

**The West Midlands Public Library
Health and Well-Being Partnership
Toolkit**

**Prepared for West Midlands, Society of Chief
Librarians by Debbie Hicks, The Reading Agency**

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This tool kit has been prepared by Debbie Hicks (The Reading Agency) in consultation with the Society of Chief Librarians, West Midlands, the West Midlands Regional Reader Development Forum and other key stakeholders.

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Introduction

This document is the result of a commission by the Society of Chief Librarians, West Midlands for an advocacy strategy to develop the health and well-being agenda within libraries through reading activity. The aims of the project were to develop a public library advocacy strategy that:

- Set out the national context in regard to health and well-being and the reading agenda
- Mapped health and well-being against key policy areas
- Identified regional case studies, best practice examples

Shortly after the project was commissioned, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council published national research mapping public library activity in the areas of health and well-being.¹ The research recommended the development of a core public library health and well-being offer to raise the profile of libraries work in this area and better position them as partners of choice for the health and social care sectors. The research suggested a holistic approach to the development of such an offer, and the strategic potential of integrating information and referral services with more creative aspects of service delivery. It also recognised the potential value of existing library assets including the public library role as community hub, universal on-line provision and the expert workforce.

West Midlands' library authorities have an established record of regional innovation supporting national development. The public library reading group offer recently adopted by SCL National Executive was piloted in the region. In this context, the advocacy strategy provided a strategic opportunity to progress the recommendations of the MLA research through regional piloting of a public library health and well-being partnership offer.

This toolkit is the result. It is divided into two main parts. Section one includes a summary of the regional public library health and well-being offer, a template indicating how regional and local data can be used in support and the beginnings of an evidence bank of partnership case studies. These are external advocacy tools to support partnership development with key stakeholders.

Section two provides the wider strategic context for the public library health and well-being offer and its relationship to the reading agenda. It includes evidence and arguments to support public library partnership development with the health and social care sector and an outline of the key policy reference points for this work. This section is designed as an internal, library sector briefing document.

¹ ***Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-Being***, Hicks, D., Creaser, C., Greenwood, H., Spezi, V., White, S. and Frude, N., MLA 2010

Section One: Advocacy Tools

The Public Library Health and Well-being Partnership Offer

West Midlands public library authorities support the health and well-being of millions of local people

They provide:

Unrivalled community access reaching older people, children and families, Black Minority and Ethnic and deprived communities

A network of neutral, trusted and accessible community spaces

Community outreach services including library mobiles and provision for the housebound, visually impaired people, care homes, sheltered housing and children's centres

Supported on-line access

Staff skilled in information management, reading and engaging with the local community

Volunteer networks delivering people-centred services, building local connections and enhancing capacity

They deliver:

A reading service providing health and well-being related information, learning and creative engagement through:

Information and signposting

Health, well-being and social care information and referral services, health information points, Information Prescriptions, NHS Choices and Choose and Book

Health and well-being promotion

Self-help services: Books on Prescription, self-help collections, cCBT services, support for self-help groups. Public health promotion: health checks, health promotions, health awareness activity. Mental health promotion: mental health awareness days and creative bibliotherapy: Bookstart, social reading activity, reading groups, reading challenges, events and workshops for mainstream and vulnerable groups

Supported by national and local partnerships

The public library service has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Health formally agreeing to work in partnership to promote health and well-being

West Midlands' library authorities are working with Primary Care Trusts, Mental Health Trusts, support groups, carers groups, sports and leisure colleges, NHS Alternative Therapies, GPs surgeries, health visitors, children's centres, adult social care and third sector organisations including MIND, Rethink. Alzheimer's Society and Age UK

Evidence Template

The Public Library Health and Well-being Partnership Offer

West Midlands public library authorities support the health and well-being of millions of local people

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Unrivalled community access reaching older people, children and families, Black Minority and Ethnic and deprived communities

Regional evidence

27% of the region's Super Output Areas fall within the 20% most deprived in England under the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007 and 15% fall within the most deprived 10%. ²
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44% of people in the West Midlands visit libraries. ³
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In 2009/10, public libraries in the West Midlands received a total of 26,233 visits and issued 24,222 books. There were 1,996 visits to library sites per 1,000 population. ⁴
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Local evidence

A network of neutral, trusted and accessible community spaces

Regional evidence

There are 340 service points across the West Midlands including mobiles. ⁵

Local evidence

Outreach services including home delivery services for the housebound, services for visually impaired people, for care homes, sheltered housing and children's centres

Regional evidence

There are 11,605 housebound readers served by public libraries in the West Midlands. ⁶

