

Choice Matters

Working with libraries



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Choice Matters

Working with libraries

Putting patients in control



Ministerial foreword

From April, patients needing to see a specialist will be able to choose to go to any NHS-funded provider in the country, allowing them to personalise their healthcare to suit their needs.



Our NHS needs to be able to offer the help and the support we all need to make healthy choices for our families and ourselves. Libraries will help to give patients greater choice and control over their healthcare by making it easier for them to find the information they need.

Some people will be able to find their way round the relevant websites themselves. But we don't want others, who aren't used to using computers, to lose out. We want everyone to be able to choose what best suits them.

The pilot we've run has been successful in delivering information equitably to all, including those vulnerable groups who have traditionally been hard to reach.

I look forward to this pilot rolling out across the rest of England so that everyone is able to access the information they need to take control of their health.

Ben Bradshaw MP
Minister for Health Services



Enabling Choice

From April 2008, patients referred by their GPs for most types of planned treatment will have the opportunity to choose from any hospital or clinic (i.e. any NHS Trust, Foundation Trust, Independent Sector hospital or Independent Sector Treatment Centre) that can meet NHS prices and NHS standards. This will be a key milestone in a process that has taken six years to develop.

Patient Choice has been tested and introduced in a measured way to allow the NHS to adjust to new ways of caring for patients.





Key milestones in the Patient Choice journey

2002 – The first pilot schemes gave patients who would otherwise wait more than six months for surgery, the choice to go to an alternative health provider for faster treatment.

January 2006 – Most patients have a choice of at least four providers when they are referred for planned hospital care by their GP or primary care professional, where clinically appropriate. Primary Care Trusts are responsible for commissioning the menu of providers from which people can choose, in consultation with local patient groups.

May 2006 – The lists of choices are widened. In addition to the local options, patients can choose from a national menu of NHS Foundation Trusts and Independent Sector Treatment Centres.

August 2006 – There is a further expansion of the choices available, as 11 Independent Sector providers are approved to add their services to the national menu. Eventually, a total of 157 facilities could be added.

July 2007 – The pace of introduction quickens again, when all NHS trusts in England who meet certain conditions are able to add their orthopaedic services to the national menu.

Now – From April 2008, if your GP needs you to see a specialist, you can choose to go to any hospital in England, including many private and independent sector hospitals. You can choose the hospital with the best reputation or shortest waiting times, or simply the one that is most convenient for you.



Elizabeth Manero, Healthlink

Enabling Choice

Talking to patients

Partnership for Patients is a joint venture between the Department of Health, DEFRA, Health Link, The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, London Health Libraries and the London Libraries Development Agency.

The Partnership for Patients pilot project was created following a three-month patient consultation on choice. Commissioned by the Department of Health. Healthlink consulted marginalised groups to find out what 'choice' meant to them and what information they required to help them choose a hospital. Many of the people consulted were regular users of the acute hospital sector.

"There is a clear link between poor health, deprivation and disadvantage. People who are 'marginalised' from traditional consultation approaches are likely to be the people who use the health service the most." Elizabeth Manero, Director, Healthlink

Health Link consulted:

- homeless people
- mental health service users
- disabled people
- young people
- older frail people
- carers
- care home residents
- those on low incomes
- people whose first language is not English
- those with basic skills needs or who are not IT literate

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What did we learn?

Several clear messages came out from the consultations, patients believed that:

- Choice should be a way of avoiding poor hospitals and accessing good ones
- To make choice work, accurate up to date information was needed
- Information needed to be provided on what was relevant to patients
- To make the information accessible, the right kind of support was needed
- Support needed to be non-judgemental, sensitive and trustworthy
- Lack of IT skills was an absolute barrier to many in accessing information
- One possible source of support and information could be the public library.

Enabling Choice

The target audience

Most NHS reforms require staff to behave differently. Patient Choice requires patients to behave differently, therefore it is vital that the programme is designed from their perspective. Knowing the profile of patients who are likely to be choosing a provider is paramount to success.

The key audience:

- Older People – 2/3rds of hospital inpatients are over 65
- Care home residents – 23% of care homes residents aged 65+ had been in hospital as an inpatient in the past year, compared to 15% of residents over 65 in private households.
- Disadvantaged social groups – People in lower socio-economic groups are more likely to have poor health and therefore more likely to use the health service. Unskilled men for example are twice as likely to die from coronary heart disease than men in professional groups, and four times as likely to die of lung disease.
- High-risk ethnic groups – People from certain ethnic groups who were born abroad have higher death rates for some conditions and are therefore more likely to be health service users. For example, death rates from coronary heart disease in the UK are roughly 40% higher among people who were born in South Asia.





Enabling Choice

Working with Libraries

Patient consultation, public involvement and profiling on choice clearly demonstrated the need for 'agents of choice' who could support informed choice by patients in an inclusive and unbiased way.

Given patients' need for up-to-date, accurate information upon which to base their choice of provider, the internet seemed the most cost effective solution. However, the internet's inaccessibility to many patients, whether through lack of IT skills or lack of funds to own a computer, is a real and present barrier. This barrier inhibits both access to comparative information and access to online 'choosing and booking' services for available health care providers.

Our consultation showed that even if they are IT literate, some patients still preferred written information or would like it in addition to online services. However providing printed information is expensive and it quickly becomes out of date.

The core challenge

There is a barrier to non-IT literate patients accessing online information and there is a resources barrier to the provision of printed information with enough frequency to make sure information is up to date.



Almost half of the entire UK population have visited a library. Therefore, gaining the support of public library staff was a potential way to overcome both the barriers above. Supporting the public to access online information using the libraries 'People's Network' would help overcome the digital divide. With help of library staff patients would not have to be IT literate to access online information and take advantage of the choice programme.

