



LIHNN: LIBRARY INFORMATION HEALTH NETWORK NORTH WEST

HORIZON SCANNING BULLETINS: A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT FROM NHS LIBRARIANS IN THE NORTH WEST

SUMMARY

The **Library Information Health Network (LIHNN)**, has undertaken a 'Horizon Scanning' project which involves producing a series of 'Current Awareness' bulletins to summarise new information on best practice, innovation and future risk factors in a series of topic areas, with eighteen titles currently being distributed monthly. Initially these concentrated on PCT priority areas, but as the programme has developed, the topics have developed to meet the needs of other users.

The **bulletins** collate information from a variety of sources, moving away from the "traditional" Current Awareness bulletin, which concentrate on showcasing new articles from peer-reviewed journals and clinical research papers, instead utilising sources such as Trust websites and news alerts, whilst still ensuring quality with experts aiming to review each bulletin before publication.

Bulletins are produced collaboratively by NHS Librarians across the North West, which enables a far greater number distributed to staff across the region than a single library service could achieve alone. They are then communicated to stakeholders using Web 2.0 technologies, such as; blogs, Wikis, RSS feeds and readers/aggregators, Twitter and other social media products. These tools were chosen partly as they are freely available, and relatively easy to use with minimal setup, and partly because they are not tied to a particular Trust IT system and therefore ideal for working across organisational boundaries.

As well as meeting an increasing demand for 'softer' information to inform service delivery and redesign and the commissioning process, the project has helped improve the skills of the Librarians involved, utilising peer support to develop Web 2.0 skills, and encouraging 'virtual' collaboration.

KEY OUTCOMES

- Eighteen monthly bulletins are currently produced each month and delivered to over 3000 subscribers, with potential for these bulletins to be cascaded further to even more colleagues.
- Results from a pilot evaluation indicated that most people felt the information was relevant to them. When asked about the impact of the bulletin on their work the most popular answer was **'It highlighted areas of good practice', followed by 'it made me think about future service provision'** When asked about the impact on the organisation the most popular answer was **'it alerted us to new information'**, followed by 'information has been brought to team discussions'. (See Appendix 2 – Pilot Evaluation Report)
- Further feedback is currently being gathered, via a survey of users, in order to assess the impact of bulletins. This is due to be completed in early 2013,

and should give an indication of how the bulletins have contributed to quality improvements or changes in practice in the recipients' organisations.

- Anecdotally, these bulletins potentially save recipients time, by collating information into a simple manageable bulletin. They also ensure that service leads and commissioners are kept up-to-date with developments in their field providing current information on best practice and possible future risk factors, which may affect service provision or changes to services.
- In April 2010, the steering group of the Horizon Scanning project organised the 'Current Awareness in the Health Sector' conference to share learning from the Horizon Scanning project with NHS Librarians from other regions.
- Librarians involved in the project have benefitted from the ability to improve and develop their Web 2.0 skills and to work collaboratively with colleagues across the region, giving an excellent Continuous professional development (CPD) opportunity.





GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY



KEY AIMS

- Support and inform the horizon scanning and service redesign process in PCTs (and later Acute Trusts)
- Provide timely, good quality information on service delivery to complement clinical research and the peer reviewed literature
- Bridge the gap in information provision, by providing valuable information from more ephemeral sources whilst maintaining quality
- Work collaboratively to produce maximum results, greater than could be achieved by a single library service working alone: maximising capacity and sharing knowledge and expertise

KEY STAGES OF SET-UP

- A steering group was established, consisting of five librarians who act as project leads across the region to; investigate viability, scope the project and develop processes (See Appendix 3 for the full governance structure)
- This steering group then offered training and support to the 30 librarians contributing to the bulletins, ensuring they had the technical skills to produce the bulletins. This included a series of workshops offering peer support and practical training
- Librarians agreed to undertake different bulletins, usually with two people undertaking a particular bulletin.
- Librarians approached potential “expert content advisors” in their Trusts – usually clinicians working in the area – and agreed a process of review, namely sending the experts a draft bulletin a few days before publication for comments and quality assurance
- Initial bulletins were produced in mid 2009 and library services across the North West began publicising and sending out initial bulletins to their members

BACKGROUND

Library and Information for Health Network (LIHNN)

The Library and Information for Health Network (LIHNN) for the North West is the network for all NHS and health library services in the region, with over 300 staff in 42 NHS library services including Library Information Professionals and para-professional support staff, as well as links to university libraries. The network has a strong history of working collaboratively.

