

Health Literacy in Ireland

Fergus Dolan, NALA

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N National Adult Literacy Agency
Ái: Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Outline



Health Literacy in Ireland

- Definition of health literacy
- Why is it important
- Government Commitment: Healthy Ireland



NALA's role

- Promoting health literacy
- Health Literacy Advisory Panel
- Health Literacy Action Plan

Simply
Put.

Becoming literacy-friendly

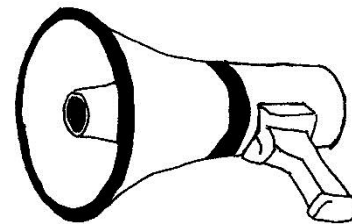
- Literacy Audit for Healthcare Settings
- Literacy-aware guidelines
- Strategies to promote health literacy



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Our Vision



NALA is the voice of adult literacy in Ireland and, with our partners, we influence policy and practice to support people in developing their literacy.

Three areas of work:

Policy

Practice

Access



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What is Health Literacy?

Health literacy is the ability to read, understand and act on health information.

Your treatment is...

I can't believe I have...

Expectations, preferences and skills of **individuals seeking** health information and services

meet

Expectations, preferences and skills of **those providing information and services**

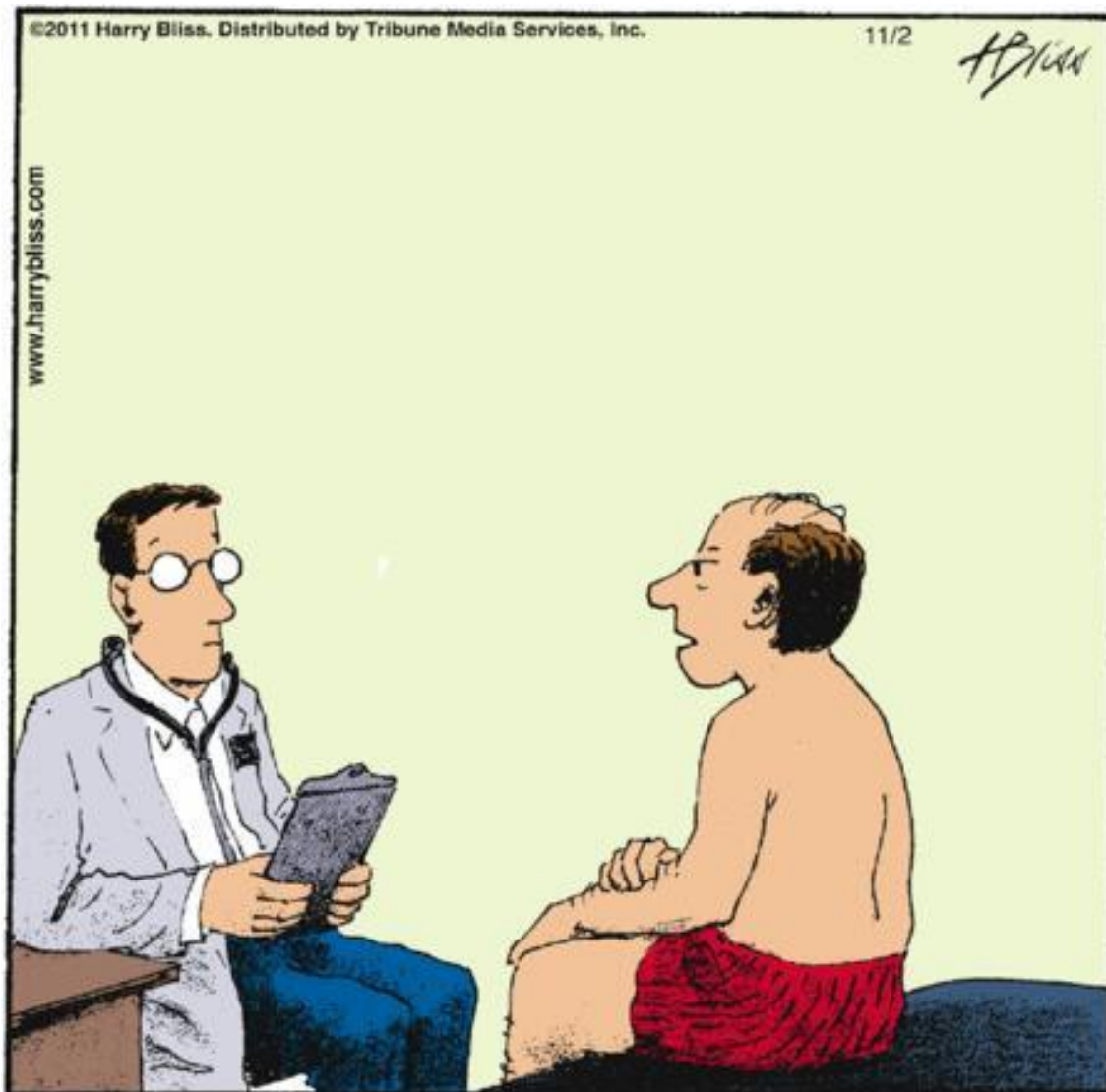


It is about mutual understanding



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“Doc, enough with the ‘English’ — just give it to me in plain academic medical terminology!”

About **50%** of patients do not take the prescribed medication or take it incorrectly.

Health literacy is estimated to cost **\$106-\$236 billion** annually.

[Source: Pfizer]



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What is Health Numeracy?

Health numeracy is the ability to understand and use quantitative health information, including:

- basic calculations, and
- information in documents and non-text formats such as graphs.

Health information is full of number-based concepts



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Everyday Examples

Prose literacy

- Patient has an appointment for blood tests and is instructed in writing to fast the night before the test.

Verbal literacy

- Patient is given a prescription for a new medication that needs to be taken at a certain dosage twice a day.

Numeracy

- Patient is told to buy a glucose meter and use it 30 minutes before each meal and before going to bed. If the number is above a certain value they need to take medication.



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Why is health literacy important?

One in five Irish people are not fully confident that they understand the information they receive from their healthcare professional (HCP).

43% of people would only sometimes ask their HCP to clarify the information if they did not understand something they had said.

One in 10 people have taken the wrong dose of medication because they didn't understand the instructions.

66% of people have difficulty understanding signs and directions in Irish hospitals.

