

The workplace library as a third space

Why do NHS staff use the workplace library for non-library specific activities?

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Within the context of this research, third spaces are defined as public places on neutral ground where people can gather, interact and feel restored and at ease.

Third spaces: promote social equality; offer support to both individuals and communities; foster democracy, and encourage tolerance, understanding and friendship. (Oldenburg, 2001).

Social capital has many definitions, but one that is relevant for this research is social capital as the connections between individuals and the trust that comes from them (Putnam 2000 p.19).

These connections, along with things like quality of life and equality, influence wellbeing (Great Britain. Office for National Statistics, 2012).



Here for you

Library provides more than library services

- These aspects are not measured?
- Difficult to quantify in business terms?
- Libraries build social capital?
- Libraries are a third space in the workplace?
- This promotes staff wellbeing?
- Online resources are one aspect of library services?
- The physical space is a service in its own right?
- Staff value quiet, supportive, non-hierarchical environment?



My background

- In post as Library and Knowledge Services Manager at Croydon Health Services NHS Trust for 11 years.
- Observe library users' behaviour
- "It's all online"?



Masters in Public Administration at London South Bank University

- Research carried out for my dissertation from a business perspective
- One strategic aim of LHL is "promoting physical libraries as attractive study and learning spaces for the whole health and care workforce" (LHL 2013)
- Small unrepresentative sample
- Research during unprecedented financial constraints
- More for less

- To critically investigate reasons why staff use the physical library space at Croydon Health Services (CHS) for non-library services, and to identify any perceptions of well-being and social relationships associated with usage which reflects current literature from public libraries and higher education libraries.

Research question

- Why and how do workplace library users utilise library space for non-library activities?

Research objectives

- For what purposes do library users use the Croydon Health Services' (CHS) library and the spaces within it?
- Why do CHS library users use the CHS library space rather than non-library locations?
- How do CHS library users think their use of the CHS library contributes to their feelings of wellbeing?
- How do CHS library users think their use of the CHS library space contributes to developing and maintaining workplace social relationships?



- identify the gaps between organisational policy around wellbeing and evidence-based practice, and how it is actually applied to achieve trust objectives.
- produce recommendations for the library service as a tool to support the organisation's objectives for wellbeing, as well as supporting evidence-based practice
- resource the physical library space for the wider personal and professional needs of the users



Here for you

- **The Public Health Responsibility Deal** (Great Britain. Department of Health, 2012) highlights the workplace as a vehicle for promoting public health and improving health and wellbeing of staff.
- Workplace libraries may not be seen as a resource specifically to promote well-being however, as Lewis (1998 p.192) identifies, libraries make information more available to people, communities and organisations than if people are left to find information themselves which makes organisations more productive and improves the quality of life in communities.
- Workplace libraries have a role in engaging staff with the organisation by increasing learning capability (Bennett, 2003, preface)



Here for you

- Studies suggest that through increasing social capital, public libraries contribute to enhanced community cohesion and thereby to healthier communities (Arts Council England, 2014 p.3)
- Information flows through social capital networks, and this helps staff achieve their goals.
- Wavell (2002) suggests libraries have social impacts which relate to an individuals' personal development specifically around challenging and changing attitudes, development of self-esteem and the acquisition of skills.



Here for you

- We have many different selves within us and our moods and emotions can be influenced and rebalanced by our environment (de Botton 2006 pg. 121)
- It is well accepted that space and design quality impacts on staff's working life (Jensen, 2005).
- Without adequate design, places and services may work but not be user friendly. This can limit users' interaction with them.



- About the Trust

- Croydon Health Services NHS Trust employs

- **3,670** staff
- has a team of **300** volunteers.
- **30%** our staff work in community services, alongside our partners in primary care and social services, to care for people in- and out-of-hospital.

We run two hospital sites covering both the north and south of the borough:

Purley War Memorial Hospital and
Croydon University Hospital - our main inpatient hospital with a flexible bed base of between 424 and 496 beds.

Services include one of the busiest Accident & Emergency departments in south London, maternity services and specialist care for stroke, heart disease and elective (planned) surgery, including trauma and orthopaedics.

The Trust also runs **16 community clinics** across Croydon



Croydon is one of the most deprived and culturally diverse areas of the capital, and our demographic is changing.

- **383,000** local population
- **Growing quickly:** 11 babies born in our maternity services every day
- **Growing older:** 50,000 older people rising to 65,000 over next 10 years.
- **A third of older people in Croydon** suffer from one or more long-term health conditions, placing huge pressure on the NHS

Long-standing financial challenges.