Local evidence

² www.gos.uk/gowm/OurReg/

³ *CASE Regional Insights: West Midlands at*
www.culture.gov.uk/images/research/CASE

⁴ ***CIPFA Public Library Statistics, 2009/10, Actuals*** CIPFA 2010

⁵ Service points open more than 10 hours a week. ***CIPFA Public Library Statistics, 2009/10***

⁶ ***CIPFA Public Library Statistics, 2009/10***

Supported on-line access

Regional evidence There are 3,393 library computer terminals with internet access across the region. ⁷
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Staff skilled in information management, reading and engaging with the local community

Regional evidence There are 2,122 library staff in the West Midlands region including 406.8 professional librarians. ⁸
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Local evidence

Volunteer networks delivering people-centred services, building local connections and enhancing capacity

Regional evidence There are 1,513 volunteers supporting public libraries in the West Midlands. ⁹
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Local evidence

They deliver:

A reading service providing health and well-being related information, learning and creative engagement through:

Information and signposting

Health, well-being and social care information and referral services, health information points, Information Prescriptions, NHS Choices and Choose and Book

Regional evidence All library authorities in the West Midlands offer health information and signposting services. Half of West Midlands' library authorities provide NHS Choices/ Choose and Book; a number of others are currently preparing to do so. ¹⁰ All library authorities also engage in the West Midlands Health Information Week, an initiative to improve access to health information through a partnership of public libraries, local authorities, the NHS, the voluntary sector and independent information and advice centres. ¹¹
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Local evidence

⁷ *CIPFA Public Library Statistics, 2009/10*

⁸ *CIPFA Public Library Statistics, 2009/10*

⁹ *CIPFA Public Library Statistics, 2009/10*

¹⁰ **Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-being**, Appendix C.2: Activity Map

¹¹ www.equip.nhs.uk/custom/healthinfo.aspx

Health and well-being promotion

Self-help services: Books on Prescription, self-help collections, cCBT services, support for self-help groups. Public health promotion: health checks, health promotions, health awareness activity. Mental health promotion: mental health awareness days and creative bibliotherapy: Bookstart, social reading activity, reading groups, reading challenges, events and workshops for mainstream and vulnerable groups

Regional evidence

Almost all library authorities in the West Midlands region offer Books on Prescription; over half deliver activity linked to BBC Headroom and over three quarters offer specially designated self-help collections and targeted physical and mental health promotion activity.

Nearly all library authorities in the West Midlands region offer Bookstart. Over three quarters of library authorities offer reading group activity with therapeutic purpose and two thirds offer other forms of creative bibliotherapy activity including writing groups and reminiscence work.¹²

Local evidence

Supported by national and local partnerships

The public library service has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Health formally agreeing to work in partnership to promote health and well-being

West Midlands' library authorities are working with Primary Care Trusts, Mental Health Trusts, support groups, carers groups, sports and leisure colleges, NHS Alternative Therapies, GPs surgeries, health visitors, children's centres, adult social care and third sector organisations including MIND, Rethink. Alzheimer's Society and Age UK

¹² **Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-being**, Appendix C.2: Activity Map.

Partnership Case Study Evidence Bank

Improved Health and Well-Being - Better Information Better Health in Stoke-on-Trent

"...the more you can invest in prevention, the less it is going to cost you in cure." (Linda Clark, NHS Stoke-on-Trent)

Stoke-on-Trent library service is working in partnership with NHS Stoke-on-Trent to improve health literacy in the city. The aim is to increase access to high quality health information and signposting to health services. The PCT is funding a permanent full time Health Information Officer Post, managed by the library service, as well as linked activities and resources with a particular focus on families and people with long term conditions.

The Better Information Better Health initiative is developing specially branded health zones within libraries featuring health information recommended by health professionals and endorsed by the public. These zones are designed to act as health "honey traps" promoting the message, *" this is your library, there are health books here and information (so) people will come to realise that within the library there is also health.* (Linda Clark, NHS Stoke-on-Trent)

Linked health clubs are engaging the public both in shaping the health zone service and in supporting events and activities. This programme covers exhibitions on difficult subjects including breast cancer and family events such as a teddy bears picnic in National Breastfeeding Week. The project will also encourage uptake of existing library resources and activities with health and well-being benefits – such as library linked reading and writing groups. As well as funding the Information Officer post, NHS Stoke-on-Trent supports the project with health expertise, information resources and help with partnership development and training.

NHS Stoke-on-Trent is clear why libraries are ideally placed to improve access to quality health information for local residents. They employ expert staff, skilled in information management and community outreach, as well as providing a network of well-used, community hub sites, free at the point of use and able to reach out into communities.