Public library staff can access information about hospitals on the People's Network for all patients, print it out and give it to them – providing written information as and when needed.

The library pilots set out to test this hypothesis.

Health Libraries: There are currently 300 health libraries across the country, with over 1,500 health library staff. They are based in acute Trusts, in some PCTs with specialist collections, in Royal Colleges and other institutions. Health Librarians have a wealth of understanding about conditions and treatments and also understand the health service. They were therefore another existing resource that could be tapped to supplement the generic support offered by the public library service.

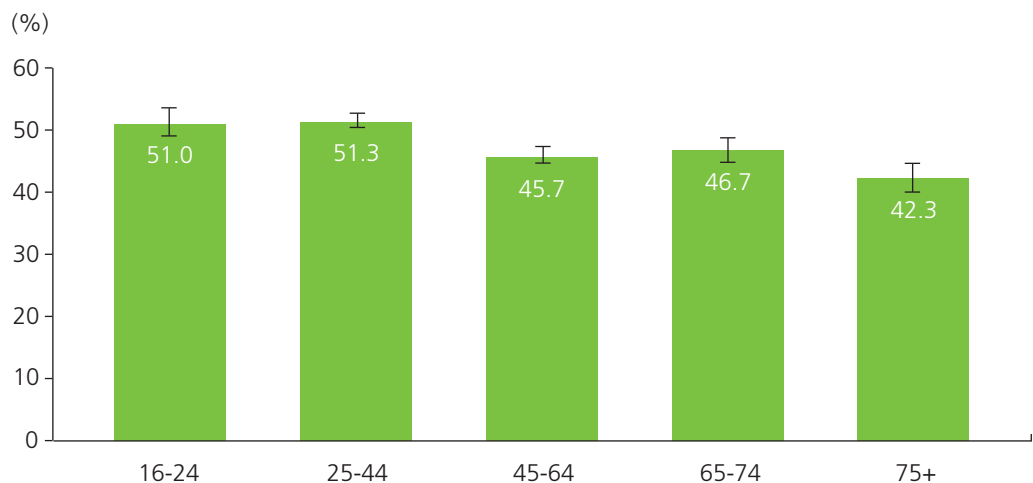




A 2005/6 Department for Culture, Media and Sport survey found that that 48% of all adults have attended a library, a percentage equivalent to approximately 19.1 million adults. 34.5% of these adults visited a library at least once a month.

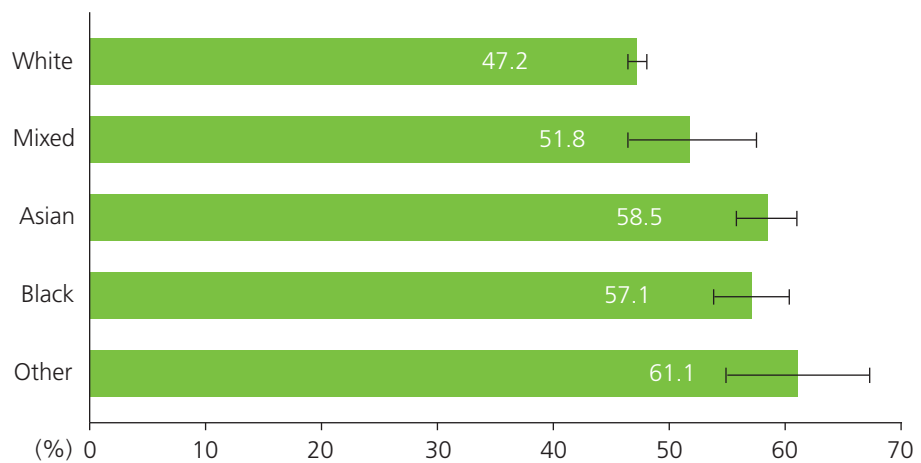
In addition, 42.2% of people with a limiting disability or illness visit libraries as well as 48.8% of people with a non-limiting disability or illness.

Attendance by age group

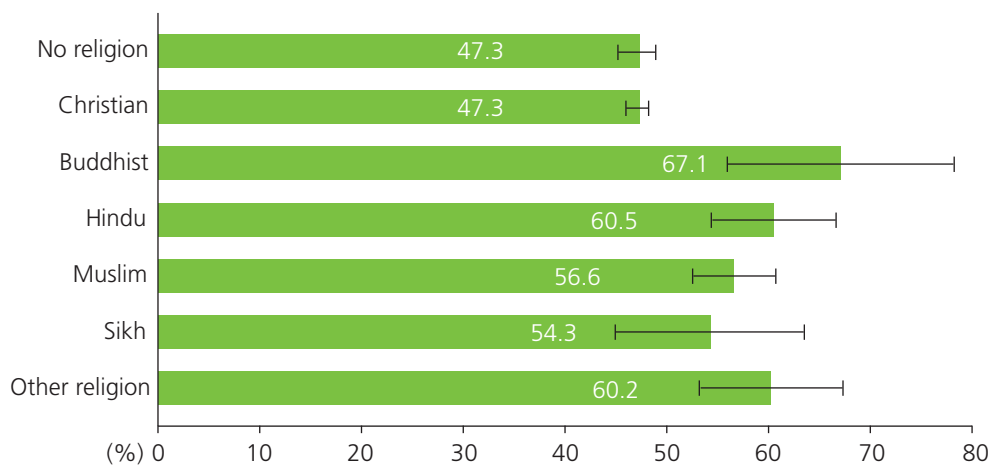




Attendance by ethnicity



Attendance by religion





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What is the people's network?

