

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR THE NURSING PROFESSION: METHODS OF FUNDING AND DELIVERY.

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"We owe it to nursing in general, we just cannot afford not to have an educated workforce, whether they are students or whether they're trained staff ... I don't want to think of our staff being caught on the hop by what is going to be a very educated undergraduate group and they need the back-up of being able to get hold of somebody to find out and the articles to keep them up-to-date." (Head of Nursing, Trust Hospital)

In October 1996, the Library and Information Co-operation Council (LINC), through its Health Panel, commissioned research from the Department of Information and Library Management at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle to investigate changes in the organisation and funding of library and information services to the nursing profession since the move of nurse education into higher education.

The aims of the project were to:

- help to identify the relationship of contracting to funding to service to access
- provide an overview to policy makers and practitioners on the provision and range of library services to nurses and how they are delivered and funded
- help to identify ways in which the Health Panel can ensure that the concerns and issues revealed can be placed before the appropriate policy makers and so influence appropriate access from the most appropriate settings
- help to identify good practice for dissemination.

The project report methodology consists of a literature review identifying key issues in the delivery and funding of library and information services to nurses and a summary of data obtained from semi-structured interviews with key professionals in both the higher education and NHS trust hospital sectors in the North-East of England. The main body of the research contains an analysis and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data obtained from a questionnaire survey conducted in England, Scotland and Wales.

The literature review provides a broad perspective on the problems involved in the move of library and information services into higher education, placing those problems in the broader perspective of changes in higher education, the National Health Service and nurse education generally. Issues covered in the literature review are those arising from the management and funding of library and information services for nurses, service and resource provision including the learning resource centre model, examples of practice in the regions and the influence and uses of new information technology, developments in provision for distance learning and remote sites. Areas

identified for further investigation from the results of literature review and the indicative interviews were used to form the basis of the questionnaire survey.

Key themes emerging from the research results from the main body of findings correlate with original interview findings and are echoed in the responses to a request for the five main key factors for development and are as follows:

- co-operation and communication between Trusts and universities
- the need for adequate funding to support all nursing groups
- good practice models in contracting and management arrangements
- the development of electronic solutions to the problems of distance users
- the provision of services at the point of need
- adequate user education support systems
- the development of joint working programmes for the networking of information systems.

It is suggested that the recommendations based on the themes and issues of concern which have emerged from the findings of the research project should be used as the basis for further discussions, research and action amongst those in the higher education and health service professions who have a responsibility or interest in the provision of library and information services to nurses.

Conclusions

The report calls for better partnerships between the different providers and purchasers of library services to ensure:

- access arrangements for all categories of nurses
- adequate funding of library and information services for nurses
- good models for contractual arrangements between purchasers and providers
- communication and decision making between NHS Trusts and Universities
- the use of information technology and networks.

"There is a need for a strategic link, position papers coming out so that people like myself, could look at that and think that's the way forward ..." (Head of Information Services, University)

The Report can be ordered from:

The Administrator, Information Services, Royal Society of Medicine,
1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE

The report costs £21.90 per copy (£19.90 plus £2 pp)

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