

Knowledge for Healthcare: Policy on Learning Space within NHS Knowledge and Library Services in England

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Abstract

Introduction

As steward of library services in the National Health Service (NHS) in England, the Health Education England (HEE) Knowledge and Library Services team held regular check-ins with knowledge services managers from the onset of the pandemic. It became apparent that many NHS library spaces were being repurposed to accommodate the pandemic response. While appropriate in the short term, there was a need to secure the future of library spaces for the benefit of NHS staff and learners. This poster provides an overview of the development, approval and implementation of a new Policy on Learning Space for [NHS Knowledge and Library Services in England](#).

Method

There are around 300 service points across 184 knowledge and library services in the NHS in England. In the early days of the pandemic, almost 25% of services reported that library spaces were closed, sometimes for infection control reasons but often because the space had been commandeered as part of the pandemic response. There was a risk that this space would not revert to its original purpose so a policy highlighting the benefits of dedicated library space was formulated using the following methods:

- Analysis from surveys of over 6000 NHS staff, educators and learners conducted by NHS knowledge services over the previous two years.
- A literature review to identify evidence of the use and importance of library space.
- Examples of innovative uses of library space gathered from the literature and case studies.

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- Analysis of the strategic priorities of the NHS from Making the NHS the best place to work, The Topol Review and We are the NHS: People Plan 2020/21 – action for us all.

Results

Evidence demonstrated the value and benefits secured for NHS organisations, healthcare staff and learners by providing library space:

- For reflection and private study
- As a health and wellbeing space
- As a place for collaboration
- As a technology hub: a place to carry out e-learning and explore augmented reality, addressing digital literacy.

A policy outlining these benefits was approved at HEE's Knowledge for Healthcare Board and ratified by HEE Clinical Tutors. It has now been embedded in the [HEE's Education Contract](#) which sets out standards for education and placement providers across the NHS in England.

Discussion

The initial driver for this policy was to ensure that services can rebuild following the pandemic. In this context, it has been used to argue for repurposed space to be returned to library and learning uses.

However, it has a long-term role in developing services, used in conjunction with other HEE policies, to maintain and improve library space, especially in the face of assumptions about the importance of digital knowledge resources, online and remote working. The policy has been used as part of HEE's advocacy on behalf of local services and by managers facing building developments.

Keywords: Healthcare, Library Services, National Health Service (NHS)

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