The People's Network was set up within the public library service in 2004 and consists of 30,000 broadband enabled computers. It is available for use by the public in 3088 library branches across the country.

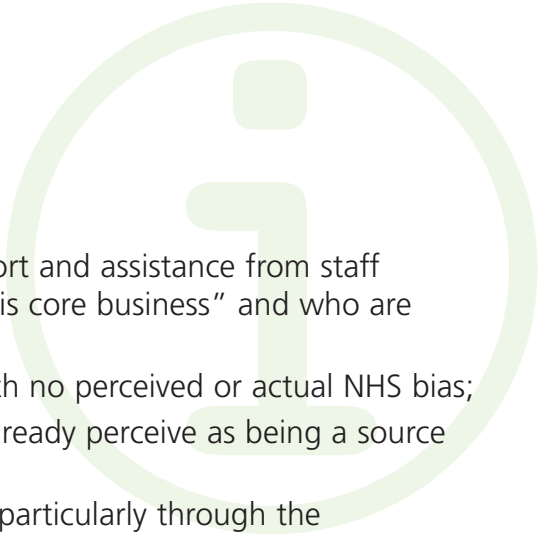
Library staff are trained to support the public in using the internet. Increasingly the role of the librarian is expanding from simply getting information for people out of a book on a shelf, to getting it from the internet.

In the Laser Foundation Libraries Impact Study (2005), a clear contribution by libraries to government objectives on patient and public involvement in health was found. Indeed, the pilot site focusing on health, Gateshead, found that almost one in two (48%) of the 196 respondents to the pilot survey used the library to access health related material. One user commented:

“Library staff are very cheerful and helpful – they help me to feel like part of the community and yet I am not someone who integrates well with people socially. I feel completely comfortable in a library.”

The library service was able to make choice more accessible to patients through its People's Network by:

- Giving patients access to 3088 service points open for 10 hours or more per week (excluding mobile library services which are in addition);
- Offering 77.3% of the population access within 1 mile of home and for 91.6% within two miles (Better access rates are found in Unitary Authorities, Metropolitan Districts and London);
- Giving patients the option of the People's Network to search for comparative information on healthcare providers, at no cost to the user in 90% of cases;

- 
- Offering patients professional support and assistance from staff “for whom looking up information is core business” and who are trained in IT;
 - Providing a neutral environment with no perceived or actual NHS bias;
 - Utilising services which the public already perceive as being a source of information about health;
 - Offering a socially inclusive service, particularly through the People’s Network;
 - Enabling patients who are not IT literate to receive support to access online information as well as printed information as required.

Gateshead library use

The Laser Foundation Libraries Impact Study (2005), found substantial evidence of the uses people make of libraries in a health context. In Gateshead, almost half of library users had accessed health information within the preceding year. The reasons people gave for doing this included:

- gaining background information
- understanding in more detail what their diagnosis was or the options available
- wanting to be better informed about the decisions they were going to make

Obviously, these days many people can simply access information at home via the internet. However, they were still keen to use the library because:

- it’s a safe, trusted place
- they can ask for help in navigating different information resources from trained staff
- they can access more resources than they could afford at home, including a wider range of books, and free access to certain subscription online services



Enabling Choice

The public library perspective, from Mike Clarke, Director, London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA)

The LLDA is always looking for new ways for public libraries to support people's information needs and Partnership For Patients fitted well with our range of activities.



Patient Choice is a major driver of change in the Government public sector reform agenda.

“Yet without a well-informed population choice is meaningless – you can't decide if you don't know.”

There is a real risk with healthcare that excluded groups – the elderly, people whose first language is not English, those on low incomes and others – will end up at the back of the queue because they cannot access information about their options. One way of challenging this is through public libraries, which are regarded as effective 'agents of choice' in communities.

People already come into libraries to seek health information. They can look at books, leaflets or websites to find out about treatments and medications, borrow books on healthier eating or smoking advice and also find out the locations of local practitioners and health services. More recently, libraries have expanded into new areas, many now offer bibliotherapy, an emerging treatment for mild to moderate mental health conditions, using reading as a means of helping people understand and combat their symptoms.



Libraries have a record of accomplishment in providing services to disadvantaged groups. We have books and other materials in different British and minority ethnic community languages. We also help elderly people relate to new forms of technology, for example through widespread 'silver surfer' sessions. Since the introduction of computers and other digital services, we have also seen a younger client group increase its take up of library provision.

When it comes to Partnership For Patients we're very clear about the respective roles of libraries and healthcare professionals. Whilst Healthcare professionals are there to offer patients advice, libraries are there to support people's choices by signposting them to information and helping them use technology. This in turn will enable patients to make independent, informed choices about their own healthcare.





Enabling Choice

The Partnership for Patients pilot

The Partnership for Patients pilot project tested the role of the public library service in supporting patients in patient choice. The pilot was launched in 10 Primary Care Trusts with 3 Libraries in each area. Health Link project managed the partnership with the DH, the London Libraries Development Agency, DEFRA, London Health Libraries and the Museums, Libraries and Archives.

A series of 10 networking events were organised, to which all partners, including local GP practices, were invited. The 10 library authorities were each invited to select three branch libraries, based on criteria that would generate a range of user groups.

A key aim was to compare the use of the Patient Choice programme by type of population and location.

These included seven London boroughs piloting 21 libraries covering a diverse population and areas of deprivation as well as affluent middle class and three rural authorities piloting nine libraries and a mobile library with internet access enabled by satellite at each stop.

