INFORMAL partnerships between health and information organisations in Bolton have been embraced and expanded with the formal creation of Bolton Health Information Partnership (BHIP). The following article looks at the formation and work of that partnership over the last two years.

**Our origins**
The initial consortium formed in 2017, bringing together representatives from:
- Bolton Library and Museum Services
- Macmillan Cancer Information Services
- Bolton NHS Foundation Trust Library Services
- University of Bolton Library

Historically, informal partnerships between some of these organisations had resulted in library access agreements being set up and collaboration at events such as a Human Library and the annual Bolton Health Mela. However, by 2017 a new impetus to work together came with Health Information Week and the Knowledge for Healthcare initiative *Developing and building local networks and partnerships* which sought to bring together local library services across a range of organisations to provide health information.

Nationally, public libraries were already delivering the Libraries Connected (formerly Society of Chief Librarians) Universal Health Offer. This builds on the recognition of libraries as trusted spaces which deliver health information and recreational activities to help people better manage their health and wellbeing. In Greater Manchester public library services meet regularly to develop regional delivery of health information. However, the growing importance of patient involvement in health and social care services was leading to the development of local
multi-sector networks not only allowing for a more collaborative approach to health information, but also the sharing of ideas and good practice.

With this in mind BHIP was formed and its purpose set out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which the named parties above signed.

**Purpose of the MoU**

1. To agree to establish a network in order to build understanding and strengthen working relationships
2. To identify where each partner can be more impactful, effective and efficient by working together
3. To agree to work in partnership to provide health information to patients, public, staff and learners
4. To articulate and describe mutual expectations and any agreed commitments for this joint working.

The MoU also includes aims and objectives. For the group as a whole, the aim is to help people in Bolton with their health and wellbeing; the main ways to do this are:

1. To promote the importance of health literacy, including functional personalised information, which all people can make sense of and act on, to assist them to make informed choices, share in decisions about their care and treatment, take control and improve the quality of their life:

   - To share and communicate good practice.
   - All parties also agree:
     - To operate as strategic partners, looking for suitable opportunities to promote the aims stated in the MoU
     - To work together on an increased evidence base to support these aims and objectives
     - To work with partners to share guidance, good practice, expertise, experience and resources
     - To facilitate/coordinate mutual training opportunities
     - To work on joint projects and events, such as Health Information Week
     - That any formal or detailed arrangements developed to implement joint actions through this agreement will be recorded and shared through the respective reporting arrangements to ensure that appropriate governance is established and good practice is cascaded. These will include:
       - Development of any structural relationships
       - Building the evidence base
       - Nominating an alternative contact person if the named lead changes.

In addition to this we developed clear roles and responsibilities fit for purpose for each of our own organisations and an example of this would be:

**Bolton NHS Foundation Trust Library Services agrees to:**

1. work with local health information providers to share guidance, good practice, expertise, experience and resources
2. promote and build the public library profile by encouraging structural relationships at a local and regional level
3. work with Trust staff to encourage active engagement with public libraries via relationships with local authorities
4. facilitate/coordinate mutual training opportunities.

Examples of how this came into force:

**Health Information Week 2017**

Staff from Library Services, MacMillan Information and University of Bolton Library came together in the Education Centre Library at Royal Bolton Hospital for an event covering:

1. Cancer information – attendees could find out more from MacMillan staff by visiting their information stand
2. Cancer collection – browse new titles available for Library Services members to borrow
3. HeLP@Bolton – chat to the Librarian from the School of Health and Human Sciences at the University of Bolton about the library resources and services available and the HeLP@Bolton scheme, which enables NHS staff to use library facilities at the university.

Public library staff were busy all week with a timetable of events including:

1. Health agencies including Macmillan Cancer, Diabetes UK, Bolton Public Health, Smoking Cessation, Dementia specialists and Deafway, on hand to provide information and advice to the public
2. A mindfulness workshop
3. Launch of the new Books on Prescription collection, ‘Reading Well for People with Long Term Conditions’. Titles cover conditions such as arthritis, IBS, asthma, COPD, diabetes, stroke, pain management etc
4. A smoothie bike event at Central Library which gave staff the opportunity to promote healthy eating and the NHS Live Well five a day campaign.

**Working together in practice**

Our ethos is that working in partnership enables our organisations to use resources more efficiently and by working together we can achieve more than working alone. Networking within the partnership connects any information professionals across Bolton who are working within the health and wellbeing arena and our group membership is open to anyone who meets that criteria.

The BHIP hopes to share good practices which could be established in other regions; work together to deliver training by NHS information professionals for public library staff in health information enquiries; redirect queries from members of the public to other organisations to ensure the most appropriate response; co-ordinating reading challenges and sharing resources. A recent example of where we have shared...
our experiences in the North West is at the Greater Manchester Health Library Partnership Event which took place in Manchester on the 14th May 2019.

In terms of sharing information and generating new ideas for collaboration between ourselves, the group meets three times a year for a few hours. We rotate the hosting to give attendees the opportunity to see other workplaces and services in action. We have also set up a blog to act as a repository for resources and to document our work: https://boltonhealthinformationpartnership.wordpress.com/

Growth in Partnerships
Since its formation the membership has grown to include Diabetes UK, Bolton CVS (Council for Voluntary Services), Bolton College, Bolton Public Health and the partnership looks forward to welcoming Bolton Carers Support at our next meeting. These organisations have signed the MoU.

Benefits
"From a CVS perspective, the Bolton Health Information Partnership has been an invaluable tool to find out a lot more about the great work that the various libraries do throughout our town, from learning about 'Reading Friends' at the Central Library to being part of Health Information Week. As a partnership, we’ve been able to promote each other’s work successfully, whilst combining on projects where appropriate.” – Patrick Long, Bolton CVS.

Health Information Week 2019
Health Information Week has given Bolton Library and Museum Services the opportunity to focus on popular events, such as NHS trainer drop in sessions, and host local organisations offering health advice across the library network in a single week. However, it has also allowed the service to develop new ideas which in 2019 included a Menopause Meet Up which was both well-attended and well-received.

For Health Information Week 2019, Bolton NHS Foundation Trust Library Services and University of Bolton Library focused their activities around the themed Health Information Week tweets to promote resources such as health apps and the University of Bolton’s award winning LEAP Online.

A workbook was also developed by the team bespoke to the needs of staff supporting health and wellbeing in Bolton. This was based on a workbook produced by Dave Ashley (Doncaster and Bassetlaw NHS FT), and is a resource list for library and information staff that can be used to:

- Raise awareness of high quality, reliable web sites providing health related information
- Increase the confidence of staff to be able to answer health related questions quickly and accurately so that patients and the public:
  - Have answers to health related questions answered quickly and accurately
  - Can be confident that the answers they receive come from high quality, reliable sources of health related information
  - Increase their awareness of high quality, reliable sources of health related information

Future Plans
The group intend to continue to meet up regularly and share good practice. One example of a forthcoming collaboration is a ‘Reading Friends’ initiative between Bolton Library and Museum Services, University of Bolton Library and Bolton College.

Ongoing work also includes the development of the blog and workbook. In addition, we are continually looking at ways to work together informally and more formally to bid for funding for projects which could strengthen the work of the partnership.

CILIP Employers Forum
Diversity in the workforce and creating an inclusive workplace

Tuesday 26th November 2019, Leeds Central Library LS1 3AB

This annual event brings together employers, managers and leaders from across the information, knowledge and library profession to tackle the key issues of our sector.

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