

The Partnership for Patients project is proceeding well with 21 set up meetings since November and 9 Networking and Training Events held across the 9 pilot areas during January and February, attended by 155 people. Suffolk Library Service has now joined as the 10th pilot. The 30 selected libraries give us a broad range of demographics and population profiles in which to test the role of public libraries in supporting patient choice. 12.5 million *Choosing Your Hospital* Booklets for patients include specific reference to the support that libraries can give in choice - so the role of the public library service in choice is here to stay!

Local Partnerships for Patients: The purpose of the Networking Events, preceded in each case by training for public and health library staff, was to launch local partnerships for patients, between the public library, health library and primary care sectors. Although attendance from the first two sectors was good, attendance from Primary Care Trust and GP staff was generally low. Feedback from the few GP and practice staff who did attend however was extremely positive. The Gloucestershire Event was attended by Jane Cummings, Department of Health Head of Choice and Choose and Book and the Whipps Cross Event by Diana Cowles, Choice Implementation Lead.

'I wasn't really sure what this was all about until I came along and really didn't see what it had to do with me. Frankly, I was sceptical - but now I think it's brilliant.' GP Practice Manager

The Events demonstrated just how much of a community hub public libraries are and how much potential there is for benefit to patients from this collaboration.

Building on existing work Southwark is finding this project has focused its attention on health even more and it has increased its spending on health related stock to meet the demands of the public locally. Hackney found that its Network Supervisor staff, whose role is to support the public in using the People's Network, enhances the role that they can play in providing support to patients accessing online information. Waltham Forest's newly refurbished library at Walthamstow should be ready just in time for the project, with 22 new computers as well as wi-fi broadband.

Working on Health: in most of our pilot areas, public library staff have been quietly working on health for some years. For example

'The enthusiasm is catching!' Library Staff Member

Gloucestershire had already discovered that 62% of its population were within 2 minutes walk of a public library. Some libraries are already providing the Books on

Prescription Service in partnership with local GPs, to patients with mild mental health problems. In Newham, 1500 books had been lent in this scheme so far. Bromley participants heard that over 50% of queries that public library staff deal with relate to health. Haringey Libraries described their stress counselling sessions for local people.

Social Inclusion: Libraries work to provide socially inclusive services to their local communities was also much in evidence, for example Newham Library Service described their Sensory PC suite at Canning Town where specialist IT trainers train people with sensory impairment to use IT. More than one authority visits every care home in their area and some also provide services to housebound people. In Derbyshire, 'super mobiles' bring free, satellite-enabled internet to isolated rural populations areas.

'This pilot is a positive development as is the opportunity for Patient Choice.' Library Staff Member

The Potential: At the Greenwich event, practice staff and public library staff discussed arranging to visit each others premises. As the health librarians at each Event explained their extensive health related material and the professional support they offer, the potential for collaboration between the two sectors was clear. Health Libraries can offer specialist back up to their public library colleagues and, through this means support the growing public demand for information about health. At the same time the great potential for Libraries to act as 'agents for choice' through their extensive community contacts, is just starting to be realised: Greenwich offered to arrange distribution of Choice material through the Council's meals on wheels service and nursing homes.

Thank You: We are grateful to the following health libraries at the following hospitals for their hospitality in hosting the Events as their in kind contribution to the project:

Derby County,
Homerton
Newham,
North Middlesex

Princess Royal University
Queen Elizabeth Greenwich
Royal Gloucestershire
Whipps Cross

Unfortunately the snow made us postpone the Event at Heidi Fanning's Health Library at St. Thomas' at the last moment and the library authority later provided a substitute venue.

'It was very clear and well-explained.'
Library Staff Trainee

Training feedback: over 90 public library staff and 26 health library have now been trained on patient choice and Choose and Book by the Department of Health. Each health library provided access to excellent facilities including PC suites where the library and health library staff were able to test out the role of supporting patients with patient scenarios, on the nhs.uk website hospital comparison pages. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, although some participants were disappointed that there was no opportunity to try out a booking, which we have reported to the Department of Health.

3088 libraries offered Patient Choice Awareness Raising Materials: as part of the national Partnership, John Dolan, Head of Library Policy for England and Bob Ricketts, Head of Demand Side Reform Department of Health have written jointly to PCT Chief Executives and Chief Librarians about the new role of Libraries as enablers of choice. They have announced the delivery of *Choosing Your Hospital* Booklets and Patient Choice materials for display in the 3088 library branches across England, from bookmarks for library users to banners to hang outside the library. Co-branding from the NHS and the MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) has been used to emphasise this unprecedented joint working. Health Link undertook the task of collating the 3088 postcodes from 150 websites while the Department of Health have mapped each postcode to the relevant PCT so that the right set of *Choosing Your Hospital* Booklets about local hospitals on offer, is delivered to the right library authority.

The Portal: As part of the pilot, we have designed a portal to deliver all of the information the patient will need. This portal is only available to the 10 pilot areas. Each area will have its own specific comparative hospital information. We are also testing the labelling of information and the ease of use. Information and updates will sit in the staff part of the site accessible via a password. Feedback and queries can go through the site to the support team. See www.intouchwithhealth.co.uk/greenwich to look at a site.

Support: Health Link will provide the first line support during the 6 months of the pilot, which will start as soon as the Chief Librarians confirm that they have sufficient staff trained to provide the service. We will notify all partners of the start date shortly.

Evaluation: Loughborough University is developing evaluation materials, to be finalised shortly. Over the next few weeks, Loughborough will send pilot libraries surveys to hand to patients. All partners will hear about contributing to the evaluation directly from Loughborough and the data sheets for the public and health libraries will be placed on the portal so additional sheets can be downloaded as required.