The authorities were:

- Bromley
- Derbyshire
- Gloucestershire
- Greenwich
- Hackney
- Haringey
- Newham
- Southwark
- Suffolk
- Waltham Forest



GP practices were selected within one mile of the pilot library in the urban areas and within five or 10 miles in the rural areas.

The pilot involved two stages:

Stage 1

Referral by a GP of a patient eligible for Patient Choice to the public library if they need information or support, with details of location and opening hours.

Stage 2

Patients visit the library where the staff show them the NHS Choices website (www.nhs.uk) where they can browse for themselves or receive assistance in choosing their hospital and booking an appointment through Choose and Book.

Evaluation

Throughout the pilot project sponsors funded an independent evaluation by Loughborough University. The university collected monthly returns of visit numbers and also collected patient information in the form of surveys of those who visited the library. They also conducted small focus groups and telephone interviews with GP practices and library staff.

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Providing support

Support was put into place for each pilot area:

- A dedicated portal was provided for each pilot location, showing local performance information, training materials and regular updates on what was happening across the project as well as access to the evaluation materials.
- Networking Events were held in each area. Staff trained in the essentials of Patient Choice, Choose and Book and patient confidentiality. In all, 225 library staff were trained in the use of designated websites showing comparative information and the Choose and Book site.
- An escalation protocol was developed for IT problems. Contact details were obtained for the IT leads in each PCT which were then added to the portal.
- NHS Connecting for Health produced a dedicated guide for the library service about how to set up People's Network PCs to access Choose and Book in the most optimum manner.

The networking events launching each pilot provided an opportunity for the library and health sectors to meet each other. In almost all cases, this was a connection that had never previously been made. The resulting discussions started to reveal the potential of this powerful partnership between a public service specialising in giving information and another, which had always struggled to provide it.

It was clear that the role of the library as a local community information hub could help the NHS 'fully engage' its users and empower them with Patient Choice.

Each pilot library was visited at least once during the project and further training offered where required. Monthly updates were produced sharing

good practice and overall progress. The project received a boost from a visit by the then Secretary of State for Health Patricia Hewitt to Haringey, at Wood Green Central library, and then a few weeks later by the then Minister for Health, Andy Burnham to Peckham library.

In order to support the referral of patients locally, we produced:

- A programme of follow-up telephone calls to 120 GP practices closest to the pilot sites.
- A series of 'Taking Libraries to Health' events in GP practices. One per pilot, where libraries could showcase their contribution to choice, health and well-being to the practices and their patients.
- A template for Taking Health to Libraries Events where PCTs held choice and health promotion events in libraries, based on three successful events in Hackney's three pilot sites. At these events, immunisations, community dental checks and safe sex information given out as well as awareness raising material about choice.



In conclusion

The role of the library as agent for choice of school, university, holiday destination, job or accommodation, is well established. In meeting its own objectives to increase visitor numbers, offer universal internet access and provide a socially inclusive service, the library service is a powerful partner for the health service. This strategic partnership for patients needs to be driven at local level so that information and support for choice can be provided where and how patients want it, dependent on local demographics and circumstances. In this way the power of choice to drive up quality in the health service and tackle health inequalities, will be released.

Case Studies



**Paul Drumm, Group Manager –
North Chingford, Lea Bridge and Walthamstow**

According to Paul the Partnership for Patients pilot fitted well with the work his librarians were already doing around Walthamstow. He explained: “Our staff have always helped with computer-based enquiries and we’ve always been able to point people to our information library or the People’s Network, which offers free access to email, internet, word processing – and help them use it.”

Ahead of the pilot, Paul’s staff went up to Whipps Cross hospital for training. They learnt about the policy of Choice, received training on how to use Choose and Book and received a refresher session a few weeks later at work. “We’ve had plenty of support,” says Paul, “as well as the training we received promotional material, so it has not put that much more pressure in our staff.”

Paul and his team have had a steady flow of enquiries about the programme. He continues:

“A lot of the people who come to us do not have a computer at home, while the first three people that came in had hearing difficulties. They were nervous about coming to places where they would feel vulnerable. But they knew that the library was a secure environment where the staff were friendly and helpful. They were not computer oriented, so we could sit them down and, while there’s nothing particularly technical about www.nhs.uk and the appointment booking procedure, we were able to make a big difference for them.”

With strong links to the local PCT, Paul has high hopes for the future of the pilot. “We’re very proud of our work so far, it’s like a foundation stone, the first step to working on other combined activities. Some people still think libraries are just about books, but this underlines they are about so much more, so this is something we can really build on.”



Diana Edmonds, Chief Librarian – Haringey

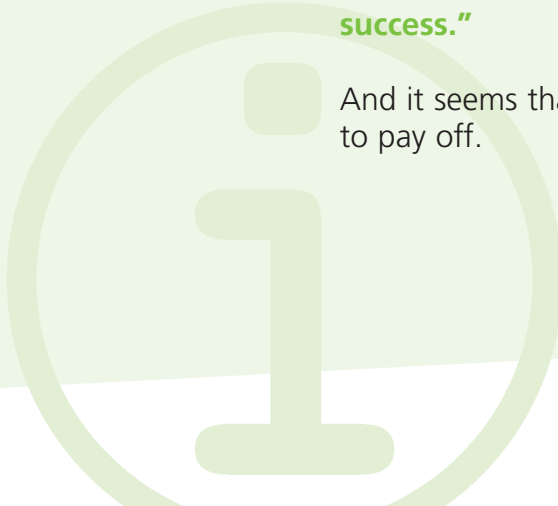
When it comes to involvement in the health sector, Haringey's libraries are setting the standard. "In a recent report, the Social Services Inspectorate felt our approach to 'Wellbeing' was excellent," says Diana Edmonds, Chief Librarian for Haringey, before outlining a wide range of community initiatives that range from improving nutrition and increasing exercise to safer sex, mental well-being and promoting sensible approaches to alcohol and drugs.

