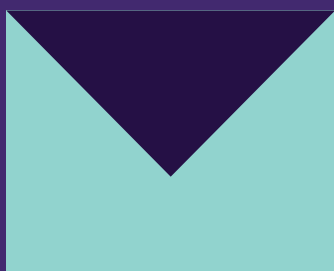
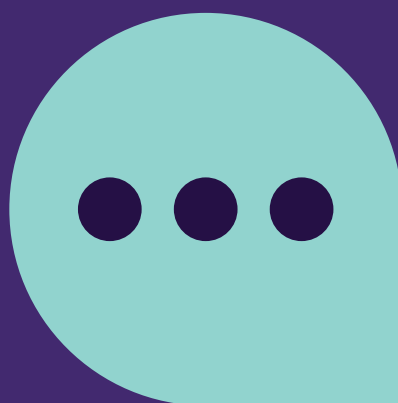


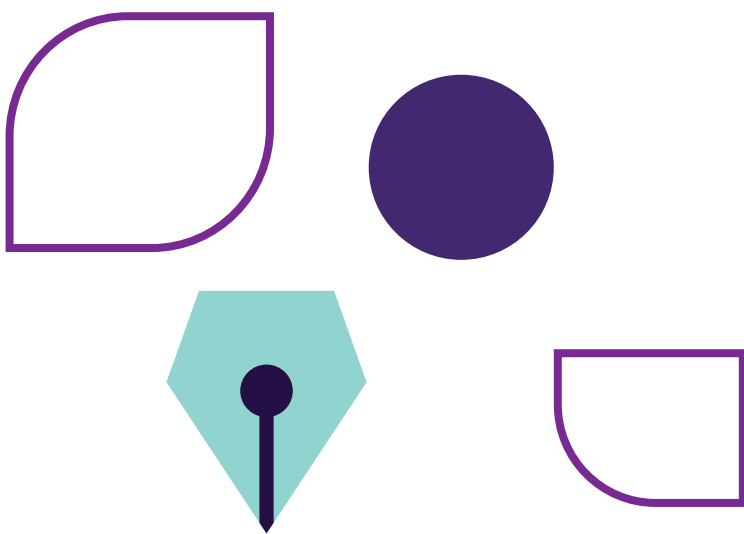
Making it happen

Five steps to becoming a literacy friendly organisation



National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh



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Contents

	Page
Section 1	
Introduction	4
Section 2	
Five steps to becoming a literacy friendly organisation	5
Step 1: Hold initial review and planning session	6
Step 2: Carry out a literacy audit	7
Step 3: Develop action plans	8
Step 4: Implement action plans	9
Step 5: Monitor and evaluate actions	11
Appendices	12
Appendix 1: Literacy friendly quality standards	12
Appendix 2: Literacy audit tool	13
Appendix 3: Training and development options	16



Some of this guide draws from **NALA's Right from the Start Guide** published in 2009.

We use the term organisation(s) all the way through the guide. We use it to refer to businesses, services, workplaces and anywhere that engages with the public.

Section 1

Introduction

A literacy friendly organisation genuinely **includes and respects its staff and its customers**. It encourages commitment in all parts of the organisation and among all staff to **remove literacy-related barriers to access, participation and achievement**.

NALA has developed 10 literacy friendly standards in four areas:



Communications



Staff awareness and responding sensitively



Policies and procedures

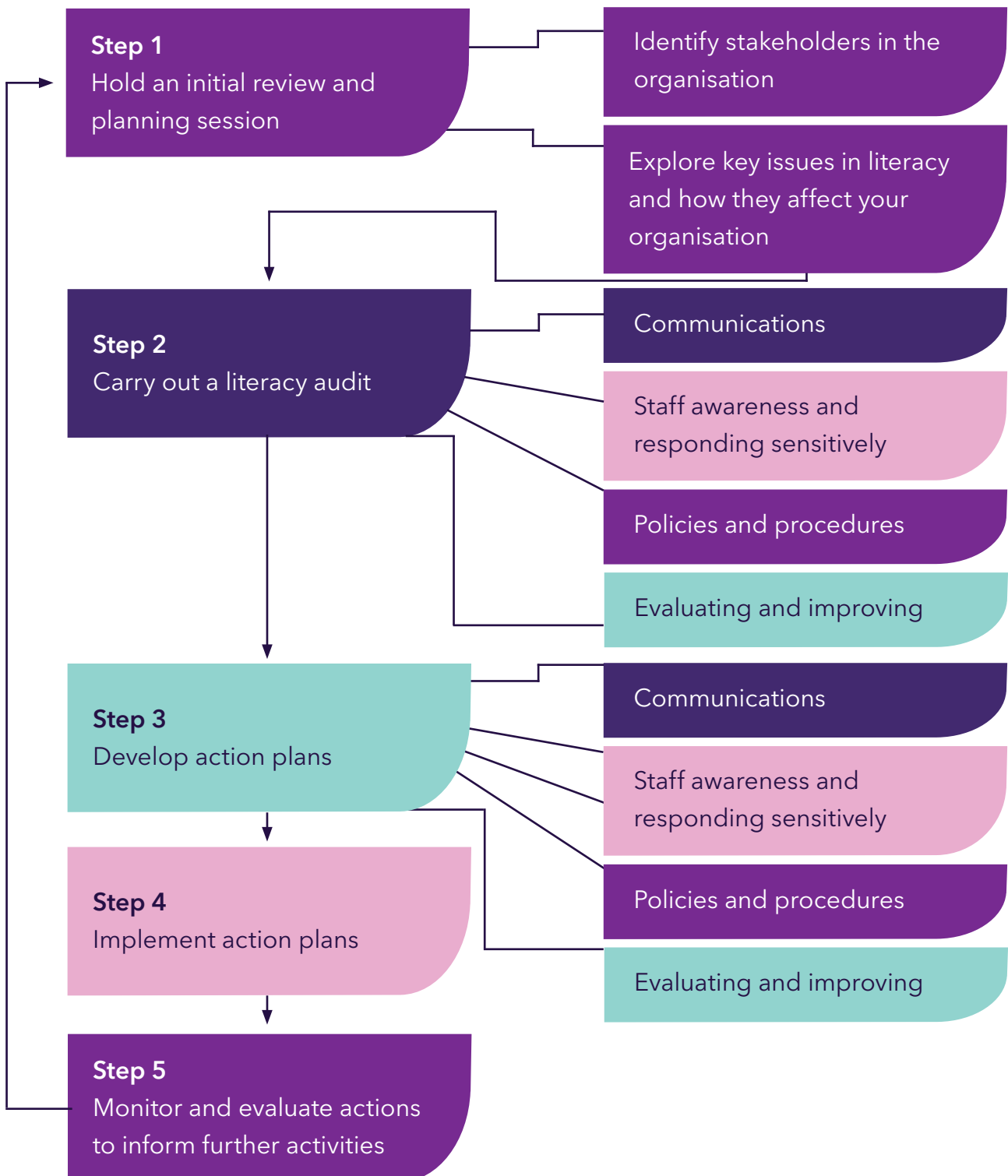


Evaluating and improving

To become a literacy friendly organisation involves a commitment to analysing current policies and practices, action planning, implementing action plans and reviewing the effectiveness of actions. We have five steps to help you to do this.

Section 2

Five steps to becoming a literacy friendly organisation



Step 1

Hold an initial review and planning session

Step 1 is an **initial review and planning session**.

You can do this in consultation with an expert agency such as NALA. NALA charges a daily fee to cover staff time.

This session can help you to reflect on:

- the existing level of literacy awareness in your organisation,
- the mission, values and targets of your organisation and how becoming literacy aware can help to achieve those, and
- good practice guidelines.

In most organisations, it is important to **involve**:

- representatives of all key sections and, if applicable, trade union members,
- people who have an in-depth, practical knowledge of how their section works,
- people in positions of responsibility who are able to make decisions,
- people who want to be involved, and especially,
- people who are willing to promote literacy awareness in their area. These people may later become 'literacy champions' to help other parts of the organisation adopt the approach.

NALA can tailor **initial briefing seminars** to the size and structure of your organisation.

These activity-based events cover topics such as:

- definitions of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, causes and effects and extent of needs,
- the reasons for supporting literacy in your organisation, as well as the potential benefits and demands of doing so, and
- how your organisation's policies, practices and procedures can take account of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.

Later, when some of your training or human resource staff gain experience and an interest in the area, they can do some in-house briefing sessions on literacy awareness.

Step 2

Carry out a literacy audit

This step will probably be the most extensive of the five steps.

At this stage, it is essential to look at what you already have in place. It is very likely that at least some of what your organisation does already supports people who have unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs. It is good to identify this, as existing good practice is an excellent starting point. The audit will also help you to clarify the precise areas where small changes could make a big difference.

You should focus on your organisation's:

- communication methods,
- staff awareness and training,
- policies and procedures, and
- evaluating and improving systems.



Key point

Make sure that the individuals who analyse and make judgements about each area really do have a deep, practical knowledge of how things actually happen on the ground and not only how they should happen.

If your team represents all areas, one or two team members could consult colleagues in the wider organisation to examine each area and bring their findings back to the whole team.