Adult Skills Survey 2013




1 in 6 people have a literacy difficulty in Ireland

18% of Irish adults are at or below level 1 of literacy – 521,550 people

15 out of 24 countries

25% of Irish adults are at or below level 1 of numeracy – 754,000 people



1 in 4 people have a problem with numeracy

18 out of 24 countries

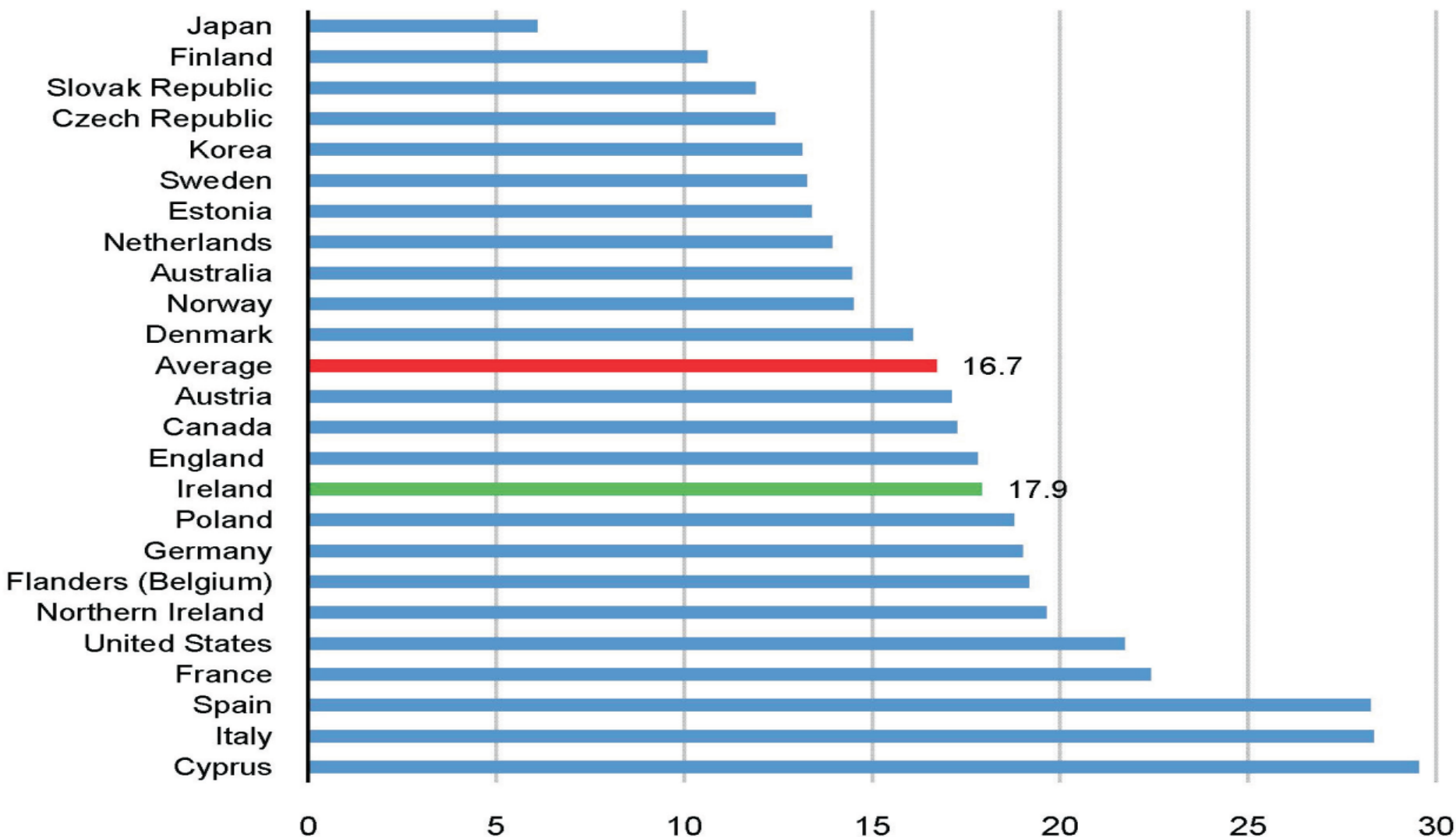


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Results for literacy

Figure 2.1
Percentage of adults (16-65) at or below Level 1 of literacy proficiency



Example

How much
sugar is in
this pot of
yogurt?

