

# *Seven steps supporting service improvement*

The service improvement booklet from the Better Informed for Better Health and Better Care series



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For more background and context on Information Literacy, please refer to the **Background** booklet in this series.

For the links between information literacy competence and the Knowledge and Skills Framework, please refer to the **Tables** booklet in this series.

For explanations of unfamiliar terms, please refer to the **Glossary** booklet in this series.

For demonstrations of search tools and techniques referenced in the tables, please visit our information literacy courses at <http://www.infoskills.scot.nhs.uk>.

For further information and resources related to information literacy, please visit the information literacy portal at <http://www.infoliteracy.scot.nhs.uk/home.asp>

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## Introduction

The drive towards information literacy is based partly on the shared perception and acceptance of information resources as an organisational asset, equally as valuable as any physical asset (such as computers or medical equipment). As such, this asset needs to be used efficiently and effectively in order for the organisation to derive benefit from it (Burk and Horton, 1988). The more skilled and confident information users become, the greater is the benefit achieved by the organisation.

One consequence of widespread information literacy throughout the organisation is the increasingly efficient arrangement and description of information resources. This, in turn, results in a more orderly information pool which assists decision-making and business activity. When shared across the organisation, this enables all employees to identify and access needed information much more quickly than otherwise would be the case (State Records Authority, NSW, 2004). This reduces information search-time and ensures that staff operate from a shared knowledge base.

This shared information can also be used to develop new knowledge and insights which may result, after analysis and reflection, in challenges to traditional workplace and professional practices and the development of improved procedures (Bruce, 2007). This, in turn, leads to the development of service improvements based on evidence and best practice. Information literacy can help the service manager to analyse and reflect on current service delivery practices and procedures and to implement service improvements based on evidence and best practice.

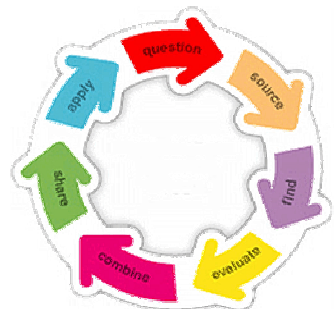
This booklet will help you ask the right questions so that you find the right answers. It will help too in recognising 'good' sources of information.

The booklet uses short extracts to describe specific situations and shows how some of the problems involved can be solved by using the steps of the information literacy cycle model. Following the extract, the stages of the cycle are shown in text which reflects the colour of that step. For example, the **question** stage is always coloured red, the **source** stage is beige, **find** is lilac and so on.

## Information Literacy

The explanations and demonstrations included in this booklet are intended to show how information literacy can help in forming and asking focussed questions, in finding needed information from people as well as written and electronic sources, and in using retrieved information to make decisions about improving health service delivery.

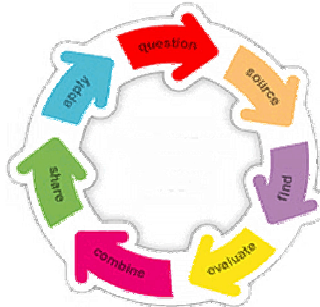
Information Literacy is nothing more than a short-hand way of saying "the ability to find, assess, use and manage 'good' information".



The information literacy cycle model used in the booklet is a quick way to show the steps involved in getting to good information and using it when you've found it.

## The Model of the Information Literacy Process

The model used is intended to illustrate, very simply, the seven basic stages of the information literacy process – your way to get the information you need. These are :



- Question** what do you need to know? As obvious as it sounds, you must ask the right question to get the right answer.
- Source** where can you look for the information? Your sources will include people as well as written and electronic materials. Perhaps there is someone you know or can contact who would be able to supply the information you need?
- Find** which words do you use in your search? At the *question* stage you will have identified the key words in your question and are now ready to use them to search the sources you have selected.
- Evaluate** have you found 'good' information? Look closely at the information you have found to check whether your question has been answered. Do you believe the information?
- Combine** have you learned something new and useful from your search? Blend this with what you knew before searching.
- Share** would other people in your workgroup find your new information useful or interesting? How will you share it with them?
- Apply** how will you use the information? Will this help improve the delivery of the services your group supplies?

