

Ireland: Making health literacy everyone's business

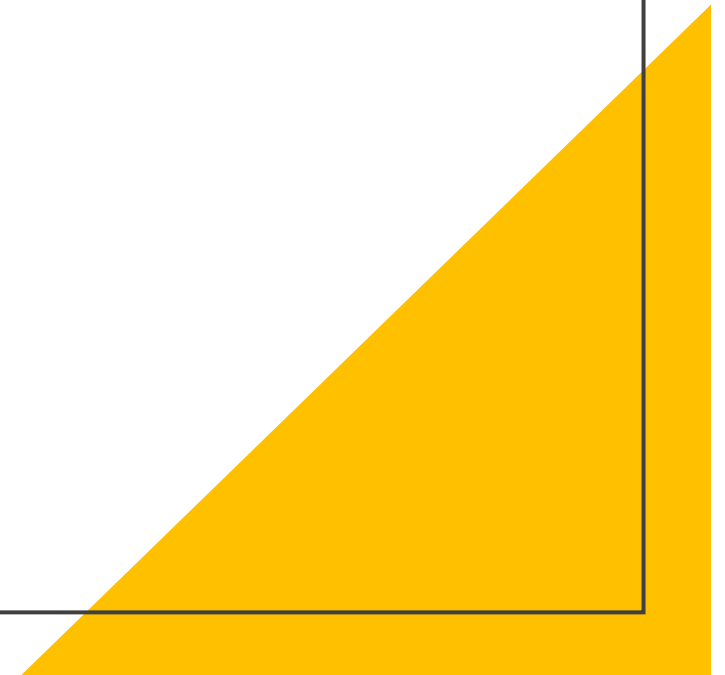


**Adult
Literacy
for Life**

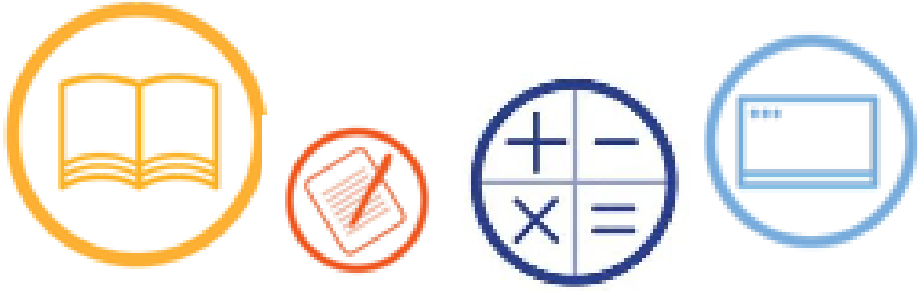
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October 2024



Literacy needs in Ireland



18% of adults find reading and understanding everyday text difficult.

25% had difficulties using maths in everyday life

42% lacked basic digital skills

Reference: OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (2012)

Source of visual:
[Literacy for Life](#), NALA (2020)



Recent research on health literacy

Omnibus survey, November 2023



17% of adults in Ireland **understand little information** from their GP (doctor), nurse or pharmacist.

Embarrassment was the main reason for not asking for explanation (42%).



33% of people would **only sometimes ask** GP (doctor), nurse or pharmacist to explain when they do not understand.

38% of people have taken the **wrong dose** of medication at least once.



Source: SOLAS Adult Literacy for Life (2023).
[Omnibus survey](#) results from Coyne Research



