



## Health Link

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10th October 2007

Dear Library Manager

### **Re Partnership for Patients Library Choice Pilots and Your Role**

You have received materials on Patient Choice for display in your branch public library, from the Department of Health. Health Link is leading the Partnership for Patients Project which is a cross government partnership working on Patient Choice. The purpose of this letter is to give you some background on this national collaboration between the library and health sectors and to announce the new updated NHS website, [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). The new site is offering a national 'one-stop' information service to help the public and those who support them to make better, more informed choices about their health and wellbeing. We hope you will find it useful in supporting local people.

The Head of Library Policy for England at the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the Head of Demand Side Reform for the Department of Health (DH) have written jointly to all Chief Librarians in the country. They explained the agreement between them on the potential of the public library service, as a neutral and trusted community resource, to support patients when they are choosing a hospital or booking their hospital appointment online. The idea for this role of public libraries came from patients themselves, which reflects the value they place on your services. Partnership for Patients has been testing the role in 30 library branches in the following library authority areas: Bromley, Derbyshire County, Gloucestershire, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Newham, Southwark, Suffolk and Waltham Forest.

The DH, the MLA and Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with 10 pilot library authorities are funding 6-month pilots in 30 pilot branches, with independent evaluation by Loughborough University. The evaluation will test the perspective of patients, library staff and GPs on this role for libraries. The outcome of the evaluation will be used at the end of this year to decide how libraries can be supported to help patients when they come for this sort of assistance.

With growing awareness of Patient Choice, we have produced the enclosed information for libraries outside the pilots so that they know what to expect if they are approached by patients for this sort of help. Please contact your Chief Librarian if you would like further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Elizabeth Manero'.

ELIZABETH MANERO, DIRECTOR

*An independent social enterprise strengthening public influence in health*

10.10.07 Health Link 62, Beechwood road, London E8 3DY 0207 254 1582 [www.health-link.org.uk](http://www.health-link.org.uk)  
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## INFORMATION FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES ON PATIENT CHOICE

**Partnership for Patients Library Choice Pilots:** Some library authorities in the country have been are running six month Patients Choice Library pilots, through the Partnership for Patients Project, a cross government collaboration led by Health Link. These pilots involve library staff supporting patients in choosing a hospital by helping them access online comparative information. Patients will be 'referred' by their GPs for this purpose.

**Libraries as a neutral source of support and help:** Health Link has conducted a consultation with patients on where they would like to get support and help in choosing a hospital. Library staff were repeatedly mentioned as skilled, neutral and helpful and as the people patients would go to get this sort of help.

### **Libraries Overcoming Barriers for Patients**

*In Waltham Forest, library staff showed the unique contribution they can make to helping people have a say in what happens to them: a profoundly deaf patient with no IT skills came into the library for help in booking his hospital appointment online. Staff helped him by using the computer alongside him, giving the options and making the booking for him. With their help, someone excluded from this convenience was able to benefit from it just like anyone else*

**Patients Choice Materials:** In order to help you deal with possible requests from patients, you will have received materials about Patient's Choice which we hope you will find useful for display in the library.

**Comparative information about hospitals and Health Information:** The information about different hospitals can be found on [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) where there is also a great deal of generic questions about conditions and treatments. Queries about a patient's own health or condition should always be referred back to their GP practice.

*'This pilot is a positive development - as is the opportunity for Patient Choice.'*

Library Staff Member

[www.healthspace.nhs.uk](http://www.healthspace.nhs.uk)).

**Booking Hospital Appointments:** If they wish, patients may book their hospital appointment online if they have chosen a hospital on the online system. They may ask for support from you with this. You will only be able to help them with this if they have a user name and password from their GP practice so they can enter Choose and Book through My Healthspace

**Confidentiality:** When viewing the Choose and Book screen after password access, you will not be able to see the patient's medical records but certain details such as the type of clinic being booked will be visible on the screen. They may also disclose sensitive information to you themselves. In addition to Data Protection requirements, you have a duty of confidence to the patient in respect of any sensitive information relating to their health and treatment. The patient must be informed in advance of what will be disclosed on the screen and consent beforehand. You must protect that information from further disclosure

*"It's a great opportunity for individuals to be able to get extra support in making an informed decision about their healthcare"*  
GP in pilot area

**Requests for this kind of support:** Patients may come into your branch requesting help, whether referred by their GPs or independently as libraries increasingly become identified with support for Patient Choice. We hope that this information will help with these queries.

### **Patients Comments from the London Borough of Hackney**

*"When I was booking my appointment on the computer I was given information about car parking"*

*"Staff are cheerful and helpful"*

*"Relaxing, friendly place to visit; I feel completely comfortable in a library"*

Please contact your Chief Librarian's office if you have any queries, or ring Jenny Sharp at Health Link on 0207 254 1582.