

Health Literacy

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Aim to cover

- ⇒ Background on Health literacy in England
- ⇒ Development of our strategic framework
- ⇒ The Skilled for Health programme

Health Literacy in England – our definitions

Following the 2005 Bad Gastein European Forum a broad description of health literacy emerged in “Navigating Health”;

Health Literacy is the ability to make sound health decisions in the context of every day life:

- at home
- in the community
- in the workplace
- in the market place ?
- in the political arena.

This forms the basis, alongside the WHO definition and the Nutbeam (2000) definitions, for the work in England.

Why is it important?

Health care systems are becoming more complex and encompass a broader range of providers from different sectors than ever before.

This rapidly changing sphere of health demands a lot of us as patients and citizens.

Health decisions place us in a vulnerable position in which we must take risks without any certainty of outcome.

Impact of education

When comparing, at age 33, those who were disengaged at school and had no GCSE level equivalents with those who did the odds of:

- smoking are 4.7 times higher for women and 3.5 times higher for men
- drinking heavily at age 33 are 1.5 times higher
- taking exercise less than once a week 1.5 times higher
- having depression 2.4 times higher for women and 2.0 times higher for men
- having back pain 1.3 times higher in men
- having migraines 1.3 times higher for women

Report by the Centre for the Study of the Wider Benefits of Learning 2006

In addition...

UK research has indicated that **low health literacy** has been associated with **poorer health outcomes** where each incremental increase towards higher health literacy is associated with a greater likelihood of:

- eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- exercising and
- being a non-smoker

(von Wagner et al 2007)

Skills for Life

Literacy and Numeracy

Entry level 1,2,3 and Level 1 & 2

Most reading matter in adult life at Level 2

LLN skills required for most workplaces Level 1

Approximately 16% of adults in England have literacy skills lower than that attained by the average 11-year-old; 46% have similarly low numeracy skills

Impact of skills on health

Over half of England's adult population have literacy skills below Level 2 – the level of skills needed to discuss a condition interactively with a doctor or specialist

Numeracy – only 25% of population at level 2 or above. Level 2 skills needed to calculate BMI, working out proportion of food groups

Skills Levels in England and the impact on health - Literacy

Literacy level	An adult with skills at this level can:	Health examples	Number of adults with this literacy level (England)
Entry 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •read short texts with repeated language patterns on familiar topics •read signs and symbols– very short sentences only •engage in simple exchanges of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •follow simple three-step instructions •interpret straightforward health and safety signs 	1.1 million (3%)
Entry 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •read short straightforward texts on familiar topics •obtain information from familiar sources •engage in discussions with familiar people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •follow simple letter from the surgery •read straightforward leaflet •able to follow simple instructions 	0.6 million (2%)
Entry 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •read more accurately and independently •obtain information from everyday sources (e.g. newspapers) •can communicate (orally and in writing) information and opinions with some adaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •read health leaflets and other information •complete a form with basic information about health •explain straightforward feelings and symptoms over the phone 	3.5 million (11%)

Skills Levels in England and the impact on health - Literacy

Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •read texts of varying lengths on a variety of topics •obtain information from different sources (straightforward reports, text books, work manuals) •in written communication demonstrate an ability to express ideas and opinions clearly using length, format and style •is confident in oral communication •make contributions to discussions that demonstrate awareness of others' views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •find the significant information in health information leaflets and web sites •write a letter to the doctor •participate in a group discussion session 	12.6 million (40%)
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •read from texts of varying complexity accurately and independently (more complex books, text books, reports, training manuals) •write to communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and effectively using length, format and style •make a brief presentation or speak in a meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •accommodate more complex leaflets and information on web sites •follow multi-stage health and first aid information books •write longer letters •follow a health talk / lecture •discuss a condition interactively with a doctor or specialist 	Level 2 and above: 14.1 million (44%)

Skills Levels in England and the impact on health - Numeracy

Numeracy level	An adult with skills at this level can:	Health examples	Number of adults with this numeracy level (England)
Entry 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •can count, read and write numbers to 10, add and subtract to 10 •recognises coins and notes •knows days of the week and months of the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •count tablets •recognise days and months of appointments 	1.7 million (5%)
Entry 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •can count to 20, read, write and order numbers to 100 •do simple multiplication •tell the time in 12-hour clock to whole, half and quarter hour •measure using simple scales •get information from simple charts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •work out how many tablets to take in one week •read weight to the nearest kilogram on weighing scales 	5.1 million (16%)
Entry 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •can work with numbers to 1000, with simple times tables and simple division •understands decimals to two decimal places (e.g. in money) •can tell the time to the nearest 5 minutes •measure weight, height and temperature using straightforward scales in metric measure •get information from charts and diagrams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •work out Calorie intake •simple budgeting •measure and record height and weight on a chart 	8.1 million (25%)

