

THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION LIBRARY INFORMATION SERVICES COMMITTEE:

Briefing Paper: Healthcare Sector LIS

Context

Over the past few years there have been several government initiatives that have led to massive changes in all areas of the NHS. The White Paper "Working for Patients" and subsequent legislation (the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990) has led to the creation of NHS Trusts and the development of a more competitive business culture through the purchaser/provider split.

Care in the Community has brought about different patterns of patient care generally involving shorter patient stays, and financial restrictions have in some cases resulted in the closure or rationalisation of hospital provision.

The recent NISME Functions and Manpower Review suggests that the way forward is perceived as involving the merger of Regions, prior to their eventual abolition. This threatens Regional library services. District library services have all but ceased to exist. Other future developments include the likelihood of local government bids to run health authorities.

Effects on Library and Information Services

Although there continue to be many positive developments within Health Service library and information services, various issues of concern have been raised through casework and by direct member representation to LA Councillors and staff.

These are:

- the fragmentation of library and information services in the new NHS;
- an absence of strategic planning and consultation concerning the move of nurse education to higher education;
- the break up of existing co-operative networks.

The work of library managers is made more difficult by the fact that, in many cases, parts of services (and parts of salaries) are funded from different sources.

There is no one set of standards for library and information services although there are several helpful documents in existence. Service level agreements are in their infancy. Developments in nurse training (Project 2000 and PREPP) and the growing concept of the importance of lifelong learning/CPD for all health care staff are placing greater demands on library services: resource provision has not grown at the same rate.

Human Resource Issues

There is a diversity of pay and service condition arrangements for library staff in health sector libraries with many library staff suffering low status and low pay. Local pay bargaining and performance related pay (PRP) are likely to be introduced over the next few years.

Suggestions for Library Association Activity

1. LA needs to set the professional agenda (this will need to include the concept that information should be accessible to everyone involved in the healthcare process, services should be high quality, resources should be adequate) AND be able to communicate this within healthcare sector - bearing in mind that "special pleading" will be counterproductive. LA has to project positively not whinge.
2. Involvement in research to establish the contribution of library and information services to:
 - a) patient care;
 - b) purchasing and planning;
 - c) professional and CPD activities for healthcare staff, doctors, nurses and managers;(The LA has not budgeted for any sponsorship of research in this sector in the next year. Co-sponsorship may be investigated as could positive suggestions for projects for LIS student Masters degree topics)
3. Co-ordination of LIS standards and guidelines. Publication by LA Publishing to be investigated.
4. Accreditation of courses/hospitals/colleges needs to be set in the context of whether library services are adequate.
5. LA needs to co-ordinate LIS groups within the health care sector.
6. LA needs to have better contacts with "external" bodies e.g. Royal Colleges, RCN, ENB, Institute of Health Service managers, National Association of Clinical Tutors (they are to have a libraries working party), NAHAT, and with DILS such as Aberystwyth who have teaching and research programmes in health service librarianship.
7. Involvement with Cumberlege seminars on managing the knowledge base of healthcare.
8. MHWLG and Subject Groups (IFM Healthcare etc) input to LA policies and activities.
9. Health sector LIS work given adequate priority within the new LA Committee structure. Current proposals are for a Special Libraries Committee covering commercial and industrial libraries; the voluntary and charitable sector; Government libraries and the health care sector. The agenda for this Committee will be discussed in a series of meetings at the end of this year. One possibility would be to have a Health Subcommittee. Links would be needed with the LA Academic Libraries Committee.
10. Carry out an NHS salary survey of all staff in libraries listed in the LA Directory of Medical and Healthcare Libraries, identifying job title, qualifications held, sources of funding for posts and services. A survey of this type is on the LA Employment Committee workplan for 1994 although no work has yet been done on this.

11. Revision of the NIS salary guide to reflect the changing roles and job titles. As the sector is changing so rapidly the salary guide may need further revision next year.
12. LA to approach trade unions (UNISON, MSF etc), concerning pay levels for library staff. Possibility of Equal Value claims for library staff if comparators can be found.
13. LA information to reach targeted groups of NHS managers eg National Association of Clinical Tutors (see lists of contacts) - using attendance at their conferences/day schools, adverts and articles about LIS professionals in their journals, year-books. There may be possibilities for joint activity with the LA Enterprise Directorate ie LAPL publications, promoting LAR Vacancies Supplement and INFOMatch.
14. Replace "If you're a NHS manager" leaflet targeted at key managers/health service employer groups.
15. Revise and reprint "Professional librarians: a brief guide for employers". This is on the workplan for 1994.

CONTACTS

The following have been identified as individuals or organisations for The LA to develop personal or organisational contact.

Alan Langlands, Chief Executive, NIS.

Ministers and MPs - a recent article in the Health Service Journal listed good contacts.

Professional Bodies - Royal Colleges, Institute of Health Service Managers, National Association of Clinical Tutors, NAHAT, ENB.

UNISON Head of Health, Bob Abberley. Our main contact for nurses is Robert Baughan.

LA Groups IFM Healthcare, Libraries for Nursing.

Other groups (listed in a recent newsletter of the MHWLG).

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