Health literacy fact sheet

What is health literacy?

Health literacy is the knowledge and skills needed to access, understand, and use information related to physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Tasmania

Almost two in three people in Tasmania do not have the health literacy skills to manage their health and wellbeing. Almost one in three adults with a university degree also do not have adequate health literacy.

A large number of Tasmanians find it harder to:

- understand and remember health information
- access services
- know who to see and when
- fill in forms
- tell service providers what they need to know
- arrange appointments, routine immunisations and screenings
- prevent problems, or pick them up early.

Lower levels of health literacy means people are more reliant on services, healthcare providers, hospital and emergency services. It also means people are less able to use programs to keep them healthy.

Organisational health literacy

Community sector organisations are already working hard to support people with lower health literacy. We can work on our organisational health literacy to do this even more. Good organisational health literacy practices make it easier for people to find, understand and use the information and services they need, so that they can have better health and wellbeing. Examples of good organisational health literacy practices are providing clear information for consumers to help them make informed decisions, engaging with consumers in a friendly and welcoming way, and involving consumers in decision making.

HeLLOTas! Toolkit

The HeLLOTas! Toolkit will help you explore your organisational health literacy. It provides:

- a step by step process for doing a self-assessment and developing a Health Literacy Action Plan
- practical tools to help you with these tasks
- links to accreditation standards, resources and further reading material.

For more information go to www.hellotas.org.au.

TOOL #2
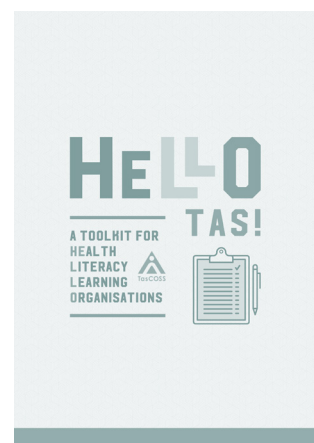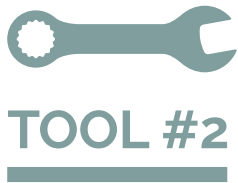
Workers Sharing Power

Becoming an ally to those who are not very good at making it through the system is a great way of using what privilege you do have to help those who have less. You can use the power you have to bring other people along, to lessen bureaucracy, to make others feel welcome and included, fully.

— Peggy McIntosh, associate director of the Wellesley Centers for Women, Harvard University.

Understanding consumer perspectives

As a service provider, you can help consumers to navigate the system by:

- Acknowledging your position of power and privilege and trying to see the world from the perspective of consumers – see, for example:
  - Mad Workplaces for a perspective on mental health consumers; also Consumer Man and In Our Own Words
  - Cultural profiles to better understand the health beliefs, pre-migration experiences, communication preferences and other aspects of consumers' cultures.
  - NICHEportal for ideas on working respectfully with Aboriginal people.

- Developing an understanding of the social determinants of health and how some of these determinants might be influencing the health of consumers
- Listening closely to consumers' stories and what they are telling you.

Working with consumers

- Recognise that what you are saying may not be easy to understand – and that does not mean a consumer is stupid
- Communicate with consumers in plain English, giving them 'health literate' written materials, and using different ways to convey information
- Encourage consumers to speak up if they have not understood something
- Encourage consumers to take notes, record what you say to them, or bring along a friend or relative to help them remember what has been said
- Use tools to explain healthcare options; then giving consumers the time and opportunity to make informed decisions about their care

- Consult with other providers involved in the care of a consumer and inviting the consumer and their families into discussions
- Respect consumers' confidentiality and privacy
- Respect consumers' decisions.

Changing systems

- Work more broadly to make consumers' experiences of the health system easier and more empowering – for example, by:
  - ensuring that your organisation is working to become more health literate – see Checklist
  - putting processes in place for genuine consumer engagement, including actively participation in how your organisation operates
  - advocating on behalf of your consumers for better processes and support to help them navigate the health and community services' system
  - ensuring adequate consumer feedback and complaints mechanisms are in place
  - consulting with consumers and potential consumers and what they want from your services.

TOOL #3

Example of self-assessment report

HEALTH
LITERACY
LEARNING
ORGANISATIONS

HeLLO

TAS!

A TOOLKIT FOR DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATION'S HEALTH LITERACY

THE PROCESS

- STEP 1: CHECK IN
- STEP 2: ASSESS
  - ✓ CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT
  - ✓ WORKFORCE
  - ✓ MEETING THE NEEDS OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES
  - ✓ ACCESS AND NAVIGATION
  - ✓ COMMUNICATION
  - ✓ LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
  - ASSESSMENT RESULTS
- STEP 3: ACTION PLAN
- STEP 4: IMPLEMENT
- STEP 5: REFLECT
- STEP 6: REVIEW

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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Below are the results of your Health Literacy self-assessment.

◆ Your Results   ◆ Team Results   ■ Organisational Results

CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT

Getting feedback from consumers.	**100%**	-
Involving consumers as experts in their own health, wellbeing, and service needs	**88%**	• ⬈ Encouraging questions from your consumers
Involving consumers in organisational planning and decision-making processes.	**100%**	-

WORKFORCE

Developing our workforce's health literacy skills	**100%**	-
Encouraging a Health Literate workplace culture	**100%**	-

MEETING THE NEEDS OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Developing consumer health literacy skills	**55%**	-
Meeting the diverse needs of consumers	**58%**	-

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

Making clear pathways for consumers to other services	**50%**	-
Identifying and addressing consumer issues with the systems and services they use	**81%**	-
Creating a health literate service environment	**63%**	-
Supporting consumers to understand and use our services	**83%**	-

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

Making clear pathways for consumers to other services	**50%**	-
Identifying and addressing consumer issues with the systems and services they use	**81%**	-
Creating a health literate service environment	**63%**	-
Supporting consumers to understand and use our services	**83%**	-

COMMUNICATION

Communicating clearly with consumers in our documents and resources	**25%**	-
Communicating clearly within our organisation	**25%**	-
Communicating clearly in interactions with consumers	**25%**	-

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Setting and achieving health literacy goals	**58%**	-
Contributing to broader efforts to improve health literacy	**75%**	-
Valuing health literacy as part of our core business	**50%**	-

YOUR TEAMS RESULTS

	CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT	WORKFORCE	MEETING THE NEEDS OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES	ACCESS AND NAVIGATION	COMMUNICATION	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
user1@emailaddress.org.au	77%	61%	52%	63%	48%	67%
user2@emailaddress.org.au	48%	66%	34%	91%	27%	47%
user3@emailaddress.org.au	95%	100%	57%	67%	25%	58%
user4@emailaddress.org.au	100%		75%	100%	30%	69%
YOUR TEAM RESULTS	**80.0%**	**75.7%**	**54.5%**	**80.3%**	**32.5%**	**60.3%**
YOUR ORGANISATION RESULTS	**81.6%**	**78.8%**	**63.6%**	**80.3%**	**43.6%**	**68.2%**

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TOOL #4

Observing and Rating your Organisation's Environment

Please tick appropriate box	Yes	Needs improvement	No	Not relevant
Getting to the service				
Phone information is offered using plain, everyday words.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clear instructions are provided on how to get there.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interpreter services are offered when required.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Disabled car parking is available.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public transport is available.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entrance				
Name of the organisation is clearly visible from outside (carpark, street).	☐	☐	☐	☐
Disability access (ramps and/or service elevator) are available.	☐	☐	☐	☐
An entry sign can be seen from the street.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Signs use plain, everyday words.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A reception desk is near the entrance.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A sign shows where the reception desk is.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Assistance				
Someone is available at or near the main entrance to help people.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Any sign-in procedures are clearly visible and simple.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interpreter services are available.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff offer to help consumers complete paperwork.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A support person is welcomed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to other appropriate assistance is provided – eg. showers, laundry, clothing exchange.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please tick appropriate box	Yes	Needs improvement	No	Not relevant

Waiting area/s

	Yes	Needs improvement	No	Not relevant
Are toilets and exits clearly signed	☐	☐	☐	☐
Water and tissues are available.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are enough stable, supportive chairs for standard client numbers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Temperature, drafts and noise levels are controlled.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Appropriate reading material is provided.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Posters are informative and visually appealing and there are an appropriate number of them	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are clean toys/activities for children.	☐	☐	☐	☐
If required, an alternative waiting area is available for individuals.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Signs advertise the availability of interpreter services.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Interview area/s

|	Yes	Needs improvement	No	Not relevant
Sound barriers ensure confidentiality.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Water and tissues are available	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are stable, supportive chairs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Posters are informative and visually appealing.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Appropriate quiet, well-lit area to encourage conversation and ensure privacy and confidentiality.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Signage

	Yes	Needs improvement	No	Not relevant
Consistent language/graphics are used on signs throughout the building.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Toilets and exits are clearly signed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Signage uses large, clearly visible lettering.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The names of any service areas are clearly visible.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Information & engagement

	Yes	Needs improvement	No	Not relevant
Consumers have been involved in all aspects of environmental assessment.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Written materials for consumers have been developed with consumers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Translated materials are available in the primary community languages.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Website and any social media follows plain language guidelines.	☐	☐	☐	☐

TOOL #5
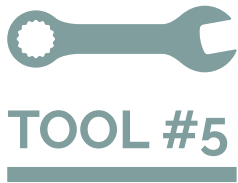
Reviewing Consumer Resources

Name / title / type of resource ....
....

Published / revision date ....
What is the purpose of this resource? ....
....
....

Who is the target audience? ....
....

Where available? ....
Other languages? ....

Readability

You may like to use a Readability Assessment tool to measure the appropriateness of the content for your audience. Aim for a reading level of Year 6 for general audiences:

- SMOG (Simplified Measure of Gobbledygook):
  http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/SMOG-calculator/smogcalc.php
- SAM (Suitability Assessment of Material):
  www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/health_literacy/
  health_literacy_toolkit/suitability_assessment_of_material_score_sheet
- Readability Score: Readability of text ranking based on several researched methods: https://readability-score.com/text

See also

- Communicate Clearly: A Guide to Plain English:
  http://26ten.tas.gov.au/PublishingImages/Tools/26TEN-Communicate-
  Clearly-A-Guide-to-Plain-English-Current-September-2014.PDF
- Health Literacy training and other events:
  www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/wihpw/news_and_events/events2

Please tick appropriate box	Yes	Needs improvement	No	Not relevant
Resource content				
The content aligns with the needs of your target audience.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information in the resource flows from one point to the next.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The resource uses simple and familiar words, short sentences and paragraphs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Each paragraph contains one concept or message. There is no excess wording.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The resource uses the active voice.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Any jargon or is explained, and abbreviations are spelled out.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Medical terms and technical or difficult concepts are explained using simple, familiar words, with examples where appropriate.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Key terms are used consistently throughout the resource.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Any numbers are clear, easy to understand and avoided where possible – eg. Use 'very few people' rather than '1 out of 10,000 people'.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Key points are summarised or emphasised where appropriate.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The topic areas in the resource have informative headers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The design helps the reader find information easily – eg, consistent use of fonts, headings, tables; limited use of upper case, italics and underlining; effective use of white space and dot points.	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is clear what a reader is meant to do with the resource/information.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The resource uses visual aids whenever these can make content clearer.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visual aids are appropriate to age, gender, culture etc. of the main audience.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Graphics/information is clear when photocopied or printed in black and white.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The date and contact information is included.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The resource content and readability has been tested with consumers	☐	☐	☐	☐

Surveying Consumers about your Organisational Health Literacy

You may like to survey consumers about their experience of your organisation's health literacy - how easy they found it to negotiate and how clear and useful they found the information they received.

TasCOSS 'How To' Guides

The TasCOSS website provides a series of 'How To' guides on conducting surveys:

- How to write questions for a survey: ⚭ www.tascosslibrary.org.au/how-write-questions-survey-0
- How to create a paper-based survey: ⚭ www.tascosslibrary.org.au/how-to/create-paper-based-survey
- How to create an online survey: ⚭ www.tascosslibrary.org.au/how-to/create-online-survey

These guides provide information on how to decide what questions to ask, how to structure the questions, how to rank them, and when to use open-ended questions. They cover some of the things to consider when developing paper based or online surveys.

Possible questions

- How easy was it to get to our service?
- How easy was it to find our service?
- How would you rate your initial reception?
- Were you given clear information about the service and what it could do for you?
- Was the information you received from the worker clear and easy to understand?
- Was the written information you received clear and easy to understand?
- Did you feel that you were treated with empathy and respect?
- Were you able to ask all the questions that you had?
- Were you encouraged to ask questions?
- Did you feel comfortable to ask questions?
- Were you offered help to fill in forms?
- Did you find the physical environment comfortable and welcoming?
- Were signs and directions easy to read and follow?
- Were you given information about any service costs?

- If you were referred on to another service, were you given information about that service?
- Do you feel confident that you have been provided with the information that you need?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
- Did you feel listened to?

Some tools for online survey design

There are quite a few good online survey design tools available, the following being well-tested.

- Survey Monkey: ⚭ www.surveymonkey.com
- Google Forms: ⚭ www.google.com/forms/about
- Typeform: ⚭ www.typeform.com

Assessing your listening skills

Which of the following do you recognise in yourself?

Please tick appropriate box	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Are there some individuals that you avoid having to listen to?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are there certain categories of people you find it difficult to listen to?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Would someone's appearance prejudice you so that you could not listen objectively?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do you tune out on certain topics?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do you refuse to listen to things that make you feel uncomfortable?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do you pay attention only to the good/bad things that you hear?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do you listen chiefly for facts and overlook feelings?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do you listen purely for your own purposes without thinking what the other person needs?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do you let your mind wander or pursue thoughts of your own?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do you spend most of the time thinking what you are going to say next?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are you easily distracted by other things going on around you?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do you have ways of kidding the speaker that you are paying attention when you are not?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Does your body language ever reveal that you are getting bored, impatient or irritable?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are you always ready to jump in with your own ideas as soon as the other person pauses?	☐	☐	☐	☐
If the other person says something you disagree with do you interrupt to put your point of view across?	☐	☐	☐	☐
If you can guess the end of the person's sentence do you complete it for them?	☐	☐	☐	☐

To be good listeners we are aiming to answer 'Never', If you answered mostly 'Never or Sometimes', well done! You are doing well as a listener - keep working on it - we can always improve.

If you answered mostly 'Often and Always', it's time to start focussing on your listening! Awareness is the first step, and with practice you (and those around you) will see real changes.

This questionnaire is part of the 'Asking Better Questions' Training. For more information go to www.betterquestions.com.au.

TOOL #8 | Health Literacy Action Plan template

Organisation/Team: Health Literacy Team

Organisational Goal: An organisation that is easy to find for consumers, provides user friendly information, is welcoming and meets consumer needs

Dimensions:

1. **CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT:** Involving consumers in organisational planning and evaluation processes and supporting them to be experts on their own needs and wellbeing.
2. **WORKFORCE:** Encouraging and supporting our workforce to use effective health literacy practices.
3. **MEETING THE NEEDS OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES:** Working to improve the health literacy of our consumers and making sure that all consumers are able to use our services and participate effectively in our organisation, regardless of their health literacy skills.
4. **ACCESS AND NAVIGATION:** Helping our consumers to get the services they need, when they need them, in a way that is most suited to them.
5. **COMMUNICATION:** Communicating clearly at all times. This includes communication within our organisation, as well as with consumers.
6. **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT:** Valuing health literacy as part of our culture and core business, working towards health literacy goals, and demonstrating leadership in the community by working with others to improve health literacy.

Dimension/s *(insert number/s as above)*	Actions *What actions are needed to make it easier for people to find, understand and use the information and services we provide?*	Key steps *What steps are needed to get the action underway and implemented*	Who will do this?	When?	Success indicator *How will we know our action has been successful?*	Progress	Review and Evaluation *Have the implemented actions resolved the issue?*

Example Health Literacy Action Plan

Organisation/Team: Health Literacy Team

Organisational Goal: An organisation that is easy to find for consumers, provides user friendly information, is welcoming and meets consumer needs

Dimensions/s	Actions *What actions are needed to make it easier for people to find, understand and use the information and services we provide?*	Key steps *What steps are needed to get the action underway and implemented*	Who will do this?	When?	Success indicator *How will we know our action has been successful?*	Progress	Review and Evaluation *Have the implemented actions resolved the issue?*
1	Improve participation in community reference group to increase consumer feedback	Improve resourcing to support participation – reimbursement of out of pocket expenses, providing food and staff support. Document and communicate to consumers.	Volunteer Coordinator budget item	Sept 2020	Increased participation of community members, more feedback provided	Underway - clarifying what we can offer within budget, and priorities for the group	
2	Improve Staff knowledge around consumer goal setting	Provide training for staff in listening to consumers and consumer goal setting	Managers	By end Oct 2020	All staff have been provided with training, consumers report positive feedback, documents show good goal documentation	Underway - First session held, two more to come next month	
4	Amend signage to ensure all consumers can find the service – language and placement of signs	Review signage design - simplify language and include graphic symbols, and check placement in key locations	Operations Manager	June 2019	Consumers say signage is clear and they can easily find the service	Complete – new signs designed and installed	Surveyed consumers in Dec 2019 (using Organisation Environment Tool 4) – got a much higher rating and really positive feedback from consumers and staff
5	Improve consumer information provided to new clients	Establish a Consumer Communications Working Group (CCWG) with consumer representation to focus on consumer information and communication processes with new consumers	Operations Manager	June 2020	CCWG established (sub-group of, client documents and interview information reviewed and updated and positive feedback received from new clients	Complete	CCWG have had 2 meetings, group have redesigned the Client Handbook, including translations, and simplified the new client interview info list. New clients have given very positive feedback.

Ideas for Action

Action area	Actions	Tools
Review organisational documents HeLLO Dimensions: Leadership and management Workforce	• Strategic and operational plans • Policies and procedures • Minutes of meetings • Budgets • Needs assessments • Staff induction programs • Staff training opportunities • Staff handbooks • Registers of consumer feedback • Risk registers • Client care or service plans • Staff survey	Assessing policies and protocols about communication and health literacy: www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/health_literacy/health_literacy_toolkit/policies_and_protocols_for_supportive_health_literacy_environments
Review documents for consumers HeLLO Dimensions: Consumer involvement Communication	• Appointment and referral letters • Client's care or service plan • Information about services • Your website and/or Facebook page • Brochures, posters and other promotional material • Consumer questionnaires • Informed consent forms • Information about how to give feedback.	**TOOL #5: REVIEWING CONSUMER RESOURCES**
Observe pathways and processes HeLLO Dimension: Access and navigation	• Check how easy it is for consumers to find your service. • Do a walkthrough of your service with a consumer to find out how they experience your organisation, including consumers with varied mobility needs (wheelchair, walker, pram etc).	**TOOL #4: OBSERVING AND RATING YOUR ORGANISATION'S ENVIRONMENT**
Check interactions with consumers HeLLO Dimensions: Access and navigation Consumer involvement	Observe staff interactions with consumers: • How consumers are greeted at reception. • Whether consumers are given time to process information and encouraged to ask questions • Whether consumer questions are answered • How processes and instructions are passed on to the consumer. • Ask consumers whether they felt welcome, respected and listened to by staff.	Hello my name is.... www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/health_literacy/hello_my_name_is It's ok to ask www.26ten.tas.gov.au/sites/test/our-focus-areas/Pages/It's-OK-to-Ask-Resources.aspx **TOOL #7: ASSESSING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS**

Observe your organisation's environment HeLLO Dimension: Access and navigation	Check out your facilities: • Is water freely available? • Are tissues freely available? • Are there accessible toilets? • Look at signage: • Are signs clear? • Are toilets and exits clearly marked? • Are there only as many signs as necessary? Reflect on processes: • Is it clear what to do when you first enter the service? • Is it clear what you can do if you have a question or need help?	**TOOL #3:** **OBSERVING AND RATING YOUR ORGANISATION'S ENVIRONMENT**
Interview staff HeLLO Dimension: Workforce	• Explore your colleagues' awareness of health literacy and how it is practised in your organisation. • Seek feedback on whether your organisational documents are easy for staff to use.	**TOOL #1:** **HEALTH LITERACY FACT SHEET** **TOOL #7:** **ASSESSING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS**
Interview consumers HeLLO Dimensions: Access and navigation Consumer involvement	• Ask consumers whether they: • are clear about the purpose of their appointment or visit • understand what they need to do following an appointment or visit • have had their questions answered • have experienced challenges in getting health services • have found services helpful and supportive. • Note: You will need to get permission from consumers for observations and interviews.	**TOOL #6:** **SURVEYING CONSUMERS** TasCOSS 'How To' guides ⚯ www.tascosslibrary.org.au/how-to: • How to plan and run a focus group • How to do a semi-structured interview • How to do a snap shot survey
Interview other service providers HeLLO Dimension: Access and navigation	Explore other service providers: • understanding of your organisation and what you do • ideas on how you can work together to meet the needs of consumers such as joint projects, better referral pathways, ways to share feedback from consumers.	FindHelpTAS ⚯ www.findhelptas.org.au/
Interview people in the community HeLLO Dimension: Meeting the needs of diverse communities	Ask people in the community: • whether they know about your organisation • what services they need • how they think you should promote your service • for any ideas they may have to improve your organisation.	

Conduct surveys HeLLO Dimension: Consumer involvement	Survey consumers about their experience of your organisation's health literacy, e.g.: • How easy they find it to communicate with workers. • How clear and useful they found the information they receive.	⚷ TOOL #6: SURVEYING CONSUMERS TasCOSS 'How To' guides 🔗 www.tascosslibrary.org.au/how-to: • How to write questions for a survey • How to create a paper-based survey • How to create an online survey Some online survey design tools: • Survey Monkey • Google Forms • Typeform
Do a cultural audit HeLLO Dimension: Meeting the needs of diverse communities	Look at how culturally-appropriate your organisation is for different groups, e.g.: • Aboriginal people. • People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. • People with disabilities. • People who are lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex.	Working with Aboriginal people and communities: 🔗 www.whealth.com.au/mtww/documents/MTWW_Audit_Tool.pdf How to make your organisation feel welcoming for people of all sexualities and gender identities: 🔗 www.tascosslibrary.org.au/how-to/make-your-organisation-feel-welcoming-people-all-sexualities-and-gender-identities
Improve skills of staff and consumers HeLLO Dimension: Workforce Communication Meeting the needs of diverse communities	Link consumers to training and support provided through the 26TEN network. Encourage staff to do training in health literacy, e.g. as provided through the Tasmanian Health Service's Health Promotion team, including: • 'Communicate clearly and check understanding' • 'How to design easy to read resources' • 'Written and verbal communication' • Link consumers to training and support provided through the 26TEN Network.	Tasmanian Health Service Health Literacy training: 🔗 www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/wihpw/news_and_events/events2 26TEN resources and support – search at: 🔗 www.26ten.tas.gov.au
Link with other organisations HeLLO Dimension: Leadership and Management	Become a member of the 26TEN members network.	26TEN members network – search at: 🔗 www.26ten.tas.gov.au

How Organisational Health Literacy supports Accreditation

By working through the HeLLOTas! Toolkit, organisations can generate further evidence and supporting documentation for their accreditation compliance.

We have provided information to help you see where your organisational Health Literacy links in with commonly used community organisation accreditation standards.

Accreditation Standards

We have identified the 6 most common accreditation standards that community service organisations in Tasmania are required to comply with. We have mapped the Health Literacy Dimensions against each of these, so you can see where they align.

These are the 6 accreditation standards that community service organisations are most commonly required to comply with – each is linked to the online set of standards:

- Aged Care Quality Standards
- National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

- National standards for mental health services
- DHHS Quality and Safety Standards
- QIC Health and Community Services Standards
- NDIS Practice Standards

How Health Literacy Dimensions support the standards

In the resources section of the toolkit we have put together a document for each of the above standards, mapping the organisational health literacy dimensions against the accreditation standards.