Through nine libraries and several additional 'outreach' points, the borough has been providing opportunities for organisations to promote health services, including stress counselling in special 'well-being suites'. "Libraries are usually regarded as places to get information," explains Diana. "But we have moved towards providing opportunities for well-being as well." In fact, the Partnership for Patients scheme was welcomed as a complementary extension of work already underway. "We were absolutely delighted with Choice," she continues. "It was entirely appropriate to what we do. We have a big emphasis on IT and have Internet champions in each library."

To really boost the Choice program Diana has been targeting GPs.

"We've done quite a lot to engage GPs, letting them to know about the facilities we have and we have had increasing success."

And it seems that strategy is beginning to pay off.



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Case Studies



Lorna Lee, Head of Libraries – Waltham Forest

Lorna Lee has backed Partnership for Patients right from the start. “It very much fitted into our vision of how our libraries should be – as a place for facilitating access to services,” she explains:

“Libraries are not just there for lending books, they are the first point of information for all sorts of services, whether through books and leaflets or staff helping people access the internet or answer questions.”

The pilot project coincided with a £10 million capital refurbishment programme for Waltham Forest’s libraries. “We’re now fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act, and can offer semi-public spaces that services like patients choosing their hospital through Choose and Book can use as well as wireless internet technology for the public.”

So the pilot came at the right time – and to the right place as well. “This programme is particularly important for a borough like Waltham Forest because it has a high proportion of new and transient communities who are drawn to the library as a first port of call,” Lorna continues. And it is not just the public who benefited, “The pilot has helped develop librarian skills and showed people in the health sector what libraries can do. It has changed the mindset of people and in the future we hope it will show that libraries are successful partners to work with.”



Linda Foster, Library Manager – Peckham

“Because we already had website access, the system was straightforward, and everyone here is comfortable giving advice, Patient Choice was something we could take on quite easily,” says library manager Linda Foster who set up the Partnerships for Patients scheme in Peckham. “I thought the partnership was a good idea.”

The number of people coming in each month asking for help with Choosing their hospital wasn't as high as Linda had hoped. But this something she believes GPs can help with, as she explains:

“We promoted the idea in the library, and people would come over and ask what it was all about. If people heard about it from their doctor first, I really think there would be a greater take up.”

Indeed, Linda would like to see more links between the health sector and the library, helping the library to become a one-stop-shop for information. “Many people are confident enough to get this kind of information for themselves, however libraries are an excellent place for people who need help to go to.”





Case Studies

Cyprian Marah, Knowledge Manager – Hackney Central

"We thought the partnership between the PCTs and libraries was a great idea," explains Cyprian Marah, who manages projects and people connected with Patient Choice in the borough.

"After all, we already recommend books and provide general health information to the public. Having the Choose and Book system that allows people who have been referred by their GP to book hospital appointments was really exciting for us."



Cyprian believes that libraries could benefit from this partnership as much as patients. "It's a great way of bringing more customers into the library, because if they are choosing their hospital using Choose and Book they may get interested in our other resources and become members."

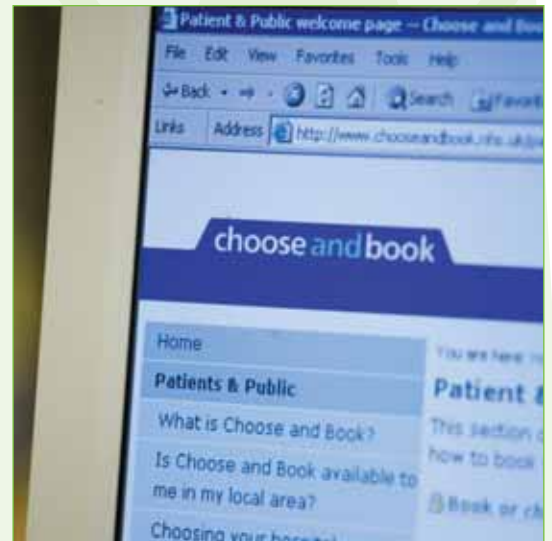
Although running and resourcing the programme has not been a big issue for Cyprian, organising events around it have been more challenging. "The promotional days did stretch us," he admits, "it took a fair amount of time to organise them in the library, when we would get other health-related services involved like immunisation, free check ups, and smoking advice." However, Cyprian feels that they coped – and maintained a regular flow of visitor enquiries.





Cyprian is very positive of the scope of PCT-library partnerships in the future. "Health is one of the highest priorities in the borough," he concludes.

"As such, it's a very good partnership to continue with. It should also raise our profile by showing our wide range of resources and demonstrate how we can assist patients in a safe, secure and comfortable environment."



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Case Studies



Wendy Sunney, Choose and Book Programme Manager – North Derbyshire

Wendy Sunney's work has focused on training. "The librarians we contacted were very much in favour of the programme and keen to get involved," she says. "But at the time we did not have a single health information portal so we had to make links to other websites." Wendy's team developed an interactive tool and a training programme which she then delivered across the county. The next challenge was changing attitudes among the public.

"There was not a huge take-up initially," points out Wendy. "I think that was because patients always assumed they were going back the same place. But Partnerships for Patients has changed that. Patient Choice and Choose and Book is now very well entrenched in Derbyshire and patients are beginning to exercise their choices."

