

Making it easy for people in Wales to find and use health and wellbeing information

Sue Thomas *Health Promotion Library Public Health Wales 4th Floor Churchill House 17 Churchill Way Cardiff CF10 2HH Wales*. Email: Susan.J.Thomas@wales.nhs.uk

Introduction

To stay healthy and well and to be prudent patients, people need to be able to access reliable, up-to-date and quality information when it is convenient for them. (1)

The Ottawa Charter highlights the need to provide information so people can make informed choices. (2)

The Health Promotion Library is the national health and wellbeing library for Wales, part of Public Health Wales an all Wales health trust. (3).

The Trust's vision is 'to create a healthier, happier and fairer Wales' and 'to work with partners to provide information and advice.' (4)

To achieve these aims with public libraries our key partners, we set up a Joint Strategic Group in 2012.

Objectives

We want to deliver health and wellbeing benefits to people in Wales using the public library network and associated partners.

Our main aims are to:

- develop a viable health and wellbeing service
- recognise and share examples of good practice
- apply for funding
- market our work
- evaluate outcomes and impact
- increase training opportunities for library staff
- seek credibility from partners and stakeholders

Methods

To raise awareness of our work we target national and local health events and conferences and provide information stands at events including 'National Eye Health Week' and the annual 'Mental Health Today' conference.

Health and wellbeing were the themes for the all Wales Library Marketing Festivals in 2012 and 2013, and during the festivals health events and displays took place in all libraries in Wales, with health partners such as pharmacists putting on exhibitions in libraries.(5)

We are developing a new service ‘HealthInfo4Life’ to signpost people to national and local services, and this won a marketing award in 2014.

The online health check for the over fifties launched in a public library building on the digital inclusion work we do (6).

Library staff have extended their skills with training in how to handle health enquiries, become dementia champions, and learnt about mindfulness.

Results

We monitor activity and impact for the Welsh Public Library Standards which include case studies (7).

In 2013 the Library Minister launched the ‘First Incomplete Field Guide to Wellbeing in Libraries’ which showcased this work. We plan to update this in 2016. (8)

We have repeat business from national organisations for exhibitions, and joint planning is taking place to use libraries to improve health and wellbeing in deprived communities.

Discussion

This is interesting and challenging work, as partners have very different ways of working.

It takes time to understand other organisations, to fully realise what can be achieved, and to get health organisations to recognise that libraries are valuable partners in achieving joint objectives.

Conclusion

We have made excellent progress over the past two years, but there is still much to achieve, and the financial climate will make this even more difficult.

We intend to build on our success, to use the strategic approach to apply for sustainable funding, and to more effectively evaluate the impact of this work to new potential partners.

References

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MESH Keywords

Health Promotion. Libraries. Patient Education. Self Care. Information Services. Great Britain.