

The Healthcare Library of Northern Ireland Strategy 2022-26

Introduction

The Healthcare Library of Northern Ireland at Queen's University Belfast ("The Library") is contracted by the Department of Health to provide library and information services to staff delivering health and social care in Northern Ireland.

This strategy outlines how the Library will provide access to the right knowledge and evidence, at the right time and place to enable high quality, informed decision-making, continued professional development, research and innovation. It covers the period 2022-2026. The Library will deliver innovative services by collaborating with key partners and engaging with Healthcare professionals to impact on health and social care in Northern Ireland through the following key areas of strategic priority:

- Impact and Innovation
- Collaboration
- Engagement
- Supporting the Department of Health's "Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026"

This strategy is also aligned to the Department of Health's "Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026: Delivering for Our People" and incorporates its relevant themes:

- Attracting and retaining people with the right skills
- High-quality training and development & Support multi-disciplinary and inter-professional training
- Supporting the workforce to contribute to local decision making
- Aiding the workforce to do their jobs

Context

Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland is facing similar challenges to the rest of the United Kingdom: rising attendances at hospitals; an ageing population; increased numbers of people living with multi-morbidities; constrained resources; rapid advances in technology; and rising patient expectations. The Covid-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for the planning and delivery of health and social care (HSC) services in Northern Ireland. Behind all these issues lies a context of long-overdue structural reform. Northern Ireland needs to reduce its reliance on hospitals, centralise some services for a critical mass at a smaller number of sites, and focus more on prevention and keeping people healthy.

The Library is committed to helping HSC staff rise to the challenges they face, by exploring new and dynamic ways of delivering cost-effective information services, and of facilitating access from any location, in the hospital setting or in the community, to the high-quality research that enables staff to make informed decisions and deliver the highest standards of patient care.

The Department of Health's "Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026: Delivering for Our People" highlights the need to transform health and social care in Northern Ireland and the aim to meet the needs of the workforce. The workforce strategy is an aspirational document, with the ambition around bringing new types of staff into the workforce and expanding people's skills.

Providing access to resources and library staff expertise meets the objectives of several of the themes of the Workforce Strategy, including high quality training and development; multidisciplinary and inter-professional training; promoting health and wellbeing; and improving workforce intelligence, which has an action to inform more evidence-based decision making. The strategy also states, “Policy decisions and planning exercises must be based on robust evidence.”

The Library connects HSC staff to the evidence they need to support their work and life-long learning, and training offered by the Library aims to give staff the skills and confidence to undertake research and therefore contribute actively to driving forward innovation and implementing service provision.

High quality patient care demands the best possible library and information service. The expertise and endeavours of library staff underpins the work of HSC staff throughout Northern Ireland in delivering high quality patient care and safety. The Library supplies the evidence base required to ensure HSC staff are well-informed, up-to date and equipped to critically appraise resources and make informed decisions. Resources and services are available when and where healthcare professionals need them. Skilled and experienced library staff are on hand to provide training and support, to negotiate best value deals and to ensure easy access to resources through well managed and continually developing systems. Through our extensive partnerships and collaborations, we aim to provide proactive, high quality, equitable and best value library services.

The Healthcare Library of Northern Ireland Strategy 2022-2026 follows on from the successful delivery of the 2017-2021 Strategy which saw the Library respond effectively to the changes in the workforce by providing services to, for example, staff in the newly created Multi-Disciplinary Teams in GP Practices; Pharmacists employed by GP Federations; Emergency Technicians; Physician Associates; and staff employed by the Northern Ireland Hospice.

Our Vision

We help deliver world class patient care by providing health and social care professionals with free library and information services, and expert advice and training to support patient care, evidence-based practice, and Continuous Professional Development.

Our Core Values

At the heart of delivering this strategy are the University’s five core values. These express our shared understanding of what we believe, how we aim to behave and what we aspire to be as an international organisation:

Integrity	We act honestly, ethically, and transparently in all we do.
Connected	We are active collaborators, recognising that we can achieve more together.
Ambition	We are forward-thinking with a strong desire to be the best.
Respect	We trust, value, and empower each other.
Excellence	We strive to always do our best.

1. Impact and Innovation

The Library will deliver and provide expert guidance and support on the use of high-quality information resources to give HSC staff access to the knowledge, information, and evidence to support decision-making and have a positive impact on patient outcomes. It will do this through the delivery of innovative services using the latest technologies to enhance the experience of using the Library, either physically or electronically.

1.1 Deliver First-Rate Resources

Aim: To maximise access to high quality information to HSC staff across Northern Ireland.