Horizon Scanning Project

This project was devised in 2009 by the Primary Care Librarians, a sub-group of LIHNN who found an increasing demand from PCT staff for up-to-date, horizon scanning information, partly in response to changing PCT priorities (such as the Department of Health “Vital Signs” document) and a need for information to inform the commissioning process. Later, the project broadened and Library staff from Acute and Mental Health Trust Libraries also became involved. There are now currently approximately 30 Librarians from across the region actively contributing to the bulletins.

- In late 2010, a short pilot survey was undertaken, seeking feedback from users of the bulletins
- Those involved in the project have a discussion list and hold regular meetings to discuss updates and changes to the bulletins such as changes to topics – as a result there have been minor improvements made to the format of the bulletins and also changes to topic areas where necessary.
- In 2012 a larger impact assessment survey began on all of the bulletins

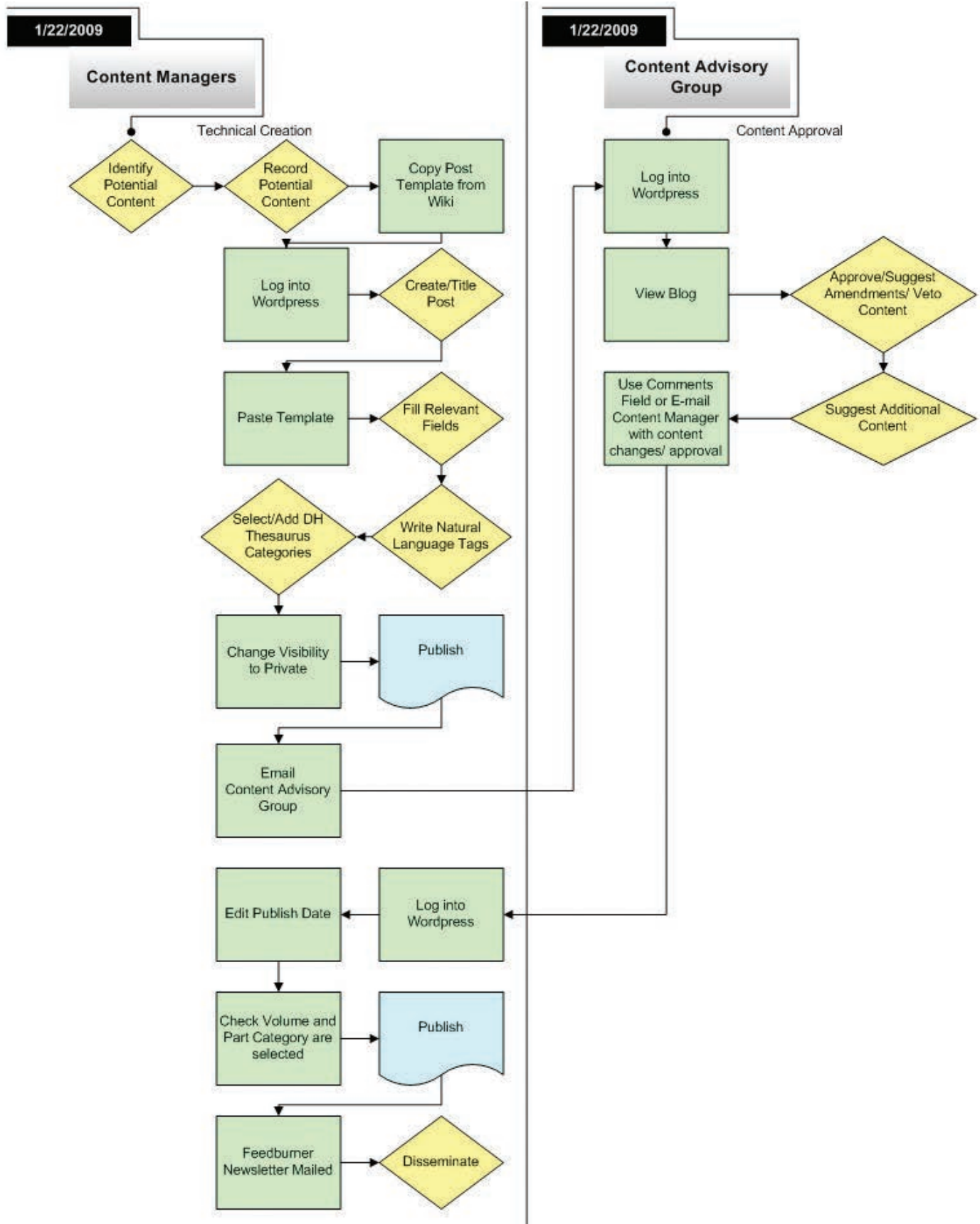




GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY



HORIZON SCANNING BULLETIN PRODUCTION





GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

- There are 18 types of bulletins currently in production, with a new bulletin created under each heading each month

BULLETIN NAME	BULLETIN NAME
Alcohol	Diagnostics
Breast Feeding	End of Life Care
Cancer	Falls Prevention
Cardio	Immunisation
Child Health	Infection Control
COPD	Obesity
Dementia	Orthopaedics
Dental Health	Patient Safety
Diabetes 2	Stroke