Skills Levels in England and the impact on health - Numeracy

Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •can make number calculations, including decimals and negative numbers •work out area and simple percentage •calculate time in 12- and 24-hour clock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •convert measures, and find the mean •work out how to get to appointments on time by making time calculations and reading timetables •understand percentage weight loss •use conversion charts •work out mean (average) Calorie intake 	8.9 million (29%)
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •can work confidently with calculations in whole numbers and decimals •calculate ratio and proportion, •measure in metric and imperial units •use simple formulas •compare data presented in different ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •compare metric and imperial measures •calculate body mass index using a formula •work out the proportion of a particular food group in a given diet 	Level 2 and above: 8.1 million (25%)

The Basics



Even the most familiar
of ideas can be a
challenge

Health literacy – our approach

- ⇒ Development of a strategic framework for health literacy
- ⇒ Research and development
- ⇒ Skilled for Health

Developing a strategic framework

Aim – to build a foundation for the progression of health literacy in England and set a direction for development in the future.

Core themes

- ➔ Policy context
- ➔ Research and development
- ➔ Delivery of Skilled for Health programme

First expert symposium to take place Autumn 2007, series of discussions followed with a view to have a draft later this year

Research and Development

- **National Health Literacy in Primary Care network**
support sports development of research projects and programmes
- **National Social Marketing Centre**
commissions research on new areas of health literacy
- **European Survey on Health Literacy**
England active partner in planning project due to commence late 2008

Skilled for Health

Aim:

“testing out new approaches to reducing health inequalities by improving literacy and other basic skills among specific groups with common health issues.”

The programme contributes to two key over-arching government strategies:

Tackling Health Inequalities: A Programme for Action (2003) sets out the objectives of reducing health inequalities by 10% as measured by infant mortality and life expectancy at birth.

Skills for Life, launched in 2001, is the national strategy for improving adult LLN skills. It seeks to improve the LLN skills of 2.25 million adults by 2010, with an interim target of 1.5 million by 2007.

How does it work?

Unique tri-partite partnership between DH, DIUS and ContinYou
– very significant for the programme

Strategic lead – Department of Health, Dept for Innovation, Universities and Skills

National Steering Group – currently chaired by DH

Programme Management Group – chaired by ContinYou

Lead on evaluation – ContinYou

Day to day contact with sites – via ContinYou

Skilled for Health – Phase 1

8 Skilled for Health demonstration sites were set up with the following aims:

- to develop working partnerships between health improvement and Skills for Life practitioners
- to design and generate combined health- and LLN-related learning materials
- to test new approaches and heighten awareness of the LLN needs of NHS users.

Skilled for Health – Phase 1

Who turned up?

- Older people and their paid carers
- Older people with arthritis in rural area
- People with mental health issues
- Somalian refugees
- Young parents
- Older people and physical activity
- Adult new mothers
- Older Bangladeshis with diabetes

What did people say who took part



“I would feel more confident explaining my illnesses to the doctor now. I understand why they ask the questions they ask.”

“I understand much more about diabetes now – I think I’m suffering from some of the symptoms and know how to ask my doctor about it.”

Behaviour Change



“We’ve done quite a lot on healthy eating, like knowing how much healthy stuff we should all be eating, how to cook, what to cook, what to look out for on packaging to know if it’s bad for you. It might seem weird but I didn’t know all this before. I didn’t even really think about it.”

Skilled for Health - Phase 2

What did this involve?

- The testing of the resources in more challenging environments
- Investigating scalability
- Developing Skilled for Health in new sectors, particularly with employers

National Sector Sites

Features of the National Sector Sites:

- Strong commitment to both learning and health improvement
- Evidence of partnership building
- Commitment to evaluation and sustainability
- Preparedness to learn and develop the programme as a representation of the National Sector Sites

Skilled for Health National Sector Sites

Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust:
Staff health needs

Gateshead

Gateshead Health NHS
Fit 4 Learning for Trust



Army Families

Tidworth Garrison, Wiltshire



Pentonville & Holloway prisons:
Offender Health

London



Nottingham City Council:
Fit 4 Learning

Nottingham



Nottingham
City Council



Royal Mail Feeling First
Class Learning Programme

National



Museums Libraries and Archives London

London



Skilled for Health – Phase 2

Community Adopter Sites

4 regions of England – NE, NW, SE, SW

Range of focus – including BME communities, Older men, people with mental health difficulties, family learning settings inc prisons, people who are economically inactive

Aim – to work with partnerships in challenging settings with a view to meeting national and local aims and encouraging sustainability

Skilled for Health – what are we learning?

- ➡ Sustainability - a challenge to work towards
- ➡ Understanding of evaluation – not widespread
- ➡ Shared agenda of creating learning opportunities and tackling health improvement are recognised
- ➡ Understanding of health literacy increasing and generating interest

Skilled for Health – Next steps?

- ⇒ Completion of Phase 2
- ⇒ Final Evaluation report
- ⇒ Development of Phase 3 with a stronger focus on health inequalities
- ⇒ Further development of strategic framework and other related health literacy initiatives

Thank you for listening

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