


Health literacy: what's it got to do with us?



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Developing people
for health and
healthcare

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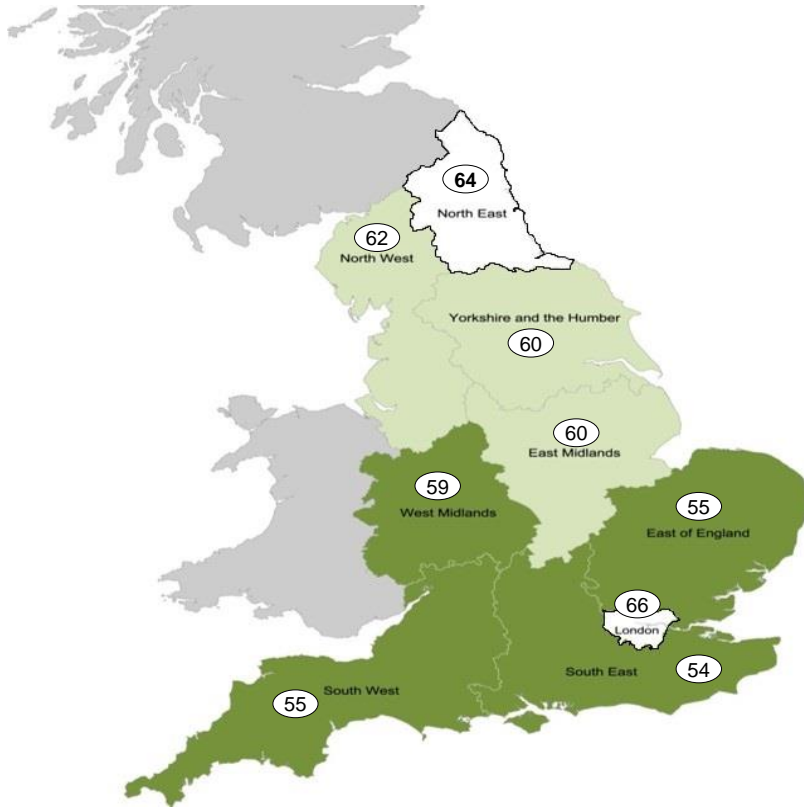
What is health literacy and why does it matter?

One definition...

“Health literacy refers to the **personal characteristics** and **social resources** needed for individuals and communities to access, understand, appraise and use information services to make decisions about health”

World Health Organisation

National and regional picture: % of adults aged 16-65 years for whom health information is too complex



**Text (literacy)
AND
Numeracy
component of
health materials**

**National average
61%**

Rowlands et al (2015)

Why does health literacy matter?

Impact on the health system:

Inappropriate decision for the patient

Missed appointments

Wasted medication

Inappropriate use of services e.g. greater use of A&E

More likely to be hospitalised/longer hospital stays

Why does health literacy matter?

Personal impacts:

People with lower health literacy/education levels are more likely to have:

- More unhealthy behaviours; alcohol, poor diet/obesity, smoking
- Fewer healthy behaviours; good diet/normal weight
- Lower levels of self-rated health
- Lower response to public healthy living campaigns

- a lady who thought her “positive” cancer diagnosis was a good thing and couldn’t understand why she wasn’t getting better;
- a lady who sprayed her inhaler on her neck because she had been told to “spray it on her throat”. Nobody had checked whether she realised she had to open her mouth and inhale;
- a gentleman referred under the two week cancer wait process who didn’t turn up for his appointment because he didn’t know the sign for Radiology was the same as for the X Ray Department. He was too embarrassed to ask for directions;

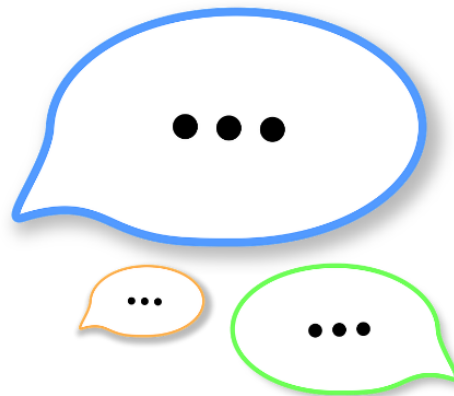
- a group of young women who did not know where their cervix was;
- a group of young people who didn't know where their waist was;
- a lady with diabetes who didn't realise there was a connection between what she ate and her ability to self-manage her condition;
- a lady who thought that her chemotherapy wouldn't do her very much good because her IV line was on the other side of the body to where her cancer had been.

Who is most likely to be affected by health literacy issues?

- People living with socio-economic disadvantage
- People with low educational attainment
- Older people
- People who have a long term health condition
- People with disabilities
- People with sensory impairment
- People with low information and technology skills

How has Health Literacy impacted on you ?

Think of examples of when you may have encountered health literacy issues within your role or personal examples from friends and family.



A Simple Exercise

- On your commute to work you travel at an average speed of thirty miles per hour. You take exactly the same route home but average a speed of ninety miles per hour! What was your average speed on your return commute to work?

- The average speed of your return journey is 45mph. We can use
- $(\text{average speed in miles per hour}) \times (\text{time travelled in hours}) = \text{distance travelled in miles.}$
- Letting d be the distance between your home and work, and t be time spent going into work in the morning, we find that
- $d=30t.$
- The time taken to return home from work was $t/3$ hours because you travelled three times as fast. So, the total distance to and from work is $2d$, and the total time spent travelling to and from work is $(1+1/3)t$. Using the formula which relates distance, time and average speed we find that
- $2d = (\text{average speed of return journey})(4t/3).$
- However, we found that $d=30t$ above. So
- The average speed of return journey in mph = $2d/(4t/3) = 2(30t)/(4t/3) = 45.$
- Taken from Radio 4 Puzzle for Today

What does this have to do with Library and Knowledge Services?

**Knowledge for
Healthcare**

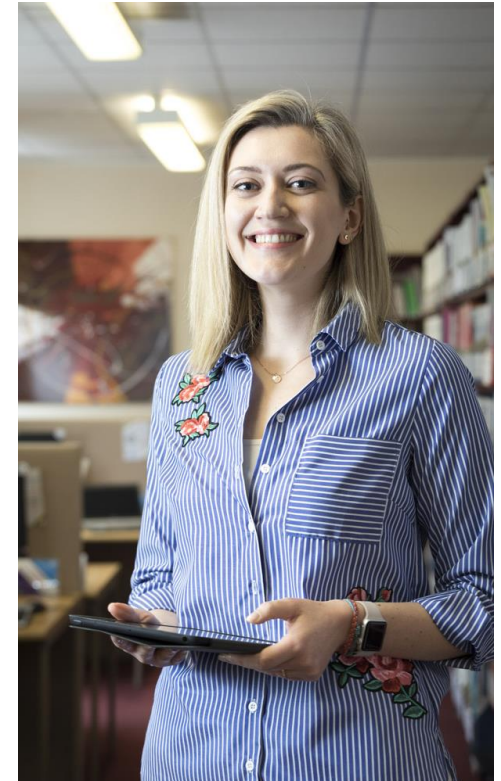
NHS Long Term Plan

Universal Health Offer



What can we do in practical terms?

- Signposting the best sources of information
- Working in partnership to raise awareness – joint campaigns
- Learning from each other



Health Literacy Awareness Training for LKS

June 2019

- Enhance understanding of the impact of health literacy on patients and the public.
- Provide practical tools to help address such issues.
- Inviting library staff from other sectors to look at how we can work in partnership

Next Steps?



Final reflections/questions?

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