Library, knowledge and information services

Library and knowledge professionals apply their expertise to ensure that NHS bodies, staff, learners, patients and the public have the right knowledge and evidence, when and where they need it.

Their work is crucial to all aspects of healthcare through the supplying of evidence to support decisions on treatment, patient care and safety, commissioning and policy. They also support lifelong learning, undertake research and drive innovation.

Working life

Information and knowledge is available in a variety of formats, for example books, websites and periodicals so healthcare professionals rely on knowledge management staff for support in accessing it. This could be looking for information on their behalf or training them to use tools to search and critically appraise the information themselves.
The work is varied, stimulating and rewarding. You may:

- run complex literature searches to support patient care, research and improvements in health services
- provide services to keep health professionals up to date with the latest evidence and best practice in their field
- develop and deliver training to help colleagues assess and make best use of this information

Library staff increasingly work outside the traditional library space to deliver clinical and outreach services, embedding roles within health and management teams.

**Roles in library, knowledge and information services**

Explore some of the roles available:

- **Library and knowledge services manager**
- **Librarian**
- **Clinical librarian**
- **Outreach librarian**
- **Public health and commissioning librarian**
- **Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) liaison librarian**
- **Library assistant/senior library assistant**

**Library and knowledge services manager**

As a library knowledge services manager, you'll:
- work autonomously to shape services to meet the needs of users and organisational objectives
- be involved in designing and delivering the national information strategy for health - 'Knowledge for Healthcare'
- shape and implement national strategy
- lead a small, diverse team that are regularly in contact with your users, allowing the team to see the difference they make to frontline staff and patients
- work collaboratively with other library services to provide the best value for money
- be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library depending upon team size

Librarian

You’ll work on the front line delivering training to healthcare professionals so they can access and assess the quality of the information they find. You’ll also:

- undertake enquiry work and perform literature searches
- contribute to current awareness bulletins for users including healthcare professionals
- deliver training to healthcare professionals
- promote and manage resources for evidence and use of the library service

Clinical librarian

Your aim is to spend as much time as possible in the hospital working alongside clinical teams as they care for patients. You are part of a multidisciplinary team including doctors, nurses, therapists and managers. You'll also:

- attend clinical meetings
- accompany staff on ward rounds as they visit patients
- conduct literature searches to find answers to evidence gaps

Outreach librarian

You’ll work with health staff working across the community, often providing library and knowledge services remotely. You’ll also:

- work with range of staff including from GPs to student nurses, paramedics and IT managers
- visit GP federations, GP practices and community health centres to promote resources and provide training
- receive requests for a variety of information or support. Some can be complex due to the evidence needed for writing local policies, choosing clinical treatment, answering
patients’ questions and professional development

Public health and commissioning librarian

You’ll provide evidence-based knowledge and information and run awareness services of the latest information. You’ll either work across public health and commissioning or just one, for example local authorities for public health, and clinical commissioning groups (CCG) for commissioning. Each may have different needs:

- public health teams require information at population level rather than relating to the clinical care of individual patients
- CCGs decide what clinical services need to be provided in a geographical area and which organisations will be paid to provide them. Their staff need evidence such as statistics and case studies from other CCGs to make these decisions and ensure high-quality care

As you’ll be working on the same site as these teams, you are part of the public health and/or commissioning team and their work.

Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) liaison librarian

You’ll promote research and collaboration between the NHS, higher education and industry. This involves:

- developing relationships
- conducting complex literature searches
- providing reviews or summaries of evidence
- exploring new technologies and innovations that can support health delivery
- profiling NHS organisations to identify common themes and issues

Library assistant/senior library assistant

You’ll be the front-line staff of the library service. Your role will involve:

- running the enquiry desk and helping users with issues, for example patient care, research or professional development
- using information resources to research enquires, from medical textbooks to online databases via the web
- ordering books and journals
- administrative tasks such as sending out letters and maintaining databases and records

Senior library assistants may supervise the library assistants and take on additional responsibilities, such as managing document delivery services and liaising with more senior staff.

Want to learn more?

- Find out about the entry requirements for libraries and knowledge management
- Find out more about the training and development opportunities in libraries and knowledge management
- Pay and conditions
Most jobs in library, knowledge and information services in the NHS are covered by Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers. Staff working in library, knowledge and information services in the NHS will usually work standard hours of 37.5 per week. Terms and conditions for non-NHS employers and contractors will vary.

- Where the role can lead

There are opportunities to progress your career a number of ways, for example moving into senior management roles, managing electronic services or teaching. Most NHS organisations have chief information officers who lead the delivery of knowledge management systems locally.

Find out more about the training and development opportunities in library, knowledge and information services.

- Job market and vacancies

Most NHS organisations advertise their job and apprenticeship vacancies on NHS Jobs, including those that run NHS services. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations at NHS Choices.

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the values of the NHS Constitution apply in your everyday work.

Find out more about NHS values.

- Further information

For further information about alternative routes into library, information and knowledge professions:

- Health Informatics Career Framework
- Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals (CILIP)

To visit a local health library, contact your regional library lead:

- NHS Library and Knowledge Services

Other roles that may interest you

- Information and communication technology
- Clinical informatics [19]
- Experienced paramedic [20]
- Emergency care assistant [21]

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[10] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/health-informatics/libraries-and-knowledge-management/entry-requirements-libraries-and