NHS Scotland Librarians
Adding value & impacting care

NHS Scotland libraries value and impact report 2025/26

Introduction

This report presents an overview of the value and impact of NHS Scotland Knowledge and Library Services. It brings together national activity data and case studies showing how library and knowledge services help staff, patients and partners find, understand, share and apply evidence and knowledge.

The 2025/26 case studies demonstrate a broad contribution across clinical practice and research, public health and policy, workforce learning, organisational knowledge, digital decision support and patient rehabilitation. Together, the examples show how these services can save time, strengthen confidence in decisions, build capability, inform service development and support safer, more consistent care. The report includes annual data from April 2025 to March 2026, covering activity across physical and digital library services.

Library activity

Physical library services

The figures below summarise data collected from participating NHS Boards with library services across Scotland.

In 2025-26:

- There were 1,177 literature searches, evidence summaries or evidence synthesis provided
- 128 current awareness bulletins were created, many for a national audience
- 583 training and outreach activities were provided

Digital library services

In March 2026 the number of eligible users with an OpenAthens account totalled 33,438.

In the past 12 months, OpenAthens account holders conducted:

- 475,082 evidence summary page views
- 1,773,842 journal article downloads
- 636,734 database searches
- 1,036,794 medicines information section downloads
- 239,696 ebook chapter downloads

Use of The Knowledge Network Library Search between April 2025-March 2026:

- Number of sessions - 203,750*
- Number of searches - 309,443**

** Sessions are a period of time in which a user interacts with Library Search.*

*** Searches of the basic search, advanced search and basic search with pre-filter.*

Impact case studies

The case studies demonstrate how NHS Scotland library and knowledge services contribute evidence and mobilise knowledge to deliver better outcomes across health and care.

Originally developed by NHS England, the case study templates have been adapted with their permission.

Each case study is presented below in a text-based format for accessibility. The original designed versions are reproduced in the appendix, with the relevant NHS organisation and case study title included as a heading.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran: Rehabilitation of the upper limbs following a stroke

Context: The Clinical Lead for Neurological Rehabilitation regularly requests literature searches to support clinical practice and research.

What was done: In July 2025, the library service carried out a search on rehabilitation of the upper limbs following a stroke.

Outcomes and impact: The search formed the starting point for a larger project and informed and shaped the entire output.

What was said:

> "As a clinical academic I constantly rely on the current evidence base to inform not only my clinical practice but to support my own research. I rely heavily on the support of our Library Services, particularly for literature searches. They are always extremely helpful, prompt and responsive. The service is invaluable to my work. I currently have several papers at various stages of publication and this would not be possible without this highly effective service."

Dr Jenny Preston, Consultant Occupational Therapist and Clinical Lead Neurological Rehabilitation

NHS Education for Scotland: Routes to impactful knowledge: Knowledge Management webinar series

Context: A programme of knowledge management webinars was developed to assist staff during transfer to a newly formed organisation.

What was done: Nine webinars covered knowledge management techniques, knowledge brokers, before and after-action reviews, Liberating Structures and communities of practice.

Outcomes and impact: The series attracted 480 participants and received positive feedback.

What was said:

"Training exceeded my expectations as it reminded me of the vast amount of places we can find knowledge, and of the many different ways we can become knowledge brokers and find knowledge brokers. It also affirmed the amount of tacit knowledge we all carry."

Anonymous participant

NHS Forth Valley: Health and wellbeing benefits of cold water immersion therapy in populations experiencing poor health outcomes

Context: Evidence was required on possible health and wellbeing benefits of cold water immersion therapy in populations experiencing poor health outcomes, to inform the development of a recovery support programme.

What was done: The librarian searched multiple databases, provided an overview of the information source, identified gaps, and signposted to publications of wider scope but potential use.

Outcomes and impact: The results supported an evidence-based intervention, helped set realistic expectations around outcomes and created an opportunity to explore further recovery interventions with NHS working in collaboration with external partners.

What was said:

"Having reviewed the material [...] I was able to clarify the expectations associated with the programme being developed and [...] the intervention [was] strengthened by having the opportunity to consider the evidence base. The expertise of the library service has been hugely valuable to me on multiple occasions, ensuring I feel confident of the relevant evidence base and [...] can advocate and influence for better health outcomes [...] with statutory and third sector partners"

Tina Everington, Senior Health Improvement Officer, NHS Forth Valley

NHS Grampian: Reading Beyond Roles: Creating a Digital Third Space Through Shared Reading

Context: A Seasonal Reads programme created a shared space for health and social care colleagues to reflect, connect and learn across professional roles.

