

Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy: Long Questionnaire

Thank you for deciding to take part in this public consultation. Please read the information below, fill out the questionnaire overleaf, and return by email to ALND@SOLAS.ie.

What we want to hear your views on:

What you think are the challenges and opportunities for Ireland in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

How you think we can create an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society.

About this Questionnaire

This questionnaire contains 5 sections, with questions grouped around 5 different themes. You can type your answers into the box provided after each question. The boxes below the questions will expand as you type so your answers can be as long or short as you like. Before starting we will ask if you are responding as a private individual or on behalf of an organisation, and your organisation's name, if applicable.

Once you have completed this questionnaire please send to ALND@solas.ie.

Long Questionnaire

Basic Information

Are you responding to this questionnaire as an individual (providing your own personal views) or as an organisation (providing the views of your organisation)? **Please mark your answer with an 'X'.**

Individual, providing my own personal views

Organisation, providing the views of my organisation

If you are responding to this questionnaire on behalf of your organisation, please **state the name of your organisation** below. If you are responding as an individual, please move on to Question 1 below.

St Patrick's Mental Health Services

Please Note: Submissions that do not include an organisation name will be treated as individual submissions.

Theme 1: Different meanings of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

Description

The words 'literacy', 'numeracy' and 'digital literacy' can have many different meanings to different people. They can cover different aspects of living, working and learning.

To ensure the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy takes the best approach, we would like to know what these terms mean to you and how the strategy should reflect these.

Question 1.1

Which aspects of **literacy** should the Adult Literacy Numeracy and Digital Strategy emphasise most?

St Patrick's Mental Health Services (SPMHS) is Ireland's largest independent, not-for-profit mental health service provider. SPMHS' vision is a society where all citizens are empowered to live mentally healthy lives. SPMHS works to provide the highest quality mental healthcare, to promote mental wellbeing and mental health awareness, and to advocate for the rights of those experiencing mental health difficulties. SPMHS achieves this through a human rights-based approach, through the enhancement of evidence-based knowledge, and by striving to be at the cutting edge of new initiatives and advances in the field. SPMHS is committed to furthering the development of the competencies of those choosing to work in mental health and of the organisations providing mental health care services, and to enhancing partnership with service users. Our strategic plan for 2018-2022 – '[Changing Minds. Changing Lives](#)', is firmly rooted in these principles and commitments.

In recent years, SPMHS has been committed to becoming a more literacy-friendly organisation, and recognises the significance of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to the concept of health literacy. Strengthening health literacy skills has been shown to build individual and community resilience, help address health inequities, and improve health and wellbeing (WHO, 2013). The benefits of developing an Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy are noted as including 'promoting health and wellbeing' within the consultation document, and SPMHS would advocate that this aspect of literacy be given due attention within the new strategy, and that significance to mental health is highlighted within this context also.

SPMHS would also suggest that the role of services, including health services, in being responsive to literacy and health literacy needs to be highlighted within the new strategy. Furthermore, SPMHS would highlight that accessibility as a human right includes access to information, as per Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and this may be an important underpinning principle to consider within the strategy. From this perspective, it is a responsibility of rights-based and public services to engage with efforts addressing literacy needs.

Question 1.2

Which aspects of **numeracy** should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy emphasise most?

The significance of numeracy should also be highlighted as regards relevance to health literacy, with functional examples including safe use of medications, and understanding of issues such as risk or dietary guidance.

Question 1.3

Which aspects of **digital literacy** should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy emphasise most?

SPMHS would again highlight the important link between digital literacy and health literacy, and would note the increased significance this has gained during the past year due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Digital literacy has been important not only as an enabler for access to health services, where traditional access routes have been restricted, but also to engage in mental health-sustaining outlets such as social support and broader social participation outlets. SPMHS would thus suggest that relevance to health literacy, access to health services and health-supporting behaviours may be important aspects to emphasise within the strategy.

Question 1.4

Which aspects of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, as a whole, should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy emphasise most?

SPMHS would suggest that the strategy should emphasise: 1) the significance to health literacy of all three areas, 2) the human rights perspective as it relates to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, and 3) the need for services, including health services, to be responsive and supportive of the needs of people who may benefit from literacy supports.

Theme 2: Improving awareness and access to information and supports

Description:

It can be daunting for a person to decide to take that first step to seek assistance with reading, writing, maths or technology. In some cases, this can be due to perceived stigma, or embarrassment, which can prevent some people from seeking information, help and support.

We would like to know your views on how we can make it easier for people to take the first step and to seek information, help and support.

Question 2.1

In your view, what are the main obstacles that prevent or delay adults from seeking help, information or support for literacy, numeracy or digital literacy?

No comment

Question 2.2

In your view what works best to encourage adults to take the first step to build their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy?

No comment

Question 2.3

In your view, how should adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy be encouraged, developed and promoted during the 10-year strategy?

No comment

Question 2.4

What practical steps need to be taken to ensure more adults are aware of the available supports and services for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy?

