Health Literacy

A Factsheet

Belfast
A World Health Organization
Healthy City

What is health literacy?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health literacy as:

"[...] linked to literacy and entails people's knowledge, motivation and competencies to access, understand, appraise and apply health information in order to make judgements and take decisions in everyday life concerning health care, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain or improve quality of life during the life course." **(WHO Europe, The Solid Facts: Health Literacy, 2013)**

Health literacy in international and local policy ...

WHO EUROPE

The WHO (Europe Region) has launched a **roadmap** to help guide the development of health literacy across Europe.

The **WHO European Healthy Cities Network** has made health literacy a critical area of work as part of Phase VII (2019-2024). As a member of this network, Belfast will continue to work on developing an awareness of health literacy.

NORTHERN IRELAND

There is a NI government commitment to health literacy through the Framework - *Making Life Better: a whole system framework for public health (2013-2023).*

Health literacy has been identified as an area of importance through the community planning process at local council level.

Making it simpler .... what does this all mean?

Put simply, health literacy is about the **communication and understanding of information** that impacts on people's health.

Health literacy refers to a wide range of things that impact on health and well-being: **written health information leaflets or posters**, the **signage** used around the physical environment, to guidance printed on **prescriptions** along with **conversations**.

Social circumstances impact on health: air quality, access to green spaces and opportunities to meet others. ***Health literacy is not just about health care***. It is about understanding the range of things that impact on health - such as nutritional messages and labelling - and how people can be supported to take action to help improve their health and well-being.

For more information and resources on health literacy and the work Belfast Healthy Cities is involved in please see:
www.belfasthealthycities.com