If needed, a literacy consultant from NALA can help your organisation work through the audit, using a set of tools and checklists, and can work with you directly on any actions that arise. NALA charges a daily fee to cover their time.

The detailed information generated from the audit provides the basis for Step 3.

Step 3





Develop action plans

When you have carried out the detailed literacy audit, the range of actions you could take to remove barriers will now be very clear.

Deciding on actions

As with all action planning, try to keep actions SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and with a clear Timeframe. Make sure you note:

- what to do and who will do it,
- when the action will be done, and
- most importantly, how your team will know the action has been done and measure its impact on the organisation.

	When looking at your communications , consider what you can do to make forms, plans, letters, e-mails, manuals, signs, notices, minutes, policies and procedures and verbal communication more literacy friendly.
	<p>When looking at staff awareness and responding sensitively, think about what you can do to support and encourage staff to be more literacy-aware and use literacy friendly practices.</p> <p>You may also have staff who have unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs and think about how you can support them. Bear in mind also, how you can advertise, design, deliver and evaluate staff training in a way that allows those with these needs to benefit.</p>
	When looking at your policies and procedures , reflect on any barriers that your current ways of working may pose to customers or staff with literacy needs. What can you do to reduce or provide alternatives to the reading and writing demands of doing business with or working in your organisation?
	Think about monitoring and evaluation right from the start. This will help you clarify what results you want to achieve from taking the actions.

Setting indicators: The action-planning stage is also the time to set indicators of progress towards completing the action. This will help the team to clarify what a completed plan will look like in reality and how best to monitor and evaluate the plans.

Step 4

Implement action plans

You have drawn up plans, decided who is responsible for each stage and developed indicators to show progress. Now is the time to put those plans into practice.

If you have identified several actions, you may need to prioritise. If so, you might find it useful to start with just one of the areas.



Communications

Making your written information as reader-friendly as possible involves both the language you use and the way you present the text. A very useful technique as a start is to present the most important documents – for the staff and for the public – in plain English. Appendix 3 has details on where to find out more about plain English.

While it is often necessary to have information in writing, it is worth investigating if you could also communicate verbally alongside written communication or instead of it. For example, it is often necessary to update health and safety procedures in writing, but for some staff the opportunity to go through them in person as well makes it more likely that they will understand and follow a procedure.



Staff awareness and responding sensitively

Working through this process could spark the interest of staff in focused literacy-support activities, including:

- general literacy awareness training,
- dedicated adult literacy tuition, and
- training for trainers to integrate literacy into their work specific training.

One outcome of literacy awareness is that some of your staff might identify that they want to improve their reading or writing or your human resources department may become aware of this need. Your local Education and Training Board has a Skills for Work initiative that offers adult literacy tuition in the workplace. Appendix 3 gives a list of all training and development options available.



Other staff training takes the ‘integrating literacy’ approach, which is a key feature of the literacy friendly strategy that some organisations have adopted. It involves identifying training needs and planning, delivering and evaluating staff training in a way that takes account of unmet literacy, numeracy or digital literacy needs. Further details are available in Appendix 3.

Even if you are not currently aware of any staff members having unmet literacy, numeracy or digital literacy needs, it is always possible that these issues may arise. By working through these steps, you will be well prepared to anticipate any such needs if and as they occur.



Policies and procedures

Before starting to make changes to a well-established policy or procedure, it may be useful to take part in a literacy awareness briefing. This will help to establish the rationale for any change and to encourage and motivate people.

Sometimes subtle barriers can be embedded in policies and procedures. For example, a job specification might demand a certain qualification simply because that is the custom, rather than its being a requirement for the job. It is not always easy to see these barriers in operation; their potential effects are even less visible. This makes the analysis in Step 2, and the resulting action plans, very important.



Think about **monitoring and evaluation** right from the start. This will help you clarify what results you want to achieve from taking the actions.

Step 5

Monitor and evaluate actions

Your action plan should include a statement about how your team will monitor and evaluate how the plan is implemented.

One option is to set up a monitoring committee, which could involve some or all of the team. The committee would check progress of the plans regularly.

Another option is to weave the monitoring of the action plans into the existing processes in your organisation, such as management meetings, general staff meetings or quality assurance procedures. If you put literacy action plans on the agenda, then literacy friendly activities and their monitoring will be more easily embedded into the work of the organisation rather than 'bolted on' as a separate issue for only a few people.

Evaluation is a key stage in all your organisation's activities – it is important to see whether the actions you are taking are having the desired effect, and gather evidence to support this. You can use a mix of verbal and written methods to gather evidence: along with traditional surveys and checklists. Try using face-to-face or telephone interviews, pictorial diaries, focus groups and role-plays.



Key point





Monitoring and evaluation are an important part of the process, right from the beginning. Be sure to keep track from the start that anything that is supposed to happen does happen.