- Each bulletin is usually produced by a pair of librarians, sometimes from the same service, but often working across Trusts. They work together to source material for the bulletin, utilising various sources as appropriate to the bulletin topic.
- The selected posts are then formatted for the bulletin, on the Wordpress site, including adding categories and tags to each post, but kept "private"
- The Content Advisory Group (consisting of experts in the topic, or at very least a member of the Steering Group) check the post for errors, either factual or for issues around quality of the source, or typographical errors, and any comments are acted upon as necessary. If a post is completely unsuitable, it is removed, with a note kept of the comments and reason for removal.
- A category list has been created for each bulletin, As new posts are added to the bulletin, they are assigned to a category. This helps users search the archives of the bulletins for a more specific topic; for example, users can browse the archives of the Alcohol bulletin for topics such as "alcohol abuse", "advertising", "alcohol policy" etc.

- New posts are published on Wordpress and in an electronic newsletter called 'Feedburner'. Readers can sign up directly for this newsletter, follow the Twitter account/Facebook page or add the RSS feed to their RSS reader as appropriate. Additionally, librarians forward on the Feedburner newsletter to further recipients
- There is a separate Wordpress site and Feedburner newsletter for each bulletin/blog as there is often a different audience for each topic.

See the below example of the Alcohol bulletin or to follow the links in the table above to each blog – with a signup link to the appropriate newsletter on the right-hand side of each bulletin.

