

King's Fund Information and Knowledge Services Visit

24th January 2017

Formed in 1897 as the Prince of Wales Hospital Fund for London, what is now the King's Fund was initially set up to raise funds for the city's voluntary hospitals. Over the course of the 20th century, and particularly since the advent of the NHS in 1948, the organisation has focused on the management of health and social care, publishing research reports and best practice recommendations that continue to influence the direction of healthcare in the UK.

Based at King's Fund HQ, an impressive Grade II listed Georgian townhouse just off Cavendish Square in Central London, the Information Centre is a sleek and modern space open to the public. Much of the organisation's income is generated through venue-hire, and the library is no exception. We are taken through the main library area, complete with enquiry desk and study spaces, to a spacious and ornate room with floor to ceiling windows overlooking a courtyard and garden. Though library shelves line the walls, this space feels more suited to a wedding reception, and sure enough we are told that is one of its many functions. Cream blinds are fixed to each book shelf and are drawn down for the many events that are held here. After a warm welcome and tour, complete with free tea and coffee, we settle in this grand room for several presentations from the Library team about the work of the King's Fund and its Information and Knowledge Service.

The enquiry service

The Information and Knowledge Service provides a free-of-charge enquiry service to internal staff, the public and external organisations. Queries can range from clarification issues, a common question currently being 'is the NHS in crisis?', to comment requests asking for the King's Fund's stance on a particular issue. The nine library staff all handle their share of enquires, the majority of which come through via email. The enquiry desk is manned weekdays 9:30 – 5:30.

A more in-depth evidence search service is available to organisations, starting at £500 per day. Previous topics commissioned have included studies of mental health partnership models and best practice in dementia services. Samples of these evidence searches are [available on the Information Service website](#).

The team keep a database of enquiries undertaken, logging the initial request and the answers given. This serves as a useful starting point for new requests, as well as a record of work undertaken, and contains the details of around 3000 completed enquiries.

The database

The key resource for the majority of enquiries is the [King's Fund Library Database](#). Library staff scan and index journals themselves, a task which also allows them to develop and update their subject knowledge. The database contains around 123,000 entries, of which around 39,000 are hard copy publications. Areas range from health inequalities and managing long-term conditions to general NHS management and leadership topics, commissioning and workforce development. The focus is

very much on open source, digital content. Database records are also sold to Ovid, who publish it (along with Department of Health publications) as the HMIC database, familiar to NHS librarians through HDAS. Shrewd searchers of grey literature will be aware that data sets are only sent to Ovid every two months, so for the most up-to-date publications it is important to search the native King's Fund database.

Current awareness

As well as an enquiry service, the team also runs three [major alert services](#). These cover health management and policy (twice weekly), health and wellbeing (twice monthly), and integrated care (monthly). Content for these alerts comes from around 200 sources which are scanned daily, and each alert has around 10,000 subscribers.

The [Library's Twitter feed](#) also provides a useful current awareness service, with regular policy alerts.

The digital archive

The protection and promotion of the King's Fund's historical material also forms a key part of the Library team's work. A three-year project to digitise King's Fund publications ran from 2013 – 2016. The [digital archive](#) now holds digitised copies all publications from 1898 – 2011. We were shown some great examples of content, including a guide to art in hospitals, and annual reports from 1898, all available through open source software. The digital archive is searchable through both advanced and simple searches. The team also wrote some [interesting blog posts](#) about the digitising process, covering interesting finds and observations.

Overall this was a really interesting and well organised visit that shed light on the work of the King's Fund Information and Knowledge Service.

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