

Informal Adult Learning: Shaping the Way Ahead

<http://www.adultlearningconsultation.org.uk/>

Cilip sent its response in June 2008. We were asked for examples of informal learning in January 2009 to inform a speech to be given by Lyn Brown, PPS to John Denham, Secretary of State for the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, on 17th February 2009 entitled "Libraries at the heart of learning".

Comments from Health Libraries Group Policy Panel

An immediate thought on this document that its approach to informal learning is to seek ways of formalising it. It and the cilip response to it seem to be largely written in jargon. An Executive Summary or list of key points to the cilip response will be helpful.

Health Libraries could enhance informal learning by improving cross-sectoral and institutional access, between NHS, public, charitable and education service libraries. There are several examples already in the response document of where this is already happening within the health sector.

Promoting libraries to informal learners must start at an early stage. The key areas within this document are therefore to do with introducing children (or possibly their parents) to the idea of libraries as friendly sources of information, places which are valued by society, modern, welcoming, interesting, exciting and which can also be places of refuge.

In the area of informal adult learning it is likely libraries produce better outcomes in health information for the public when access is mediated or they are guided towards authoritative sources. Guided learning may be more appropriate than informal learning and with regard to health information in particular, libraries may have more a more important role in encouraging knowledge of how to evaluate sources.

Peter Hill's Review of NHS Health Libraries in England (2008) states that "NHS health libraries should see the support of lifelong learning in NHS health professionals as part of their core business" and given that learning later in the life course is more likely to be informal, examples of this can be found at <http://www.londonlinks.ac.uk/resources/alignment-toolkit/lifelong-learning-by-health-professionals>.

The other area for emphasis is to do with the removal of barriers to access to information indicated in Sections 4b and 4e of the cilip response.

There are several references to the need for more research. There is the danger that carrying out research becomes an excuse for delaying action. However the call for a summation of existing knowledge (Section 1a) is fundamental to the ability to plan future developments.

Given the nature of some health information particular care should be taken when encouraging informal learning in the healthcare environment. Informal or formal, learning about health issues needs to be based upon accurate and reliable information.

HLG Policy Panel

Jan 2009

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