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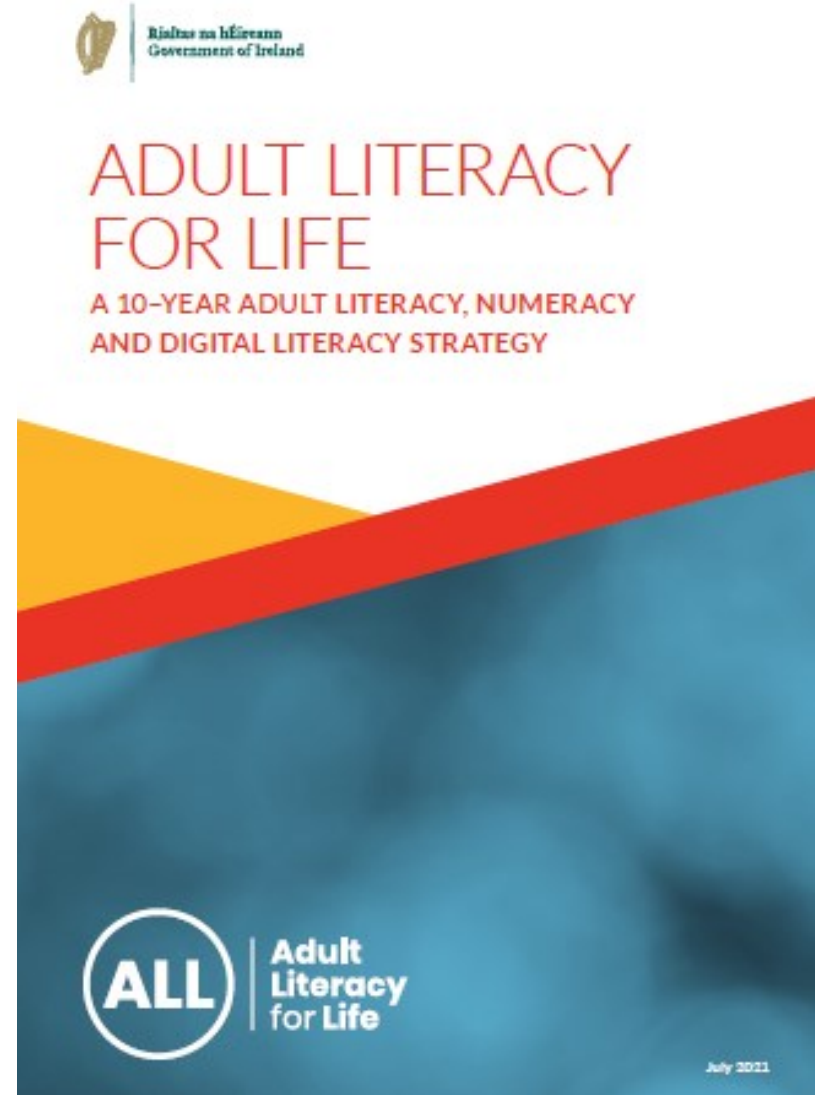
Government response

