UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE: WHAT IS NEEDED FROM A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT HEALTH SERVICE LIBRARIANS IN ENGLAND?

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Abstract  
This paper focuses on work underway in England, to design and deliver a programme of professional development for all library staff in the National Health Service (NHS). This work is a partnership between various stakeholders. It is widely recognised that the role of the librarian in twenty-first century healthcare is changing. The new co-ordinated programme of professional development will provide a range of training opportunities based on nationally agreed learning objectives, with a commonly agreed structure and delivery mechanisms that connect and build on existing work. The programme will address various levels of delivery including national, regional and local. The programme will be informed by an examination of the training and professional development needs of library staff, within the wider context of a changing health service. This early work (September 2004 – January 2005) will result in an overview of the key training and professional development needs of library staff including priority areas for development. Examples of training successfully delivered across the country, which may provide valuable models will be identified. There will be a review of other work relating to training needs within the wider library community. Recommendations for future work will be made. The presentation of this paper will share results from this initial work.

Introduction  
2004 has been a year of significant change for library staff in the National Health Service (NHS). Within the library sector itself, there is a programme to develop the National Library for Health (NLH), a hybrid network of physical libraries and digital resources and services. Within the health service, new initiatives that will have a great impact include: the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework; national competencies for NHS library and knowledge management staff; and Agenda for Change, a new pay system. Within the wider
environment, other significant developments include; new Skills Sector Councils; and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals' (CILIP) new Qualifications Framework and the work of MLA (the national development agency for England’s museums libraries and archives) in developing a Workforce Development Strategy to produce a skilled and diverse workforce.

Currently, training and development for library staff is organised and delivered by a range of providers, for example: Strategic Health Authorities, national organisations, professional groups, universities through departments of Library and Information and related studies and private companies. The result is that whilst there are excellent examples of training, existing provision is not co-ordinated across the country. The initiative to develop the NLH includes a workstream dedicated to delivering an effective programme of training and development, through a partnership of key providers. The NLH will work principally with the Health Libraries Group (a Special Interest Group of CILIP) and the NHS Library and Knowledge Development Network, thus bringing together the key training providers to health librarians. The aim is to develop a programme providing a range of training opportunities based on nationally agreed learning objectives, with a commonly agreed structure and delivery mechanism that connects and builds on existing work. The programme will also explore accreditation of existing courses. Where regional provision already exists, the NLH will work with these organisations to ensure that learning opportunities are not duplicated but rather complement one another. In essence, training opportunities will be delivered according to need: locally, regionally, nationally; face to face, electronically, and in a blended style.

**Supporting changing needs**

The following are three of the areas where more support is needed for effective training and development of library staff: supporting new and expanding roles for all staff, supporting paraprofessionals and supporting development of the profession. Librarians have the opportunity now to take on a range of new roles, for example, as clinical librarians working alongside health professionals in the workplace, project managers, health informatics specialists, knowledge managers, primary care outreach links and teachers and trainers. The changing role of librarians is highlighted in several recent reports. For example, the OCLC report examines effects on libraries of the trends towards self-sufficiency, disaggregation of content and increased collaboration: “It makes a great deal of sense for libraries to look for new, broader service opportunities within their communities”.

One result of new roles such as these is putting the librarian closer to decision making. This is a significant development for the profession and one which may impact on the profile and perception of the contribution that librarians can make to healthcare. Such roles provide an opportunity to mainstream librarians, that is, becoming embedded in their organisations, whereas now they are often seen as slightly external to the core activities of their host organisation. Anecdotally, library staff have expressed a need for better understanding of health care processes. This essentially refers to better understanding of how decisions are made in health care, both by clinicians and by managers. These roles also require excellent communication skills, such as persuasion, influencing, marketing, strategic thinking and leadership.

Library assistants, as paraprofessionals, are a vital part of library services and are the frontline contact for library service customers. Library assistants require support to develop skills to perform effectively but also to progress in their chosen career paths, which might lead to a formal library qualification, a position in another area of health informatics, or other chosen path. A key debate is the future role of library assistants as more customers become self-sufficient (so requiring less administrative support, such as document requesting) and as
more services and resources are delivered outside the library walls. Will library assistants become more responsible for day-to-day management of services? Will they become more involved in outreach work?