What was done: Library and Knowledge Services worked with Spiritual Care, using literature, podcasts and online discussion to explore grief, mortality, communication and compassion.

Outcomes and impact: The programme supported individual engagement and shared reflection, creating meaningful conversations across professional and organisational boundaries.

What was said:

> "It was beautiful to see how the facilitated space helped staff share and reflect deeply on their own experiences and fears, in a supportive, affirming and very human community. This can hopefully also support them in their professional encounters with dying."

NHS Grampian Healthcare Chaplain

NHS Lanarkshire: Global and national models that lead to longevity

Context: The Director of Public Health's Annual Report focused on healthy ageing and prevention. The requestor wanted to refer to interventions from UK and global models to inform what can be done to support and improve healthy ageing in Lanarkshire.

What was done: NHS Lanarkshire Knowledge Services carried out a literature search and summary, working with the requester to select key articles for inclusion in the summary

Outcomes and impact: The results increased knowledge and awareness of factors that support healthy ageing. The findings were shared through the Annual Report with stakeholders and the public to stimulate dialogue and assessment.

NHS Lanarkshire: Roles and effectiveness of preceptorship programmes and induction orientation for newly qualified nurses and midwives.

Context: Support was needed from Knowledge Services for a short-life working group on induction that was looking to develop good practice guidance on the topic. The group wanted to standardize the induction process across NHS Lanarkshire for newly qualifies nurses and midwives.

What was done: The Knowledge Services team undertook a literature search and worked with the requester to select key articles for inclusion in a summary which was written by NHS Lanarkshire librarians.

Outcomes and impact: The summary identified pertinent research to inform the working group's guidance.

What was said:

> "Really good service in terms of content, information and response time and very helpful in guiding me on the process of getting a summary."

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde: NHS GG&C Right Decision Service

Context: Knowledge Services have been working with service leads since 2015 to deliver web and app toolkits supporting local decision-making.

What was done: The case study records 101 toolkits published or in development as of June 2026.

Outcomes and impact: The service supported toolkits across clinical and service areas.

What was said:

> *"Over 85% of respondents to an evaluation survey agreed that MyPsych was likely to increase their knowledge and understanding of mental health topics, and likely to improve safe and timely practice in mental health services."*

Public Health Scotland: Road traffic collisions: interventions to reduce incidence and health impacts

Context: Road traffic injuries are preventable health harms and remain a significant public health concern in Scotland.

What was done: The Public Health Librarian worked with the requester to produce a literature search strategy focused on identifying upstream and midstream strategies that reduced the incidence and health impacts of collisions.

Outcomes and impact: The umbrella review was disseminated through a report, as a presentation for several different stakeholder groups, as policy briefings for national transport strategic and operational partnership boards and used to form a UK Government consultation response. It was also being developed as a journal article and is currently under peer review and as a conference presentation at an international conference.

What was said:

> *"The search was very comprehensive and transparent which bolstered the credibility of the work."*

Gail McMillan, Public Intelligence Advisor

Public Health Scotland: Relationship between the local food environment and the weight/BMI of pregnant women

Context: Public Health Scotland are carrying out a project looking at the impact of the density of fast-food takeaways on maternal weight in Scotland. The project looks as whether the evidence shows that the density of fast-food takeaways is linked to higher maternal Body Mass Index in Scotland.

What was done: A literature search identified relevant published research.

Outcomes and impact: The results will be written up as a paper and submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal to address an important in the existing evidence on the effectiveness of intervention in food environments to improve population health. Findings will be disseminated to stakeholders in NHS Scotland, the Scottish Government, local government and other relevant partners.

What was said:

> *"The research found by this literature search will help to support our work in this area."*

David Carr, Advanced Epidemiologist, Public Health Scotland

Public Health Scotland: CMO guidelines for physical activity

Context: Identify recent evidence that specifically examines the impact of small increases in physical activity on adult populations who are sedentary or relatively inactive.

What was done: The Public Health Librarian worked with colleagues on population-level systematic review evidence since 2019, covering outcomes including mortality, quality of life, cardiovascular disease and other long-term conditions.

Outcomes and impact: The librarian's expert knowledge and repeated adaptation of the searches supported a contribution to the evidence refresh for an update to the UK Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidance.