To achieve this:

- We will provide HSC staff with high quality, current information from the location of their choice
- We will use the expertise of our Subject Librarians, and recommendations from Healthcare professionals, to select and purchase the most relevant and best-priced resources
- We will work with Healthcare professionals in the Trusts to review the provision of physical collections to ensure that staff have equitable and ready access to relevant resources
- We will implement an e-first policy, where appropriate and affordable, to widen access to resources for staff, regardless of location, as a cost effective and efficient way of delivering optimal access to a large number of people, avoiding duplicating physical holdings across locations
- We will benchmark our core resource offer to compare our offer and continuously improve the quality of our stock
- We will actively review and promote Open Access publishing, which provides free online access to peer-reviewed research. This is an area which has seen significant growth in Higher Education, and the Library recognises the opportunity to progress within the Health Service
- We will continue to provide our literature searching service to provide the best quality evidence to support research and innovation in healthcare.

1.2 Deliver a Dynamic Digital Experience

Aim: To develop a 'Digital Library' harnessing technology to deliver an exciting and dynamic experience for HSC staff.

To achieve this:

- We will continue to enhance our digital presence, meeting accessibility standards and offering an easy to use, interactive and personalised experience
- We will continue to enhance our online presence, with a focus on a consistent look and feel, user-friendly navigation and quick and easy access to information resources
- We will increase the Library's use of third-party apps (where available from publishers) to enable HSC staff to access information more flexibly via their preferred devices
- We will explore developing a Healthcare Library app that will make it easier for HSC users to view branch opening hours, access their Library account, and search resources
- We will investigate options to embed search facilities into websites of Trusts and other relevant bodies to make information resources discoverable and as easy to access as possible
- We will promote the use self-service facilities to improve the experience of borrowing and returning books

1.3 Provide Effective Training and Support

Aim: To ensure HSC staff are equipped with the skills to use the resources available to them to improve their research outcomes, lifelong learning, and evidence-based practice through flexible training methods.

To achieve this:

- We will provide a comprehensive training programme, encompassing group and individual training, as well as customised training to fit around the schedules of staff, delivered, where possible at time and locations to suit attendees, including online training.
- We will deliver a hybrid training model, offering both in person and remote training
- We will provide users with appropriate, timely information and assistance
- We will deliver training using innovative technology
- We will develop and promote a suite of online learning materials
- We will seek to develop and strengthen the Library's on-line presence, providing new opportunities for existing and (potential) users to interact with the Library, receive training and provide feedback
- We will develop online guides to signpost users to appropriate resources
- We will continue to identify and liaise with high-level contacts in the Trusts, making use of their local knowledge to cascade training on, and increase awareness of the Library.

1.4 Improve Clinical Decision-Making

Aim: To support improved clinical decision-making by striving to acquire a point of care information system, which would provide HSC a single point of access to the most up to date evidence-based information to inform clinical diagnosis, practice, and treatment.

To achieve this:

- We will continue to campaign for a Regional Point of Care Tool across NI
- We will contribute to the selection of a Regional Point of Care Tool by providing pricing and engaging with clinicians, vendors and the Procurement and Logistics Service (PaLS)
- We will provide access to any Point of Care tool purchased through the Library website and manage authentication, allowing access both from the workplace and from apps
- We will promote and provide training on using our current resources to the best quality evidence to support decision making
- We will continue to provide our literature searching service to provide the best quality evidence to support decision making

1.5 Deliver Value For Money

Aim: To achieve maximum value for money when purchasing resources

To achieve this:

- We will maintain strict governance, fiscal controls and manage risk
- We will select resources which are aligned to supporting HSC staff in delivering evidence-based practice and continued professional development
- We will work closely with resource providers to negotiate advantageous prices for resources on behalf of HSC users
- We will explore authentication models to configure access to resources for particular groups of users
- We will maximise our investment by monitoring membership usage of electronic resources, providing training and promoting or removing under-utilised resources and targeting any unnecessary duplication in the purchase of journals
- We will regularly review information resources to ensure they meet the current and future needs of the workforce

2. Collaboration

The Library will endeavour to establish and cultivate cooperative working relationships with other organisations, both nationally and locally, that provide complementary library and information services to HSC staff in Northern Ireland. The Library will create partnerships and work in collaboration where possible to help provide a competent workforce with the essential skills to meet the changing needs of the population and health and social care delivery in Northern Ireland.

2.1 Connect with Partners

Aim: To establish value added relationships and work in collaboration with a range of partners for mutual benefit.

To achieve this:

- We will strengthen our relationship with the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Association to improve access to library services and resources to postgraduate medical and dental trainees and GPs throughout Northern Ireland
- We will seek further opportunities for collaboration with professional bodies which represent all Healthcare professionals in Northern Ireland
- We will build on existing partnerships and collaboration, such as with ICT managers and key personnel in the Trusts
- We will work collaboratively with health libraries in GB and Ireland to enable further opportunities for resource sharing and greater efficiencies
- We will develop new partnerships with relevant bodies and collaborate to enhance services where possible
- We will work with the Five Nations group for knowledge sharing, benchmarking, and collaboration on shared projects

2.2. Develop a Sustainable Funding Model

Aim: To work in collaboration with the Department of Health to develop a sustainable funding model for optimal library and information services.