Find out how it is working out while it is still in progress, rather than weeks or months later when it may be difficult to correct any problems. Learning from experience can be supported by monitoring and evaluation at all stages in the five-step process.

Appendices


Appendix 1 Literacy friendly quality standards

NALA has developed ten literacy friendly quality standards:

 Communications	
1	Our staff use plain English when speaking with people.
2	We use plain English in our written information .
3	We check that people understand what we have told them.
4	The layout of our office/reception is clear.
 Staff awareness and responding sensitively	
5	Our staff are aware of literacy friendly work practices.
6	Our staff respond sensitively to the literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs of people.
 Policies and procedures	
7	We have a literacy friendly policy .
8	We have specific ways to help people find and use important information and instructions.
9	We support our staff to improve their own literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.
 Evaluating and improving	
10	We regularly evaluate and continually improve our literacy friendly service.

Appendix 2 Literacy audit tool

Here are ten literacy friendly quality standards with space for you to fill in examples:

 Communications		
	Standard	Give examples
1	Our staff use plain English when speaking with people.	
2	We use plain English in our written information .	
3	We check that people understand what we have told them.	
4	The layout of our office/ reception is clear.	



Staff awareness and responding sensitively

	Standard	Give examples
5	Our staff are aware of literacy friendly work practices.	
6	Our staff respond sensitively to the literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs of people.	



Policies and procedures

	Standard	Give examples
7	We have a literacy friendly policy .	
8	We have specific ways to help people find and use important information and instructions.	
9	We support our staff to improve their own literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.	



Evaluating and improving

	Standard	Give examples
10	We regularly evaluate and continually improve our literacy friendly service.	

Appendix 3 Training and development options

Adult literacy service (run by your local Education and Training Board)

There are over 100 local adult literacy centres around the country. They provide literacy tuition with trained tutors on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. The service is free and confidential. The local Adult Literacy Organiser meets the learner to discuss what they want and then finds a suitable tutor. They also offer Skills for Work courses providing adult literacy tuition in the workplace.

For information on your nearest service, contact the NALA Freephone support line on **1 800 20 20 65** or go to nala.ie/find-a-centre to find your local centre.

Literacy awareness training

This varies from a one-hour introduction to a half-day more in-depth session. It aims to raise awareness of literacy issues, including their causes and effects, and explores ways of responding. NALA has developed two online course on literacy awareness which are available on the Professional Development section of learnwithnala.ie. You can get a NALA Professional Development certificate on successfully completing these courses.

Contact NALA's Training Department for further details on **01 412 7900**.

Plain English training

NALA provides workshops to show how to update existing documents and write new ones in a literacy friendly and more accessible format.

Contact NALA's plain English service for further details on **01 412 7900** or fill in the Plain English Services form at nala.ie/plain-english

Integrating literacy training

NALA offers a short eLearning module on integrating literacy – you can register for the Integrating Literacy course at the Professional Development section of learnwithnala.ie

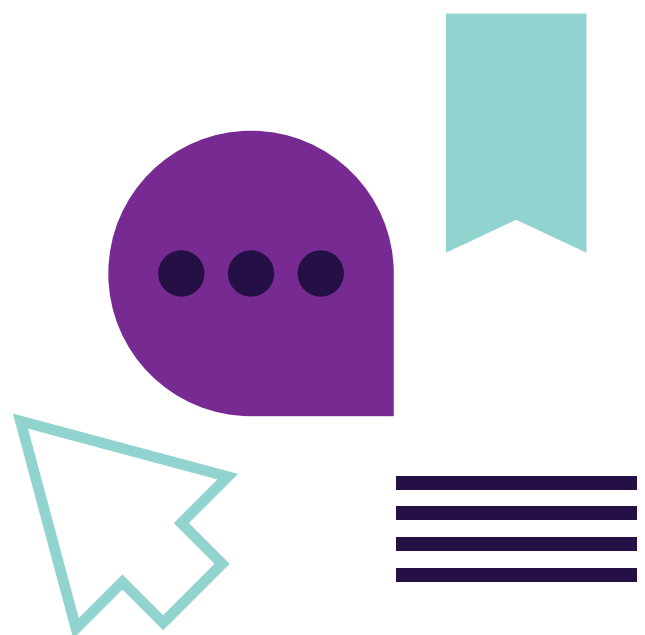
Contact NALA's Training Department for further details on **01 412 7900**.

Notes

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Notes

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The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity and membership based organisation. We work to support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs to take part fully in society and to have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA does this by raising awareness of the importance of literacy, doing research and sharing good practice, providing online learning courses, providing a tutoring service and by lobbying for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

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