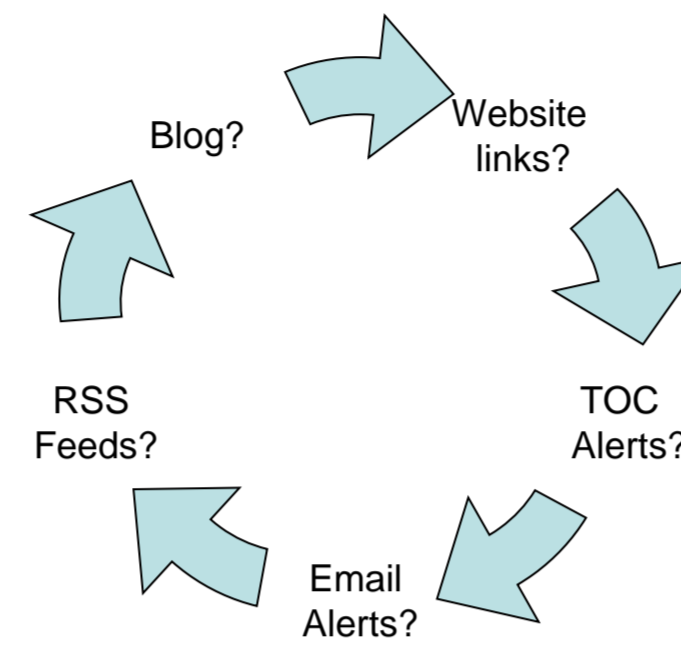


Knowledge Alerts Service

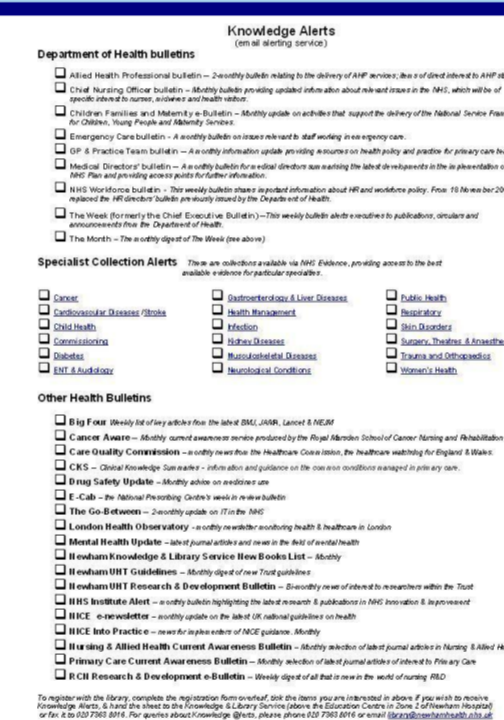
• First thoughts – What to include?

- We reviewed options for a current awareness service. What was the best & most cost- & time-efficient way to do this, offering convenience and control to our users?
- It was decided to set up a blog for general library 'news'.
- Users would be shown how to set up Tables of Contents alerts (TOCs) themselves.
- Our main Alerts service would focus on emailed subject alerts using quality publications eg NHS Evidence Specialist Collections alerts, Department of Health e-bulletins, etc.
- Users should have control over selection & removal of alerts, with complexity hidden.



• Designing a form, & Registration

- Our aim was to make it easy for users to sign up to alerts tailored to their needs, & to clarify the source & content of alerts.
- Limiting our form to one side of A4 allowed it to sit on the back of our library registration form, supporting uptake.



• Setting up controls

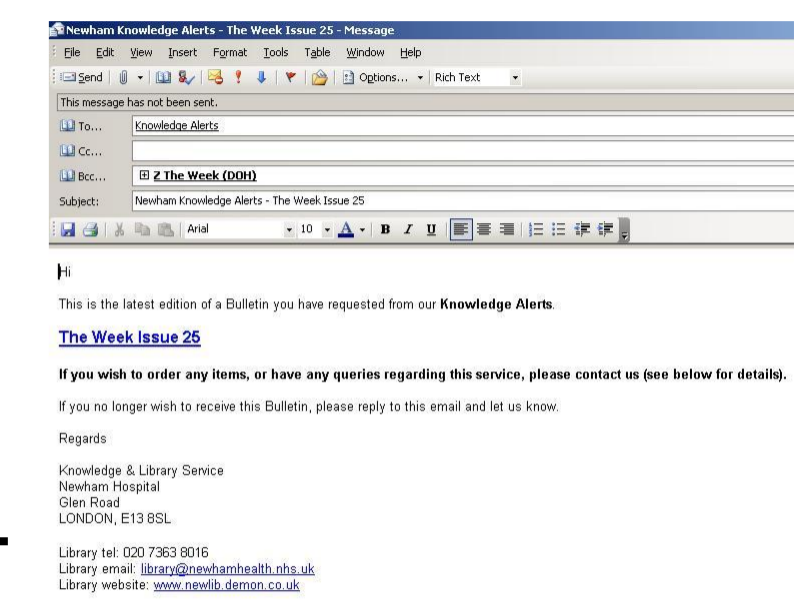
- The system can be complex, with many alerts of different frequency, so a spreadsheet was set up to identify how and when alerts are sent.
- By creating a TAG for each alert in our Library Management System we are able to identify users' selections and to extract statistics for analysis.

• Setting up the Alerts

- We wanted the alerts to be sent from a dedicated email address, to make them easily identifiable and also more manageable for staff & users.
- An Outlook account was set up, and each alert has a distribution list.
- Alerts were subscribed to, basing selection on national importance + local relevance & need.

• Sending the Alerts

- Email templates were created, giving a standard format for each message. A structured title aids visibility & reinforces identity in the inbox. Each template includes the option to unsubscribe & an offer of further assistance.
- We can alter the templates for informational or promotional purposes, eg to raise awareness of a new service.



• Monitoring & Maintenance

- The Service takes an average 1 hr daily overall to run.
- Email bounce-backs & Alert removal requests are dealt with immediately.
- New alerts are added to the system when necessary (eg a new Specialist Library newsletter) & initially forwarded to existing Alert users in related fields.
- Defunct alerts are removed & alternatives sought if needed.

• Good Practice

- Avoid sending attachments - they clog up the email system.
- Encourage users to select only 6 alerts initially to avoid being swamped.
- Send alerts as a Blind Copy to avoid identifying individuals.
- Good documentation is essential to keep track of alerts, and to ensure staff competency in operating the system.
- Remove forwarded 'junk' eg local end messages & original message header.
- Convert links in new emails to a user-friendly format for greater clarity.

• Observations & Looking ahead

- Take-up has been good – the service began in Dec 2007 & currently has nearly 400 subscribers. Feedback is positive & we have had very few removal requests. Over 80% of users surveyed rated it Good or Very Good.
- An online request form has just been set up. This will enable us to promote the service more easily.
- We plan a service review & impact exercise in the coming months.