Becoming information literate and developing your existing skills and abilities is an ongoing process. It requires the continuous application and improvement of previous learning to build your level of skill and knowledge.

## Examples of information literacy in action

The following stories show how information literacy can help the people involved with their problems. Each story is followed by a single 'trip' around the information literacy process model, stage by stage.

### A GP practice goes "paperless"

A GP practice has decided that record-keeping within the practice could be improved and that the paperless office is an achievable goal. The benefits of being paperless are seen to be : less risk of papers being misplaced or going missing ; easier access for the GPs to the most up-to-date information for each patient and, for the patients, the security of knowing that their medical record is complete at the time of a consultation. Additional benefits are that an electronic office would be less costly to maintain than one requiring filing stacks and paper files ; it will no longer be necessary for handwriting on any document to be deciphered as all data input will be recorded electronically in the clinical system using word processing software ; information will be easier and faster to find by using electronic search tools ; all incoming mail will be scanned on arrival and added to the relevant record.

Elizabeth, the Practice Manager, undertakes a search for information on suitable electronic document management software. She speaks with other Practice Managers to find out what applications are currently being used and how efficient these are. Elizabeth then conducts an Internet search to learn more about the recommended software packages and to identify others which might be useful. She downloads a selection of demonstration versions of the applications for testing. After trying these, Elizabeth eventually decides that DocMan is the programme which will best meet the needs of the practice and recommends this package to the next Practice meeting.

The recommendation is accepted and the computer programme implemented on two computers within the Practice, for use with a selected portion of record information.

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### Commentary

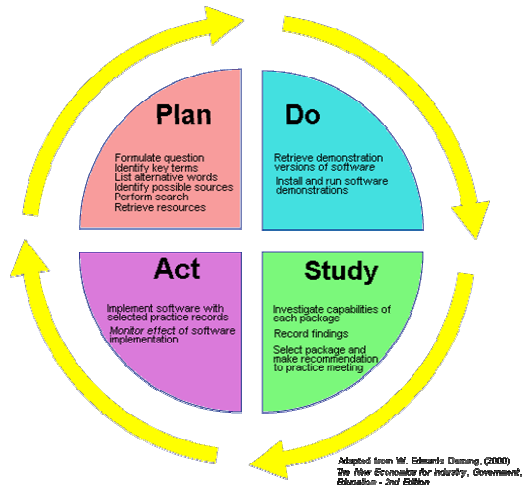
A successful search for information begins with forming a search question. Elizabeth's first task is to think of a question about the information she needs and to identify 'key' words within the question.

**Key words** or **key terms** are the most important words in a search question.

**PLAN Activities**

Using the **Plan** quadrant of the PDSA diagram, the first step in the planning process for Elizabeth is to state her **question** : *Is there a document management package which would support the work of the practice?*

She next has to identify the key words or key terms within the question. In this case, these are **document management package**. It might be helpful too, for Elizabeth to develop a list of alternative words. This is particularly useful when the targeted sources are either written or online. It can also help when sources are people since not everyone uses the same words to describe the same item.



Adapted from W. Edwards Deming, (2000) *The New Economics for Industry, Government, Education - 2nd Edition*

Key term	Substitute term
<b>Document management package</b>	Document management application Document management programme Document management program Record management package Record management application Record management programme Record management program Records management package Records management application Records management programme Records management program

The table lists a series of alternative terms Elizabeth might use to find the information she needs about software packages.

Next, Elizabeth chooses the sources to consult for information. These include : other practice managers and the internet. She notes the names of all the programmes mentioned as she intends to find further information on these.

Elizabeth is now ready to conduct a search of her sources [**SOURCE**]. She searches the Web using her original **key term** initially and, some of the alternatives in later stages of the search. In addition to retrieving a selection of articles [**FIND**], Elizabeth identifies a list of websites which allow the downloading of demonstration versions of several software

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packages [FIND]. She eliminates less helpful articles and programmes from her listings and identifies four software applications for further exploration. [EVALUATE]

## Summary

Elizabeth's application of the information literacy process	
Question	Is there a document management package which would support the work of the practice?
Source	Other practice managers, internet
Find	Selection of software demonstrations
Evaluate	Checks for application in Practice
Combine	Compares advantages and disadvantages of each package
Share	Makes recommendation based on software tests
Apply	Recommended package implemented for testing in the Practice.



