

Health literacy: it affects us all, all of the time and we can do something about it!



Developing people
for health and
healthcare

www.hee.nhs.uk

What is health literacy and why does it matter?

Health literacy: one definition

- Health literacy relates to individuals' ability to **access**, **understand**, **appraise** and **use** information and services to make decisions about health

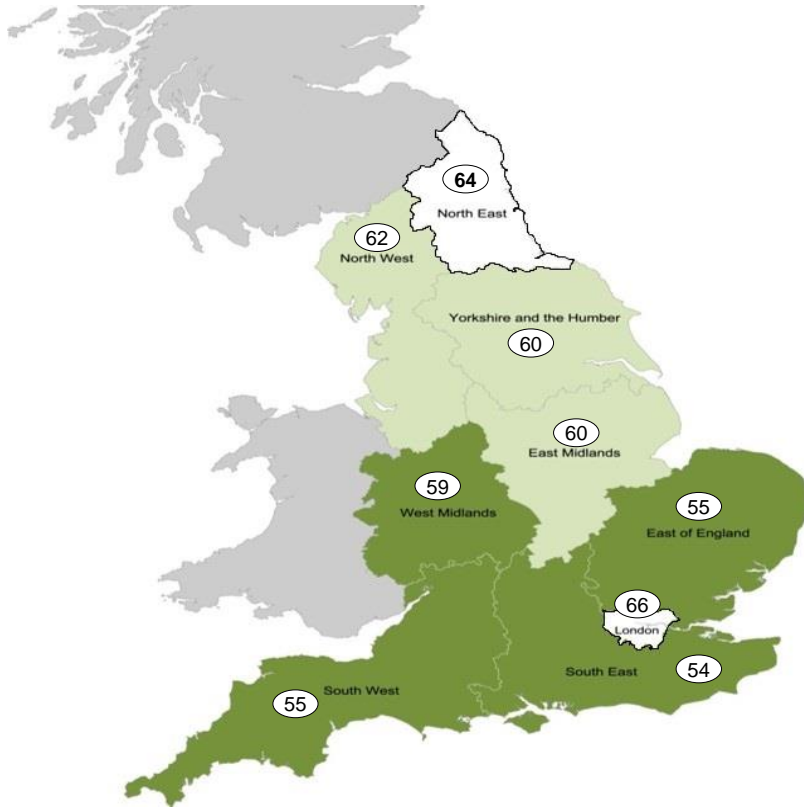
Health literacy: a two-sided coin

- Personal
 - Health literacy is partly about people having the skills, knowledge and confidence they require to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing
 - People with the lowest levels of language, literacy and numeracy are those who experience the poorest health outcomes in society
- Societal
 - Health literacy is also about how effectively information is given to people and how effectively services are set up to ensure they can be accessed, understood, appraised and used by people who need them

Health literacy is therefore dependent on:

- Communication skills of patients and health professionals
- Lay and professional knowledge of health issues
- Culture
- Demands of the healthcare and public health systems
- Unique demands of the context or situation
 - (Adapted from US Department of Health and Human Services:
<https://health.gov/communication/literacy/quickguide/factsbasic.htm>)

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

How does it feel when it goes wrong?



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

The total number of spots on three spotty dogs is 98. If Grumpy spotty dog has twice as many spots than Sneezy spotty dog and Happy spotty dog as twice as many spots as Grumpy. How many spots are there on each of the spotty dogs?

In case you are interested....

- Grumpy dog has 28 spots, Sneezy 14 dog has spots and Happy dog has 56 spots
- Details of a possible solution.
- $G + S + H = 98$
- $G = 2S$
- $H = 2G$
- $2S + S + 4S = 98$
- Hence $S = 14$ and $G = 2 \times 14 = 28$ and $H = 2 \times 28 = 56$

What does this have to do with Library and Knowledge Services

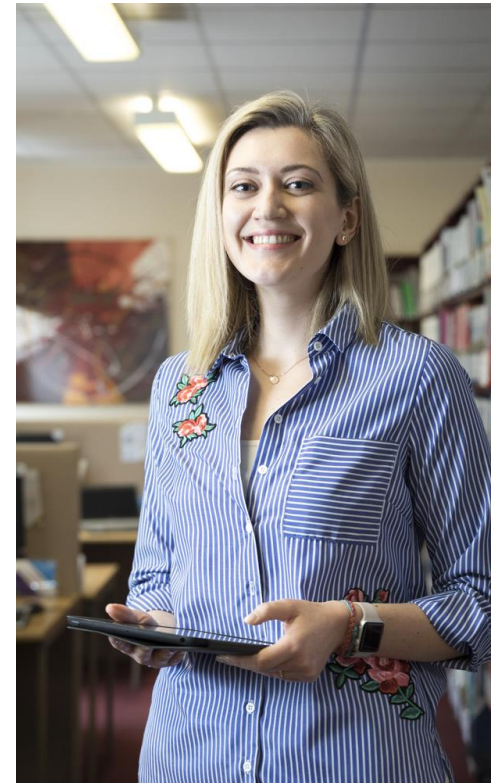
**Knowledge for
Healthcare the next five
years**

NHS Long Term Plan



What can we do in practical terms?

- Putting our own houses in order.
- How accessible are our own services?:
 - For a consultant
 - For a nurse
 - For a healthcare assistant



Health Literacy Awareness Training for LKS

June/July 2019

- Enhance understanding of the impact of health literacy on patients and the public.
- Provide practical tools to help address such issues.
- Inviting public library staff too to look at how we can work in partnership
- York July 10th
- Partnership days later in the year

Questions?

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