My hobbies are all kinds of crafts, sewing, knitting, crochet etc.

Now I help at the Drop In and enjoy meeting and chatting with so many interesting folk.

Contact the Engage Befriending team

Main number: 0118 995 2102 | Email: engage@themustardtree.org

Jackie Curtis: 07887 395115 | Jo White 07437 011764 | Sheila Cox 07516 254916

If you would like a large print version of this newsletter, please let us know.

Engage is part-funded by many organisations including:



STAR Club and MCST Dementia Clubs at Age UK Reading

I've been in my role as Group Activities Development Co-Ordinator since January 2025. I look after the clubs we run at Age UK Reading, including STAR Club, Pop In Coffee Morning, and four MCST Dementia Clubs. I've loved learning the role and being part of the charity. It's been wonderful to work with our fantastic Facilitators and incredible volunteers who make every club possible. But the best part by far is seeing the difference these clubs make and hearing our clients laughing and enjoying themselves.



Our MCST (**M**aintenance **C**ognitive **S**timulation **T**herapy) Dementia Clubs support people living with mild to moderate dementia. The sessions are based on Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST), the only non-drug treatment recommended to improve cognition, independence and well-being by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Sessions follow CST principles, with a consistent structure and themed activities such as music, word games, current affairs, and creative tasks. The focus is on participation, social connection, and enjoyment, all within a familiar and supportive environment.

Our **STAR Club** and **MCST Dementia Clubs** are all about bringing people together, having a laugh, and making sure no one feels alone. These clubs are a real lifeline for many older people in our community, offering friendship, routine, and plenty of moments of joy.

An added benefit of both our MCST and STAR Clubs is the valuable respite they provide to carers, offering peace of mind while their loved ones are supported and engaged.

The STAR (**S**timulation **T**herapeutic **A**ctivity **R**espite) Club is a relaxed, welcoming group for older people with long-term health conditions or mobility issues that make it difficult to get out and about. Sessions are designed to gently stimulate the mind, encourage social interaction, and build confidence through enjoyable activities such as games, quizzes, crafts, and conversation. STAR provides a safe, friendly space where members feel comfortable, valued, and part of a community. For many, it's the highlight of the week.

We're hoping to open more MCST Dementia Clubs and Pop In sessions this year and are currently looking for facilitators and volunteers to help make that happen. If you enjoy good company, having fun, and making a real difference, we'd love to hear from you.



Becca Palmer

To find out more about our clubs, or to get involved, please contact by email clubs@ageukreading.org.uk or call our main line **0118 950 2480**

February Facts



The shortest month... but not always the same length: February is the only month that can have 28 or 29 days, and in rare calendar adjustments it has even had 30 days (Sweden, 1712 — a right muddle of a year).

The old English name was "Solmonath" Meaning "mud month" or possibly "month of cakes" (offerings to the gods). Either way, very British.



Groundhog Day is older than you think:

The idea of animals predicting the weather goes back to medieval European folklore, where people watched badgers or hedgehogs. When settlers reached America, the groundhog took over the role.



February can miss a full moon: Because it's so short, February occasionally has no full moon at all — the last time was 2018, and the next will be 2037.

Avoid a fall in icy weather

Walk Like A Penguin!



Do The
Penguin Walk
To Avoid
Winter Slips

Bend slightly and keep your knees loose

Point your feet out slightly



Extend your arms to your sides

Walk flat footed, taking short slow steps

Keep your centre of gravity over your feet

www.keepwellinwinter.scot.nhs.uk

When the weather is icy, there is a sharp increase in the number of people attending the Emergency Departments with slip and trip injuries such as broken bones.

If you do need to venture out when the weather is wintery then dress warmly, wear sensible shoes with a good grip and to take care when walking on icy surfaces.

If you want to stay safe whilst walking on icy paths, the advice is to walk like Smarty the penguin – follow our feathered friends and avoid a fall this winter.

- Bend slightly and keep your knees loose
- Point your feet out slightly
- Extend your arms to your sides
- Walk flat footed, taking short slow steps
- Keep your centre of gravity over your feet

Help with using the Internet

Get Online Reading aims to use Reading's highly literate population to help those who don't have the skills or opportunity to make use of the internet.

They run drop-in sessions in several of Reading's central libraries and other community venues all over the town. Look out for a drop-in session near you – and if you know anyone who would benefit from help why not suggest that they come along too?

They can also offer telephone support if you are unable to attend one of the drop-in sessions. If you would like help please call on 0118 334 1095 – please leave your details and one of their team will call you back.

A few of the future drop-in sessions are at:

- Battle Library coffee morning, 10.30-12, Thurs 5th, 19th, 26th Feb
- Central Library, 10-12, Sat 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th Feb

There are any others around Reading - phone for details.

