

What evidence is there that NHS knowledge and library services have an impact on the wellbeing of NHS staff?

Supporting staff wellbeing is a strategic priority for the NHS workforce. This research explores how different NHS libraries approach their wellbeing offer, and how the impact that they have on staff wellbeing is evaluated. We created a mixed-methods survey, distributed online to all NHS libraries in England, with quantitative questions about services delivered and qualitative questions about who libraries worked with and how they evaluate the impact that their services have on staff wellbeing.

Key themes from survey responses:

The NHS health and wellbeing framework includes a toolkit to support NHS people to plan, deliver and evaluate a wide range of wellbeing interventions in their organisation. Adaptable evidence based tools are available to link activities directly with key policy from the NHS Long Term Plan and People Plan, and to gather evaluation data which fits with organisational strategic priorities.

Over 47% of respondents to our survey were not familiar with the framework



Around 6% of respondents indicated that their library uses the framework to help plan and evaluate their offer to support staff wellbeing

Many respondents indicated that they use social media, email lists and other professional networks to keep up to date on how NHS libraries are supporting wellbeing and identify new ideas.

What services are libraries delivering to support staff wellbeing?

- Fiction or wellbeing book collections
- Quiet spaces
- Signposting to wellbeing support and information
- Book and journal clubs
- Wellbeing activity groups

What positive impacts are library services observed to have on staff wellbeing?

- General positive feedback (no detail on impact)
- Staff appreciate access to a relaxing, quiet space away from clinical and office areas
- Library activities help to create connections across the organisation
- Staff are supported with wellbeing related information needs
- No evidence of impact

How do libraries evaluate their impact on staff wellbeing?

- Comments to library staff (informal and overheard)
- Through collaboration with other teams in the organisation
- As part of general feedback gathering (surveys, UX techniques)
- Usage data for wellbeing collections

What were the main barriers identified to delivering services to support staff wellbeing?

- Lack of time
- Library space restrictions
- Lack of funds and resources
- Lack of awareness and engagement with library initiatives amongst staff in the organisation

What were the main barriers identified to evaluating the impact of library services on staff wellbeing?

- Library staff do not know how to evaluate the impact of services on staff wellbeing
- Users do not engage with feedback collection, or staff do not want to disturb users
- Wellbeing services that are provided are used anonymously

Emerging themes:

- Patchwork approach:** NHS libraries display a varied, non-standardized approach to integrating H&W in their services, reflecting diverse perceptions of library responsibility in this domain.
- Networking & Collaboration:** Librarians rely on informal networks for knowledge sharing, highlighting the absence of a centralized resource. Whilst libraries learn from each other, a gap exists in awareness of overarching policies and resources.
- Active vs Passive Approaches:** Preference leans towards passive approaches for both wellbeing initiatives and impact assessments, with activities closer to traditional library services garnering more traction.
- Contextual and Reactive:** Despite shared similarities, individual library services navigate unique local challenges, leveraging local networks and resources such as OD and H&W teams for contextual adaptation.

Conclusion:

Whilst library services are doing fantastic work to enhance NHS staff wellbeing, this currently lacks evidence and coordination. Centralised resources, research, and collaboration both with other libraries and local resources such as existing health and wellbeing teams is crucial for impactful strategies. In the face of multiple barriers to implementing effective wellbeing initiatives, emphasis should be on creating formal networks for sharing best practices rather than overcoming broad challenges to improving staff wellbeing that go beyond libraries' scope.

Read the full report and references: