

Healthy Literacy Collaboration – Developing Understanding to Tackle Health Inequalities across Settings

Workshops

There were six workshops facilitated by lead specialists within particular programme areas covering:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Health Literacy in the Workplace
- Long Term Conditions
- Neighbourhoods and Communities
- Health Literacy and Social Media
- Adult Education and Literacy Programmes

Each facilitator was asked to cover key questions (listed below) and to identify three key actions to take forward. A summary of the responses to the questions asked is provided below.

1. Is health literacy a concept which people currently use and work with?

The term health literacy is not widely recognised in communities. The term 'literacy' is often interpreted as just reading and writing which often comes with a stigma attached.

Overall, organisationally health literacy is understood but to a limited extent and furthermore, it is not embedded within practice. For example, professionals need to take account of the audience they are engaging with and people's ability to interpret and engage.

There are concerns that health literacy is perceived to be too big to be tackled as a single issue, however, different communities, individuals and organisations will need different responses.



2. How could the profile of health literacy be raised as a tool to tackle health inequalities?

There was recognition that now is a good time for different sectors to work together and engage with health literacy as a priority within their work programmes. This could be achieved by using existing networks within and between communities and organisations.

3. Is there work already in place which could be replicated or showcased?



International work is being developed via the WHO Healthy Cities Network. There have been national developments, for instance with offenders using health trainer networks and there are local examples using health and learning champions, adult education and English as a second language courses. There is significant potential for using social media, digital and visual media within communities.

One outcome from this Lancashire Workshop should be a scoping of effective practice.

4. How can partners work together to support an integrated approach to developing health literacy across Lancashire?

Partners can support an integrated approach by understanding the context and cultures of individuals, communities and organisations. This can be done by engaging through existing networks.

There is a need for key actions to be undertaken at different levels using a variety of approaches. One size will not fit all. Explore a range of models such as investing in people (peer mentors and champions) rather than leaflets to take work forward.

Develop an inventory of on-going activity which works and share best practice.

Be prepared to let communities take the lead incorporating an asset based approach to health literacy.



Next Steps

1. To establish a multi-agency task and finish group to take forward actions from the conference. The collaboration between education and health sectors will be key.
2. To scope key opportunities for building commitment to developing health literacy within the emerging health structures and priorities for the new public health system in Lancashire (including the Health and Wellbeing Board) at county and district levels.
3. Explore the feasibility of incorporating health literacy within education led programmes such as Skills for Life and English as a second language.
4. To explore the opportunities for introducing health literacy qualification Level 1 for frontline workers whose role might impact on others' health and wellbeing. The qualification will develop an awareness and understanding of health literacy and how this supports individuals in different settings to achieve better health and learning outcomes. This will be in addition to the health champion's programme.
5. Embed health literacy within the workplace health programme.
6. Utilise social media techniques to systematically include health literacy approaches in public health campaigns.

7. Include health literacy within a new bespoke induction for new staff in Lancashire County Council and other local authorities. To embed health literacy within the “Self Care” work stream for the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.