



**South Tyneside and Sunderland**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Engaging people with low health literacy about health information

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# What we will cover

- Background
- Problems
- What did we want to do?
- How did we do it?
- What did we find out?
- Who did we speak to?
- What did we learn?

# Background

We needed to  
rewrite  
800+  
health leaflets  
at reading age  
9 to 11  
years

# Problems



We have no statistics for the local reading age.



We wanted better evidence before making changes on a large scale.



Staff were worried that it would sound patronising.

**What did we  
want to do?**

# We wanted to check...



Is information written at a reading age of 9 to 11 understandable and acceptable?



With local people who are most likely to be affected by low health literacy.



With people living in our most deprived areas.



**How did we do  
it?**

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# Community engagement



January to  
March 2023



9 members  
of staff



48 venues



100 hours

## How did we check?



We didn't ask people to come to us. We went out to them.

We attended community groups that already existed.

We targeted the most deprived areas.

We showed leaflets written at a reading age of 9 to 11 and asked questions.

### How we asked ...

"We know we write things in a complicated way. We've tried to make this simpler but we're not sure if we've done it right. Can you tell us how to make it better?"

- Do you prefer it when it looks like this or this?
- Are there any medical words that didn't make sense?
- Does it make you feel talked down to or offended?

# What did we ask?

1.	When you get information from the doctor, do you prefer it as a:					
	Leaflet <input type="checkbox"/>	Online link <input type="checkbox"/>	Audio <input type="checkbox"/>	Video <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>	No preference <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments					
2.	Here are 3 leaflets. Which size leaflet do you like best?					
	Trifold <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 6)	A5 <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 5)	A4 <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 4)	No preference <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 4)		
	Comments					
3.	These 2 leaflets have slightly different amounts of space at the edges. Which do you prefer?					
	Small space <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 7)	Big space <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 7)	No preference <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 7)			
	Comments					
4.	These paragraphs have different size headings. Which size do you prefer?					
	12 <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 12)	14 <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 14)	16 <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 16)	18 <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 18)	No preference <input type="checkbox"/> (Get 12)	
	Comments					
5.	Do you prefer there to be a space underneath the heading or not?					
	Space <input type="checkbox"/>	No space <input type="checkbox"/>	No preference <input type="checkbox"/>			
	Comments					

6.	What did you think of the leaflet?	
	Comments	
7.	Were there any medical words that didn't make sense? Could you point them out to me?	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments	
8.	(If yes for Q8) Were the medical words explained so you could understand?	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments	
9.	Did it make you feel talked down to or offended?	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments	
10.	(If yes for Q9) Would you still follow the advice on the leaflet?	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments	
11.	Is there anything more you would add to the leaflet?	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If yes, what?	



**What did they  
say?**

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# What have they said?

Most people would **prefer a leaflet.**

People prefer **smaller leaflets** e.g. A5 or trifold.

People prefer **bigger headings.** Size 18 is most popular.

# What have they said?

**94%**

said there weren't any medical words that didn't make sense.

**97%**

said it didn't make them feel talked down to or offended.

**93%**

of the **3%** that did feel talked down to, **93%** said they would still follow the advice.

Straight to the point 'no waffle'.

Layman terms so people can understand. Hasn't got any medical terms. Using words that you don't understand makes you feel worried.

Clear language – nothing highfalutin.

Easy to follow.

Boring.  
Easy to read.

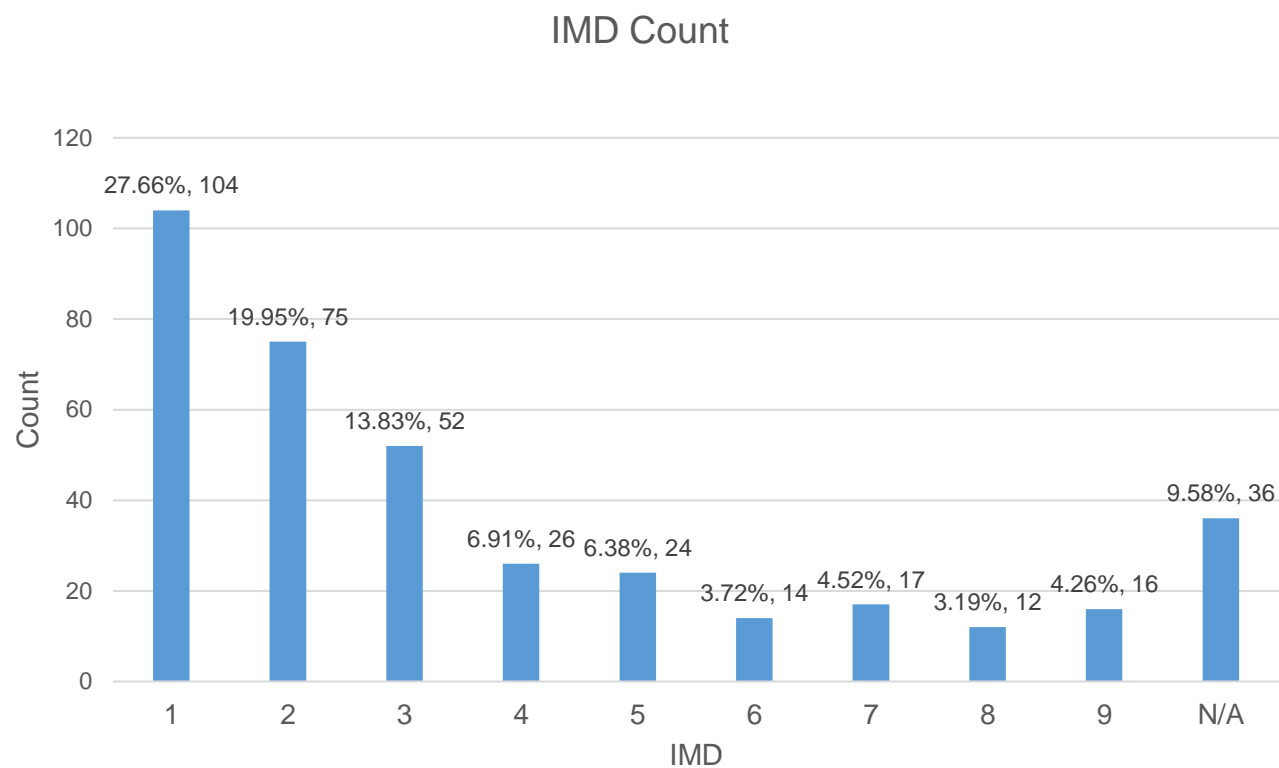


**Who did we  
speak to?**

# Who did we ask?

378 residents

48% lived in  
IMD 1 or 2



**What did we  
learn?**

# Lessons learned

✓ Go out to people rather than trying to get them to come to you.

✓ It takes time but it's worth it.

# Lessons learned



Take the blame so people give more honest feedback. Say “I don’t think we’ve done this well ...”



This is a good way of doing community engagement for making the same change to a large number of leaflets.



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**Thank you**

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