What was said:

> *"Grant's expert knowledge, flexibility and willingness to adapt searches multiple times enabled us to respond to the UKHSA request in a positive and constructive manner that ultimately enabled us to provide a valuable contribution to the evidence refresh in support of the July update to the UK CMOs PA guidance."*

Christina Buckton, Public Health Intelligence Lead, Public Health Scotland.

The State Hospital: Patient Library Assistant role as vocational rehabilitation

Context: The Patient Library at The State Hospital is run by patients for patients.

What was done: Patient Library Assistants undertake recruitment, day-to-day library duties, peer support and project work. They can also undertake accredited learning.

Outcomes and impact: The role provides work experience, peer support and learning opportunities as part of vocational rehabilitation.

What was said:

> *"Working in the Patient Library was instrumental to my recovery."*

Healthcare Improvement Scotland / Right Decision Service: High-Risk Prescribing Decision Support through the Right Decision Service

Context: The Right Decision Service (RDS) High-Risk Prescribing Decision Support System delivers patient-specific prescribing alerts within primary care electronic health record systems, providing clinicians with evidence-based guidance at the point of care. The evaluation provides encouraging evidence that integrating high-quality evidence and guidance into electronic health records can change clinical behaviour, reduce high-risk prescribing, and strengthen the role of knowledge-driven decision support in improving healthcare quality and safety across Scotland.

What was done: An independent evaluation by the University of Dundee examined the Right Decision Service High-Risk Prescribing Decision Support System in NHS Lothian and NHS Tayside.

Outcomes and impact: The evaluation found measurable reductions in high-risk prescribing across both health boards. Improvements were seen across several clinically important risk areas, including cardiac and cardiovascular prescribing, falls risk, hyperkalaemia, renal risks, and respiratory prescribing. Notable reductions were observed in high-risk anticoagulant and NSAID combinations, methotrexate prescribing risks, cardiovascular medicine interactions, and prescribing risks affecting people with dementia and asthma.

Although the study did not directly measure clinical outcomes such as hospital admissions, the indicators targeted prescribing situations known to be associated with medicines-related harm, including bleeding events, falls, renal injury, cardiovascular complications and respiratory problems. Reducing these risks will contribute to safer patient care and reduce medicines-related adverse events requiring unscheduled hospital admission, particularly for older people and those living with multimorbidity and polypharmacy.

For health librarians, the evaluation demonstrates the value of translating evidence and guidance into actionable, point-of-care decision support. Rather than relying solely on information retrieval, the RDS model embeds knowledge directly into clinical workflows, enabling clinicians to act on evidence in real time.

What was said:

> *High-risk prescribing can be difficult to identify in increasingly complex patient populations.*
> *By providing patient-specific, evidence-based alerts directly within the clinical workflow, this decision support helps clinicians recognise and address risks that might otherwise be missed. The evaluation findings indicate that this approach can reduce medicine-related adverse events and enable safer prescribing across Scotland.*

Scott Jamieson, GP Clinical Lead - Primary Care NHS Tayside, Angus HSCP Associate Medical Director

Appendix

NHS Ayrshire & Arran: Rehabilitation of the upper limbs following a stroke

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NHS Ayrshire & Arran



Rehabiliation of the upper limbs following a stroke

Literature searches are requested regularly by the Clinical Lead for Neurological Rehabilitation to support their work

In July 2025 a search was requested regarding the rehabilitation of the upper limbs followng a stroke.

This was the start of a larger project and informed and shaped the entire output.

"As a clinical academic I constantly rely on the current evidence base to inform not only my clinical practice but to support my own research. I rely heavily on the support of our Library Services, particularly for literature searches. They are always extremely helpful, prompt and responsive. The service is invaluable to my work. I currently have several papers at various stages of publication and this would not be possible without this highly effective service."

Dr Jenny Preston MBE, PhD, BSc (Hons), Dip COT, FRCOT, Consultant Occupational Therapist and Clinical Lead Neurological Rehabilitation

NHS Education for Scotland: Routes to impactful knowledge: Knowledge Management webinar series

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NHS Education for Scotland



Knowledge Management (KM) webinar series

NHS Education for Scotland provided a series of 9 knowledge management webinars to assist in the transfer to a newly formed organisation.
The 'Routes to impactful knowledge' series covered:

- What KM is and the techniques involved.
- The role of Knowledge Brokers.
- Before and after action reviews.
- Liberating structures.
- Communities of practice.

The series attracted 480 participants and received positive feedback.

"Training exceeded my expectations as it reminded me of the vast amount of places we can find knowledge, and of the many different ways we can become knowledge brokers and find knowledge brokers. It also affirmed the amount of tacit knowledge we all carry."
Anonymous. NHS Education for Scotland

NHS Forth Valley: Health and wellbeing benefits of cold water immersion therapy in populations experiencing poor health outcomes

NHS Forth Valley

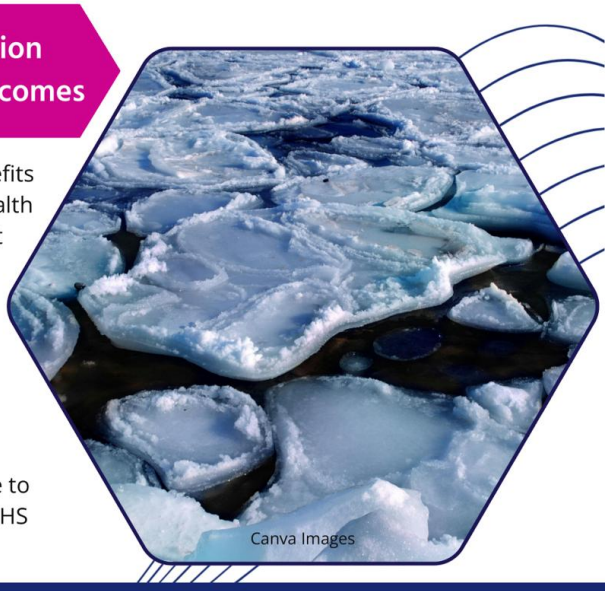
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Heath and wellbeing benefits of cold water immersion therapy in populations experiecing poor health outcomes

Evidence on whether there are recognised health and wellbeing benefits of cold water immersion therapy in populations experiening poor health outcomes was required to inform development of a recovery support programme.

The Librarian conducted searches across multiple databases, providing an overview of information sourced, gaps identified, and signposting to publications of wider scope but potential use.

The results enabled the intervention to be evidence-ebased and for expectations around outcomes to be realistic. Opportunity also arose to explore the development of additional recovery interventions, with NHS working in collaboration with external partners.



"Having reviewed the material [...] I was able to clarify the expectations associated with the programme being developed and [...] the intervention [was] strengthened by having the opportunity to consider the evidence base. The expertise of the library service has been hugely valuable to me on multiple occasions, ensuring I feel confident of the relevant evidence base and [...] can advocate and influence for better health outcomes [...] with statutory and third sector partners"

Tina Everington, Senior Health Improvement Officer, NHS Forth Valley

NHS Grampian: Reading Beyond Roles: Creating a Digital Third Space Through Shared Reading

NHS Grampian

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Reading Beyond Roles: Creating a Digital Third Space Through Shared Reading

More than a reading programme, this *Seasonal Reads* special created a space between roles where colleagues from across health and social care could reflect, connect and learn together.

Working in partnership, NHS Grampian Library & Knowledge Service and Spiritual Care teams used literature, podcasts and online discussion to spark exploration of grief, mortality, communication and compassion. By supporting individual engagement with ideas and shared reflection, the programme created opportunities for meaningful conversations across professional and organisational boundaries.



CWS Grampian Image - Johnston Gardens

"It was beautiful to see how the facilitated space helped staff share and reflect deeply on their own experiences and fears, in a supportive, affirming and very human community. This can hopefully also support them in their professional encounters with dying."

NHS Grampian Healthcare Chaplain

NHS Lanarkshire

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Global and national models that lead to longevity

The Director of Public Health's Annual Report this year focused on healthy ageing and the role of prevention. The requester wanted to refer to interventions from UK and global models to inform what can be done to support and improve healthy ageing in Lanarkshire.

The Knowledge Services team undertook a literature search and worked with the requestor to select key articles for inclusion in a summary which was written by NHS Lanarkshire librarians.

The results increased knowledge and awareness of factors that lead to healthy ageing and enabled that knowledge to be shared via the Annual Report to a wide range of stakeholders and the public in order to stimulate dialogue and assessment.



NHS Lanarkshire: Roles and effectiveness of preceptorship programmes and induction orientation for newly qualified nurses and midwives.

NHS Lanarkshire

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Roles & effectiveness of preceptorship programs and induction orientation for newly qualified nurses

Support was needed from Knowledge Services for a short-life working group on induction that was looking to develop good practice guidance on the topic.