For each set of standards, we have listed the different sections and subsections, and then shown which Health Literacy Dimension is aligned. If there are standards where you need some more evidence or improvements, you can see which aspects of organisational health literacy can assist.

The HeLLOTas health literacy dimension numbers listed relate to the dimensions as outlined in the Self-Assessment Checklist. For example 1.3 relates

to Dimension 1 (Consumer Involvement), question 3 "We respect consumer's decisions about involving or not involving families or other support people, including advocates."

Designing a Health Literate Website

1. Plan your site

- Website or social media?

Website

Pros	Cons
Full control	Design and setup can be costly and time consuming
Flexible re layout	Needs regular maintenance
Can include much more content than social media	

Facebook

Pros	Cons
Quick and easy to setup	Limited control
Free	Design limitations
Very interactive	Needs regular monitoring
Easy to delete	Limited reporting tools
	Limited to small chunks of information

(Tip: If you develop both a website and a Facebook page you can link these together and get your messages to a much wider audience.)

- Will you DIY or get it professionally designed? (Tip: there are many website building tools online that do not require coding or design skills – search on your browser).
- What is the purpose of the site?
- Who do you want to reach?
- Have you chosen and registered a domain name (www.domainregistration. com.au/domains/tips)?
- What size site? How many pages, how much storage will you need (images and videos greatly increase storage space)?
- Do you want to include online forms, blogs, maps, links to social media, links to other sites and resources, video and/or audio players?
- Do you need to optimise content for tablets and phones?

2. Develop content

- Plan the content –focus, key messages, what to include, how information will be organised
- Create a simple engaging homepage

- Put the most important information first
- Put key messages 'above the fold' (content you don't need to scroll down to)
- Include simple navigation – clear pathways, menus and buttons with meaningful labels
- Use images to explain content and help people learn, not to distract them
- Use interactive content that users can tailor to their own needs.

3. Check style

- Talk directly to your intended audience, using common language
- Use plain English – everyday words rather than complex words
- Use active voice (subject-verb-object) where possible
- Be concise, keep it simple
- Keep sentences short
- Write short, single-topic paragraphs
- Avoid clichés
- Avoid jargon and abbreviations
- Use clear, meaningful titles, sub-titles and links
- Avoid underlining, italics,

- bold print, capital letters or exclamation marks
- Use inclusive language - gender neutral, culturally appropriate, disability-friendly
- Always capitalise 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal' when referring to Aboriginal Australians
- Use different ways to get messages across – graphics, multimedia, graphs, images
- Limit content to one or two main fonts
- Use a clean (sans serif) readable font for text – at least 12 points
- Use 1.5-line spacing
- Include plenty of white space
- Chunk content into manageable pieces
- Use dot point lists to break up text
- Test content for readability (see: Readability statistics)
- Test content with your consumers.
- Resource: Writing for the web http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/health_literacy/health_literacy_toolkit/writing_for_the_web

4. Check accessibility and useability

- Refer to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/glance) for international best practice recommendations for improving website accessibility
- Australian Government page: (www.guides.service.gov.au/content-guide/accessibility-inclusivity/)
- Check out Vision Australia's Accessibility Toolkit
- Check that:
  - images meet the 6 relevant accessibility guidelines (alt text, colour, contrast, images of text, flashing, icon consistency)
  - link text is easily understood and clearly marked
  - HTML tags have been used appropriately for headings, lists, quotations, tables and emphasised text
- Make title and headings clear, meaningful and easily searchable
- Include organisation name in title or sub heading
- Write a useful meta description (summary of content)
- Use Search Engine Optimisation – include highly ranked keywords
- Make sure content displays correctly on different screens – desktops, laptops, tablets, mobile phones
- Embed social media buttons on your website; include links to your website on your Facebook site.
- Resource: For useability tips, see Web Useability http://usability.com.au

5. Promote your website

- Promote your web address everywhere possible – social media, directories, posters, business cards, etc.
- Do an online search on ways to increase website traffic
- Monitor use of your website – search online for web analytics tools