For Wendy the key link is with the practice receptionist, "GPs have a consultation and then the patient goes out and talks to the receptionist. It's often there that they have the conversation about waiting times and the options available."

So what results has Derbyshire seen? "We have seen a real turnaround," Wendy confirms. "It's really reassuring that a large number of patients surveyed through our hospital appointment system say they have been offered a choice." She concedes there is still more work to be done though, since people are not always using all the information available to them. However the value of the partnership with libraries is clear:

"The librarians we contacted were very much in favour of the partnership programme and keen to get involved. Because of this support our GPs can now see that the library is a central place for them to market their services to patients."



**Pete Clark, Choose and Book
Associate Project Manager – Waltham Forest**

When Pete Clark began promoting Choice through Choose and Book across the borough, he found GPs were initially sceptical. “When it first launched, it was pretty slow and likely to crash,” he says. “Much of my time was spent showing doctors how those initial problems had been solved. The message really started to sink in because I was able to show GPs that you could book an appointment in around 60 seconds. The challenge then became getting the patients involved – and that’s where Partnership for Patients comes in.”

The response to the pilot has been positive. “It’s been a very rewarding exercise that benefits both doctor and patient,” says Pete.

“The doctor may come up with the choices but not have time to explain them. With the new system the patient can go away and look at the facts and figures for all providers – and if they need support, or they haven’t got internet access at home then they can get help from the library.”

The demand has certainly been there: “I once presented the idea to a group of elderly residents and asked them what would influence their choice of hospital. One woman said ‘has to have a good hairdresser’, although most suggested food, fatality rates, parking and shops.”

Equally striking has been the response of the libraries. “I was absolutely gob-smacked by the enthusiasm of the library staff. They have been so keen to get the project going, not just offering lip-service to patient Choice but adding real value.” It is a value he feels can only be increased with a more ambitious roll-out of the PCT-library partnership, boosting a system that now processes more than 2,700 referrals a month in Waltham Forest alone.



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Case Studies



Esther Denny, Choose and Book Project Support Officer – City and Hackney

“We don’t currently have a budget for the programme so we’ve been doing what we can within our means and I think we have got quite good results,” says Esther Denny, who ran one of the three Partnership for Patients pilot schemes in the borough.

But she does admit that she had some doubts at the start. “We weren’t quite sure how it was going to turn out, but it’s all gone really well. We’ve been able to show other PCTs that this partnership is something they could put together without focus groups and lots of publicity – and we have had some very good feedback.”



Spreading the message involved more than putting up posters and leaflets in the libraries.

“We held a health day in each location, which brought in lots of other issues such as immunisation as well as dentists providing free dental check ups and nurses doing blood tests – so as well as promoting the library and its services we were



able to bring the PCT to the people.”
This has proved an important step in
City and Hackney’s relationship with
the borough.

**“For us this has been very valuable
because we are a very diverse
community and a lot of people
are unaware how the health
services work.”**



Case Studies

Kathy Watkins, Chief Executive – Newham University Hospital NHS Trust –

For Kathy Watkins, the Partnerships for Patients initiative has fitted neatly into her overall vision for her own hospital. “We have always believed in giving patients more power as consumers of health services,” she explains. “Our community comes from a wide variety of backgrounds with different needs and we are always looking to use whatever avenues are out there to share information.” The library programme came at just the right time, complementing the hospital’s other patient involvement groups.

“The libraries project is a very important way of ‘de-institutionalising’ the hospital and realising our vision of the hospital as a ‘health village’,” Kathy continues, acknowledging that while the task of educating the public in health issues is being taken up by PCTs, there was still value for Acute Trusts like Newham to get involved. “We have seen this hospital as a place that belongs to the patients and the people. But hospitals are still potentially threatening places so this was an opportunity to put out messages easing the fear of illness.” As a result, Kathy believes the health sector should embrace libraries.

“I would encourage other people to get involved with this, especially if, like us, you deal with communities that may be less familiar with the health system. And, for us, it is important people make choices in an informed way and understand how we are different from another hospital that may be providing seemingly the same operation.”



**Pradip Karanjit, Choice Manager –
Newham University Hospital NHS Trust**

The Newham University Hospital Trust had been conducting its own research into the support available to its patients. So when Pradip Karanjit, the hospital's Choice manager, heard about the Partnerships for Patients initiative being piloted by a number of local PCTs, he was naturally interested. "We were looking for a similar way of delivering multi-language support, and the library project seemed the best way of doing it," he says.

"We had patients who were not calling up to book an appointment with us because they did not have enough confidence on the phone."

Libraries became a key focus of the community support scheme, "Whilst we do not yet have the direct booking facility online we still saw a real value in getting libraries to help patients use our booking line over the phone," Pradip explains.

Most libraries were very supportive, as were the local PCTs and a number of GPs who helped promote the scheme by informing patients and helping out with a number of public events. Pradip is very positive about the scheme as a whole.

"With extra support the library relationship will definitely fulfil its potential. It's a fantastic idea, especially in a borough like ours where you have a diverse community with many languages and cultures."



Case Studies

Dr Evan James, GP – St James Street Practice

Dr James is a great supporter of patient choice, giving his patients the relevant booklets and explaining the choices they have. However, he is aware of a range of responses to the programme. "Some patients certainly like to be given the choice," he explains. "The younger or more educated patients, for example. But the older patients tend to prefer local services. Then there are always some patients who will ask me what is best to do."

He thinks that some people, particularly older patients may lose some of their local services if they were to go somewhere other than their local hospital. On the other hand, allowing people to choose does encourage hospitals to provide better services, "Some patients decide where they want to go on the basis of a friend or relative's recommendation, this means hospitals will have to provide a good service to get the recommendations."