Alongside new roles, the library and information profession is also changing. Evidence-based librarianship offers many opportunities but also, for many, requires a new set of skills such as research skills and critical appraisal. Such developments also encourage a new way of thinking, promoting knowledge sharing, active research, questioning actions and evaluating outcomes. To compete in the jobs marketplace, library staff are now expected to demonstrate a range of “skills beyond subject knowledge”, including business awareness, communication, team-working. Added to these new pressures, there is a growing emphasis on the importance of learning and development. Within the UK, government policy encourages lifelong learning. Professional bodies, such as CILIP, although always encouraging professional development, have developed new ideas (such as revalidation) to stress the importance of professional development to the individual, the service and the profession. In short, we now work in a fast-changing environment and as individuals, we have to learn and adapt quickly. A programme to support training and development must therefore be flexible, responsive to need, and based on anticipated future needs but at the same time recognise that there will still be demand for support to develop some of the more traditional skills.

A key consideration in designing an effective programme of development for all library staff is engagement at the right level. For instance, a library assistant on an enquiry desk might need basic understanding of critical appraisal to deal with an enquiry; a trainer will need sufficient knowledge and skills to facilitate learning; and a clinical librarian will need skills to conduct critical appraisal on behalf of clinicians. Other factors include potential barriers to learning, such as lack of time, geographical barriers, particular learning styles, lack of funding. These need to be overcome if learning and development is to be accessible to library staff.

**Recent findings**

A number of recent studies are informing work within the NLH to support learning, training and development. The following are a range of examples to show the key issues and needs which must be tackled. A national training needs analysis of library staff in the NHS was conducted in 1999, by a team at the Library and Information Statistics Unit, Loughborough University. Even in the relatively short time since then, the emphasis on roles and activities has changed somewhat: “The tasks most frequently undertaken by respondents were circulation desk activities (that is, those operations connected with the loans procedure), dealing with requests for information, training library users in information skills, and CD-ROM, Internet or database searching. Few participants are currently involved in developing or managing web sites, intranets or knowhow systems”. However many of the findings remain relevant: “It is therefore both imperative and opportune to train the NHS workforce to meet the challenges of change.”

Prior to commissioning the FOLIO programme (http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/folio), the National electronic Library for Health (which forms part of the NLH) commissioned a small desk research project. The FOLIO programme is a series of modules for library staff, delivered electronically, to appeal to those individuals who find it difficult to leave the workplace (for various reasons including inadequate training budgets to cover travel, lack of staff to cover services in the absence of staff). Funded by the National electronic Library for Health, the modules are free of charge to librarians. To date, four modules have been delivered to over 150 participants. The aim of the desk research project was to inform development of FOLIO by painting an accurate picture of the training provision and training
requirements of NHS librarians. The project also aimed to address the future development of e-learning opportunities for NHS librarians within the context of continuing professional development. The report emphasised the need to address changing roles: “As the need for information and knowledge services has grown, NHS librarians have witnessed their roles evolve in many ways, including knowledge management, providing training in information and evidence-seeking skills, involvement in clinical decision making and implementation of policies”.

Earlier this year, CILIP published a report from their Health Executive Advisory Group, on future-proofing the profession. The report focuses clearly on the role for effective training and development to support library staff in developing skills and knowledge required in the twenty-first century. It examines how the role of health librarian has developed and how it is likely to develop: “The second trend we have noted is how roles outside the library have increased. Clinical librarians began working on the wards in clinical teams as early as the 1970s. The emergence of new technologies and better electronic resources has enabled the expansion and development of this role”. The report has recently been endorsed by the CILIP Council and discussions are underway on the actions required to meet the report’s recommendations.

These examples offer important, interesting and generalisable conclusions. However, there have also been many studies focusing on more specific aspects, for example at particular roles or on a geographic basis. For example, a recent survey of clinical librarians highlighted the need for specialised training and development: “CPD will therefore be important to the continuing expansion of these types of roles, encouraging CLs to explore the ways in which they can support health professionals, particularly with respect to the creation of critically appraised search results”. The report recommended the formalising of professional development opportunities for clinical librarians.

