

# NHS Library and Knowledge Services in England Policy

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Secretary of State for Health has a duty, under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure “the use in the health service of evidence obtained from research”.<sup>1</sup>

Health Education England published *Knowledge for Healthcare: a Development Framework for NHS Library and Knowledge Services in England* in December 2014.<sup>2</sup>

This sets out a clear vision:

*NHS bodies, their staff, learners, patients and the public use the right knowledge and evidence, at the right time, in the right place, enabling high quality decision-making, learning, research and innovation to achieve excellent healthcare and health improvement.*

The contribution of healthcare library and knowledge services to education, lifelong learning, research and evidence-based practice is widely valued, supplying the evidence base to the service to make decisions on treatment options, patient care and safety, commissioning and policy, as well as to support lifelong learning, undertake research and drive innovation.

Introducing the framework Prof. Ian Cumming, Chief Executive of Health Education England also noted:

*Our ambition is to extend this role so that healthcare knowledge services become business-critical instruments of informed decision-making and innovation.*

To this end, and in accordance with the principles of the NHS Constitution<sup>3</sup> (See Appendix 1), Health Education England has agreed the following policy:

## 2 POLICY STATEMENT

To ensure the use in the health service of evidence obtained from research, Health Education England is committed to:

- Enabling all NHS workforce members to freely access library and knowledge services so that they can use the right knowledge and evidence to achieve excellent healthcare and health improvement.
- Developing NHS librarians and knowledge specialists to use their expertise to mobilise evidence obtained from research and organisational knowledge to underpin decision-making in the National Health Service in England

- Developing NHS library and knowledge services into a coherent national service that is proactive and focussed on the knowledge needs of the NHS and its workforce.

### 3 RATIONALE

#### 3.1 Purpose

People should be cared for by competent and capable staff, receptive to innovation and able to use evidence from research. All NHS bodies and staff should be able to access the expertise and resources offered by healthcare librarians and knowledge specialists.

#### 3.2 Context

The NHS is experiencing a period of unrivalled change. Globally, economies are experiencing a shift from the ‘white heat of technology’ of the mid-twentieth-century into today’s digital age. This new landscape is one in which information is the currency of healthcare.

Healthcare is a knowledge industry. It is not enough to have the right teams in the right place, collaborating to deliver high quality, efficient patient care. It is essential that they use the right knowledge and evidence at the right time. The knowledge and know-how of staff are precious assets. Health Education England is committed to building a flexible workforce, responsive to innovation and new technologies with knowledge about best practice, research and innovation, which promotes adoption and dissemination of better quality service delivery. Applying and embedding knowledge into action is the currency of successful organisations.

The Carter review identified a need to “Improve the decision making process using factual data and evidence”.<sup>4</sup> Librarians can make a critical contribution to improving quality outcomes and meeting the productivity and performance challenge by ensuring teams are sighted on evidence from research to inform decision-making, targeting and tailoring information to manage information overload, organising that body of knowledge and keeping colleagues updated.

#### 3.3 Capitalising on the specialist skills of librarians and knowledge specialists

*Evidence does not speak for itself but needs to be mobilised at the right time, and through the right people, to make a difference in decision making.*<sup>5</sup>

Health Education England has identified a priority for NHS library services to mobilise the evidence base, bringing it the boardroom and the bedside.

Librarians comprise a small, specialised workforce in the NHS. Their contribution to education and research is highly valued. Increasingly, they are called upon to take a more active role as knowledge brokers. Health Education England recognises the value of these enhanced roles in which librarians share their expertise with teams in the workplace, enabling staff to find, evaluate and use evidence.

### 3.4 Partnership working

In this Knowledge Age it has never been more essential for the service to promote the use of research evidence and for all NHS bodies to ensure their staff can capitalise on the specialist expertise of healthcare librarians and knowledge specialists.

Health Education England is working with CILIP, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals to realise these aims, and to more strongly profile the positive impact of NHS library and knowledge services.

## 4 REFERENCES

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<https://hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Knowledge%20for%20health%20care%20-%20a%20development%20framework.pdf>
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5. Evidence in management decisions (EMD): advancing knowledge utilization in healthcare management. Executive summary. Southampton: NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research, 2012  
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## 5 APPENDIX: SUPPORTING THE NHS CONSTITUTION

All HEE policies support the values and pledges set out in the NHS Constitution.<sup>3</sup> In particular, this policy accords with the following principles:

### ***3. The NHS aspires to the highest standards of excellence and professionalism***

It provides high quality care that is safe, effective and focused on patient experience; in the people it employs, and in the support, education, training and development they receive; in the leadership and management of its organisations; and through its commitment to innovation and to the promotion, conduct and use of research to improve the current and future health and care of the population.

### ***7. The NHS is committed to providing best value for taxpayers' money***

It is committed to providing the most effective, fair and sustainable use of finite resources.

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Prepared by Sue Lacey Bryant  
Senior Advisor, Health Education England - Knowledge for Healthcare