

Health literacy matters

We need health information for all

People need trustworthy information to make decisions about health but...



- 1 million cannot follow a letter from a GP surgery or hospital department
- 5 million adults cannot find relevant data in standard health information
- 1.7 million are unable to explain symptoms and feelings over the phone
- 6.5 million cannot measure or record height and weight on a chart1
- 9 million people are unable to use digital tools unaided²



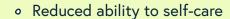
UK information skills

9 years old is the average reading age³

up to 1 million people cannot speak English well or at all⁴

of the population are at or below primary school numeracy level⁵

What does this mean for health?







- Greater distrust of clinicians
- General negativity towards health and healthcare⁷

Let's create health literate information that works for everyone



- Use the NHS style guide.⁸ Aim for a reading age of 9 for information, shared decision-making and informed consent
- o Involve users in development and use patient voices and case studies9
- Make information easy to access, use and navigate
- Make it easy for users to give feedback
- Promote information so it reaches the people who need it most



Health literate information is not 'dumbed down', it helps 'level up'.

1. Rowlands G, Protheroe J et al, 2015. BJGP, 65(635): e379-e386. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov. / 2. Lloyds Bank, 2020. www.lloydsbank.com. / 3. Office for National Statistics, 2017. style.ons.gov.uk. / 4. www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service. gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/english-language-skills/latest / 5. www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/building-skills-for-all-review-of-england.pdf. / 6. National Voices, 2017. www.nationalvoices.org.uk. / 7. Gupta C et al, 2014. J HealthCommun, 19(0 2): 44–60. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov. / 8. NHS Style Guide, 2020. https://service-manual.nhs.uk/content/how-we-write / 9. APA PsycNet. https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fhea0000387
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