

Press Release

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From knowledge to health in the 21st Century Aligning library/knowledge service to core NHS business

The NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement has submitted two important documents to the Department of Health both of which underpin the improvement of NHS Library Services and ensures that high quality health knowledge informs patient care. They are the report of the National Review of NHS Health Library Services in England, sponsored by the Department of Health and authored by Professor Peter Hill (formerly the Postgraduate Dean for the North East) and the National Service Framework for Quality Improvement, which has been a key work stream of the National Library for Health within the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement.

Knowledge is a core function in the full range of health care services, including the provision of evidence for clinical and management decision making, support for clinical governance, information for education and lifelong learning, and information for research. This is consistent with recent reviews, such as the Tooke review on clinical effectiveness, and the likely outcomes of the Darzi Review, as well as the pursuit of world class commissioning

The National Library for Health is both a digital service and the network of NHS funded library/knowledge services in England. The underpinning aim of the National Library for Health and NHS Libraries is to put knowledge to work, which in turn will transform patient care and public health. This aim will be achieved by implementing the recommendations of the National Review, followed by a quality assured review, redesign and development of library services to form a modern library/knowledge service.

Strategic commissioning and management of both local services and the digital hub is vital. In commissioning the local components of the National Library for Health, the challenge is to transform dispersed and variable service provision to create a high quality knowledge service fit for purpose in the 21st century. The process of change will be characterised by explicit partnership working across health economies in order to achieve long term sustainability.

Whether knowledge is accessed through a library space, via the web, in the workplace, in the ward, clinic or in the community, the delivery of knowledge requires the infrastructure to be in place to enable safe, efficient and effective access to the knowledge base.

Organisations will have different needs and demands, and operate in different environments, serving different customer groups. Library/knowledge services must meet the needs of their organisation, supporting informed decision-making for clinical and non-clinical staff as well as supporting work based learning and continuing professional development. The provision of high quality health information is attained through library/knowledge services which are integral to all NHS organisations and which can demonstrate fitness for purpose and value for money.

Paralleling the Review, the National Service Framework for Quality Improvement will ensure that NHS library/knowledge services maintain and continuously improve their service. The National Service Framework for Quality Improvement is the mechanism for quality

assurance, quality management and quality control for all library/knowledge services that support healthcare organisations. The Framework is generic to any type of knowledge service, whether a library, a resource centre, information unit or an individual in a specialised role.

The work of compiling the National Service Framework for Quality Improvement is a significant development in guiding NHS library/knowledge services through an integrated organisational assessment process, review of strategies, policies and practices that ensure a 360 degree review of provision. The new standards are based upon and will replace the Health Library and Information Confederation standards and are referenced to all major NHS quality assessment programmes including Standards for Better Health, NHS Litigation Authority and the Health and Safety Executive

The framework enables robust quality assessment of library and knowledge services providing the means of enabling organisations to assess their level of compliance to national standards and demonstrate fitness of purpose that our 21st century health system demands. It provides a clear focus for action planning across all NHS organisations, driving forward a quality improvement plan, offering clarity of direction for service managers and transparency of development to meet business and client need.

The National Review recommendations and the National Service Framework present significant challenges, but establishes a framework for commissioners and a clear pathway for librarians to follow in order to become integral to innovation and improvement and enable library services to be aligned to core NHS business.

Alignment to core business is central to Professor Hill's Review of NHS Health Library Services in England which acknowledges that strategic commissioning and management of both local services and the digital hub is vital to modern health care.

The Review Report and the Framework for Quality Improvement can be located at:
<http://www.library.nhs.uk/aboutnlh/review>

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