

## **SHA Library Leads Group (SHALL)**

### **Response to *Developing commissioning support: towards service excellence***

The members of the Strategic Health Authority Library Leads Group (SHALL) are pleased to have the opportunity to provide input to the consultation exercise around the development of commissioning support in NHS England.

SHALL represents the interests of the NHS library, information and knowledge services across the ten statutory SHAs and leads on the strategic development, quality assurance, monitoring and development of these services.

We work closely with NHS Evidence to ensure that the whole NHS workforce has access to a wide range of electronic resources to support evidence based practice, training research and decision making. We also support a wide network of physical and virtual library services which help staff who need access to information to support patient care, management and clinical decision making, research and lifelong learning activities.

Further details of our work can be found at: <http://www.libraryservices.nhs.uk>

#### **Please find below our comments on the draft document.**

We recognise that this is a high level document that talks of 'end to end' or 'one-stop' commissioning support. However it does not explicitly state the importance of evidence-based commissioning for service excellence.

The document acknowledges there is a range of functions the CCGs will need and that intelligence functions could be standardised and scaled up. Wherever the intelligence function sits, we recommend that professionally qualified and experienced health librarians are included in the team as a key element of commissioning support. Their expertise in navigating the literature, critical appraisal and knowledge management techniques would provide valuable input to the developing commissioning processes.

NHS librarians are well placed to support evidence-based commissioning by providing knowledge and information when commissioning managers require evidence for initial assessments, business cases and option appraisals, and when they are: commissioning services; redesigning services; assessing healthcare needs; and disinvesting from services.

Different forms of evidence will be required - from data to research and intelligence. Data on activity, cost, and outcomes will need to be combined with the knowledge on needs assessment, clinical outcomes and cost information. For example, models of service delivery and examples of good practice from other parts of the country would be useful to inform the initial assessment process, whilst more detailed database search results would be required for developing a business case with options.

## **SHA Library Leads Group (SHALL)**

### **Response to *Developing commissioning support: towards service excellence***

There is also a need to provide evidence services and information support for: research and development; revalidation of GPs; supporting students on placement; and supporting staff undertaking courses as part of their CPD.

The evidence provided by a professionally led library and information/knowledge service focuses on material that can be used to support all aspects of the commissioning cycle. It ensures that decisions are based on best current evidence and commissioners are signposted to the most relevant and up-to-date resources, be they publications, guidance, tools, websites or intelligence.

This can be achieved through service outputs that include

- literature searching to answer commissioning questions
- current awareness / alerting and horizon scanning
- a range of knowledge management tools and techniques
- supply of articles, reports and books
- information-skills training and support for searching healthcare databases

There are a wide range of existing NHS library and knowledge services in PCTs and Trusts. Public Health England (PHE) is already working with SHA Library Leads to identify where library and knowledge services are located, what staffing levels they have and what expertise and best practice exists in the system. This will lead to an options appraisal for the provision of such services to PHE.

We recommend that the NHS Commissioning Board encourages commissioning support organisations to engage with their SHA Library Lead to identify where library and knowledge service expertise currently sits and how it can best be integrated into the commissioning process.

We would be delighted to provide such support direct to the NCB in this matter if that would prove useful.

We would draw your attention to a number of developments where library and knowledge services have been supporting the commissioning process and that might serve as a model for the future:

Primary Care Commissioning 'Ask an Expert' Service

<http://www.pcc-cic.org.uk/ask-an-expert>

Librarians providing fast and efficient expert search service via this national pilot

Milton Keynes – recognition of role of professional librarians in helping clinicians to get evidence into practice – contributed to PCT achieving highest level compliance with WCC competency 5 (manage knowledge).

## **SHA Library Leads Group (SHALL)**

### **Response to *Developing commissioning support: towards service excellence***

The Commissioning Handbook,

<http://www.libraryservices.nhs.uk/forlibrarystaff/commissioning/>

A resource that has been developed nationally to develop and maintain the specialist skills of librarians supporting commissioning.

To contact your SHA Library Lead:

<http://www.libraryservices.nhs.uk/shall/shallcontacts/>

Richard Osborn  
SHA Library Leads Group Chair

December 2011