No comment

Question 2.5

What practical steps could be taken to ensure more adults avail of services and supports for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy?

No comment

Question 2.6

Let us know any other views you may have about improving awareness of services and supports for adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

No comment

Theme 3: Bridging the digital divide

Description

The digital divide is the gap between 'the haves and the have-nots' in an increasingly technology-dependent society. As more aspects of society become dependent on digital resources (digital resources are digital devices and services such as internet connectivity), there is pressure on individuals to have these resources and be able to use them.

Many people in Ireland have excellent digital skills but nearly half of the Irish population score at or below the most basic level of Digital Literacy. The Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy needs to promote and support adult literacy, numeracy, digital literacy and 'digital inclusion' to close this gap.

Question 3.1

In your view, how does the digital divide impact on individuals and communities, particularly those with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs?

Within the context of mental health, and as has been evidenced with the events of 2020, the digital divide may impact on a person's ability to access not only health services, but to engage in activities and or supports that may support recovery or generally sustain good mental health. Additionally, for particular groups that may experience disadvantage as regards digital literacy, this may compound any existing mental health needs or risk of social isolation where services or supports cannot easily be accessed. This might include older people, members of the Traveller community, or people living in some especially rural areas, where access to necessary skills, resources or network infrastructure may be limited.

Question 3.2

What steps should be taken to help bridge the digital divide in Ireland?

SPMHS would suggest that increasing targeted support and resources for key groups, that are culturally competent and easily accessible, be explored. This might include financial assistance schemes where needed to secure necessary resources.

Question 3.3

Please provide details of any innovative projects you are aware of, that aim to bridge the digital divide.

In response to the restrictions necessitated by the Coronavirus outbreak, SPMHS quickly adapted a large proportion of its mental healthcare services to remote online or telephone-based services. An important element of this was the setting up of a new service – the 'Service User IT Support Service' or SUITS. The aim of SUITS is to provide people accessing SPMHS' video-enabled services with advice on how to set up their device, training on how to link into SPMHS video appointments, and additional basic technology assistance such as help with setting up an email account. We would be happy to provide further information about this should it be deemed helpful to the Strategy development.

Theme 4 - Priorities and actions

Description

When complete, the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy will set out the priorities for Ireland over the next 10 years and the actions we need to take to achieve these.

We need to ensure that we create an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society.

We want to hear about your ideas on what priorities the new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Strategy should focus on and the types of actions you think should be taken during the strategy.

Question 4.1

In your view, what specific actions should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy contain to encourage, develop and promote adult **literacy**?

No comment

Question 4.2

In your view, what specific actions should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy contain to encourage, develop and promote **numeracy** for adults?

No comment

Question 4.3

In your view, what specific actions should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy contain to encourage, develop and promote **digital literacy** for adults?

No comment

Question 4.4

How can we create an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society?

No comment

Question 4.5

In your view, what specific approaches should be put in place to meet the needs of certain groups?

These groups could include:

- Adults who face additional barriers related to disability and the lack of accessible content or assistive technology.
- Adults who are digitally excluded.
- Adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.

As per response to Question 3.2

Question 4.6

In your view, what outreach strategies work best to engage adults and communities in need of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy support?

No comment

Question 4.7

In your view, what approaches to interagency partnerships work best when meeting the needs of adults and communities in greatest need of literacy, numeracy or digital literacy supports?

SPMHS has valued and benefited greatly from an ongoing engagement with the services provided by the National Adult Literacy Agency, including progressing a service-wide health literacy audit. SPMHS believe that it is important for health settings to similarly engage, and would advocate collaboration and openness to projects such as jointly creating and or sharing resources. It may also be helpful to consider exploring philanthropic partnerships with private enterprises and the voluntary sector to develop and implement literacy, numeracy and digital supports.

Question 4.8

Please provide details of any innovative practices you are aware of that encourage and promote Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy.

No comment.

Theme 5: Measuring success

Description

When We will need to know if we have achieved the priorities and actions of the strategy. In other words, we need to know what success will look like and how to measure it.

We would like to know how you think we should measure and track our progress towards the aims of the new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy.

Question 5.1

How will we know if we have done a good job in reaching the ambition where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society?

SPMHS would suggest that the inclusion of a health literacy measure within monitoring and evaluation processes be considered.

Question 5.2

Please share your thoughts on ways you think we should measure and track our progress towards the aims of the new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy.

As per response to Question 5.1.

Question 5.3

Please provide any other suggested actions that you believe are needed to measure success in achieving the priorities and actions of the strategy.

No comment

Final Comments

If you have any other comments or views on the development of the new 10-Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy please provide these below.

We would be happy to offer any further input that might be of assistance over the course of its development.

End.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your views and ideas will help us to build a strong 10-year strategy for Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy in Ireland. This strategy will be developed over the coming months.

Please send your completed questionnaire to ALND@solas.ie.



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