To achieve this:

- We will collaborate with key stakeholders to devise a sustainable funding model
- We will communicate any impacts to service provision
- We will develop business cases for appropriate service enhancements
- We will demonstrate value for money of any new services to the Department
- We will negotiate advantageous prices for both resources and systems, building on pre-existing university contacts and experience to do this

3. Engagement

The Library will raise awareness of the library service and its resources through increased outreach and communication with the HSC community. We will raise the profile of the Library, increase awareness and use of services and information resources, and communicate the impact and value of the Library to HSC professionals.

3.1 Promote Library Services

Aim: To increase awareness and usage of the Healthcare Library of Northern Ireland by engaging with HSC professionals across Northern Ireland using social media and other marketing tools.

To achieve this:

- We will promote our Healthcare Library brand which clearly communicates our purpose
- We will exploit Social Media as a means of advertising and promoting our services and resources as well as a means of communicating with HSC professionals
- We will promote the availability of resources to the various specialities
- We will develop a marketing and promotional plan to raise awareness of the library's resources, services and facilities to Trusts, GPs, other HSC Bodies, and professional groups
- We will continue to use clear and consistent branding guidelines to ensure a distinctive and consistent look and feel across our services
- We will continue to develop our digital persona to include establishing the tone of voice we use when communicating with our target audience

3.2 Increase Participation

Aim: To enhance patient care by increasing the participation of HSC staff in the Library, and their subsequent use of the high-quality resources it provides.

To achieve this:

- We will further promote our online registration form, to make it easier for HSC staff to join the Library
- We will actively target under-represented groups of healthcare professionals
- We will report annually to the Department on membership numbers and changing trends

3.3 Provide an Excellent Standard of Service

Aim: To deliver services in a user-focussed way to HSC staff in Northern Ireland.

To achieve this:

- We will place users at the heart of our service and act on their feedback
- We will engage with customers in developing our services
- We will develop staff who are approachable, helpful, efficient, and knowledgeable
- We will actively seek feedback from users through a variety of channels
- We will maintain high levels of satisfaction with library services and work for continuous improvement
- We will continue to retain Customer Service Excellence accreditation and will demonstrate this standard in all aspects of our engagement with our customers, from front-line and face-to-face support to liaison and communication

4. Supporting the Department of Health's "Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026"

The Library will align its services and resources to support the aims and objectives of the DOH Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026

4.1 Support staff recruitment and retention

Aim: To help attract skilled professionals to HSC, help staff developing roles and assist with the DOH aim of being an employer of choice, by providing a high-quality library service.

To achieve this:

- We will make our catalogue of resources viewable by all, enabling potential employees to see the scope of our resources
- We will support staff in their continuing professional development; preceptorship and maintaining revalidation by providing access to high-quality information and library training
- By providing resources and training in finding high-quality evidence and innovation, we will support Healthcare staff to undertake new roles or expand their skills, such as Physician Associates, Advanced Practice roles and non-medical prescribing

4.2 Support high quality training and development

Aim: To help to help staff to remain compliant with their professional codes by delivering training in the effective use of peer-reviewed, evidence-based information.

- See section 1.3

4.3 Supporting the workforce to contribute to local decision making

Aim: To deliver training and support for HSC staff to effectively access high quality information to inform clinical decision making, diagnosis, practice, and treatment.

To achieve this:

- We will deliver and provide expert guidance, and give HSC staff access to the knowledge, information, and evidence to support decision-making and have a positive impact on patient outcomes
- We will provide information resources and development skills for identifying and accessing high quality information and research to drive change and save decision maker's time
- We will provide high quality information and evidence to help improve patient outcomes and safety, inform treatment options, and reduce unnecessary treatments and interventions
- We will provide high quality information and evidence to help shape policy, guidelines, and practice
- We will provide high quality information and evidence to help Quality Improvement of Healthcare services.
- We will provide high quality information and evidence to help reduce costs and contribute to financial effectiveness

4.4 Aiding the workforce to do their jobs

Aim: To provide information resources and develop HSC staff's skills and confidence in identifying and accessing high quality information critical to providing quality care, patient safety and service development.

To achieve this:

- We will enable HSC staff to deliver excellent patient care based on informed decision-making by providing access to high quality evidence
- We will provide access to information and resources support HSC staff to be well trained, knowledgeable, and skilled to support the delivery of high-quality safe patient care
- We will train HSC staff on efficiently locating research and innovation, to support the health service to meet its statutory obligations to utilise evidence from research
- We will provide access to high quality information to help HSC staff to avoid misdiagnoses, adverse drug reactions, medication errors and patient mortality

5. Delivering the Strategy and Demonstrating Achievement

This strategy sets out the plans for delivery of library services to Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland over the next four years. It will be reviewed on an annual basis. We will continue to produce an operational plan which will outline specific objectives and tasks. This will include the key performance indicators we will use to monitor progress towards successful pursuit of the strategy and allow us to demonstrate our achievements and address any aspects that are not progressing as planned.

The successful delivery of this Strategic Plan will require additional funding from the Department of Health to support the ambitious aims this Plan sets out to achieve.