

Updating the Wessex Classification Scheme for UK health libraries: a case study in improving inclusion and diversity in a specialist classification scheme

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Background

The Wessex Classification scheme was introduced in 1987 aiming to improve the cataloguing of items relating to UK healthcare practice.

It consists of a classification schedule adapted from National Library of Medicine and annotated subject headings informed by NLM Medical Subject Headings (MeSH).

The 5th edition of Wessex was published in 2013 with no major updates since.



LGBTQ+ (Pride)

- Increased awareness of LGBTQ+ issues and care requirements since last Wessex update.
- Opportunity to educate health library users and express allyship.
- Criminal aspects of sexual behaviour moved to Psychiatry classification schedule.
- Subject headings identified for removal or to be updated using resources and collaboration with NHS staff networks.
- Sub-group work is complete, changes were published in June 2023 celebrating Pride Month.



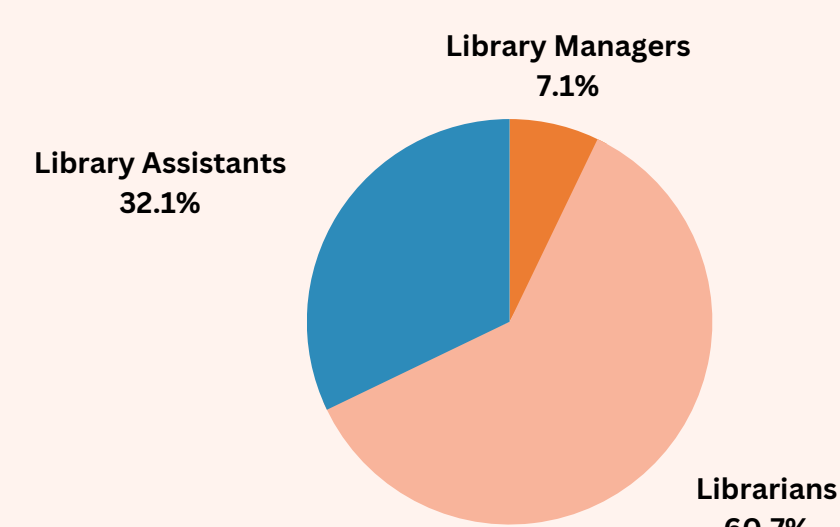
The Future

- A great deal already achieved in first year.
- New sub-groups being formed, while work of Ethnicity and Race, and LDN sub-groups carries on.
- Co-ordinate work with EBSCO to update terminology in CINAHL database.
- Moving Wessex to a thesaurus management tool (PoolParty) to make searching and editing easier.
- Move scheme to a national website and away from regional NHS site.

The Oversight Group

Formed in September 2022 containing members from all regional networks and job roles for the first time:

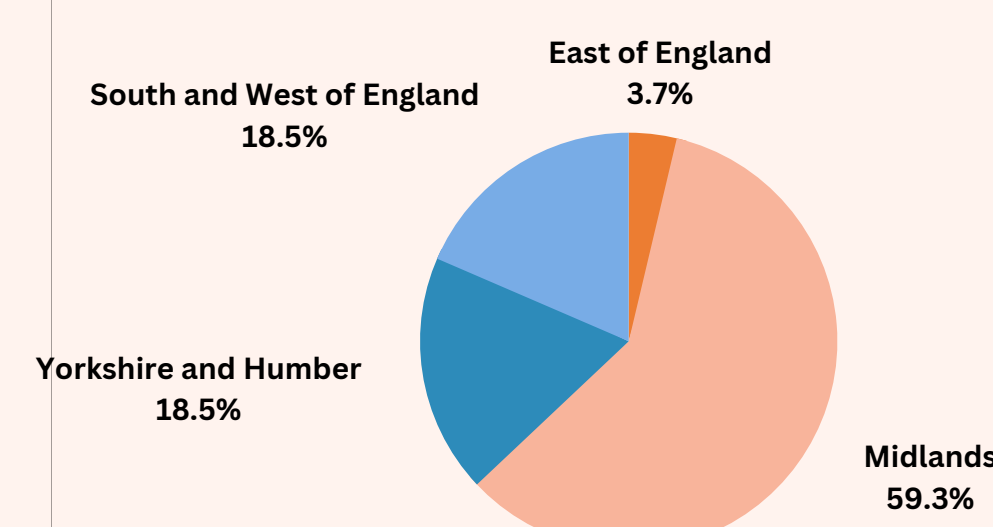
- Bringing together knowledge and skills
- Opportunity for professional development and networking
- Ensures longevity of the scheme
- Shares the maintenance work



Sub-Groups

The Oversight Group identified three main areas they felt required updating and sub-groups were formed as follows:

- LGBTQ+ (Pride)
- Ethnicity and Race
- Learning Disabilities and Neurodiversity (LDN)

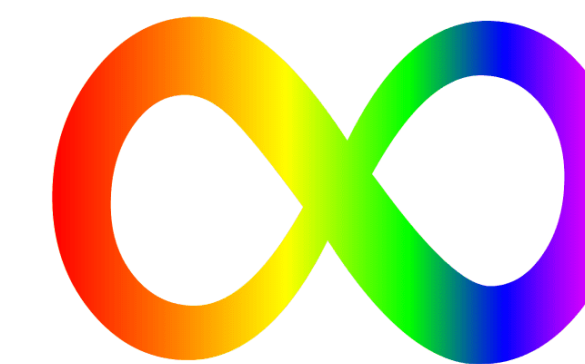


Ethnicity and Race

- Work focused on inclusive language, removing outdated and offensive subject headings.
- Collaboration was via shared documents due to scheduling challenges.
- Other challenges include lack of lived experience within sub-group and unable to connect with BAME staff networks.
- Opportunity to overhaul geographic subject headings, improving consistency and usefulness.
- New subject headings identified and currently being classified.

Learning Disabilities and Neurodiversity (LDN)

- Growing awareness of neurodiversity as an issue.
- Benefit of the lived experience of members of the LDN group.
- Proposed change to schedules to rationalise classification and remove outdated language.
- Moving away from a medical model of neurodiversity.
- Challenges of the scale of proposed work and limited capacity of group, including limited professional membership.
- Challenges for libraries of re-classifying stock.



View

Scan QR code to view the updated Wessex Classification scheme



Acknowledgements

Thanks to Anne Lancey (retired librarian from the Isle of Wight) and Jenny Toller (formerly of Health Education England) for their work in setting up the Oversight Group.

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A big thank you to all current and former members of the Oversight Group, for their enthusiasm to see Wessex improved for the benefit of health library users.