As for the partnership with libraries, Dr James believes resourceful patients will find it useful.

"I think they certainly could provide long-term value to patients and GPs by making medical advice information available and providing internet access".





**Dr Ranjit Gill, Chair –
Stockport Managed Care Company**

Stockport Managed Care Company has a contract with Stockport PCT to deliver practice based commissioning. “We manage approximately 90% of the PCT’s budget,” explains Dr Gill. “Part of our role is to enable, encourage, facilitate and manage use of the Choose and Book facility by GP’s and patients.”

Dr Gill believes that Patient Choice has an essential role to play in making GP referrals as smooth as possible, as well as empowering patients to make their own choices.

“Often patients choose where to receive hospital treatment on a convenience and often geographic basis. What we want to do is enable patients and their GPs to make a more informed choice based on real information about the quality of care available, as well as speed.”

Patient Choice has been well received by Stockport GP’s and Dr Gill has been pleased with the success of the library partnership. “Libraries are an effective tool to make patients access to Choice much easier. In the future we’d like to see patients have the same access in doctors waiting rooms and other public areas.”

Dr Gill also feels that the Choice system is particularly helpful in cutting through the mounds of confusing information that patients often face. “The healthcare system is complex and as such, the information required is also complex. It needs to be imparted in a way people can understand it. He concludes: “By providing this information in an easy to understand format it will encourage further patient driven choice in the future.



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Case Studies

Peter Mitchell

"My partner works in the local library so that's how I heard about Choice," explains Peter Mitchell, who recently used the scheme for the first time. "When my Doctor told me I needed to make an appointment I went to library to do it, it saved me a lot of time."

Like many elderly people, Peter is not computer literate, however, he didn't find this was a problem. "The staff did everything for me," he continues. "I just told them what dates were good for me. It was quite easy once you got on. You can take your time and can get through the system quite quickly. It all worked very smoothly."

Peter also found there was plenty of information available on Partnerships for Patients at the library.

"The library had a big sign saying 'book your appointment here', which helps spread the idea," he recalls, "The library staff are also on hand to tell you more. If someone I knew was going to make a hospital appointment then I would definitely tell them to go to their library and do it online like I did!"





Josephine Tyrcomell-Fay

"I think the Choice library scheme is a very good idea," recently retired nursery teacher Josephine explains. "Especially for old people who may not know much about computers or can't afford one and want to find out more about hospitals. GPs are generally too busy to do all the explaining themselves." Josephine found out about the Partnership for Patients scheme when she dropped into Waltham Forest's St James Street surgery for her flu jab. Browsing the stalls that had been set up to coincide with the surgery's 'flu day', she was immediately impressed with the Choice scheme. "I'm a strong believer in choice when it comes to hospitals," she continues, "Infection rates are something that would influence my decision."

"The library's always having events, and there are all kinds of exhibitions in the foyer. It's a real focus for the community. There are always a lot of older people in there too, so the Choice scheme seems a natural thing to offer there."

Although she's not used the system herself yet, Josephine has no doubt she would if she needed to. Not only that, she would also encourage others to make informed choices and sees libraries as supportive environments in which people can make them effectively. "I was talking to an older lady the other day about the scheme and she thought it was a good idea, because she doesn't have a computer and she's a regular visitor to the library," concludes Josephine. "She knows she can get help on the computer there too. I think libraries should be offering more of this kind of thing, perhaps focusing on mothers and children."



Case Studies

Enabling Choice

St James' Street open day

The St James' Street medical centre is a fast-growing practice in the borough of Waltham Forest. It has seven GPs and provides a series of additional services designed to raise issues relevant to the diverse community it serves. The October open day was part of this push, promoting a series of services from patients choosing their hospital and Partnerships for Patients, to Home Energy Efficiency Training (HEET), smoking and general healthy living advice.



For the Practice's Principle GP, Dr Kavar, and its busy Practice Manager Sue Crabbe, the day typified their active involvement in the local community. "We like to maximise our opportunities so the day has been organised

to coincide with flu-jab day," Sue explains, accounting for the steady flow of around 250 people who browsed the stalls set up around the surgery's open reception area.





After speaking to almost 150 people about patient Choice, Pete Clark, from the Waltham Forest PCT, felt the day had been “pretty successful” while the practice’s Health Improvement Manager Matthew Cook was able to sign up more people to his programme, including one man who was trying to give up smoking and improve his diet: “I am looking forward to his call, so I can live better!” he said.

Natalie Edgehill was attending the day’s weekly children’s clinic with her seven-week old son and noticed the HEET (what is this?) display. She picked up some useful information on energy saving, commenting: “this is very good for me, particularly now we are approaching winter when the bills go sky high.”

“We’re a forward-thinking practice,” says Dr Kamar, explaining how the day fits into his overall vision for creating partnerships throughout the community. “We are always interested in getting involved in initiatives that improve health care, whether it is improving choice or helping people miss fewer appointments through Choose and Book.”



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Case Studies

Enabling Choice

Hackney

Hackney was one of 10 local authorities chosen to pilot the Partnership for Patients scheme. Staff received training to help patients use the online booking system and were able to offer a range of support, from answering non-clinical queries, to booking appointments for patients online or by telephone.

Promotional and evaluation material (Choosing Your Hospital booklets, bookmarks, banners, pop-up posters and surveys) were displayed in the libraries to raise awareness and seek feedback. Staff also collated monthly statistics for Loughborough University Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU) who were the independent evaluator of the Partnership for Patients Project.