- **Commissioners and providers** have long-standing and substantial deficits.
- **Croydon Social Care** faces continued pressure for further savings

60

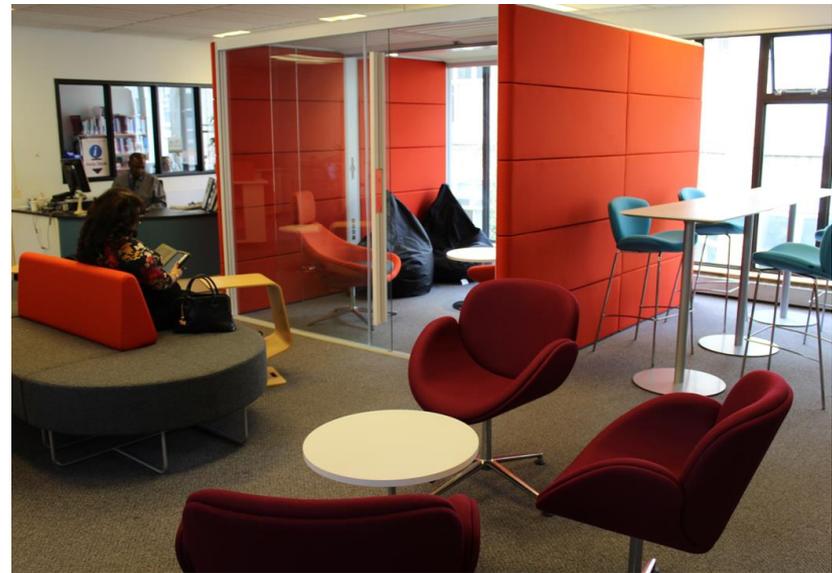


Stark health inequalities between south and north of the borough.

If you take the No. 60 bus, from Old Coulsdon to Thornton Health, life expectancy of local people drops a year for every mile travelled.

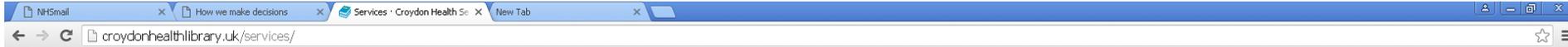
The library

- In postgraduate medical centre
- Available for all staff to use



- IT
- Free wifi
- Books – fiction from public library and healthcare stock
- Journals
- Workspaces
- Standard library services





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NHS Libraries funded by Health Education England

“Healthcare library and knowledge services underpin education, lifelong learning, research and evidence-based practice. Our ambition is to extend this role so that healthcare knowledge services become the integral part of informed decision-making and innovation.”

<https://hee.nhs.uk/our-work/research-learning-innovation/library-knowledge-services>



- In London, NHS libraries have a strategic steer at regional level from London Health Libraries (LHL) and nationally from Health Education England (HEE). LHL is a co-operative group of member libraries, managed by a strategic lead who is employed by Health Education England.
- One strategic aim of LHL is "promoting physical libraries as attractive study and learning spaces for the whole health and care workforce" (LHL 2013)



Local Education and Training Boards (LETBs) ensure the workforce has the right skills, values and behaviours, in the right numbers, at the right time and in the right place.

Across London, there are 3 network library groups based on LETB areas.



- My research questioned why staff were using the library when NOT for *education, lifelong learning, research or evidence-based practice*
- I categorised these, for research purposes as “non-library specific activities”
- Many staff do not want to learn or participate in education, lifelong learning or evidence-based practice yet they use the library regularly – why?

Why do staff use the workplace library for non-library activities

- Participants reported the workplace library **positively impacted on their wellbeing** and was used as a third space in the workplace, **in addition** to providing a full library service.
- Respondents valued the **quiet, non-judgmental** environment which allowed them to **think, disengage** and see colleagues in a different way.
- The enforced quiet within the library space offered respondents **protection** from having to **interact** with colleagues, unless they wanted to.
- Participants were able to **access IT, work** and **read** in an environment of **calm** which gave them a break from demanding and noisy work departments in the trust.
- Participants valued the unique contribution the physical library space gave to the organisation, frequently referring to it as the **only place in the trust** where they get the quiet space they needed to recharge themselves for the demands of work.
- They also valued **uninterrupted access to IT equipment and free wifi**, as office workspace is at a premium
- Senior managers, who rarely took breaks during the working day valued the physical library space as somewhere they go and be **“on duty” and visible yet be in a relaxing environment**.
- Senior managers also valued that fact that if **junior staff were not in their department**, but were in the library they **could be contacted** and their managers knew where they were.



Here for you

- As a multifunctional space the library operates as an environment for people to work or hot desk, and also as a relaxing area in which staff can disengage during breaks.
- It is a legitimate destination to get away from the departmental environment which allows staff thinking space away from pressured wards / departments.
- It is often the only quiet space that they feel they have access to.
- The environment enhanced their ability to focus and this helped their stress levels and wellbeing.
- Library staff are valued for their calm demeanour and are viewed as non-judgemental
- There are no expectations on participants to “play out” a particular job role. Elsewhere in the trust they could be called upon in a professional capacity (e.g. cafe, staff room, corridor)



Over and above “library activities”

- Stress release
- Privacy
- Thinking space
- Freedom
- To get away from busy departments
- To be left alone to think



Results

Most frequent
response →

Why do you choose to come to the library rather than go elsewhere	Participant
I won't get disturbed / bothered	X4
It's quiet	X5
It's comfortable	X2
To read	X1
To study / learn	X2
It's welcoming	X1
For the coffee	X1
To work / Hot desk	X2
For the IT / technology available	X2
It's calm	X1
You can stay as long as you want / need	X1
Library staff are supportive / helpful and appreciate time pressures	X4