A recent report focused on the role of outreach librarians working in primary care. The report looks at how these roles vary, in terms of geographic areas covered, number of customers, time spent on outreach work and activities undertaken. It stresses the need for coherent professional development if such roles are to make a significant contribution to primary care. The following needs were identified by means of a survey (listed in order of priority):

- influencing managers, that is, help in “penetrating the organisation” and “getting the managers on board”,
- improved understanding of user needs “so we can target our training advice and save them time”,
- understanding knowledge and information resources themselves,
- teaching skills,
- marketing services.

Respondents also mentioned the need for robust mechanisms for sharing experience and networking. Studies have also been conducted at a regional or local level in the health service. The following are a selection of recent examples.

A training needs analysis, conducted in London in Summer 2004, used brainstorming as an innovative method of gathering ideas and thoughts. Over 600 suggestions were received. Needs identified were ranked as follows (other headings, in order of preference, include: Communication Skills; Financial Management; Personnel Management and Information Technology Skills);

1. Information Retrieval/Bibliographic Databases (for example, knowledge of what is available on various databases, generic literature search skills).
2. Teaching/Training (for example, train the trainers, e-learning support, learning theory).
3. NHS Policies and Developments Awareness (for example, structure of the NHS, decoding jargon, important developments).
4. Research Support (for example critical appraisal, understanding evidence-based medicine, understanding statistics).
5. Business Management (for example, strategic planning, service evaluation, project management, income generation).
6. Customer Handling Skills (for example, reference interviewing, telephone skills, customer care).
7. Legislation Awareness (for example, copyright, data protection, freedom of information).

A training needs analysis in the South West area of England focused on needs relating to knowledge management. This analysis used a questionnaire and facilitated workshop to gather information on needs. The resulting strategy was outcomes-focused and considered how professional development should be designed to meet targets and objectives. Key needs identified were making sense of the NHS, marketing and understanding client needs, foundations in knowledge management, selling and customer management, searching skills and influencing and speaking the NHS jargon.

A task and finish group was set up in the North West of England specifically to consider changing roles and opportunities provided by the changing environment. Mainly driven by a new project to develop a single search environment, the aim of this group was to consider how recent and anticipated changes could impact on the library profession. The group worked on an initial SWOT analysis to inform a discussion of potential future roles. Group members then consulted with their own local library networks. A literature search was conducted to identify recent research in this field and validate findings of the group. The group’s findings list the following potential roles for library and information staff:

- outreach librarians working alongside clinicians,
- expert searchers,
- teachers and trainers,
- electronic resources officers, leading on managing and developing resources,
- electronic learning support and help desk officers,
- information technology champions within teams,
- customer services librarians,
- marketing leads,
- library and information service managers,
- knowledge managers,
- library assistants, overseeing administrative tasks,
- patient and public liaison roles,
- current awareness publishers.

The group’s conclusions included a range of key points. There is a need for considerable additional training at all levels. Many of the roles overlap. Not all roles will be complete roles; most individuals will undertake a combination of roles. A large number of the roles are not totally new but rather include new aspects. All staff need generic skills (e.g. time management, assertiveness skills) underpinning the specialist skills and knowledge. As people are up-skilled / re-skilled, there will be a blurring of professional / paraprofessional and non professional roles leading to flatter operational / management structures.
It is clear from the examples written in this paper, that there is consensus on the core training and development needs of library staff. Many mention the need to develop skills in communication and business awareness, to learn more about the health service so as to be able to communicate with customers more easily and target services appropriately. Technical skills, such as searching, are also highlighted. There are also many references to ‘newer’ skills such as knowledge management, evidence-based practice and research skills. It is essential that the new programme of professional development and training caters not only to these general needs but also to the more specialist needs, if it is to support the new and emerging roles in the profession.

