INTRODUCTION

This pack is intended to be a practical support to help you develop your literacy skills in a way that is meaningful to the work you do.

The exercises are directly relevant to working in Health and Social Care and linked to tasks and activities commonly found in care settings.

“Why do I need to be good at Literacy when I’m doing Health and Social Care?”

All Health and Social Care roles involve communicating effectively. There is a wide range of daily work tasks and routines that involve literacy skills, for instance:

- **Reading** - correctly reading drug instructions, understanding written information such as case notes, health and safety notices and messages
- **Writing** - accurately recording medications given, writing notes and messages, recording information that will contribute to care plans
- **Listening and speaking** - to clients and their families and other health professionals.

Having good language and communication skills is just as important as having good number skills. Service users benefit from improved communication with direct carers and care staff are able to adapt communication to suit the wide range of people and situations routinely encountered in Health and Social Care settings.

These skills are also essential to ensure safeguard the people you care for and support.

A health worker struggled to read and understand an important message about a service user’s urgent hospital appointment. The service user missed the urgent appointment and important medical tests that were due to be carried out.

Imagine how this might have impacted on the service user.
Imagine how relatives might have reacted when they discovered what had happened.
Imagine if the same person misunderstood other critical written information such as health and safety information or care plans.

Developing literacy skills will also make it easier to achieve your qualifications, benefit from work based training opportunities and improve career prospects.

All this means that anyone working in a care setting needs good literacy skills to do their job well and provide high quality care services.
About this pack

The literacy skills in this resource pack focus on following instructions.

The pack consists of a Revision Guide and practice exercise created specifically for Health and Social Care workers.

How to use this pack

Your esg. contact person will explain how to use this pack and make sure you understand how to use it.

These exercises are not tests or exams and should not be timed; this means you can complete them in your own time without rushing.

Try to find a quiet time and a quiet place to work through the pack.

You should not use a calculator, but please feel free to use paper to help you with your calculations.

First, read the revision guide and then work through the exercise section.

When you have completed the exercise please forward it to your esg. contact person for marking.

Feedback and support

Detailed feedback on your performance will then be given and any areas of uncertainty explained.

Arrangements will then be made to provide further assistance for any additional support needs identified; this will continue until you are confident in using this particular literacy skill.

The skills you develop by using this resource will not only support you in the workplace but will also help with portfolio completion.

All results will be treated with complete confidentiality.

Please feel free to get in touch with your esg. contact person if you need further help with this particular topic or any other literacy skills.
“What’s so important about following instructions?”

You might not realise it but following instructions is nothing new; it’s part of our daily lives and has been since we were very young.

As children, we were given instructions from our teachers - “No running in the corridors” or “don’t drink or eat in the Science Lab”. Then there are all the obvious examples for Health and Safety reasons: “don’t ride a motorbike without a helmet”, or “don’t work with electricity near water”.

It’s also really important that anyone working in a care setting can follow instructions. In fact in some cases, it can be a matter of life and death. For instance, it’s essential that you follow instructions very carefully if you’re involved in looking after and administering medication to other people.

Working in a Health and Social care setting also involves using equipment such as needles, sharps and surgical instruments. Put simply, if you don’t follow instructions and do something wrong you or somebody else might get hurt.

“So what’s the secret to following instructions?”

First, let’s look at following spoken instructions - simple and easy you might think. It isn’t! The secret is to learn “how to follow instructions” rather than “to follow instructions” - the key is LISTENING.

We need to listen to instructions so that we know how to operate equipment or to carry out duties and tasks properly. If we don’t listen to instructions carefully things can go badly wrong.

“What is listening?”

To listen is to: “make an effort to hear something”, “pay attention” or “tune in”.

Listening skills in Health and Social Care are very important and not just for following instructions:

- Findin
  - g out if someone has pain, where and how bad it is
- Taking
  - messages
- Helpin
  - g people talk through their worries and fears
“How can I become a good listener?”

Try using these top tips to help you listen well:

➤ **Pay attention** - keep eye contact/focus on what’s being said/don’t get distracted
➤ **Show that you’re listening** - nod your head occasionally/smile or use other facial expressions
➤ **Give feedback** - repeat instructions/ask questions/check you’ve understood the instruction and key information
➤ **Be honest** – if you find you haven’t understood the instruction say so: “Have I understood you correctly?” or “Do you mean you want me to …….”

Try to practice active listening as often as you can so that you always completely understand the instruction being given.

This vital skill will also help you communicate better in everyday life as well as at work.

Now let’s think about how to follow written instructions.

Carrying out a task or duty well often means following written instructions.

This happens in everyday life too – it’s not much use if you buy a new bed and can’t follow the instructions to put it together.

Here are some easy steps for following written instructions:

**First**, carefully read all the instructions so you know what you have to do.

**Second**, carefully think about what you have to do.

**Third**, follow directions in the order they’re written.

**Fourth**, don’t leave out any steps in the instructions.

**Finally**, if there’s something you’re not sure about or don’t understand **ASK, ASK, ASK …. for help!**

**GET THE INFORMATION YOU NEED**
Now that you’ve had a quick reminder about following instructions, try these exercises and see how you get on.

Your esg. contact person will show you what the pictures and answers should look like.

1. Follow these simple instructions.
   
   Get a scrap piece of paper and a pencil, then do the following:
   
   1<sup>st</sup> Draw a square in the space below.

2<sup>nd</sup> Draw a triangle in the square.

3<sup>rd</sup> Write “Instructions” below the triangle.

2. Follow these instructions.

   Write the letter S in the space provided.

   Write the letter g after the letter S.
Write the letter E in capital letters before the letter S.

REVISON GUIDANCE

EXERCISES

3. Follow these instructions.

1. Read everything through carefully before you do anything.
2. Print your name in the top left hand corner of this page in capital letters.
3. Write the date below your name in the top left hand corner.
4. Circle the number “4” at the beginning of this sentence.
5. Draw a line through this sentence.
6. Draw a big smiley face in the middle of this page.
7. Put an “X” in the top right hand corner of this page.
8. After the date written just below your name, write the name of your workplace.
9. Put a tick next to your name.
10. Now that you have read everything through carefully, only do items 4 and 5.
WORK RELATED EXERCISES

It’s also very important that you can use your literacy skills in the workplace.

The next activity is directly related to Health and Social Care.

Good luck!

FOLLOWING MEDICINE INSTRUCTIONS

A client at Cardiff Nursing Home is being treated for a number of conditions. There are three different types of treatment, instructions as follows:

(A) *Paracetamol* (for pain). Take four 500mg tablets per day, two in the morning and two in the evening. Take with water.

(B) *Lasix* (to control high blood pressure). Take 40 mg as a single dose once a day. To be taken in the morning with water. Take on an empty stomach and at least one hour before food.

(C) *Antiseptic cream* (for skin condition). Apply twice a day to affected area.

**Questions**

1. Which medicine must not be taken with food?
2. How often should two Paracetamol be taken each day?


WORK RELATED EXERCISES ctd ...

3. Which medicine would be used to treat high blood pressure?


4. Which medicine would you use to treat a skin condition?


5. Which tablets should be taken in the morning and the evening?


6. How many tablets a day should the client take in total?


7. How many treatments would not be taken orally?