

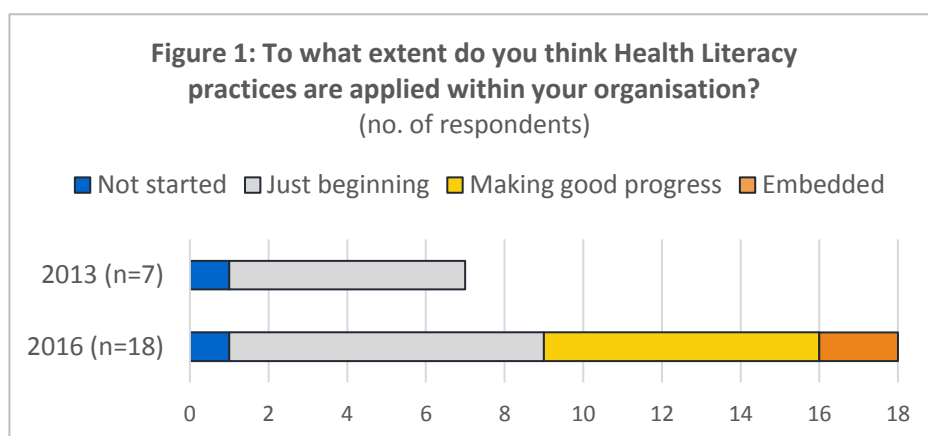
About the survey

Health literacy was identified as a priority in HealthWest’s strategic plan 2013 – 2017. To help assess the impact of our work, HealthWest surveyed our member organisations to find out how health literacy practices have changed during this time. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. Responses were collated and compared to a baseline survey conducted in 2013.

In December 2016 all HealthWest members were invited to complete the survey. 18 of 48 members responded. In July 2013 a select group of HealthWest members (17 of 34 members) were invited to complete the survey and 7 responded. Respondents came from a broad range of organisations within the health and community sectors including acute health, mental health, community health, local government and peak bodies.

Health literacy practices in 2016

The survey indicates that health literacy practices are now being applied to a greater extent among our members (see figure 1). Half of respondents (n=9) report making good progress or having embedded health literacy practices, compared to none in 2013. The remaining half of respondents (n=9) are yet to start or just beginning their health literacy journey.



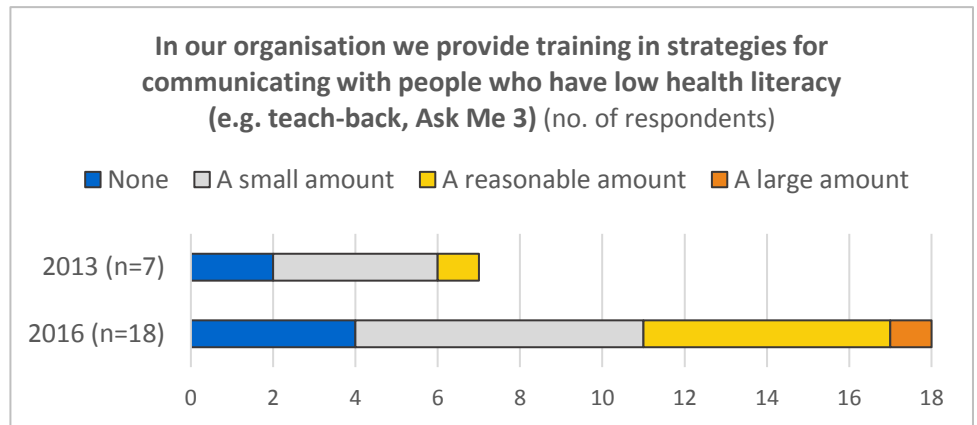
Respondents that answered 'true':	2013 (n=7)	2016 (n=18)	Difference
1. Health Literacy is embedded in our strategic plans.	27%	39%	+12%
2. Our organisation has a Health Literacy Policy.	0%	33%	+33%
3. Health Literacy is a key element of other organisation policies (details in box over page).	Not asked	39%	N/A
4. In our organisation Health Literacy is embedded in our written communication policy guide.	29%	44%	+15%
5. In our organisation Health Literacy is embedded in our web communication policy guide.	29%	33%	+4%
6. In our organisation we have allocated staffing to Health Literacy.	27%	50%	+23%
7. In our organisation Health Literacy is embedded into the position descriptions of our staff.	27%	17%	-10%
8. In our organisation we have formally assessed or audited our organisation's Health Literacy practice.	0%	39%	+39%
9. In our organisation community engagement/ participation strategies are inclusive of and accessible to people with low health literacy.	71%	89%	+18%
10. In our organisation staff are encouraged to use Health Literacy communication strategies with all consumers.	29%	89%	+60%
11. In our organisation we produce materials in languages other than English.	86%	72%	-14%

Table 1: Organisational health literacy practices: a comparison between 2013 and 2016.

When looking at specific health literacy practices, we again see them being implemented at greater proportions of respondents overall than they were in 2013 (see table 1). The survey did indicate areas for improvement, with a decreased proportion of respondents having embedded health literacy into staff position descriptions or supplying materials in language other than English.

Communication strategies

More respondents encourage staff to use health literacy communication strategies with all consumers (89% compared to 29% in 2013). However less than half this number (7 of 18 or 39%, see figure 2) provide a reasonable or large amount of training to support staff to use these strategies. This may be another area for improvement.



How HealthWest is supporting our members

Respondents reported being part of a number of HealthWest-run health literacy activities between 2013 and 2016:

- 61% were involved in the Health Literacy Practitioners Alliance.
- 56% attended Health Literacy Community of Practice MEET-UPS.
- 56% received health literacy related emails from HealthWest.
- 39% participated in the western region Health Literacy Development Course facilitated by CEH.

A quarter of respondents (28%) report that they did not participate in any of these activities.

Respondents nominated a number of key areas where HealthWest has contributed to their health literacy work:

- Promoting a **shared understanding** of health literacy concepts.
- **Driving action** in our region through a systems approach.
- **Providing information** on good practice and resources.
- Creating **networking** opportunities for staff to connect and share.
- Working in **partnership** to find shared solutions.
- **Supporting organisations** to access networks, partners and opportunities.

Future priorities for health literacy work

Respondents plan to focus on a range of priorities in the next 12-18 months:

- **Identify priorities in their organisation and community**
e.g. staff survey, research project, organisational self-assessment.
- **Create and support change in their organisation**
e.g. train key staff members as change agents, include health literacy in health and wellbeing plan, develop a health literacy policy.
- **Support staff to use health literacy practices in their work**
e.g. staff training, develop audio-visual resources to support communication with consumers.
- **Support consumers and community to access information and services**
e.g. provide information in easy English and community languages, educate and support consumers to ask questions, community programs.
- **Embed effective health literacy practices within the organisations**
e.g. sustain initial staff engagement, incorporate health literacy into all relevant policies and procedures, include health literacy in quality improvement activities.
- **Share resources and positive stories with other organisations.**

Embedding Health Literacy

While some respondents have a health literacy policy, even more have incorporated health literacy into broader policy areas to embed good practice in the organisation.

Respondents have included health literacy in the following policies:

- Marketing and communications
- Service delivery
- Client rights and responsibilities
- Informed consent
- Consumer and community engagement
- Interpreting and translating
- Access and equity.

Conclusion

Since prioritising health literacy in 2013, HealthWest has helped drive and contributed to significant health literacy work in our region. Health literacy practices are being applied by more members and to a greater extent than in 2013.