The group wanted to standardise the induction process across NHS Lanarkshire for Newly Qualified Nurses and midwives.

The Knowledge Services team undertook a literature search and worked with the requestor to select key articles for inclusion in a summary which was written by NHS Lanarkshire librarians. The summary allowed pertinent research to be identified.

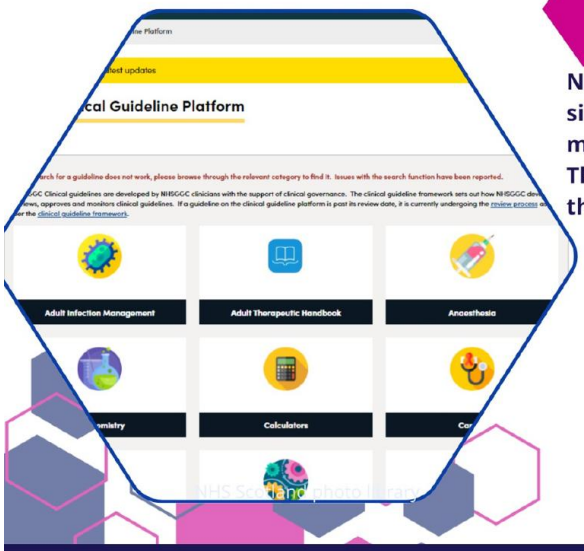


"Really good service in terms of content, information and response time and very helpful in guiding me on the process of getting a summary."

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde: NHS GG&C Right Decision Service

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NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde



NHS GG&C Right Decision Service

NHSGGC Knowledge Services have been working with service leads since 2015 to deliver toolkits (web and app) to support local decision making.
The numbers listed below are correct as of June 2026 and inlcude those published and in development.

Count of Toolkit	
Row Labels	**Grand Total**
Adult Acute	26
Adult Self-Management	15
AHP	11
Community	4
Maternity and Gynaecology	6
Management	1
MyPsych	4
Neurology	6
Primary Care	3
Public Health	9
Resident Doctor Handbook	4
RHCG	10
Sandyford	2
Grand Total	**101**

"Over 85% of respondents to an evaluation survey agreed that MyPsych was likely to increase their knowledge and understanding of mental health topics, and likely to improve safe and timely practice in mental health services"

Public Health Scotland: Road traffic collisions: interventions to reduce incidence and health impacts

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Public Health Scotland



Road traffic collisions: interventions to reduce incidence and health impacts

Road traffic injuries are preventable health harms and remain a significant public health concern in Scotland.

The Public Health Librarian worked with the requestor to produce a literature search strategy focused identifying upstream and midstream strategies that reduced the incidence and health impacts of collisions.

The findings of the resulting umbrella review have been disseminated a a report on the PHS website, as a presentation for several different stakeholder groups, as policy briefings for national transport strategic and operational partnership boards, and used to form a consultation response to a UK government consultation. It is being developed as a journal article and is currently under peer review, and as a conference presentation at an international conference.

The search was very comprehensive and transparent which bolstered the credibility of the work."

ail McMillan, Public Intelligence Advisor

Public Health Scotland: Relationship between the local food environment and the weight/BMI of pregnant women

Public Health Scotland

NHS Scotland Librarians
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Relationship between the local food environment and the weight/BMI of pregnant women.



Public Health Scotland are carrying out a project looking at the impact of the density of fast-food takeaways on maternal weight in Scotland. The project looks at whether the evidence shows that the density of fast-food takeaways is linked to higher maternal Body Mass Index in Scotland.

A literature search was conducted which has helped the team discover relevant research that has already been published on the subject.

The results will be written up as a paper and submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal to address an important gap in the existing evidence on the effectiveness of intervention in food environments to improve population health. Findings will also be disseminated to stakeholders in NHS Scotland, the Scottish Government, local government, and other relevant partners.

"We're carrying out this project to support and influence planning departments in local government. In England, some local authorities have restricted the opening of new fast-food takeaways in areas with high child Body Mass Index. If we can show that the density of fast-food takeaways is linked to higher maternal BMI in Scotland, that could provide evidence to support implementing such policies here. The research found by this literature search will help to support our work in this area".
David Carr, Advanced Epidemiologist, Public Health Scotland

Public Health Scotland: CMO guidelines for physical activity

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Public Health Scotland



CMO guidelines for physical activity

The purpose of this work was to identify recent evidence that specifically examines the impact of small increases in physical activity on adult populations that are sedentary or relatively inactive.