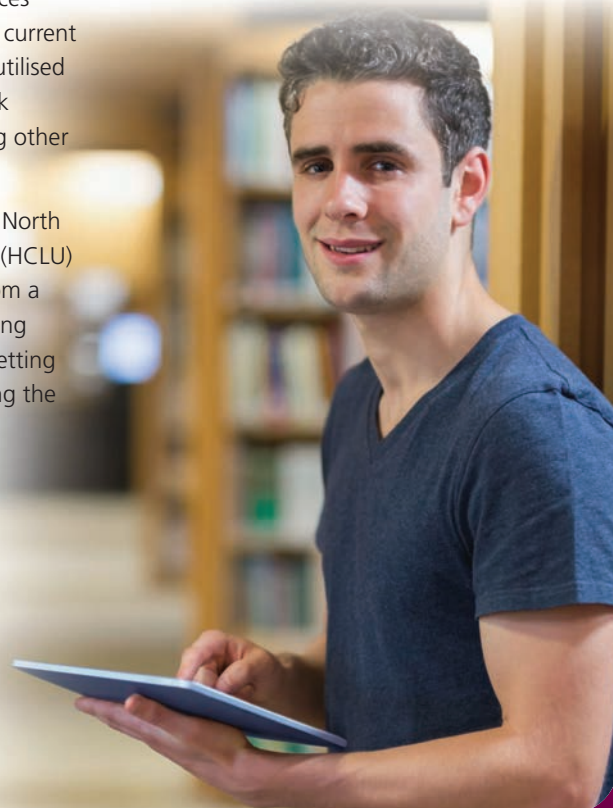
- [Blog: Alcohol bulletin](#)
- [Sign-up form to Alcohol bulletin](#)
- [Twitter stream](#)
- [Facebook page](#)
- [RSS feed](#)

RESOURCES

- Most of the resource comes from within existing services. All library services have a commitment to produce current awareness services thus LIHNN utilised this capacity and agreed to work collaboratively, rather than using other resources.
- Funding was provided from the North West Health Care Libraries Unit (HCLU) to cover some initial support from a band 3 library assistant by funding additional hours. This covered setting up the blogs, including compiling the categories list

KEY CHALLENGES

- **Training & skills:** ensuring participants had appropriate skills to produce the bulletins. Peer support and steering group-led training sessions helped improve skills
- **Staff time/capacity:** initially producing bulletins proved quite time-intensive and a commitment was required by staff to undertake a day's training. However, this was integrated with other activities where possible (e.g. at the end of network meetings)
- **Capacity to produce bulletins:** over time capacity has reduced as people have left or changed jobs and this has led to some bulletins stopping. However this challenge has been managed by people agreeing to change topics or newcomers taking over existing bulletins.
- **IT Restrictions:** this has led to accessibility issues with regard to Wordpress and other websites, but this has largely been overcome by liaising with IT departments to unblock the websites, or using a workaround.





GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

KEY LEARNING

- Working collaboratively has benefits and in this project has enabled LIHNN to produce more than a single service could have achieved alone. However, in order to be successful when collaborating across services, it is important to have clear aims and objectives and realistic goals, with an agreement to stick to the plan rather than each service making its own adaptations. A steering group or a group of nominated people is vital to help lead the project and to make decisions on areas such as format. This helps avoid work becoming disjointed.
- It is important to listen to end users and constantly reevaluate and adapt the product as necessary to keep meeting their needs; and the difficult decision to stop producing a bulletin that is no longer relevant, should not be avoided.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

- **Appendix 1 – [Horizon Scanning Bulletins](#)**
- **Appendix 2:** Governance structure
- **Appendix 3:** Pilot evaluation report (NB this was an initial pilot in 2012, and a full survey will be carried out in 2012)
- **Appendix 4:** Current Awareness in the Health Sector Conference 2012 – Horizon Scanning presentation
- **Appendix 5 – [Horizon Scanning Wiki](#).** This serves as the “manual” for all involved in the project. NB Access is restricted due to contact details etc appearing in the Wiki, but access will be granted to any NHS colleague who wishes to view it.

FURTHER LINKS

[North West LIHNN Website](#) – Click here to access to all existing online bulletins and those currently in production, as well as to sign up for the newsletter.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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SUSTAINABILITY

Production of bulletins is largely embedded in the everyday work of staff involved; as production of current awareness services is an expectation of library staff, it is an area that most staff would have time set aside for anyway.

NEXT STEPS

- Carry out a full survey to evaluate the impact of the bulletins
- Minor adjustments to some formatting issues in order to respond to user feedback
- Possible adjustments to some topic areas/introduction of new topics