"...people will use the library who won't use other services". (Linda Clarke, NHS Stoke-on-Trent)

Libraries provide a neutral and trusted venue for people to interact with others and engage in activity that helps build the self-esteem, learning, literacy and other essential skills necessary to make informed health choices, manage health concerns and navigate health services.

"It's a brilliant opportunity for libraries to show what we can offer regarding health information, it's an opportunity that can only benefit our visitors." (Debbie Owen, Health Information Officer)

Improved Quality of Life - Reading Groups in Dudley

Dudley public library service is working with a range of partners to provide social reading activities for isolated and vulnerable people. This work is improving the quality of life and promoting the well-being of reading group members; building confidence, supporting learning and increasing social and community engagement.

Supported by Adult Social Care partners, the library service is delivering a thriving reading group programme for people with learning disabilities. Working with the Amblecote Centre, a reading group for service users and their carers has been established at Wordsley Community Library. It meets weekly, bringing people with learning disabilities and their carers together to talk about books and how what they read relates to their own lives.

"I want to come again next week."
(Wordsley reading group member)

"The staff were extremely motivated and passionate about providing a reading group service for our service users...some service users who attended this group had a profound learning disability, whilst others had complex needs due to sensory, mobility and mental health needs."
(Debbie Cooper, Team Leader Amblecote Centre for Learning Disability)

Dudley library service is also working with social services and a local community organisation to provide reading groups for Asian men and women with learning difficulties. The community skills of library staff, their book stock and reading expertise and their knowledge of community languages has enabled them to engage and inspire service users with little knowledge of reading and writing in either their own community language or English. The enthusiastic and positive response from group members says it all. Group members have fun, have developed new confidence and engage in a meaningful learning activity as members of a supportive social group.

"I liked what we did last week."
(Asian Women's reading group member)

"Can we look at football books?"
(Asian Men's reading group member)

There are also reading groups for people experiencing mental illness. The library service provide a reading group in partnership with MIND as well as a thriving group established with the support of the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education's Reading for Pleasure, Mental Health Programme. Both groups attract new members every week. Evidence suggests they are providing a cost effective health and well-being community service that supports learning, promotes engagement and delivers therapeutic benefits. Reading group members' confidence has increased, concentration levels have improved and people have experienced the benefits of engaging with others, exploring experiences through reading and escaping with a book.

Choice and Control - Lamb Street Project, Coventry Library Services for Adults with Mental Health Issues

"This is an excellent example of integrated working and is where library services need to be directing their efforts and resources to support people with mental health issues." (Alice Davey, Head of Culture, Leisure and Libraries)

Coventry Library Service are working with Lamb Street Centre for adults with mental health issues to provide specially tailored library provision combining reading and information services with creative bibliotherapy and a self-help reading scheme. The focus for this work is the newly developed SURF library and ICT unit based within the Lamb Street Centre and providing personalised on-site access to books, information and computers. Users of the centre have been working with the library service both to design the SURF centre and select stock. They are also supported in making regular visits to the Central Library to borrow books and use People's Network PCs. Library staff are receiving training from a local mental health support group to equip them to better support the needs of mental health service users.

"Library services are integral to the development and outcomes we are aiming to achieve, for and with service users, as a library is central to most communities but also an incredible resource in terms of networking and information sharing."

(Christine Eade, Unit Manager, Lamb Street Centre)

The library service are working on a joint funding bid with the Lamb Street Centre and the voluntary sector agency, AIHMS (Actively Involving People with Mental Health) to provide an outreach service supported by volunteer mental health information workers. The workers will be trained in information provision and will support people with mental health issues to access information through community libraries. A partnership is also in place with NHS Coventry to set up a Books on Prescription service to benefit people using the centre and from across the city. Local GPs and practice therapists will prescribe self-help books that will be available from libraries.

The project is joining up its health information and self-help support services with an exciting programme of creative activity. Taster events including a writing and storytelling workshop have been really popular with centre users as well as delivering clear health and well-being benefits.

"It lifted my mood."

"Found that poetry can be therapeutic."

"Everyone was included."

"I enjoyed the creative aspect and socially being together."

"The people from Community Mental Health Team East were so positive, in fact buzzing when they left."