- *“It is somewhere you feel you can come and just be yourself and not be watched and you have a bit of freedom”*
- *“It's comforting to have a place that...I suppose it's a bit like the chapel, you can go there, just relax and gather your thoughts, but you can do that in a totally different way here.*
- *“I come in and take my shoes off and I put my feet up (on the sofas) ..I could sit in my office, I could lower my chair a bit, I could shut the door and the team wouldn't disturb me, but I'd be surrounded by all this work I've got to do and the computer screen, it's not the same, it's that different physical location and quietness.*



Here for you

Themes

- Appreciation of quiet

“I don't come to be sociable in the library, and I like libraries to be quiet”

“I don't regard it as a social environment, I almost come here to be alone”

“This is where you network with the books.”

“I use the library to unwind”



Here for you

- *“You can see the library staff are extremely calm ...there is not rush whatsoever, and there is no rush, not in a negative way it is absolutely in a positive sense and they are very friendly, they want to help and they go out of their way to helpif you go to other areas people are always busy, running and rushing so if you are asking or seeking help it comes in that form, rushed or quickly, so you can feel that stress in that environment and again I think it is that de-stressed environment that helps I guess”*
- *“...we are so hectic downstairs 24/7 basically, I've found recently, that when I go home, my brain is still active and it doesn't actually switch off, so when you can come to a place like this..if you can shut your eyes for ten minutes in an environment like this, a lot of strain and stress just seems to ebb away that you don't seem to be able to do while you're at work. It's a totally different environment”.*



Here for you

- *“This (the library) is just I guess, our space and you know you can go to the canteen and have a quiet cup of coffee but somebody will join you. You can stay here (in the library) for the day; you can stay here for 5 mins. It is that kind of area.*
- *“I see other people in here and I would never ask them about work matters, you know, I wouldn't even interrupt them to say "hello" unless they looked at me and smiled and quietly said "Hello" . If I went to the main restaurant...that's kind of like a space where people can come up to you and interrupt you and say "I'm really glad I've seen you here, can I just mention X or Y?"*
- *“For quiet, you can't get it anywhere else, literally, if you go to a canteen or whatever, it's just hustle bustle, and people walking past saying "hello" or whatever.*



Here for you

- *“There is something about the environment of the library, it is not corporate it is more stimulating and somewhere where you come to get away. For the environment we are in it is a very unique space.”*
- *I come here to help my wellbeing, so when I feel I've had seven / eight intense hours, this can help my wellbeing because it's just some place I can just sit and process things in a different way, maybe not work related, so that's important for my well-being. Helps manage stress, helps cope with stress.*
- *We do so much around the physicality of people but the emotional needs are important and they need to be met and arguably the most important resource we have is the library to do that.”*
- *“I think it is a long way to come over here for my break, that is half my break gone when I get here.*



- A £600m national incentive fund (in 2016/17)
- Organisations are funded to achieve quality improvement

Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN) National CQUIN Goals 16/17

Improving the health and wellbeing of NHS Staff Goal:

Improve the support available to NHS Staff to help promote their health and wellbeing in order for them to remain healthy and well.

Rationale: Estimates from Public Health England put the cost to the NHS of staff absence due to poor health at £2.4bn a year – around £1 in every £40 of the total budget.

Evidence from the staff survey and elsewhere shows that improving staff health and wellbeing will lead to higher staff engagement, better staff retention and better clinical outcomes for patients.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/cquin-guidance-16-17-v3.pdf>



Health and wellbeing

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/retain-and-improve/staff-experience/health-work-and-wellbeing>

Without staff that are well and at work the NHS could not deliver quality and effective care to patients.

We need to ensure that staff are provided with an environment and opportunities that encourage and enable them to lead healthy lives and make choices that support their wellbeing.



My research recommends:

- the *value* of the physical library space to all staff is embedded within the trust's wellbeing agenda.
- The main purpose of the library is not to support wellbeing *but* many users come to the library for reasons related to wellbeing, therefore the library's development and usage should be supported as part of wellbeing at the organisation.
- The physical environment should be welcoming, calm and quiet and employ library staff who are able to recognize the unique role the physical library space plays for users during their working day.
- Development and use of the library services should be championed at board level.



Governance

- Clinical governance is a framework through which NHS organisations are accountable for continuously improving the quality of their service and safeguarding the high standards of care by creating an environment in which excellence in clinical care will flourish.

Board Level representation

- The role of the Trust Board is to govern Croydon Health Services effectively and in doing so build patient, public and stakeholder confidence that their health and healthcare are in safe hands.

Strategic Management and Leadership of the organisation and Education = working together



Developing roles ?

- Support organisational **knowledge management** within business planning
- Protect the third space, by encouraging wider usage of the space within the organisation – e.g. not just for education
- Libraries role in online services is important – but face to face is as important. *“At a time when the provision of knowledge and culture is increasingly digital and screen-based, the value and importance of high-quality physical spaces and experiences is growing, not diminishing (British Library 2015)”*
- Promote the library space as a way to support staff wellbeing

Thank you
Danke schoen
Irgendwelche Fragen, bitte?