**Knowing what we know**

As mentioned earlier, the last training needs analysis of library staff was conducted in 1999. As outlined in the review of recent findings, the world has changed considerably in the last few years. It was decided that an updated perspective was required, to reflect such change. However, before embarking on new primary research, it was considered that the wisest approach would be to review what is already known, what has already been reported and what has been discovered. Currently, this knowledge is out there but not yet organised in a helpful way. This paper refers to just a few examples of recent work and there is a pressing need to gather existing explicit and tacit knowledge in a useful format with which we can plan future activities.

A study to review and synthesise this existing knowledge was commissioned in September 2004. Following a small tender exercise, the contract to run this study was awarded to the University of Wales Aberystwyth (http://www.dil.aber.ac.uk/default.asp). The study will provide:

- an overview of the key training and development needs of NHS library staff including priority areas for development;
- examples of training programmes successfully delivered across the country, which may provide valuable models for a programme of professional development;
- examples where training programmes have been accredited and recommendations for future accreditation;
- a review of other work relating to training and development needs within the wider library community;
- recommendations for future work, for example, should a national training needs survey be commissioned?

The team from University of Wales Aberystwyth began work in October 2004. Their final report will be published by March 2005 and will be available via the National Library for Health web site (http://www.library.nhs.uk/forLibrarians).

The study comprises three main elements. There was a literature review of existing published and unpublished studies. The researchers are reviewing training and development needs analyses undertaken in the last three years. The desk research also entails a literature review of published studies and an analysis of the outcomes from unpublished studies, carried out by Strategic Health Authorities, professional groups and other national/regional agencies. Unpublished studies will include surveys, brainstorming and focus groups. Interviews with opinion leaders also took place. The researchers have conducted a range of interviews with key opinion leaders, for example Strategic Health Authority Library Leads and members of the professional groups. Two workshops were held with library staff. The team have also held workshops for library staff, in Manchester and London. The aim of these workshops was to validate findings so far and to provide an opportunity for library staff to contribute. An
opportunity was also provided for those wanting to contribute (via e-mail) who were unable to
teach a workshop. This work is intended to provide a snapshot of current training and
development needs and current provision of training. This will enable the subsequent
development of a programme to meet the most pressing needs, using the most appropriate
models of delivery.

The interim findings from the workshops show a shifting emphasis on new types of
skills. For example, librarians expressed a need to develop skills in marketing and promotion.
This is supported by a recent article by Wakeham⁸ discusses the need for NHS libraries to
market their services to actual and potential users and comments “Librarians should find
marketing and promotion a core element of their professional role”. An audit conducted as
part of a training needs analysis for South Yorkshire (also conducted by the University of
Wales Aberystwyth and at the time of writing, still underway) shows the amount of time spent
on influencing and promoting is relatively small; anecdotally, library staff have reported this
as an area where training is needed urgently. Librarians attending the workshops discussed the
implications of changes within the health service and within the profession and the potential
impacts on their services and on them as individuals. Accreditation of learning was also
discussed with many participants agreeing that professional development could offer
incentives such as this. Participants were also asked to discuss best approaches to delivery of
training, such as what should be done locally or nationally. Final results from the study will
be published and the presentation of this paper will summarise the key findings.

Next steps

The study will report in early 2005. A small project group has been set up to manage
the study, with representation from key groups. On publication of the report, this group will
be expanded to include wider representation, and the group’s remit will extend to one of
reviewing and acting on the report’s recommendations. The main work of the group will be to
design, develop and deliver a coherent and comprehensive programme of training and
development, along the following principles. It will:

- address needs of all library staff,
- meet priority needs first,
- outline levels of responsibility for individuals, services, commissioners and
  providers,
- clarify role of key partners,
- will join up provision,
- will make it easier for library staff to identify and obtain learning and
  development opportunities,
- build on existing provision of training,
- avoid duplication.

The group will address current issues, for example, by exploring the feasibility and
potential benefits of accreditation. The group will also consider barriers to learning and how
these might be overcome to deliver effective learning and development in a format which
suits library staff. The programme will provide library staff with an easy route to professional
development by offering a range of opportunities, delivery mechanisms and sources of
funding.

References

   <http://www.oclc.org/reports/2003escan.htm>