(Mike Murkin, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust)

Section Two: Briefing Resource

Reading, Libraries, Health and Well-being

The power of reading

Reading is emerging as a powerful and versatile health and well-being tool. The act of reading is a means of acquiring health information and of delivering self-help cognitive behavioural therapy. It also supports learning and skills development and can deliver the sense of well-being and inclusion generated by being part of a reading group, talking to others about books and empathising with experiences in a way that can throw a lifeline to all sorts of people, particularly those that are vulnerable and isolated.

Reading builds knowledge, supports learning, grows understanding and provides an important escape route and release valve. It can also connect people up, create supportive social networks, build social capital and improve quality of life.

Public libraries are experts at delivering the information and creative functions of reading. They are, therefore, important potential partners for the health and social care sector.

Terminology

Bibliotherapy is a term frequently used to refer to the use of books and reading to heal. There is almost as much diversity in its definition as there is in its practice, which includes creative reading activity as well as health information provision and psychological therapy. Evidence suggests that despite the current confusion over meaning, bibliotherapy has the potential to grow into a consistently identified discipline using language that speaks to both libraries and health sector partners.¹³

The public library partnership offer

In addition to the value of their reading offer, libraries have other key assets of proven interest to potential health and care partners.¹⁴

Public libraries provide a local, regional and national network of community sites. Their local function and outreach potential enables them to operate as important social hubs providing unequalled access to the community as well as to groups that clinical/medical providers may find hard to reach, e.g. BME and deprived communities.

The library setting is a civic space that provides a positive, neutral, non-stigmatised and non-clinical environment. This differentiates it as a health and well-being venue from hospital/clinical services, widens access and helps to normalise the experience of health related activity for users. It also supports the prevention and early intervention agenda by reaching people before they need to seek the support of medical services.

¹³ ***Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-being***

¹⁴ ***Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-being***

In some places in the West Midlands, e.g. Stoke-on-Trent, the development of specially branded health zones within libraries use library space to formalise the health offer. This approach sits comfortably alongside other more established service areas, such as children's and young people's spaces.

Public libraries also help bridge the digital divide, providing supported on-line access to learning, information and therapeutic services.

They have expert staff with excellent customer facing skills. The library workforce is skilled in information management, access and retrieval and in delivering community activity particularly linked to creativity and reading.

Combined these factors create a unique offer to potential partners and make the library a good place to offer health and well-being activity.

For libraries, partnership with the health and social care sector raises their profile externally and within the local authority, encourages new users, attracts resources, builds capacity and supports workforce development.¹⁵

¹⁵ ***Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-being***

The Evidence

The impact of library activity

Recent research indicates that whilst robust evidence of impact is important to raising the profile of public library health and well-being activity, the existing evidence base is inadequate for this purpose. Evidence collection within the sector is currently focused on anecdotal and usage data rather than impact evaluation. Libraries also tend to collect evidence relevant to their own needs rather than to those of potential health partners. The evidence base is further weakened by the lack of an effective standardised evaluation methodology.

It is clear that libraries need to develop a stronger and more robust approach to impact evaluation that can be mapped across to partner's priorities and expressed in a language they understand. This means showing how library activity can deliver early intervention and preventative services with cost saving benefits and clear patient outcomes. This has been identified as a national research priority for the sector.

In the West Midlands, there is work to be done to build the regional evidence base by shifting the focus of current evaluation methodologies to link more closely with partner priorities. The development of a regional health and well-being case study database would also serve as a powerful resource to support partnership development and the sharing of good practice.

Reading impact evidence

Whilst library impact evidence requires consolidation, there is a developing evidence base for reading that libraries can effectively use to build their case. This helps position reading as a cost effective, low intensity, creative and learning intervention that can contribute to quality of life and support health and well-being.

Mental agility and older people

Research from the Netherlands has proved that bibliotherapy increases the self-management ability and mental agility of older people.¹⁶ Also research by the Older People's Programme has identified seven dimensions to achieving a good life. It is significant that continuing to learn emerges as the second of these dimensions and that it plays a key part in delivering the first, which is being active, staying healthy and contributing.¹⁷

Health literacy

A study by the Canadian Council of Learning concludes that a daily habit of reading contributes to an increase in health literacy and the ability to

¹⁶ "The effectiveness of bibliotherapy in increasing the self-management ability of slightly to moderately frail older people", *Patient Education and Counselling* **61 (2006)** 219-227, Frieswijk, D. Dept of Social and Organisational Psychology, University of Groningen, The Netherlands

¹⁷ *Living Well in Later Life*, The Older People's Programme, 2002

make decisions on self-care. It also makes the links between literacy levels and wellness.¹⁸

Therapeutic benefit

Research at the University of Sussex suggests that reading works better than other methods to calm frazzled nerves. It was proven to reduce stress levels by 68 per cent. The study suggests that the concentration reading requires, combined with the distraction of being taken into another world, eases the tension of the muscles and the heart.¹⁹