The Public Health Librarian worked with colleagues to respond to the following research question:

What population level systematic review evidence has emerged since 2019 relevant to incremental or small increases in physical activity for adults who are currently inactive, and associations with health outcomes including mortality, quality of life, cardiovascular disease and other long term health conditions including mental health conditions?

Grant's expert knowledge, flexibility and willingness to adapt searches multiple times enabled us to espond to the UKHSA request in a positive and constructive manner that ultimately enabled us to rovide a valuable contribution to the evidence refresh in support of the July update to the UK CMOs PA uidance."
hristina Buckton, Public Health Intellgence Lead, Public Health Scotland.

The State Hospital: Patient Library Assistant role as vocational rehabilitation

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Patient Library Assistant Role as Vocational Rehabilitation

The Patient Library at The State Hospital is run by patients for patients. Patients undergo a recruitment process to gain a Library Assistant work role, then undertake day-to-day duties such as isuing and returning items and supporting peers to find items.

Library Assistants also undertake project work such as supporting the Reading Ahead challenge. As part of their role, Library Assistants have the opportunity to undertake accredited learning, such as Volunteering Skills offered by Qualifications Scotland.



"Working in the Patient Library was instrumental to my recovery"
Patient Library Assistant

Healthcare Improvement Scotland / Right Decision Service: High-Risk Prescribing Decision Support through the Right Decision Service

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Healthcare Improvement Scotland | Right Decision Service

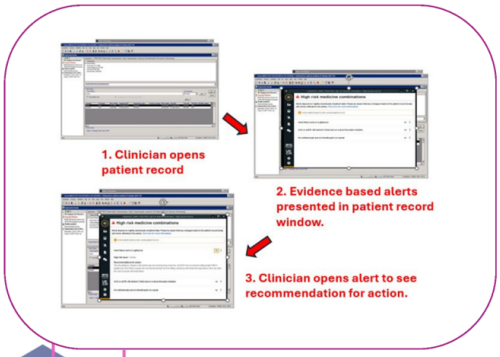


PHOTO CREDIT: Healthcare Improvement Scotland

High-Risk Prescribing Decision Support through the Right Decision Service: Key Findings for Health Librarians

An independent evaluation by the University of Dundee assessed the **Right Decision Service (RDS) High-Risk Prescribing Decision Support System**, implemented across NHS Lothian and NHS Tayside. The system delivers **patient-specific prescribing alerts** within primary care electronic health record systems, providing clinicians with evidence-based guidance at the point of care. The evaluation provides encouraging evidence that integrating high-quality evidence and guidance into electronic health records can **change clinical behaviour**, **reduce high-risk prescribing**, and **strengthen the role of knowledge-driven decision support** in improving healthcare quality and safety across Scotland.

The evaluation found **measurable reductions in high-risk prescribing** across both health boards. Improvements were seen across several clinically important risk areas, including cardiac and cardiovascular prescribing, falls risk, hyperkalaemia, renal risks, and respiratory prescribing. Notable reductions were observed in high-risk anticoagulant and NSAID combinations, methotrexate prescribing risks, cardiovascular medicine interactions, and prescribing risks affecting people with dementia and asthma.

Although the study did not directly measure clinical outcomes such as hospital admissions, the indicators targeted prescribing situations known to be associated with medicines-related harm, including bleeding events, falls, renal injury, cardiovascular complications and respiratory problems. Reducing these risks will contribute to **safer patient care** and **reduce medicines-related adverse events** requiring unscheduled hospital admission, particularly for older people and those living with multimorbidity and polypharmacy.

For health librarians, the evaluation demonstrates the **value of translating evidence and guidance into actionable, point-of-care decision support**. Rather than relying solely on information retrieval, the RDS model embeds knowledge directly into clinical workflows, enabling clinicians to act on evidence in real time.

> High-risk prescribing can be difficult to identify in increasingly complex patient populations.
> By providing patient-specific, evidence-based alerts directly within the clinical workflow, this decision support helps clinicians recognise and address risks that might otherwise be missed.
> The evaluation findings indicate that this approach can reduce medicine-related adverse events and enable safer prescribing across Scotland.
>
> **- Scott Jamieson, GP Clinical Lead - Primary Care NHS Tayside, Angus HSCP Associate Medical Director**