**DO YOU NEED
HELP TO GET
ONLINE?**



Whatever you need help with – internet, email, a new smartphone or tablet... we can help you get going.

Drop-in sessions at venues around Reading, with remote support by phone available.

For details please call our helpline on 0118 334 1095.

Part of the **GET ONLINE READING** project
For more details of the Get Online project please visit
www.go-reading.org

**+READING
VOLUNTARY
ACTION**

**GET
online
READING**

**Reading
Borough Council**
Working better with you

Pancake Day - 17th Feb The Curious History of Pancake Races



Pancake races are one of those wonderfully eccentric British traditions that brighten up Shrove Tuesday. The most famous takes place in **Olney, Buckinghamshire**, where the story goes that in **1445** a busy housewife heard the church's "shriving bell", panicked that she was late for confession, and dashed through the streets still clutching her frying pan and pancake. The townsfolk loved the moment so much that they turned it into an annual race.

Shrove Tuesday was the last chance to use up rich ingredients before Lent, so pancakes were the perfect way to clear the larder. Over time, the Olney race became a joyful mix of faith, folklore, and friendly competition. Runners—traditionally women in aprons—still sprint from the market place to the church, flipping their pancakes as they go.

Today, pancake races pop up all over the country, from school playgrounds to charity events, keeping this centuries-old bit of British cheer very much alive.

PUZZLE PAGE

D A F F O D I L A M I R S P Z
 C A R D W C A N D L E M A S D
 R M I S I X N A T I O N S I V
 O U E Z N W K E S S C H H S N
 C F N J T E H D A A O N W R I
 U B D Q E F O B K R H P E V J
 S A S H R O V E T U E S D A Y
 E M H Y O C D E X I A P N L S
 S E I M L A S T L B R R E E N
 S T P V Y T K R A U T I S N O
 E H Y A M F I O M D Y M D T W
 V Y J O P R I O B S S R A I D
 Z S N R I O N T I I O O Y N R
 D T D L C S G R N I U S I E O
 H C F A S T I N G Q P E C S P

February Word Search

Amethyst Lambing
 Ash Wednesday Pancake Day
 Beetroot Primrose
 Buds Rain
 Candlemas Shortest Month
 Card Shrove Tuesday
 Crocuses Six Nations
 Daffodil Skiing
 Fasting Snowdrop
 Friendship Valentine
 Frost Winter Olympics
 Hearty Soup



Common Sayings

Can you figure out the common sayings in these pictures?



Words

How many words of four letters or more can you make from the letters in:

E N G A G E
 B E F R I E N D I N G

E.g. RAGE, FRIEND, BEER, ...

How many more words can you find?

Bonus points: Can you find 4 ten letter words?

Christmas Word Search

Y L I R R E M G N O D G N I D E V C J U
 W H X A W A Y I N A M A N G E R A E M W
 D Z R E I N D E E R X M X F T K O A E F
 R Y H D R Y P I D D U V A H E H O T G C
 E E F W X V F I Q E J V G P O H H G F O
 B K I T S W S K G L C I L L Z R I U P W
 M N Q L X A D R E S N K Y L E I G B L C
 E O S T E N M Z E T I N T E O J B E O D
 C D L G X C N T N K I N K H O R O Q L F
 E E L N J W Q E S G C I B Y E N A I L I
 D L E I N L L K H I N A T L T H H C T N
 C T B K K I X T N G R O R S A C A W K F
 F T E C S P C J S A T H R C Y N E L C S
 D I L O T L R E N H M I C O C L K J L V
 L L G T S F T E E H F W B R V I P E T S
 I D N S A U C W S E Y S O E E W C R T B
 T V I R R K O O H E Y J D N B H E B K S
 X Q J K T R W T C R N A Z S S E T F W M
 T L E Z L S R R A F Y T I L Y L S A H H
 O Y F D N O R M T S T S S Z M J H F F R

New Year Word Search

I Y H N R W O L A W E N E R V U N J
 I A F H U M Y W Y T I R E P S O R P
 T Y I A D U O P E L M A X P S V J R
 T A R D M F W C H A M P A G N E T C
 E T E E M I N F R I E N D S H I P E
 F R W S L A L R M A W E T S B U C L
 N A O A D U P Y E F Z R J X F A L E
 O D R J G D C O D S A B E I L M P B
 C I K N O D J K N T O P E E U U A R
 W T S T A X O N S T O L N H D S R A
 U I Q E L T K H T H V D U V Y I T T
 M O B V S F S H F P A Y T T Q C Y I
 V N U H T E G F F R A O B B I S O O
 L T L J R I W W H W A X G A M O J N
 B V D F N I O U L S X C U J K G N S
 Z M B D C N O I T A P I C I T N A Q
 O W I X F H Q N W O D T N U O C E G
 W M M W Y T I V I T S E F Z V I B I