There is also a growing body of evidence reinforcing the well-being effects of belonging to a reading group. Taking part in regular social reading activity helps people relax, combats isolation, improves self-esteem and social interaction, supports learning and develops concentration, memory and mental agility as well as being great fun – the best medicine of all!²⁰

The National Literacy Trust's research *Literacy Changes Lives* clearly indicates a correlation between reading and a variety of physical and mental health and well-being outcomes²¹ as does the recent library impact study supporting the DCMS' library service Modernisation Review.²²

¹⁸ www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7010114051, February 2008.

¹⁹ www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/5070874/Reading-can-help-reduce-stress, March 2009

²⁰ *Reading the Situation, Book Reading and Public Library Use*, The Reading Agency/BML, 2000; *Reading Groups and Public Library Research*, The Reading Agency/BML, 2002; *A National Library Development Programme for Reading Groups*, The Reading Agency, 2004

²¹ *Literacy Changes Lives*, Dugdale and Clark, National Literacy Trust, 2008

²² *DCMS: Capturing the Impact of Libraries*, BOP Consulting, 2009

Policy and Planning

The health and social care policy context

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has, for some time, reinforced the value of bibliotherapy as a treatment for mild to moderate disorders.²³

It is, however, more recent policies and initiatives with their focus on early intervention and prevention, cost efficiency and the need to address health inequalities that point to the real potential for libraries' health and well-being offer and for partnership working with health and social care.

Our Health, Our Care, Our Say (2006) identified a new direction for health and social care which prioritised the promotion of health and well-being for all and the delivery of care services that are built around people's needs and delivered in the communities in which they live.²⁴ It also established clear outcomes for individuals towards which adult social care services should be working. These include:

- Improved health and emotional well-being
- Improved quality of life
- Making a positive contribution
- Choice and control
- Freedom from discrimination
- Economic well-being
- Personal dignity

The 2008 Darzi Report further developed the NHS vision of *High Quality Care for All* identifying as key priorities the need to keep people well, prevention rather than cure, cost efficiency, patient choice, self care and learning and partnership with other agencies.²⁵

Other key policy drivers include *Putting People First* (2007)²⁶, *Transforming Adult Social Care* (2008)²⁷ and the Department of Health's guidance document, *Improving Care and Saving Money: Learning the Lessons on Prevention and Early Intervention for Older People*.²⁸ These all focus on the need to build a health and social care system that can meet increasing demand through the better deployment of limited resources. They also recognise that preventing the slide into high cost dependency is key. *Improving Care and Saving Money* acknowledges that a critical factor in pushing people into physical and mental decline is loneliness and social isolation and recognises the need for preventative services that build social capital and support inclusion.

²³ National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2004, 1.4,1.5

²⁴ ***Our Health, Our Care, Our Say: A New Direction for Community Services***, DoH, 2006

²⁵ ***High Quality Care for All: NHS Next Stage Final Report***, Lord Darzi of Denham, DoH, 2008.

²⁶ ***Putting People First: A Shared Vision and Commitment to the Transformation of Adult Social Care***, DoH, 2007

²⁷ LAC (DoH) (2008) 1: ***Transforming Adult Social Care***.

²⁸ ***Improving Care and Saving Money, Learning the Lessons on Prevention and Early Intervention for Older People***, DoH, 2010

This message is reinforced in the Department of Health's guidance on depression and older people. This clearly suggests that strategies for recovery for older people presenting with depression should include enhancing social networks and sources of social support.²⁹

In addition, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services' (ADASS), *Framework for Council Information and Advice (and Advocacy) Strategies* recognises that information provision is one of the key building blocks of *Putting People First* and *Transforming Social Care*.³⁰

New Horizons, the government strategy for mental health suggests a potentially key role for libraries in mental health promotion. It proposes an approach to whole population mental health that focuses on helping people to keep well. It recognises the vulnerability of certain groups including older people, those living in poverty and people from BME communities – all recognised communities of users of the public library service. Perhaps most significantly, however, *New Horizons* acknowledges the value of new approaches to mental health promotion including reading programmes that improve literacy, develop social skills and enhance self-esteem. The reading group work of Get into Reading is cited as a model of good practice in this area.³¹

There are also opportunities for libraries linked to the Department of Health's *National Dementia Strategy*. The *Dementia Strategy* highlights the need for improved community support services and a joint commissioning health /social care strategy to support the increasing number of dementia sufferers in our aging population.³² Its delivery by NHS organisations working with partners has been identified as a specific priority in the recently published *Revision to the Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2010/11*.³³