6. Maintain your site

Develop a regular schedule to:
- Check all content is up to date
- Check all links work
- Add new content, links and resources.
- Resource: Health Literacy online: A Guide for Simplifying the User Experience https://health.gov/healthliteracyonline/

Consumers taking control

Finding your way through the healthcare maze

There are lots of services and resources out there to help you navigate the health system. Searching online will provide you with up to date information and links. Here are just a few:

- Find Help Tas provides a publicly accessible, independently managed database of Tasmania's social services
- Consumers Health Forum of Australia: Find your way, Guide to our Health System
- Primary Health Tasmania: My Passport to Better Health, Connecting Care
- Beyond Blue: The Beyond Blue Support Service
- Association for Children with Disability (Tas.) Inc Finding your way

Before an appointment

Get clear in your mind about what you want to get from the appointment.

- Write a list of any questions you want to ask and anything you want to tell the service provider before you go.

- Gather together information to take with you on current conditions, past surgeries or illnesses, and any medications you are taking.
- Decide whether you want to take anyone else along for support and an extra pair of ears.
- Work out where you need to go and how long it will take to get there.

Asking questions

You have a right to ask questions of service providers and to get clear answers. Some people find it overwhelming to receive lots of information, while others want as much information as they can get.

- Let the service provider know how much information you want and how much you want to be involved with decisions about your care.
- If you don't understand what they are saying, tell them. This does not mean you are stupid – just that they are not good at communicating.
- Make sure they listen to what you say and what you want.
- Don't be afraid to ask 'silly' questions – these are often important.

- Take notes of what they say.
- Ask for an explanation of anything that you don't understand.
- Ask if there are any handouts, websites or other places you can get more information.
- If they can't help with any specific issues, ask who you should contact for more help.
- If any drugs are prescribed, ask:
  - Why should I take this?
  - Are there any side effects?
  - What does it cost?
  - Is there a generic (cheaper) form of the drug?
- If you are sent for tests ask:
  - What is the test for?
  - How much does it cost?
  - When will I get results?
- If a procedure is recommended, ask:
  - Why do I need this procedure?
  - How many times have you done this procedure?
  - Are there any alternatives?
  - What happens if I don't do anything?
  - What are the possible complications?
  - What are the costs?

Resources:

www.chf.org.au/health-consumers-tasmania

www.consumerreports.org/cro/news/2015/02/3-questions-to-ask-a-doctor/index.htm

www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/10questions.html

www.26ten.tas.gov.au/sites/test/our-focus-areas/Pages/It's-OK-to-Ask-Resources.aspx
https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder

Know your providers

- Find out who's who in the world of health practitioners – check out Clinicians' Guides - a Consumer Perspective; and The Company We Keep: A user's guide to mental health clinicians.

- Ask other consumers for advice on who to see (noting that most service providers are not able to make specific recommendations).

- Find specific service providers. Some provide a list of the services they offer and details such the availability of bulk-billing,

cost, accessibility. Check out:
- Primary Health Tasmania: Tasmanian Health Directory
- DHHS Service Finder – South | North | North West
- Find Help Tas

Get involved

There are lots of ways for consumers to get involved in changing health and community services' systems so that they are more 'user-friendly and empowering. Find Help Tas lists lots of advocacy groups that you may like to join. Search for 'consumer advocacy' or for a specific group or condition.

Being on committees

Decision-making and advisory bodies need to 'abandon the idea that a consumer can possibly be "representative" on a committee' but acknowledge that every consumer is an expert in their own right and has their own lived experience.

- Before agreeing to go on a committee, find out some background information – eg. why they want a consumer representative, whether

any other consumers are involved, and what expertise is needed.

- Ask about entitlements – are there any sitting fees, reimbursement of expenses, resources to consult with other consumers, support from the organisation?

- Has the committee undertaken any training in recognising and working with consumers, or are they willing to do this?

- Is there recognition within the committee of entrenched power imbalances and the tyranny of status?

- Is the committee aware of the need for health literacy and have they undergone any training?

- Are committee members willing to sign up to a 'committee agreement' on how to work collaboratively with consumers?

Resources:

Our Consumer Place: Resource Centre for Mental Health Consumers

Positive thinking about consumers