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 30 g

Servings Per Container 1

Amount Per Serving

Calories 15 **Calories from Fat** 0

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 0g **0 %**

Saturated Fat 0g **0 %**

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg **0 %**

Sodium 35mg **1 %**

Potassium 0mg **0 %**

Total Carbohydrate 2g **1 %**

Dietary Fiber 0g **0 %**

Soluble Fiber 0g

Insoluble Fiber 0g

Sugars 1g

Protein 2g

Vitamin A 0% • Vitamin C 0%

Calcium 0% • Iron 0%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

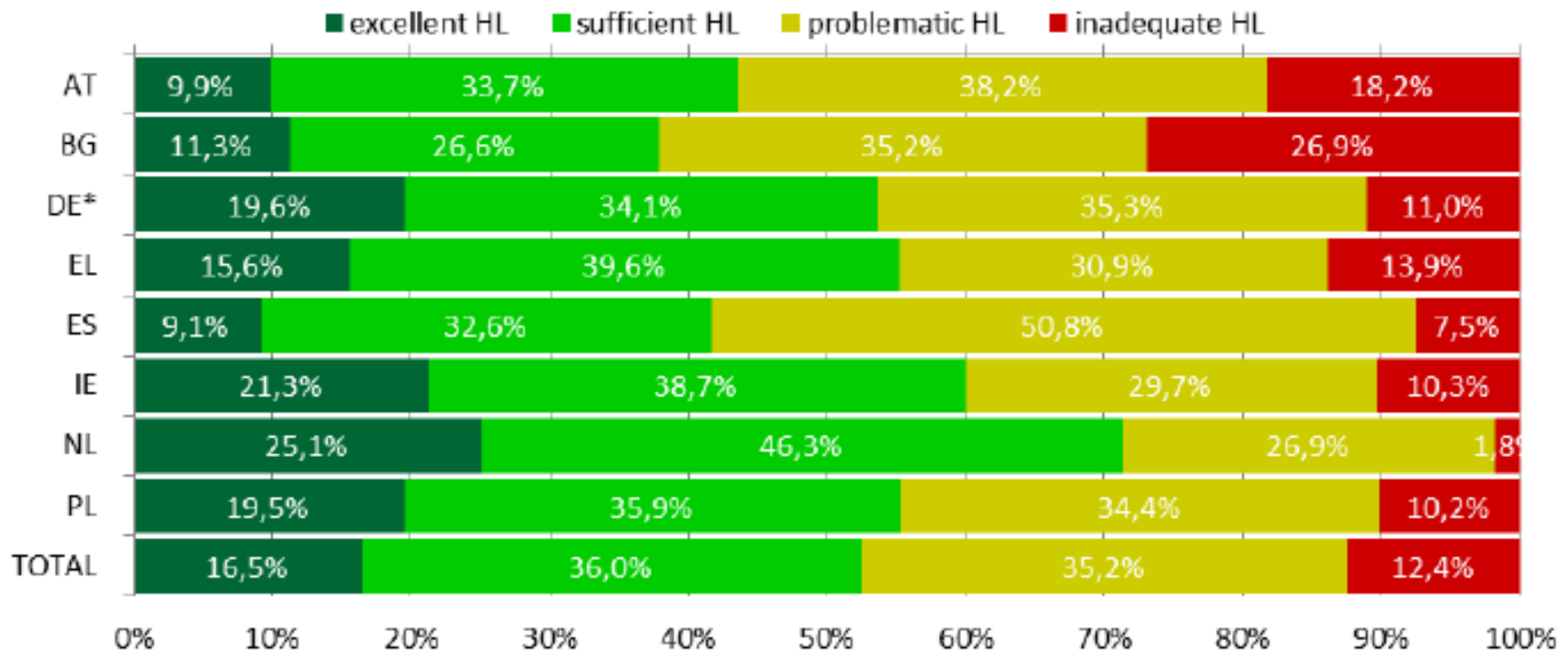


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EU Health Literacy Survey



10.3% had inadequate health literacy

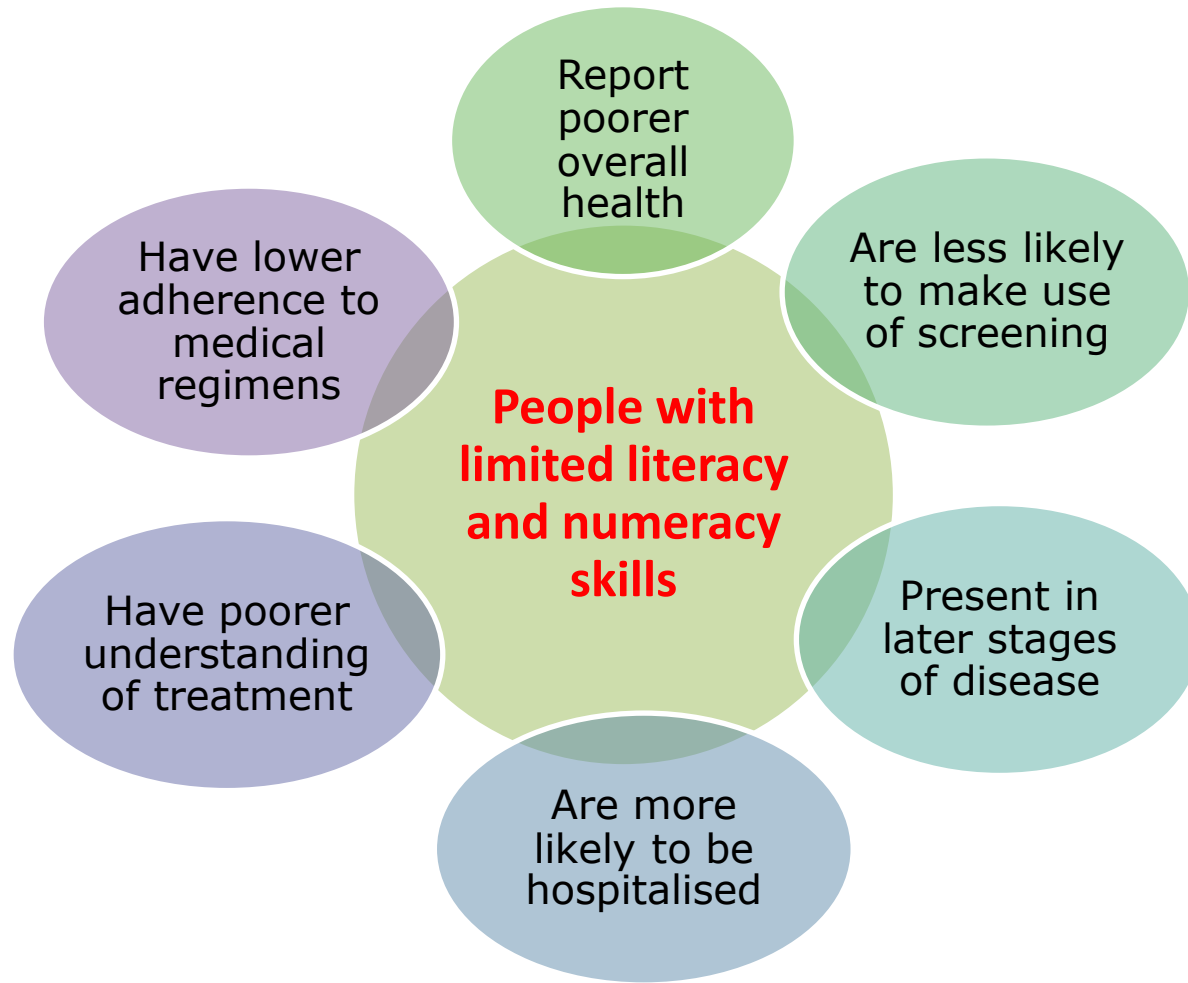
29.7% had problematic health literacy

Limited health literacy rate 40%



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Why is health literacy important?



Reference: Rima Rudd, NALA Health and Literacy Conference, 2002

Government Commitment

Healthy Ireland is a new national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of our country over the coming generation (2013 – 2025).



It contains the first ever Government commitment to health literacy:

“Address and prioritise health literacy in developing future policy, educational and information interventions”

Framework is available here:
<http://bit.ly/1i1tFCv>



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NALA's role

**Promoting
health
literacy**

**Health
Literacy
Advisory
Panel**

**Health Literacy
Action Plan**

2013 - 2016



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Health Literacy Advisory Panel

The Panel consists of organisations working in healthcare who are interested in advancing actions and strategies to improve health literacy in their own organisation and influencing a national health literacy policy.

Members include:

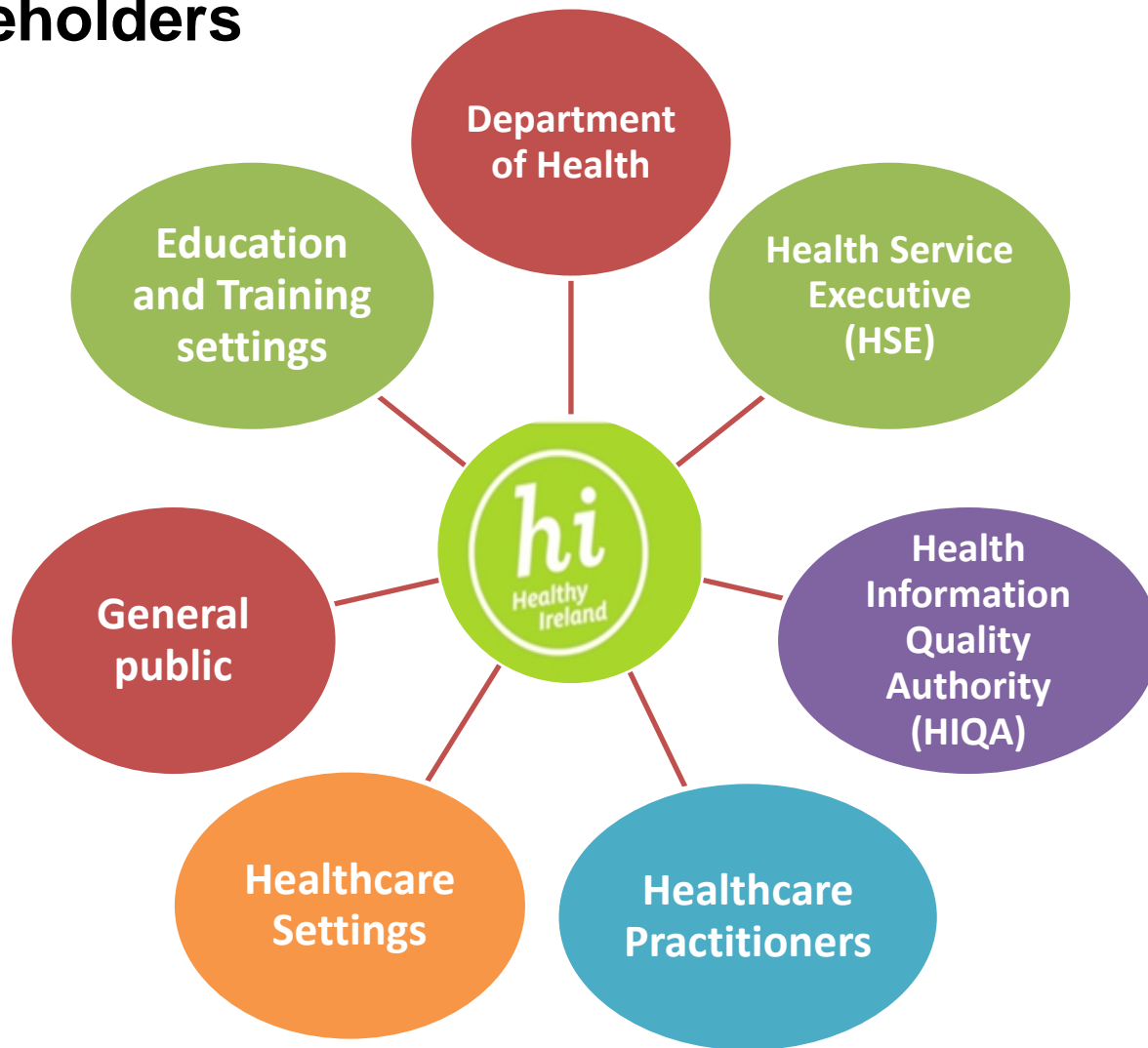
- the Health Service Executive (HSE) Health Promotion and Improvement and Social Inclusion Units
- Irish Cancer Society
- Irish Hospice Foundation
- Temple Street Children's University Hospital, Dublin
- University College Cork and University College Dublin
- Merek Sharpe and Dohme (MSD)



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Health Literacy Action Plan

7 stakeholders



Strategies to promote health literacy

Capacity building / awareness raising

- Train healthcare workers at all levels
- Use plain English, numbers and speaking
- Use the right medium to communicate
- Produce tailored, targeted programmes to promote health literacy



Knowledge development

- Develop the idea of health literacy
- Improve how we measure health literacy levels and promote that information
- Identify best practices in health literacy
- Conduct more cost benefit studies of health literacy



Building partnerships and cooperation

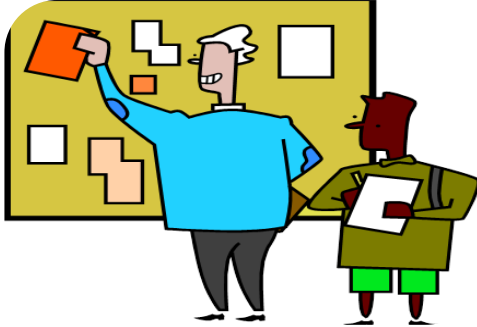
- Integrating health literacy into all national health campaigns and screening projects – cancer screening
- Development of strategic partnerships