In partnership with local health services and the City and Hackney Teaching PCT, the libraries also ran a series of health events and activities to raise awareness of Patient Choice and other health initiatives. These events reached out to people who may not otherwise have had the opportunity or motivation to participate or find out about Patient Choice.

Hackney Libraries provide a safe place for patients, they offer professional, mediated help to those with no IT skills and or who were unable to research their options, giving patients peace of mind and time to decide on what is important to them when choosing their hospital.

The project strengthened the traditional and trusted role of Hackney Libraries as accessible sources of information in the community and optimised the use of new technology, as well as tapping into the existing library staff skill set. It also supported a key policy priority of Hackney's elected Mayor: Improving services and increasing opportunities for all, raising the life chances of the most disadvantaged.



Enabling Choice

Stockport

Caroline Bennett, Head of PLC (PCT, Library, Choice), Lynne Ranson, Stockport Libraries Lead Librarian, and Wendy Morrell, Stockport PCT Choose and Book Lead, became aware of the Partnership for Patients project being piloted in localities throughout the country and were intrigued.

“We discovered the Partnership for Patients pilot in our neighbouring PCT in Derbyshire and wanted to find out more,” Caroline explains. “We could see the potential of this innovative service and wondered how it could be delivered here in Stockport.”

A visit was arranged to Bolsover Library in Derbyshire to see how the pilot had taken off there. The visit proved useful and the team returned with a number of ideas. Caroline continues: “As Stockport library service was due to embark on their regular training with the Foundation Trust on health websites, we wondered if there was an opportunity to include training on Patient Choice. Resources were made available and we were given access to the portal which helped us to brand the service in exactly the same way as the pilot.”

Instead of picking one or two libraries in the borough, it was decided that the partnership would launch with all 15 local libraries. Training was given to all Stockport library staff starting with the senior librarians. Using the Choose and Book system to ‘book’ test patients into virtual clinics enabled staff to gain a working knowledge of the system. Local GP surgeries were also visited to raise staff awareness of the new service now available in libraries, with posters, bookmarks and business cards being made available.

Case Studies

Working with the Foundation Trust, local libraries and Stockport PCT, the team organised a series of Public Health Awareness events to raise public awareness of Patient Choice. The first was on the 5th November when the service was launched across the whole of Stockport. It became apparent during these events that the public were not aware of Patient Choice or Choose and Book when making their outpatient appointment.

To encourage the public to participate and inject a little fun, the team contacted local companies to ask if they would donate prizes for a quiz raffle. "We decided to ask participants three easy questions regarding the process of booking a hospital appointment using Patient Choice," explains Caroline. "All the answers to the questions were on display boards which were at each event."

The questions were: Where can you now book your hospital appointment? How many local libraries are there in Stockport? And what is the name of the NHS website? The quiz proved to be very successful and at the end of the events patients were more knowledgeable about the options and choices available to them and how to book their hospital appointment on line at the library.



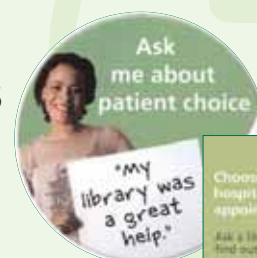
Enabling Choice

Next Steps

For the Partnership for Patients programme to be successful, it's important that everyone who can commits to developing the programme in their local area. Resources and advice are available to help you get started.

Your resources

- Display materials for libraries are available from the Department of Health. Telephone 08701 555 455 or send an email to dh@prolog.uk.com
- CD library toolkit available on prolog
- 5ft pull up banners and 10ft outside PVC banners are also available. email choice@dh.gsi.gov.uk
- 'Choosing your Hospital' booklets are available from your PCT. Booklets in other languages, Braille and audio are also available to order. See www.nhs.uk/choices/pages/alternativeformatversions.aspx for further downloads.



Building successful partnerships

Creating your own Partnership for Patients programme is as simple as developing strong links and a communication chain to deliver what patients need.

So who needs to do what?

Initially it needs commitment from both a library and a PCT. The Chief Librarian and the PCT Manager need to meet and agree steps. (For an example please see the Stockport case study on page 41)



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What will libraries need from the PCT?

1. email address and phone number for contact/s at PCT
2. Regular communication. Monthly meetings via email or telephone are advised
3. A steady supply of information regarding Choice, news of any changes or updates as they occur
4. Updates to the nhs Choices website: www.nhs.uk
5. Contact details for the communications lead and public health team to create promotions and events
6. Library link on the PCT website informing and leading people to the 'Partnership for Patients' role of libraries
7. Posters, publicity material and 'Choosing your Hospital booklets
8. Communication with GPs and Practice managers in their local area. This could be done through regular meetings
9. Encouragement of GPs and practice staff to use the libraries to help them deliver information for choice
10. Training on the nhs Choice website and Choose and Book – available through MyHealthspace (www.myhealthspace.co.uk)
11. Regular, constructive feedback on what is and isn't working
12. Evidence from patients detailing the benefits of the partnership they have experienced



What will PCTs need from libraries?

- 1.** Branch manager and team contact details. Telephone numbers, addresses and also the opening times of the library
- 2.** Regular communication. Monthly meetings via email or telephone are advised
- 3.** Feedback from Librarians about the information that is being requested by and delivered to patients
- 4.** Updates and information about other initiatives running in the library, which the Partnerships for Patients programme could link with
- 5.** Icon and link on the libraries website for the PCT
- 6.** Links into the libraries network groups such as mums and toddler groups, silver surfers and reading groups
- 7.** Regular, constructive feedback on what is and isn't working
- 8.** Evidence from patients detailing benefits of the partnership they have experienced.

Remember, regular communication and feedback are essential to building a successful Partnership for Patients programme.





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