The Department of Health identify the key characteristics of a sustainable NHS as care closer to home, earlier intervention, fewer acute beds, empowered patients and reduced unit costs. These priorities are outlined in *NHS 2010-2015: From Good to Great Preventative, People-Centred, Productive*.³⁴ They also drive the *NHS Operating Framework 2010/2011*, which identifies keeping people healthy and reducing health inequality as one of the five national service delivery priorities.³⁵ This priority has

²⁹ **Department of Health, Publications and Policy Guidance: Depression** at http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/BrowsableDH_4901990

³⁰ **Framework for Council Information and Advice (and Advocacy) Strategies**, ADASS/LGA, 2009

³¹ **New Horizons, Towards a Shared Vision for Mental Health**, 2009 at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_109705

³² **Living Well with Dementia: A National Dementia Strategy**, DoH, 2009

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www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicationsandStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_1101

³⁴ **NHS 2010-2015: From Good to Great. Preventative, People-centred, Productive**, DH, 2009

³⁵ http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/research/topics/operating_framework.html

remained intact in the Government's recent revision to the Operating Framework.³⁶

The QIPP programme has been developed to support the NHS in meeting the challenge of delivering high quality care for all in a tighter economic climate. QIPP is the umbrella term used to describe the approach the NHS is taking at local, regional and national levels to reform operations and make efficiency savings. Its four components, Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention have become the key guiding principles for service reform.³⁷

A new Government

Early indications from the new Coalition Government suggest there will be a similar direction of travel in future policy with the focus being on early intervention and prevention supported by greater patient choice and control.³⁸ The new Secretary of State for Health has set five priorities:

- A patient led NHS
- Better health outcomes
- A more autonomous and accountable system
- Improved public health through a new public health system
- A focus on reforming long term care

Partnership working, particularly with the voluntary sector, and other external partners, is anticipated to increase. The expansion of the voluntary sector is also likely, drawing on the concept of the "informed citizen."³⁹

These priorities are clearly articulated in the recently published *Revision to the Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2010/11*, which gives patients increased decision-making power and prioritises greater devolved responsibility, a more rigorous outcomes based approach supported by clinically relevant performance measures and a relentless focus on efficiency savings.⁴⁰ It also identifies joint working and commissioning between PCTs and local authorities to be of increased importance and the need for a greater emphasis on the implementation of the *National Dementia Strategy* through partnership working.

The Coalition Government's NHS White Paper, *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*, July 2010, reinforces these ambitions. It puts patients at the heart of the NHS, calling for their empowerment through an information revolution. It also focuses on improving public health, tackling health inequalities and a reform of adult social care. PCT responsibility for local health improvement will transfer to local authorities. They will

³⁶ *Revision to the Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2010/11*, DH, 2010.

³⁷ *Briefing Note*, Health Policy and Economic Research Unit, BMA, May 2010 at www.bma.org.uk/healthcare_policy/qippbn.jsp

³⁸ www.conservatives.com/policy/where_we_stand/health.aspx

and <http://programmeforgovernment.hm.gov.uk/nhs/>

³⁹ *Report from the TPFL Health Interest Group*, 15 June, 2010, Royal Society of Medicine

⁴⁰

http://dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_11010

employ the Director of Public Health, jointly appointed with the Public Health Service. There will also be a shift of power towards GPs who will have the leading contract responsibility for significant proportions of health spending.

The Government has also recently announced that it will publish a new mental health strategy. This is likely to continue the direction of travel established by *New Horizons*. It will, however, make explicit the link between poverty and mental health and the need to offer a range of support for people with mental illness including strong social networks.⁴¹

Public libraries are ideally positioned to use reading to deliver against these key building blocks of health and social care policy. Their community focus and strong social inclusion agenda position them favourably in terms of the health inequalities and the community engagement and empowerment agenda. Their role in supporting reading delivers a vital health information function as well as creative reading activity with therapeutic impact that connects people up, improves quality of life, builds social capital and promotes skills development. The public library health and well-being offer can deliver key health and care priorities through the provision of community based early intervention and preventative services that are cost effective and can help keep people well.

Volunteering

Volunteering has a significant part to play in improving health and social care services and outcomes for individuals and communities. The emphasis for future health and social care provision is on better quality and more personalised services.⁴² *Putting People First* clearly promotes the role of user-led organisations and emphasises social capital as a key element in successful transformation.⁴³ These developments provide new roles and opportunities for volunteering and for engaging the expertise of service users in the design and delivery of services.