### DO activities

Elizabeth downloads and installs the demonstration versions of the four records management applications she has identified as likely to be helpful to the Practice. [EVALUATE]

### STUDY activities

As she explores each of the programmes, Elizabeth notes the capabilities of each against a list of Practice requirements [EVALUATE]. From this activity, she is able to identify the programme which most closely matches the stated needs and to make a recommendation based on her test findings [COMBINE, SHARE].

### ACT activities

Reaching the Act stage of the PDSA process, Elizabeth's recommendation is accepted and the recommended software is installed on two Practice computers [APPLY] for use with a

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proportion of Practice records and will be monitored over the next four weeks to test whether the expected benefits actually occur.

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## **Reflection**

At the end of the initial four-week test period, what questions would you expect to have been answered?

What questions might have been raised over this period and how might the information literacy cycle help you in finding the answers?

Are there other PDSAs obvious to you in the scenario?

Using one of the PDSAs you have identified, which elements of the information literacy process are related to which of the PDSA activities?

## A hospital addresses customer service improvement

Routine monitoring of patient responses returned in *How can we improve?* forms within a hospital has revealed that a significant number of patients are unhappy with their experiences. The comments received indicate that the main difficulties seem to be related to communications with healthcare staff. Patients say that they are not accorded the empathy, respect and dignity they expect from hospital personnel at all levels.

Hospital management is aware that research has shown that positive patient perceptions are directly related to positive clinical experiences and outcomes (**Kenagy, J W, Berwick, D M, Shore, M F.** *Service quality in health care.* JAMA 1999; 281:661-5) and that the interaction between patient and physician is paramount in the delivery of quality health care (**Neuwirth, Z E.** *Reclaiming the lost meanings of medicine.* Med J Aust. 176(1): 77-79). Management is concerned to improve the situation [**QUESTION**] so that its services support and reflect the NHS focus on patient-centred, patient-led healthcare.

The hospital's Complaints Manager, Brian, knows that the Client-Focused Evaluations Program – UK agency [**SOURCE**] has conducted and published the results of several patient surveys and that the Health Foundation is a charity dedicated to improving the quality of healthcare in the UK [**SOURCE**]. He decides to find out what improvements are suggested [**FIND**] and which activities and actions might be adopted or adapted [**EVALUATE**] for application within the hospital [**COMBINE, SHARE, A PPLY**]. A search of the Internet reveals that many institutions have introduced short courses of customer service training for all levels of healthcare staff [**FIND**] and that this has had a positive effect on patient experiences of the hospital department and staff as measured by further surveys.

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### Commentary

Brian begins with the **question** : *What is being done to improve patient satisfaction with hospital services?*

He develops a table of possible alternative words he might use as he searches for information.

Key term	Substitute term
<b>Customer service training</b>	Client service training
	Patient service training
	Communication training
	Service improvement
<b>Communication training</b>	People-facing skills
	Soft skills

As in the previous example, the information literacy process has been applied at the **Plan** stage of the PDSA model. Brian's application of the process and its results are shown below.

**Summary**

In this case, rather than providing a commented demonstration, the guided reflection might help you decide what steps Brian might take to complete this PDSA cycle

<b>Brian's application of the information literacy process</b>	
<b>Question</b>	What is being done to improve patient satisfaction with hospital services?
<b>Source</b>	CFEP-UK website Health Foundation website UK and international health websites
<b>Find</b>	Reports, papers and online courses on improving customer service
<b>Evaluate</b>	<p><i>Evaluation of Patient Experience survey report</i> CFEP-UK</p> <p><i>Communicating with patients : A Quick Reference Guide for Clinicians</i> Association of Reproductive Health Professionals</p> <p>CFEP-UK workshops for receptionists and for clinicians.</p> <p>Free online training course <a href="http://www.onlineconsultation.org.uk/">http://www.onlineconsultation.org.uk/</a></p> <p>American Hospital Association <i>Communicating With Patients guides</i> <a href="http://www.aha.org/aha/issues/Communicating-With-Patients/">http://www.aha.org/aha/issues/Communicating-With-Patients/</a></p>
<b>Combine</b>	Compares advantages and disadvantages of each resource to decide which will be helpful in improving the services of the hospital
<b>Share</b>	Write a report making recommendations based on research
<b>Apply</b>	Implement training/improvement programme in one department then survey patients.



