

Lending & Learning is Serious Fun!

Hospital Libraries & Serious Games



Overview

The Newcomb Library and Information Service serves the staff and students of Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Homerton is based in the London Borough of Hackney and provides general health services in the hospital and in the community and staff work from more than 70 sites. The hospital has almost 500 beds, 11 wards, a nine-bed intensive care unit and maternity, paediatric and neonatal wards.

The Newcomb Library promotes safe, compassionate, effective care by supporting the clinical effectiveness, education, training, professional development and research needs of all staff members and users.

The library staff don't limit themselves to 'traditional' activities. In their efforts to position the library as an integral element of the Trust's learning environment, the library staff recognised the value that loaning educational board games could add, in engaging all staff in new ways of learning.

This exciting approach stems from the library staff's belief that board games can engage, educate and enhance learning, while making it more enjoyable. The games loaned by the library have been developed by Focus Games Ltd in partnership with leading specialists, practitioners and academics to ensure that they reflect current guidelines and best practice.

What was the driver for this innovation?

Health professionals must maintain their learning and continuing professional education to deliver safe effective patient care. But all learning resources must be accessible, relevant and effective; the Newcomb Library believes that educational board games meet these vital criteria. Lending games fulfils a range of needs and aspirations:

- Alternative to 'traditional' learning - playing board games is fun!
- Help time-pressured staff with limited time for learning.
- Improve communication in multidisciplinary teams.
- Staff learn from each other while playing and the learning is better retained.
- Raise the library's profile.



What did the library do?

Several games were purchased from Focus Games Ltd with support from the Head of Professional Education, Learning and Development. These games were added to the library’s catalogue to be borrowed for team meetings and training sessions. The library currently has 13 different games:



The Library staff have publicised the games through targeted communications to key staff, highlighting their use in both formal and informal peer learning and teaching. The library has also hosted several events, with staff and students invited to play a range of games and experience the value of games as teaching and training tools.

The library staff were also invited to lead a student nursing teaching session, and took along several games for the students to play. They enjoyed playing the games so much that they wanted to continue playing them even after the session had ended!

Board games have become a great way to celebrate wider events: for 2016’s Fab NHS Change Day, as well as International Games Day, the library invited all staff members to “change the way you learn” by attending drop-in sessions with free food and board games.



What were the outcomes?

Rising loan statistics prove the increasing popularity of the games with staff members across the Trust. The games have also helped to raise awareness of other useful library resources for individuals and their teams.



What were the key learning points for the library?

- Involve key members of staff across the Trust, especially learning and development, to help raise awareness of the games as teaching tools.
- Send personal email invitations to key staff members, and take games to staff team meetings to show that the games are 'serious'.
- Produce attractive publicity for games sessions organised by the library, and involve the Trust Communications team to help raise awareness of events.
- Ask Focus Games Ltd for advice and support.



What do people think?

Head of Professional Education, Learning and Development *"Learning should be fun, and these games are just that – a fun way to learn. By engaging in conversations and discussions with other players as you answer questions...not only do you learn something, you also build relationships with colleagues."*



Head of Medical Education *“Learned more from other colleagues than specifically from answers. Very good idea to stimulate discussion about communication.”*

Physiotherapy Quality Improvement Lead *“Games are a useful and interesting way of learning in a fun environment... could be used as a mechanism/tool for engagement.”*

Practice Development Nurse, Elderly Care Unit *“The board games were a very interactive and interesting way of learning. Staff felt that the game encouraged team working and updated their knowledge of pressure ulcers. Other participants mentioned that they had retained the information more. The board games have been welcomed very much by the staff, they are a very useful resource which I will definitely continue to use.”*

Staff Experience Lead *“I enjoyed it very much, and I feel it may be worth expanding on and make it a regular monthly session as it would be good for staff to get away from their busy schedules and have some time to attend a fun and interesting event but still be learning at the same time.”*

Lead Nurse for Preregistration Education *“What an enjoyable session, it really highlighted important issues in a fun way. The board game is another innovative way of learning; it makes learning fun, interactive and also helps to test what has been taught in theory. The team work is great; it beats ‘talk and chalk’ any day.”*

Assistant Librarian *“Traditionally you gain knowledge from books borrowed from the library, borrowing educational board games can be just as effective at enhancing the learning process, and reinforcing knowledge! If key Trust staff are made aware that the games are “loanable” from the library, this can raise the profile of the library, and shows that the library is being proactive in fostering new ways of learning.”*

About Focus Games Ltd

We’ve been making educational board games for use in health and social care since 2004. We’ve developed over 50 different games covering a range of clinical, patient safety and organisational issue and we believe that over 1 million people around the world have played our games. If you’d like to learn more about games in education and performance improvement please visit our website at www.FocusGames.com.

With thanks to:

All of the staff at the Newcomb Library and especially Heather Mills, Assistant Librarian.