10-year government strategy

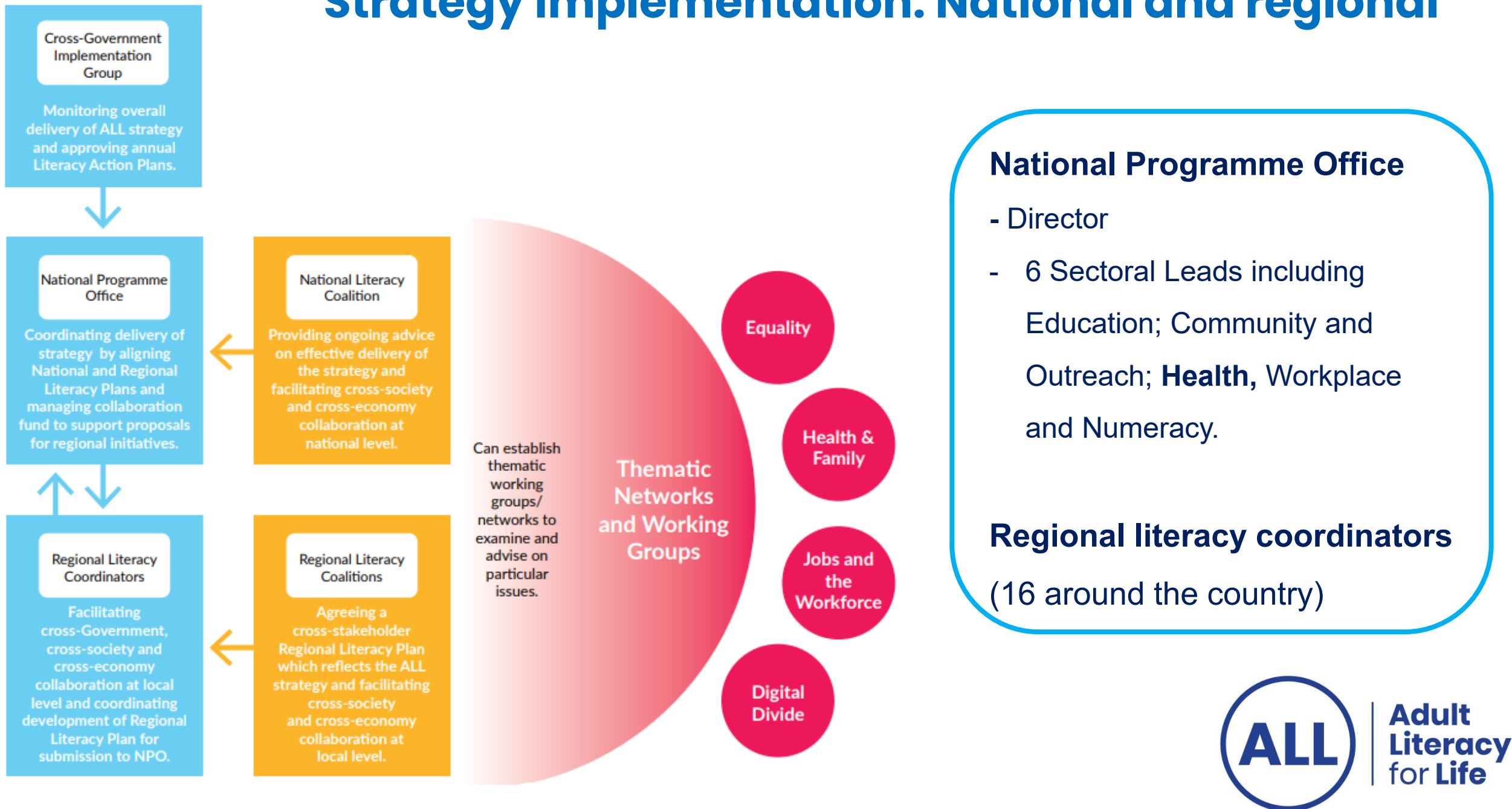


Whole of government, whole
of society and whole of
economy approach

Read the strategy [online here](#).



Strategy implementation: National and regional



Collaboration and Innovation Fund

The fund aims to support collaborative and innovative activities that will help achieve the aims of the strategy and create a more equal society.

In 2023, the Programme Office allocated €1 million to 51 projects across the country.

The Fund for 2023 was open to public, non-profit, community and voluntary organisations across Ireland.



Report is [online here](#)

In 2024, the Programme Office will fund 100 projects.
10 projects are looking at health literacy.



Looking at the 3 sides to health literacy



Personal health literacy



Organisational health literacy



Community health literacy

Health literacy for life: actions 2024-25

Policy	Practice	People
Department of Health set up Health literacy liaison group	Training for staff on health literacy and plain language	Promoting health literacy to the public
Working with HSE, communities and academia	Training more health literacy tutors	Building health literacy skills of the public
Health literacy research : people and organisations	Health literacy practice toolkit	Embedding health literacy messages in health campaigns
Health literacy policy toolkit	Website on health literacy	Finding more health literacy champions



Let's talk about health literacy during health literacy month

"We cannot assume people understand everything we tell them."



Catriona

HSE Mid-West



Watch [Catriona's video online here.](#)

"When health services use a literacy friendly approach, it is better for everyone."



Catherine

Sláintecare Healthy Communities



Watch [Catherine's video online here.](#)

"When you do not understand health information, it can really impact a person's wellbeing."



Michael

Literacy Ambassador



Watch [Michael's video online here.](#)

"Health literacy is about using simple language."



Austin

Family doctor



Watch [Austin's video online here.](#)

Online health literacy courses



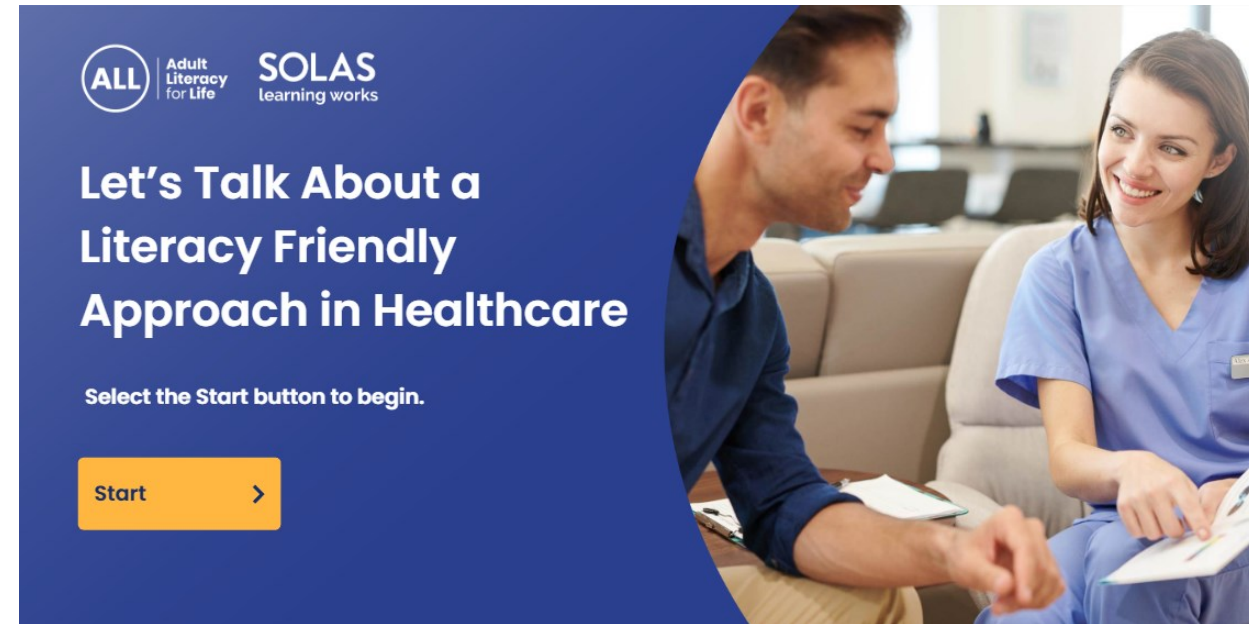
ALL Adult Literacy for Life **SOLAS** learning works

Let's Talk about Health Literacy

Select the Start button to begin.

Start >

Course 1: For the public



ALL Adult Literacy for Life **SOLAS** learning works

Let's Talk About a Literacy Friendly Approach in Healthcare

Select the Start button to begin.

Start >

Course 2: For health and social care staff

About the courses: www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/aware/

	Course 1 Let's talk about health literacy	Course 2 Let's talk about using a literacy friendly approach in health
Audience	Everyone who uses health and social care services	Health and social care professionals.
Length	25 minutes	40 minutes
Aim	To introduce health literacy and the needs and experiences of people using health services with health literacy needs.	To become literacy aware and respond sensitively to unmet literacy needs in the health care setting.
Content	What is health literacy? What is a literacy friendly health service? Tips when using health services	What is a literacy friendly approach in healthcare Tips for using a literacy friendly approach

Let's talk about health literacy factsheet



Let's talk about health literacy

Health literacy is about finding, understanding and using information to promote and maintain good health.



Clear communication supports health literacy and gives a better health and social care experience for everyone. This includes listening and speaking, reading and understanding, numbers and digital health literacy.

Health literacy needs in Ireland

Research shows that 28% of Irish adults have limited health literacy. This is over 1 million people.

Limited health literacy means that people

- Are not using health services.
- Have less knowledge about their health and treatment.
- Go to their doctor and emergency services more often.



The Adult Literacy for Life programme office presents two short eLearning courses on health literacy.

- Course 1 is for the public.
- Course 2 is for health and social care professionals.

www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/aware



Literacy friendly approach in healthcare means

1. **Being aware** of and **taking account** of unmet health literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.
2. **Removing** literacy related **barriers** where possible.
3. **Communicating** clearly using plain language and universal design.
4. **Promoting** literacy and lifelong learning opportunities if appropriate.



Tips for being literacy friendly

Tip 1	Tip 2	Tip 3
Be aware and respond sensitively	Use plain language	Check for understanding
<p>You should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support people when they are filling in forms. • Use a highlighter pen to mark out important information. • Offer to go through a booklet or leaflet with them. • Use open-ended questions. • Allow for extra time with someone where needed. 	<p>Plain language is a style of presenting information that helps someone understand it the first time they read or hear it.</p> <p>You can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use active verbs. • Avoid jargon. • Be consistent. • Break up text with bullet lists. • Use sans serif font such as Arial. 	<p>Teach back is a tool to check that people understand what you have said.</p> <p>Three steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain one point. 2. Check the person's understanding by asking them to repeat back what you have said in their own words. 3. If the person has understood, then explain the next point.

More information
<https://www.nhcprogramme.ie/>

More information
www.nala.ie/publications/writing-and-design-tips/

More information
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDQoApTFDMs>



SOLAS
learning works

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Health literacy matters for all.

Thanks for listening.



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