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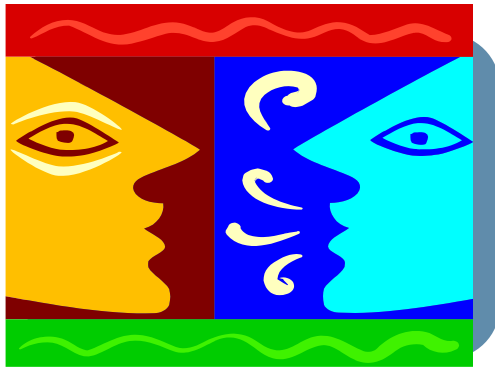
Becoming literacy-friendly



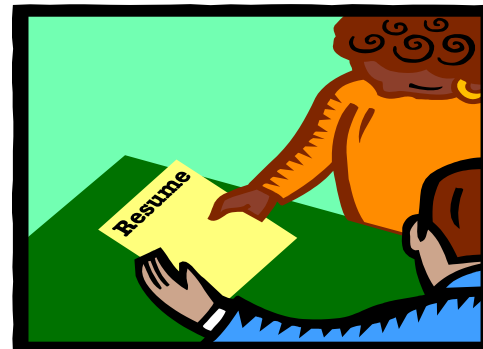
Environment



Staff Awareness



Verbal communication



Printed materials



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Benefits to your service

Clearer
understanding

More effective
communication

Better and
equal access

Greater
participation

Fulfil national
standards

Better impact



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Becoming literacy-friendly



A **literacy audit** is a snapshot of your organisation and how it addresses literacy issues in policies and procedures, communications and staff training and development.

A **literacy audit** looks at:

- What you already do to support people who have literacy and numeracy difficulties; and
- What you could do better to support them.

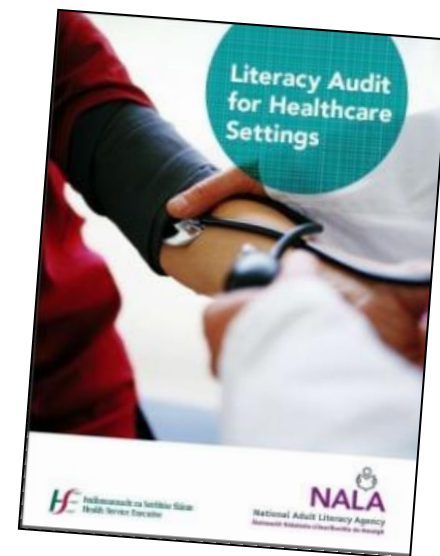


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Literacy Audit looks at...

1. Policies and procedures
2. Communications
 - Navigation – finding your way around
 - Print materials
 - Visuals
 - Verbal communication with medical practitioners
 - Website and technology
3. Staff training and development



Health Literacy Audit
<http://bit.ly/16ieLxJ> is
currently being
updated.



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Current work

Training for healthcare professionals (HCPs)

During 2014 we have facilitated health literacy workshops ranging from 1 hour to 3 hours for:

- Health Service Executive (HSE) nursing staff
- Irish Pharmacy Union – four sessions in Dublin, Cork and Limerick
- People working in healthcare in the Tallaght (Dublin) and surrounding areas – lunchtime awareness session during South Dublin County Council Health and Wellbeing Week
- Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (Dublin) – May and October

Literacy Audits

- Tolco Clinic (HSE Addiction Services Treatment Clinic)
- Irish Cancer Society



Conclusion

Health literacy is an essential skill for life that we develop and maintain throughout our lives

It is not an individual problem – range of responses required, from personal to practice to policy

Becoming health literacy aware means better health services

Making one small change can make a difference



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Further information

Sandford Lodge
Sandford Close
Ranelagh
Dublin 6

Tel: (01) 412 7900

Email: fdolan@nala.ie

Website: www.nala.ie

Distance learning website: www.writeon.ie

Plain English: www.simplyput.ie

Family: www.helpmykidlearn.ie



<http://facebook.com/nalaireland>



<http://twitter.com/nalaireland>



<http://www.youtube.com/user/nationaladultliterac>



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Please – no more jargon, small print or gobbledygook!