*Volunteering – Involving People and Communities in Delivering and Developing Health and Social Care Services*⁴⁴, highlights the important role volunteering can play in creating people-centred services; keeping people active, engaged and independent; and in meeting the support needs of patients, carers and users of care services. It identifies that volunteering can contribute to:

- Quality, choice and innovation in services
- Building social capital and reducing isolation
- Enhancing the capacity of preventative care
- Meeting the culturally specific needs of health and social care service users
- Increasing the connections between citizens and the services they use.

⁴¹ www.futurevisionformentalhealth.org.uk/mh_strategy_soon_press_release.html

⁴² ***High Quality Care for All***

⁴³ ***Putting People First***

⁴⁴ ***Volunteering – Involving People and Communities in Delivering and Developing Health and Social Care Services***, DoH, 2010.

Realising this strategic vision for volunteering in the health and social care sector will require strong local partnership mechanisms.

Public libraries have much to offer in this respect. They provide a trusted gateway to local communities and to potential health champions. They also have developing expertise in volunteer recruitment, support and service delivery having traditionally used volunteers to deliver key outreach services such as those serving nearly 80,000 housebound readers.⁴⁵ Between 2006/7 and 2008/9, the number of volunteers involved in public libraries in England increased by 22% from just over 10,000 to over 12,500.⁴⁶ In 2008/9 volunteers were providing almost 355,000 hours of support to public library services with each volunteer providing an average of 40 hours a year.⁴⁷ In the past year, the total number of volunteers in UK libraries rose by 7.7% to 17,111 people.⁴⁸

The empowerment of local people and communities is emerging as a key driver for the new Government's *Big Society* reform agenda.⁴⁹ Levels of volunteering in public libraries is therefore set to increase providing them with strategic common ground for partnership building with the health and social care sector.

Local Area Agreement targets

Public library health and well-being activity also has potential to deliver against key local indicators and targets particularly those relating to Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Whilst this contribution has yet to be properly articulated and recognised, LAAs and linked Local Strategic Partnerships nevertheless offer an important opportunity for libraries to increase the visibility of their health offer and to broker a broader range of partnerships to support it.

Health is listed amongst the most cited 20 local priorities identified by local authorities in their LAA.⁵⁰ The following list demonstrates where libraries health and well-being activity can contribute to the current national indicator set (NIS). Some NIs are relevant to very targeted health information and health promotion activity and clearly depend on a libraries working in partnership with other agencies to contribute to their delivery.

Whilst a significant evolution of the NIS and other aspects of the local authority performance framework will follow the Government's autumn Spending Review, in the absence of an alternative, the NIS does still provide a useful map of relevant strategic priorities. The following indicators remain intact following the reduction of the NIS from April 2010

⁴⁵ **Research Briefing 9: Trends from the CIPFA Public Library Service Statistics 2004/5 to 2008/9**, MLA, 2010.

⁴⁶ **Research Briefing 9**

⁴⁷ **Research Briefing 9**

⁴⁸ **CIPFA Public Library Service Statistics, 2009/10**,

⁴⁹ **Building the Big Society** at <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/407789/building-big-society.pdf>

⁵⁰ **Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-Being, Appendix B: Evidence Framework**

in line with commitments made in *Putting the Frontline First Smarter Government*.⁵¹

Children and young people

NI 50	Emotional health of children
NI 53	Prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks from birth
NI 55	Obesity in primary school age children in reception
NI 56	Obesity in primary school age children in year 6
NI 58	Emotional and behavioural health of looked after children
NI 112	Under 18 conception rate
NI 113	Prevalence of Chlamydia in under 25 year olds

Adult health and well-being

NI 119	Self-reported measure of people's overall health and well-being
NI 122	Mortality rate from all circulatory diseases at ages under 25
NI 122	Mortality from all cancers at ages under 75
NI 123	Stopping smoking
NI 124	People with a long-term condition supported to be independent and in control of their condition
NI 125	Achieving independence for older people through rehabilitation/intermediate care
NI 138	Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood
NI 139	The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home
NI 141	Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living

⁵¹ *Putting the Frontline First Smarter Government*, CLG, 2010

New Opportunities

Evidence suggests that there are a number of strategic opportunities for public library health and well-being activity. These relate both to the development of existing services and to new interventions. Whilst related activity is underway within the West Midlands, a strategic approach to development across the region would raise the profile of this work locally as well as contributing to the national agenda.

