

Taking number skills to the next level on National Numeracy Day

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13 May 2019



At Health Education England (HEE) we are passionate about supporting health and social care staff in having the skills they need to deliver the best possible care for patients. That's why we are pleased to support National Numeracy Day [7] on 15 May 2019 for a second consecutive year and promote our Numeracy Champions programme.

Being comfortable with numbers is important in many jobs, but none more so when it comes to providing and managing services for patients and service users. From interpreting graphs and taking measurements from patients to administering medicines and understanding budgets, staff across the service are faced with numbers and data every day. Clearly, health and social care staff need to be confident with numeracy to be able to carry out everyday tasks, regardless of whether they work in hospitals or the community.

Career progression

Numeracy is also one of the key skills that is imperative to the NHS's vital support workforce. Lack of

confidence can prevent them from applying for jobs and pursuing training. Specifically, we are supporting those looking to advance their careers through apprenticeship pathways - including the trainee Nursing Associate programme.

We have many talented people displaying the right values working across health and social care, however, without the numeracy skills needed to progress, people can struggle to reach their potential. In many cases people feel so anxious about their ability to work with numbers to consider applying for progression through learning. This can hold back some of our best people from taking the next step in their career. We want to give them the support they need.

Overcoming anxiety over numbers

The ability to perform numeracy tasks can cause anxiety and stress for lots of people in the UK, and health and social care staff are no different. Many staff say that their inability to work with numbers has affected their personal well-being in the workplace, while those people given the opportunity to learn often report feeling more confident within their roles and less stressed when faced with numbers.

We have seen from the work National Numeracy [7] has done with trusts that overcoming numeracy anxiety and gaining everyday skills can have distinct benefits for both employers and individuals. We are therefore delighted to be working with the charity to pioneer a new approach to numeracy in the workplace and ensure the sector is leading the way in supporting our staff with numbers.

It is important that people are supported, not just with their skills, but also their mindset. That's why we are working together to develop the unique *Becoming a Numeracy Champion* programme. As part of this approach, Trust learning and development teams have the resources to support staff that feel anxious about working with numbers and introduce numeracy initiatives to the workplace. Staff can also learn independently using the National Numeracy Challenge [8] and take the next step in their development. The programme also includes a new Numeracy Champions Network for staff [9]. We are keen that everyone has the chance to learn from others and share their examples of best practice. With numeracy providing a common challenge for many this innovative platform will provide the opportunity for organisations to support each other and access guidance from National Numeracy.

Working together, we can show that all health and social care staff are 'numbers people'.

Sir David Behan

Chair of Health Education England

Posted by

This Page was last updated on: 13 May 2019

Source URL (modified on 13/05/2019 - 10:19): <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/news-blogs-events/blogs/taking-number-skills-next-level-national-numeracy-day#comment-0>

Links

[1] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work>

[2] <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/>

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/>

[4] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/news-blogs-events>

[5] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about>

[6] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/covid-19>

[7] <https://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/>

[8] https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/national-numeracy_challenge/

[9] <https://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/numeracy-healthcare>