Sign our petition
at www.nala.ie



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Dear Taoiseach,

Both citizens and governments benefit from clear information, written in plain English. Citizens are more likely to understand their rights and governments are more likely to make better use of their resources.

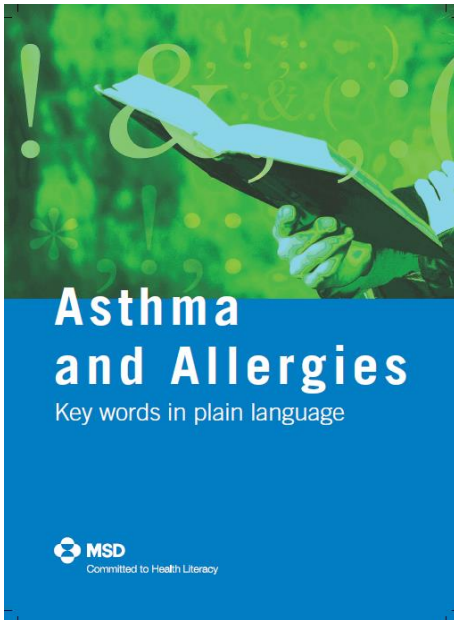
That's why we recommend that all public information produced by Government and its agencies is written in plain English.

Our petition calls for public information such as letters, forms and documents to be written in plain English. This means:

- using **everyday words** where possible;
- explaining specialised words if they can't be avoided;
- keeping sentences to about **15 to 20 words**; and
- using a readable font type and size.

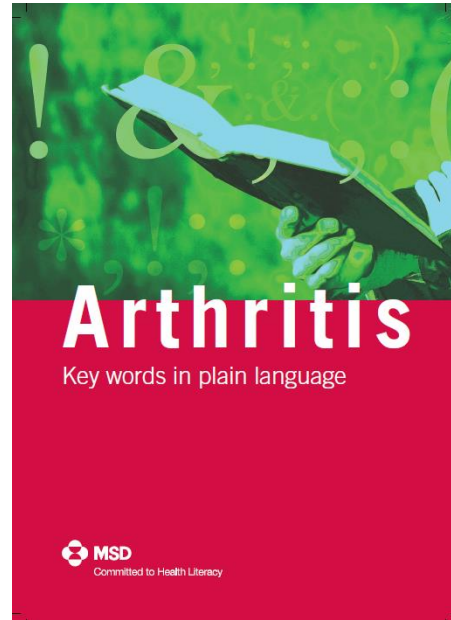
Inez Bailey
Director
National Adult Literacy Agency

Useful leaflets



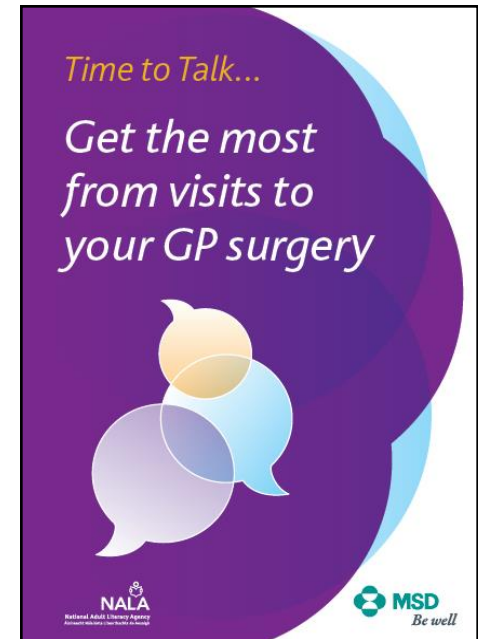
Online link:

<http://bit.ly/1h98Qrc>



Online link:

<http://bit.ly/1kbQqR3>



Online link:

<http://bit.ly/13L6jKB>



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