New opportunities include:

The health and well-being offer

Whilst public libraries offer a range of health and well-being services, research shows that this offer is not particularly well articulated and of low visibility to potential stakeholders.⁵² A clear expression of a regional public library health and well-being offer is an important first step to raising the profile of libraries' contribution in this respect, helping to position them as partners of choice for the health and social care sector. A public facing version is a key second stage development.

The definition and piloting of a West Midlands public library health and well-being offer, focused on reading and integrating health information and health promotion with creative reading activity, will raise the profile of public library health and well-being activity regionally. Building on existing models such as the Youth Library Offer and the West Midlands Reading Group Offer, it could also inform national offer development.⁵³ There is a strong precedent for such an approach. The regional reading group offer developed in the Midlands is now being rolled out nationally.

A Regional Library Health Partnership Board would be a strong advocate for this offer; supporting innovation, partnership building and related service development.

Commissioning

The new commissioning regime offers important opportunities for public library health and well-being activity. This is particularly true in the area of adult social care where there is a move towards community focused, integrated care models based on partnerships across primary, community, secondary and social care.⁵⁴

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) requires upper tier local authorities and PCTs to undertake joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA). This process identifies the current and future health and well-being needs of the local population, informs LAA targets and leads to the agreement of commissioning priorities focused on improving outcomes and reducing health inequalities. Public library authorities can use the Strategic Needs Assessment to effectively identify

⁵² ***Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-Being***

⁵³ SCL has prioritised the development of a national health and well-being public library offer in its shared workplan with The Reading Agency

⁵⁴ <http://wcc.networks.nhs.uk>

those areas of community need where they can make an impact with the health and well-being services they offer.⁵⁵

There is clearly greater potential for commissioning of library health and well-being services, particularly if the focus is on new services or the repositioning of existing or core activity to meet the specific health needs of target groups. This is, however, a relatively new funding model for library activity in this area and requires libraries to develop a strong business case showing health gains, value for money and cost saving benefits mapped against commissioning priorities.⁵⁶

Communication and networking

Research indicates that designated public library health champions at local level would increase the profile of the public library contribution in this area and support the development of new partnership networks.⁵⁷ Library staff have an important role to play as community health advocates; signposting services and opportunities and delivering community focused activity. Libraries would also benefit from nurturing high-level champions within local authority and other key stakeholder organisations.

Public libraries' health and well-being work is also central to the local and regional reading agenda and should inform strategy development, action planning and delivery structures.

An annual showcasing/skills share event could offer important networking and partnership opportunities, providing a platform for the sharing and dissemination of good practice.

The development of a regional directory of key contacts in libraries, health and social care would also reinforce this area of work, helping better navigation of partnership structures and the identification of relevant contacts.

Developing the evidence base

A systematic regional approach to evaluation and data collection would pay significant dividends, helping to build the evidence base supporting partnership development. A strengthened approach to evaluation could also test drive new ways to evaluate impact, particularly of creative reading activity, identify cost savings and support effective case study collection.

⁵⁵ *Understanding Commissioning A Practical Guide for the Culture and Sport Sector*, IDEA, 2010

⁵⁶ *Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-Being*

⁵⁷ *Public Library Activity in the Areas of Health and Well-Being*

Horizon Scanning

There is particular potential for a West Midlands reading focused health and well-being programme in the following areas:

Mental health promotion

New mental health policy provides an opportunity to formalise the contribution of social reading activity including reading groups to the promotion of mental health and well-being. There is potential to raise the profile of existing regional work in this area and to build shared approaches to delivery, resource and tools development and evaluation.

Social care

There are real opportunities to link existing community based library activity such as volunteering, housebound services, reading groups, social reading activity and creative bibliotherapy to the social care agenda, positioning libraries as partnership providers in integrated social care packages.

New approaches to day care delivery are replacing building based models with community provision including support groups, courses and activity programmes. Public libraries are beginning to position their existing offer as part of this new model. There is significant potential to develop this approach.

Health inequalities agenda

The powerful community access and outreach potential of public libraries, combined with the impact of their reading for pleasure role on literacy and learning, means they can be strategic partners in delivering the health improvement and health inequalities agendas.

Primary care service development

Public libraries could also make a major contribution to emerging community based primary care models. These are becoming increasingly focused on mainstream early intervention and prevention activities supported by a range of services and resources. Public libraries are ideally placed to support primary care delivery in relation to mental and public health promotion as well as health information.

Linked agendas

Public libraries' work with reading has significant impact on linked health and well-being agendas such as worklessness, informal adult learning, literacy, language and communication skills development and social inclusion. This contribution needs to be clearly identified and articulated in relation to wider health improvement policy.