## Reflection

How might Brian use the tools and resources he has identified?

What might Brian do next, in terms of the PDSA model?

Which of Brian's activities might require further application of the information literacy process?

Is it likely that the whole of the information literacy process would be applied?

If not the whole process, which phases of the information literacy process might Brian have to use and at which points?

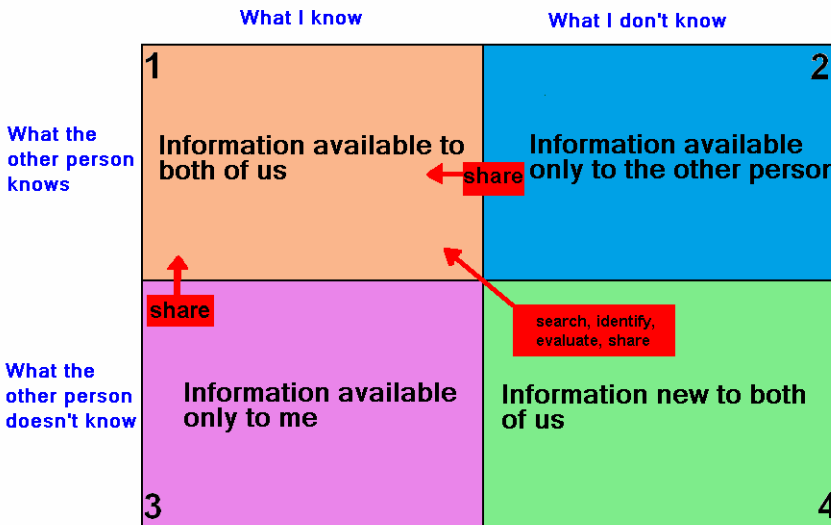
## When your information source is a person

When you need information and you ask another person for help, it seems obvious to say that they will know things that you don't and you will know things that they're not aware of. This is one reason that it is important to be clear in your own mind what information you need from them so that you can ask the right question or, perhaps, use the right words when you ask questions.

When you speak with another person the diagram below might help you "see" your information need from more than your own point of view.

If you imagine yourself as the 'I' in the diagram, and the 'other person' as the person you expect to help answer your questions, you will be able to see where you share information and where you each need to supply information to the other person.

### Information availability during a conversation



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**Box 1** represents information known to both of us. It also holds information freely available to everyone and might include details reported in newspapers, magazines, books, television programmes etc.

- Box 2** represents the information that the other person is aware of, much of which may be contained in his/her head. I can access this information only if the other person chooses to share it with me.
- Box 3** is information only I know. This box is about my feelings, thoughts, worries and wishes. The other person can access this information only if I choose to share it with him/her.
- Box 4** represents information as yet unknown to both myself and the other person. This may be identified and recovered by following the information literacy cycle from the question stage to the apply step. When retrieved and shared, this information will add to the contents of Box 1.

## Further Information

For more detailed information about Information Literacy, its context, background, links to KSF and other occupational standards and competencies, please see the other booklets in this series. These are available online from the Information Literacy Portal at <http://www.infoliteracy.scot.nhs.uk>

Further support in developing your information skills is available through the Information Literacy Skills courses online at <http://www.infoskills.scot.nhs.uk>. The course consists of eight modules : an introductory module which helps you assess your IT skills while each of the following seven modules is dedicated to a single step in the information literacy process.

If you would like some comment or feedback on your responses to the questions in this booklet or, if you would like to comment on the content of the booklet itself, please contact

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