

Introduction: Good practice in NHS-funded library and knowledge services

David Stewart, Sue Lacey Bryant, Clare Edwards, and Dominic Gilroy

Every CILIP President has a theme. In David Stewart's Presidential year in 2019, one of his themes was the need to focus on our own evidence base in libraries and therefore research.

In the NHS "evidence-based healthcare" has been an important driver for change since the 1990s. Evidence based healthcare led directly to evidence based librarianship and that too has been a powerful agent for change in NHS library and knowledge services. Nevertheless, there is much more to do – the power of evidence needs to be recognised across all our professional groups and we need a much more coordinated approach to its funding, development and dissemination.

Intrinsic curiosity (research), and an appetite to adopt innovation that advances provision to the communities we serve, are markers of a forward-looking service and a forward-looking profession. The *Knowledge for Healthcare* strategy (Healthcare Education England, 2014) sets the direction for national investment in National Health Service (NHS) library and knowledge

Authors

David Stewart is Regional Director of NHS Health Libraries and Knowledge Services North. He served as CILIP President in 2019.

Sue Lacey Bryant is National Lead for NHS Library & Knowledge Services, Health Education England Development Advisor, Time for Care, NHSE/I, and a CILIP Trustee.

Clare Edwards is Deputy Head of Library and Knowledge Services working across East of England and the Midlands, Health Education England.

Dominic Gilroy is Library and Knowledge Services Development Lead, Directorate of Innovation and Transformation, Health Education England (North West, North East and Yorkshire)

Email: clare.edwards@hee.nhs.uk

services. Innovation, Effective and Efficient and Quality service provision are guiding principles of the strategy. Further, Health Education England is explicit about the need to continue to undertake and publish research in order to deliver on these core values.

Building the evidence base for service improvement and sharing best practice are crucial for the NHS. Week by week health librarians and knowledge specialists provide evidence across the Service - to clinicians making decisions about the care offered today, and to teams planning the shape of provision for tomorrow. If we are to ensure that knowledge services remain fit for the future in our fast-changing environment, it is similarly vital that we draw on compelling real-world evidence and implement innovations in our own field.

The Knowledge for Healthcare strategy recommends that “knowledge teams will continue to undertake and publish research in the field, thereby building the evidence base for service improvement and sharing best practice” (p. 48). To achieve this, the Knowledge for Healthcare (KfH) Quality and Impact Workstream was tasked with identifying and promoting innovation and best practice in library and knowledge services.

It is too often the case that new ideas and excellent practice take place in isolation without wider awareness. This *Library and Information Research* special issue focuses on sharing good practice and innovation in NHS LKS. The concept for the special issue originated from the KfH Sally Hernando Innovation Awards process.

The Sally Hernando Awards are named in memory of a former Head of Knowledge Management and E-learning at NHS South West who led on many innovative national developments. The awards aim to capture innovative practice in NHS health library services (NHS Library and Knowledge Services, 2018). LKS staff are invited to submit examples of new

projects from their services with the top three submissions selected by peers from across England. Entries are shared with colleagues via a website to prompt spread and uptake of ideas, with the top three projects funded to present their work at conferences.

Health Education England's Library and Knowledge Service Leads, who organise the Innovation Awards, are keen to further enhance the spread and encourage adoption of good practice and ideas in LKS both within and outside the health sector. The two challenges identified in relation to this were:

- 1) The confidence levels of NHS LKS professionals relating to writing for publication
- 2) The need for a vehicle in which examples of good practice can be published to enable wider awareness

Both challenges were resolved through partnership working with the Library and Information Research Group. There was agreement to develop this special issue of the *Library and Information Research* journal to host successful submissions. To support this endeavour, two training webinars were developed for prospective authors aimed at enhancing the skills needed to meet the editorial board's expectations for successful publication.

A total of 32 expressions of interest were received from NHS Library and Knowledge specialists from which 16 colleagues were invited to proceed to the next stage and participate in the writing for publication webinars. In some instances, colleagues working on a similar idea were invited to draft a joint submission.

In assessing expressions of interest for publication there was a particular scrutiny of information about the success factors associated with the work. There was a recognition of the

importance of information which would enhance the likelihood of successful adoption and implementation elsewhere.

Following the publication of the special issue we will be carrying out a Retrospect to gather learning from everyone involved in this collaborative initiative. A Retrospect is a structured facilitated meeting or workshop at the end of a project to capture the knowledge before the project team disbands. We hope that the learning will contribute to continuing to increase the confidence and research skills of library and knowledge staff and building the evidence base.

We trust that the initiatives and research outlined in this special issue are both interesting and informative. By promoting this special issue, we hope to spread awareness to a wider audience and increase the likelihood of the spread of best practice throughout the profession. More importantly we would like to encourage the reader to consider whether elements of the good practice detailed in the papers may be transferrable to their own service for the benefit of their users.

This special issue is a shining example of collaboration and partnership working between Health Education England, CILIP's Library and Information Research Group (LIRG) and NHS Library and Knowledge Services (LKS) from across England. It evidences the commitment of LIRG to linking information research with practice and the dedication of health librarians to test innovation and adopt best practice. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to it.

References

Health Education England. (2014). Knowledge for healthcare: A development framework for

NHS library and knowledge services in England. Retrieved from

https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Knowledge_for_healthcare_a_development_framework_2014.pdf

NHS Library and Knowledge Services. (2018). Sally Hernando Innovations home page.

Retrieved from <http://www.libraryservices.nhs.uk/wiki/Innovations.MainPage.ashx>