

"Would you credit it?"
Libraries for Nursing Autumn Study Day
A report by Jim Moore
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The Charter Mark Scheme

Jacqueline Mather, Charter Mark Assessor, gave us a very clear outline of the purpose, content and process of the government's Charter Mark Award. Jacqueline started by saying that Charter Mark is the only award that concentrates on public services from the users' viewpoint. As such, it is a relevant award for Libraries. There is an initial payment of £25 for the information pack, which enables you to prepare your service for the award, but after that, Charter Mark is free. Any size department can apply, so long as it is a public service, and has its own allocated budget. The award lasts for 3 years.

The Charter Mark Assessors evaluate each service using the following ten criteria, and they stress that their evaluation is carried out from the user perspective.

- 1) Set standards
- 2) Be open and provide full information
- 3) Consult and involve
- 4) Encourage access and promotion of choice
- 5) Treat all fairly
- 6) Put things right when they go wrong
- 7) Use resources effectively
- 8) Innovate and improve
- 9) Work with other providers
- 10) Provide user satisfaction

Once you have ensured that your service meets these criteria, you make an application, consisting of a twelve page report accompanied by no more than an A4 boxfile of supporting evidence, (reports, publications, surveys, etc.). The report and evidence is carefully read, before an Assessor arranges a day visit to the service. All applicants, whether successful or not, get a written feedback report. There is a right to appeal.

"Charter Mark 2000: your questions answered"
Available from: Service First Unit, 0345 22 32 42

Implementing Charter Mark

Margaret Forrest, Librarian at the Health Education Board Scotland, then gave a very helpful presentation on how she and her staff had

approached applying for Charter Mark. The Library at HEBS had decided to apply because they wanted a more objective measurement of the quality of their customer service, recognition of what they were already doing, a structure and focus for developing the service, and the help and advice that Charter Mark offers. Margaret felt Charter Mark was a win-win scheme: application cost only £25; the process of preparing to apply benefited the library's members; the Assessor's visit was very worthwhile; even if you failed to win the award, the written feedback report provided helpful guidelines on how to further improve the service.

Margaret felt that winning the award had a number of benefits. It raised awareness of excellent customer care, improved the service for library members, was very good for team-building with staff and members, raised the library's profile within and beyond the parent organisation, gave a wonderful sense of achievement.

LinC Health Panel Accreditation Scheme

After a good lunch, Valerie Trinder, Library Services Manager at Plymouth Hospitals Trust, described how the NHS Regions had felt the need for a national standard of accreditation for health Libraries, and this had led to the establishment of a Working Party. The NHS Library Adviser had got involved, and the link was also made with LinC, to encourage a national view.

A provisional checklist was piloted in the Trent Region and the Cairns Library, Oxford. The resulting document, published in 1998, is designed to be applicable to all health libraries - whether in the NHS or HEI. It was recognised, however, that sector-specific toolkits would be useful, and therefore Valerie prepared one for NHS trusts.

The Accreditation process involves working through the checklist and evaluating your service. Since this is Library accreditation, attention is paid to all aspects of a library service - the day to day, the management and the strategic. For each section of the checklist, questions must be answered, and evidence provided. Once this is complete, LinC-trained Assessors will visit to evaluate the service.

Accreditation of Library and Information Services in the health sector: a checklist to support achievement.

Available from the King's Fund

Accreditation of Library and Information Services in the health sector: implementation guide and toolkit for libraries in NHS Trusts.

Available from South & West Health Care Libraries Unit