

Working together on Patient Choice: The Partnership for Patients Project is working across government and across the public sector in nine pilot areas to explore the role of the public library service in supporting Patient Choice. The Project was formally launched on the 13th November 2006 and this is the first Update. The Partnership comprises Health Link, a social enterprise working on patient involvement, the Department of Health, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), the London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA) London Health Libraries and Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Pilots Sites Selected: The 9 pilot library authorities have nominated the 3 branches which will pilot support by library staff for patients. GPs will be invited to 'refer' patients in the pilot areas to the designated public library where library staff, will support them to access online information, compare hospitals and, if they wish, book their appointments online. Library staff will be trained by the Department of Health and supported by their health library colleagues if necessary. The public library service has 30,000 broadband enabled computers available for use by the public on the People's Network. The Libraries will also have the Choosing Your Hospital Booklets relevant to the area. The 6 month pilots will start in February 2007.

Library Authority	Library Branch Name
Bromley	Orpington; Chislehurst; West Wickham
Derbyshire	Bolsover; Bakewell; Hayfield and Mobile libraries.
Gloucestershire	Coleford (Forest Of Dean); Dursley; Tewkesbury.
Greenwich	Plumstead; West Greenwich; New Eltham
Hackney	Shoreditch; Stamford Hill; Hackney Central
Haringey	Wood Green Central; Marcus Garvey; St. Ann's
Newham	Canning Town; The Gate; Plaistow
Southwark	Dulwich; Peckham; John Harvey
Waltham Forest	Walthamstow; Lea Bridge; North Chingford

Local Launch of Pilots: 19 set up meetings have now been held with pilot organisations. Each pilot will start with a Networking Event, where librarians, GPs PCTs, and health librarians will be invited to explore the opportunities of this new way of working together. The first event will be at Bromley Hospitals Health Library on the 24th January. Other dates will be published shortly. At these Events, Department of Health staff will offer training library staff on Choice, Choose and Book and the comparative information about providers which is on offer to patients.

Evaluation: Loughborough University has been commissioned to evaluate the pilots as a means of in making choice more socially inclusive through the libraries' information and support role, including for patients with little or no IT skills. As well as patient satisfaction, the suitability of the model will be assessed for the public library service, health libraries and GPs.

Libraries as Agents for Choice: While patients in the 9 pilots are testing the benefit of library support in their Choice of hospital, England's 3033 public libraries will be able to offer their local communities materials about Patients Choice, which have been produced by the Department of Health. A Joint Letter from the MLA Head of Library Policy for England, John Dolan, and Bob Ricketts, DH Head of Supply Side Reform, to Chief Librarians across the country invited public libraries to participate in this exercise, as a first step to developing their role as 'agents for choice'. The neutral and unbiased provision of information and support to the public on Patient Choice builds on the traditional role of the library as the trusted, accessible source of information in the community.

For Further Information, please contact:

DEFRA - Tom Stafford: tom.stafford@defra.gsi.gov.uk

DH - Lynn Plant: lynn.plant@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Health Link - Jenny Sharp: jsharp@health-link.org.uk ;

LLDA - Michael Clarke: michael.clarke@llda.org.uk

LHLs - Richard Osborn: richard.osborn@nwlondon.nhs.uk

MLA - Marcus Weisen: marcus.weisen@mla.gov.uk