Should hospices further utilise information specialists to support the digital literacy of staff and volunteers?

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Background

According to a recent survey of hospices, just 15% have a paid librarian in post. This figure was derived from a whole sample survey of 220 hospices with a response rate of 30%. If we assume that the non-respondents do not have an information professional in post, the percentage would fall to 5%. Wherever the true figure lies, it is clear that librarians are a rarity in hospices.

Despite the lack of dedicated information support, health and social care professionals are required to navigate a highly complex web of information (figure 1). At Princess Alice Hospice there are local policies, forms, databases, intranets, eLearning systems and shared document drives, all with a different information architecture, sometimes password-protected, and sometimes not.

This is just the tip of the information iceberg; there are also national clinical guidelines, publications from a multitude of associations / regulators / commissioners, not to mention books, eBooks and journal articles. The journal database Medline, part of Pubmed, is getting close to indexing a million journal articles a year. There are also wider issues to address – the Royal College of Nursing, in conjunction with Health Education England, recently published their “Improving Digital Literacy” report which recognises that: