Your health, your way
A guide to long term conditions and self care

Information for social care professionals
**Document Purpose**: For Information

**Gateway Reference**: 12934

**Title**: Your health, your way – a guide to long term conditions and self care. Information for social care professionals

**Author**: DH

**Publication Date**: 09 Nov 2009

**Target Audience**: Local Authority CEs, Directors of Adult SSs, Directors of Children’s SSs, PCT CEs, NHS Trust CEs, SHA CEs, Care Trust CEs, Medical Directors, Directors of PH, Directors of Nursing, Special HA CEs, Directors of HR, Allied Health Professionals, GPs, Communications Leads

**Circulation List**: PCT CEs, NHS Trust CEs, SHA CEs, Care Trust CEs, Medical Directors, Directors of PH, Directors of Nursing, Special HA CEs, Directors of HR, Allied Health Professionals, GPs, Communications Leads

**Description**: A brief overview of ‘Your health, your way – a guide to long term conditions and self care’ for social care professionals. It introduces the concept of personalised support planning for people with LTCs and supported self care with points for consideration when starting the planning process.

**Cross Ref**: Adult Social care work force strategy. Commissioning Personalised Care Planning Information and Guidance for Commissioners.

**Superseded Docs**: N/A

**Action Required**: N/A

**Timing**: N/A

**Contact Details**: Long Term Conditions
2N16
Quarry House, Quarry Hill
Leeds LS2 7UE
About this booklet

This information booklet has been developed for social care workers to support the integration of ‘Your health, your way’ into practice. Each section of the booklet has been developed to raise awareness of the different aspects of ‘Your health, your way – a guide to long term conditions and self care’, which was launched on NHS Choices in November 2008.

The central focus of ‘Your health, your way’ is to promote discussion between health and social care professionals and individuals with long term conditions about what options there are for self care and what support and information is available. Linked to ‘Your health, your way’ is the commitment that, by 2010, everyone with a long term condition will be offered a personalised support plan¹ and all people who have care and support² will have a ‘personalised budget’ by 2012. The plan will record the outcome of discussions between the individual and a professional that focuses on what the individual wants to do, their goals, and the choices they wish to make. These discussions present a valuable opportunity to support the self care aims of ‘Your health, your way.’

PLEASE NOTE

The term ‘social care’ refers to the wide range of services designed to support people to maintain their independence, enable them to play a fuller part in society, protect them in difficult situations and manage complex relationships.

Social care works in partnership with many other public services, and often acts as the ‘glue’ that joins these services together, around the needs of the service user, as well as having a role in its own right.

¹ Personalised support plan/planning is the preferred term in social care to refer to care plans and personalised care planning. It reflects practice which is informed by the transformation and personalisation agendas

² Care and support means the activities, services and relationships helping people to be independent, active and healthy and to participate in and contribute to society-throughout life
The social care sector is characterised by a diversity of employers including around 35,000 registered provider organisations in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors plus a myriad of agencies in every community who provide a range of practical and personal support.

The adult social care workforce is made up of about 1.5 million workers working in a variety of settings and carrying out different roles such as social workers; residential, day and domiciliary care workers; personals assistants, and support workers. There are even more relatives, friends and volunteers caring for people alongside the workforce. This workforce can make a massive and hugely positive difference to the way people are living their lives. Their contribution to the self care agenda is vital to support the aims of personalised services.

This ‘Your health, your way’ information booklet does not represent a definitive guide to implementing self care or personalised support planning in practice, but rather offers an introduction to the concept of supported self care and personalised support planning.

Information is offered to assist social care professionals to understand:

- The philosophies and goals of ‘Your health, your way’ and how they fit in the broader context of personalised support planning
- The five core elements of ‘Your health, your way’

Additional resources and information to supplement this booklet can be found at: www.dh.gov.uk/yourhealth
The policy context

There are currently over 15 million people in England living with a long term or chronic medical condition and, as people live longer and are exposed to greater health risks, the prevalence of long term conditions is set to rise.

To meet the predicted challenges associated with this increased healthcare demand for services, the pro-active management of long term conditions is a key priority for the Department of Health (DH), the NHS, and social care services. Encouraging self care for people with long term conditions forms a foundation of this work, and, in the ‘Our Health, Our Care, Our Say’ White Paper published in January 2006, the Department of Health committed to:

- Do more to support people with long term conditions to self care
- Promote well-being and community engagement
- Focus more on prevention and early intervention
- Design services around the individual rather than forcing their needs to fit around the service

Putting People First: A shared vision and commitment to the transformation of Adult Social Care, published in December 2007, set out the shared aims and values for this transformation to ensure that people using services and their carers, irrespective of illness or disability, are supported and safeguarded to be able to:

- Live independently
- Stay healthy and recover quickly from illness
- Exercise maximum control over their own life and where appropriate the lives of their family members
- Sustain a family unit, which avoids children being required to take on inappropriate caring roles
- Participate as active and equal citizens, both economically and socially
- Have the best possible quality of life, irrespective of illness or disability
- Retain maximum dignity and respect

Achieving these outcomes relies on the capacity, competence and commitment of the social care workforce, regardless of where they work, to empower and support people who use services, and their carers to exercise choice and control.
Self care support is...
about supporting people in the decisions they make to manage their long term condition. It is also about offering individuals the right information and support at the right time, and empowering them to take a more active role in their health and well-being in order to improve their quality of life.

Personalised support planning is...
about having a discussion that addresses an individual’s full range of needs and focuses on goal setting, information, and support for self care.

Self care is...
about people taking responsibility for their own health and well-being. It includes staying fit and healthy, taking action to prevent illness and accidents, using medicines effectively, treating minor ailments appropriately, and seeking professional help when necessary.

A support plan...
records the outcome of the support planning discussion between an individual and a professional.

An Information Prescription...
provides relevant, timely and individually-tailored information for people with long term conditions and their carers. People will be given information or signposted to advice and support on treatments, care services, benefits advice and local support groups.
Introduction to self care in long term conditions

These pages outline the importance and value of self care for individuals living with a long term condition. They provide a summary of what self care might mean to the individual and what approaches to self care might be considered in a broader healthcare context.

What is self care?

Self care is an integral part of daily life and is all about individuals taking responsibility for their own health and well-being with support from the people involved in their care. Self care includes the actions people take for themselves every day in order to stay fit and maintain good physical and mental health, meet their social and psychological needs, prevent illness or accidents, and care more effectively for minor ailments and long term conditions.

People living with a long term condition can benefit enormously from being supported to self care. They can live longer, have less pain, anxiety, depression and fatigue, have a better quality of life, and be more active and independent.¹

The ‘Your Health, Your Care, Your Say’ consultation demonstrated clearly that people with long term conditions want to participate more fully in self care.

¹Department of Health. Self Care – A Real Choice; Self Care Support – A Practical Option. Published January 2005.
Successfully embedding the principles of self care support into practice – which is a longer-term goal for social care and the for the NHS – should mean that each individual with a long term condition and their carers, where appropriate:

- Actively participates in decision-making with social and health care professionals
- Follows a personalised support plan that has been developed in partnership with social and health care professionals
- Understands the nature of their condition, including risk factors
- Understands their treatment options and can make informed choices about their treatment
- Understands their medication, what it does, and how and when to take it
- Monitors signs and symptoms of change in their health condition and has an action plan to respond to identified changes
- Manages the impact of the condition on their physical, emotional and social life
- Adopts a lifestyle based on informed decision making in relation to health promotion
- Has confidence in their ability to use support services and make decisions relating to their health and quality of life

This booklet has been developed to help begin this process.
Different approaches to self care support

A wide range of approaches can be used to develop and support self care. Self-help and internet-based resources, telephone counselling, mentoring, and peer-based support are tools to support people with long term conditions develop skills of problem solving, decision making, planning and self-tailoring health actions and interventions, with considerable success³.

The ability of individuals to self manage will depend to some extent on what stage of their ‘healthcare journey’ they are on. Someone who has just been diagnosed with a long term condition will have very different self care support needs to someone who understands and has accepted their condition or someone requiring support at the end of their life.

Individuals most receptive to the concept of self care are likely to be those who recognise that they have an important role to play in managing their own health and have the confidence to fulfil that role. An individual’s willingness to engage in self care may also be affected by the quality of the relationship with social care and health professionals. So, good communication skills are essential for optimising self care.

The Common Core Principles to Support Self Care⁴ have been developed to reflect the skills and behaviours required by social care and health professionals to effectively support people to self care:

- Ensure individuals are able to make informed choices to manage their self care needs
- Communicate effectively to enable individuals to assess their needs and gain confidence to self care
- Support and enable individuals to access appropriate information to manage their self care needs
- Support and enable individuals to develop skills in self care
- Support and enable individuals to use technology to support self care
- Advise individuals how to access support networks and participate in the planning, development & evaluation of services
- Support and enable risk management and risk taking to maximise independence and choice

⁴A full version of the principles can be found at www.skillsforhealth.org.uk and www.skillsforcare.org.uk
**Strategies for effective self care**

Effective self care requires more than just providing information to individuals and their families and carers.

It requires developing a supported process whereby people who live with long term conditions work to appraise their current lifestyle choices, think about important goals for them as individuals, and work towards gaining the confidence to attain those goals. A wide range of different health and social care professionals may be involved in that process, depending on the complexity of the individual’s needs.
Introduction to ‘Your health, your way’

These pages outline the background to, and rationale for, the launch of ‘Your health, your way’ in 2008. They also describe the principal aims and the five core elements of ‘Your health, your way’.

In January 2008, the Prime Minister committed to putting in place a Patient’s Prospectus setting out how the 15.4 million people living with long term conditions in England could access a choice of self care services. ‘Your health, your way – a guide to long term conditions and self care’ was launched on NHS Choices on 2 November 2008*, setting out the support that people who use services should expect to receive from their Primary Care Trusts and local authorities.

‘Your health, your way’ is not new policy, but provides an opportunity to draw together all the strands of work and information that already exist. It is primarily a generic product – applicable to all long term conditions – and covers five pillars – four of which are existing DH policy for self care, plus healthy lifestyle choices.

It raises awareness to people who use services and the public about what support they can expect if they choose to self care.

Core aims of ‘Your health, your way’

The core aims of ‘Your health, your way’ are to empower and support people with long term conditions to understand their own needs and be able to make an informed choice about the self care support they wish to access from the resources available. These aims should be achieved through a process of collaborative dialogue during which the individual leads the discussions based on the goals that are important to them.

Five areas of self care have been identified as being key to achieving these aims:

1. Information
2. Skills and knowledge training
3. Tools and self-monitoring devices
4. Healthy lifestyle choices
5. Support networks

These are now discussed in more detail.

*www.nhs.uk/YourHealth
Information

While information on its own is not enough to change people’s behaviour, quality of life, or health outcomes, there is good evidence to suggest that a better understanding of a long term condition can positively affect a person’s understanding of their symptoms and long term health, empowering them to take action when needed. Individuals will differ in their information needs according to the stage of their long term condition and they may differ in their preferred method for receiving that information. Many people would rather have a face-to-face meeting with a health or social care professional than be given written information. Ideally, therefore, an individual’s preferred method of being informed should be established as early as possible in any self care discussions.

People can find information about general well-being issues and specific conditions from many different sources. Local libraries, adult education facilities, workshops and courses may have books and leaflets, videos and audiotapes available.

Self care support networks and local and national charities also offer a range of information. The internet can be a good information source, however, it is recommended that only ‘quality assured’ sites (for example, those ending in nhs.uk, gov.uk or ac.uk) are used.

\textsuperscript{6} Department of Health. 2006. Supporting people with long-term conditions to self care. A guide to developing local strategies and good practice.

THINK

Do you know what information sources are available locally or nationally?
Do you consider how you provide information, and whether you offer the right information at the right time?
Can you direct individuals easily to the resources they might be interested in using?
Would an Information Prescription be of value?
Is one already available?
Do you know about Information Prescriptions?

The NHS Constitution sets out a commitment to offer easily accessible, reliable and relevant information to enable people to participate fully in healthcare decisions and to support them in making choices. Information Prescriptions aim to provide people with long term conditions with timely, relevant and reliable information to empower them to make decisions about the care and services they receive. They are not just about providing information on health needs, but also about offering information on wider aspects of health and wellbeing, including access to benefits and social care services. This fits with a more personalised, holistic and integrated approach to care delivery, supporting optimal health and well-being and increased choice. Information is tailored to individual needs, provided via appropriate delivery channels and in accessible formats.

Currently, people can generate self-prescribed Information Prescriptions for 18 long term conditions on NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk/informationprescriptions. These provide excellent and comprehensive information on specific conditions and their treatment; they signpost people to where to obtain further advice and support – both locally and nationally – and how to network with others with a similar condition. From the end of 2009, supported information prescribing (where a professional works with an individual to help them select information) should be available and can be offered as part of the care planning process.

Information Prescriptions have been piloted across 20 health and social care sites in England. The evaluation report can be found at: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_086889.

For more information for healthcare professionals about Information Prescriptions, please visit: http://www.informationprescription.info/resource/index.html.

An Information Prescriptions e-learning tool will be available later in 2009.
Tools and self-monitoring devices

Tools and self-monitoring devices play an integral role in helping people to improve their choice and control over their situation. One of the aims of ‘Your health, your way’ is to ensure that individuals are aware of the availability of appropriate monitoring equipment and assistive technologies, and are informed and supported in their use.

The voluntary and community sector has an important role in terms of providing advice and information about equipment and tools to help people self care and maintain their independence. Housing and care services, such as home improvement agencies, will install aids and adapt and repair people’s homes to help them live independently. The value of these services should not be underestimated and close links with social services can offer great benefits for many individuals living with long term conditions.

At present social care and support is primarily the responsibility of the local authority who provides and commissions services from the private and voluntary sector for people who meet assessed need. Local authorities also provide well-being and prevention services. As personalisation develops further an increasing number of individuals will be able to use direct payments and personal budgets to customise the care and support they need. A wider range of information and prevention services will be provided for all.

Skills and knowledge training

In order to support improvements in confidence, communication skills and knowledge about specific conditions individuals may wish to participate in local or national education/training programmes.

Many different skills and knowledge training programmes and approaches exist, including user/carer-led generic courses for anyone with a long term condition(s) (e.g. the Expert Patients Programme) or condition-specific courses that are designed for people with a single condition (e.g. DESMOND, DAFNE) which are often professionally led. Both types of approaches have been shown to be effective ways of encouraging self care and improving health and well-being for people with long term conditions.7,8,9,10

THINK

When people learn more about ‘Your health, your way’, they may ask how they could develop their general or specific health knowledge and self management skills. Do you know what courses are available in your area?

THINK

Do you know what self-monitoring devices and tools people currently use? Do they know how to use them properly? Is there new equipment that might improve their quality of life? Do you know how individuals might gain access to such equipment?

7,8,9,10
Support networks

Service user organisations, cares support groups, community and voluntary groups play an important role in boosting people’s confidence, providing practical and emotional support, and encouraging individuals to learn more about their condition and what might help them. A wide range of local and national user-led groups operate in the UK; many providing expertise beyond traditional social and healthcare services. Peer support groups can offer:

- **Specific and detailed advice and information on individual conditions**
- **Condition-specific education and training**
- **Respite care and support for carers and relatives**
- **Peer support with people in similar circumstances**
- **Advocacy support, lobbying for service change and improvements**

Support groups and networks may often be better at engaging with disadvantaged communities in order to promote self care.

Healthy lifestyle choices

Although many people successfully self manage their long term conditions on a day-to-day basis, some may still need extra support to understand the potential benefits associated with stopping smoking, losing weight, cutting down on alcohol, increasing physical activity, and eating more healthily.

Achievable healthy lifestyle goals may be agreed during personalised support planning discussions, but these goals should always be set by the individual – not the social care or healthcare professional.

THINK

If individuals decide they would like to adopt a healthier lifestyle, how could you support them to do this?

Are you addressing health and lifestyle issues in your personalised support planning discussions?

Could you help to encourage and support individuals using coaching skills or motivational interviewing techniques?

THINK

Have you discussed whether individuals might find belonging to a support group helpful?

Do you know what support groups operate in your locality?

Do you know what sort of support these groups offer?

Do you know what sort of support groups are available online?

THINK

If individuals decide they would like to adopt a healthier lifestyle, how could you support them to do this?

Are you addressing health and lifestyle issues in your personalised support planning discussions?

Could you help to encourage and support individuals using coaching skills or motivational interviewing techniques?
Personalised support planning and supported self care

Personalised support planning starts with a discussion with the individual and aims to assess their full range of needs, taking into account their health, personal, family, social, economic, educational, and cultural circumstances.

It recognises that many different issues can impact on an individual’s overall health and well-being. The process should always be supportive, individualised, flexible, and non-judgemental.

Personalised support planning should be built around a holistic process that puts the individual at the centre of their own care and focuses on enabling them (and their carers) achieve the outcomes they want for themselves. Support planning discussions should not be professionally-led, but should focus on encouraging the individual to tell their story and set their own agenda through collaborative goal setting and action planning, problem solving, negotiation, and decision making.

Key to the personalisation agenda is how a shift of values is achieved from professionals ‘knowing best’, to them supporting and empowering people who use services to be in control of their care and support needs. This is centred on the development of a practice model for all social care and health workers in which the choices and preferences of people who use services and carers are at the centre of assessment, support planning and service delivery.

A Care Planning e-learning tool will be available later in 2010.
What is a personalised support plan?

A personalised support plan records the outcome of the planning discussion between an individual and their health and social care workers. It should contain all the information an individual needs in order to effectively manage their own situation. The plan is owned by the individual and may be a written document or something that is recorded in the person’s record. It may be complex or simple, depending on the individual’s health and social care needs. If it is a written document, a copy of the plan should be given to the individual and stored in their records.

Personalised support plans should take account of any lasting Power of Attorney\(^\text{11}\) that an individual may have made. For people at the end of life, Advanced Support plans\(^\text{12}\) are good practice.

Copies of the plan should be available, or at least accessible, to all health and social care professionals providing direct support to the individual, and any other individuals (such as carers) who have been given permission to see the plan.

Templates and personalised support plans...a word of caution

A planning template may be useful to enable the process, however, it should be remembered that the most important aspect of personalised support planning is that a discussion takes place during which social care and healthcare professionals:

- Invite people to tell their story and set the agenda
- Work with people to think about goals of importance to them as individuals
- Work with people to develop action plans to attain those goals
- Ensure review is built into the process

\(^\text{11}\)More information is available at http://www.publicguardian.gov.uk/arrangements/arrangements.htm
\(^\text{12}\)More information is available at http://www.endoflifecare.nhs.uk/eolc/acp.htm
Resources to support workforce development

Skills for Care, as part of a joint project with Skills for Health, has tested and developed a detailed training pack for people working in community settings – The self care training pack to support the common core principles for self care5.

The training pack was developed with Lancashire County Council’s ‘at home’ care services. The objectives were to:

- design and test models of training in adopting and using the principles of self care across the workforce
- embed the principles of self care within the health and social care workforce through management supervision, action learning and specialist mentoring
- evaluate the results and outcomes of the training, particularly through a qualitative survey of a sample of workers, people who use services, and carers

The benefits of using the training pack have been:
- empowering people who use services to make informed choices in managing their condition and care needs more effectively
- enabling workers to communicate effectively with people who use services to develop and gain confidence in their self care skills
- enabling and supporting people to use technology in supporting self care.

This training pack will be available as a free download from Skills for Care’s website from November 2009. www.skillsforcare.org.uk

5Skills for Care and Skills for Health’s joint project tested the application of the common core principles to support self care across three demonstration sites. The full report on outcomes can be found at www.skillsforcare.org.uk
The voice of people who use services

People who use services completed a survey prior to the training commencing. After the training programme the same people were interviewed to gather what changes had occurred.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Before pilot</th>
<th>After pilot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel my care worker supports me to remain as active and independent as possible</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My care worker understands my changing needs and is flexible in supporting me to meet them</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my care worker understands my long term health conditions and how they affect me</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I set goals with my care worker in what I would like to achieve with their support</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to make decisions on how I am supported by my care workers</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been given information on technology and/or devices which can support me in my home</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

And finally...

This information booklet has provided a brief overview of the philosophies and goals of ‘Your health, your way’, the importance of supporting self care and the five areas where support is most beneficial.

It has also provided an introduction to the concept of personalised support planning and supported self care and offered points for consideration when starting the process of planning with people with long term conditions.

To complement this information booklet, a range of practical tools and resources are available online to support social and health care professionals deliver personalised planning including support for self care. These can be found at:

www.dh.gov.uk/yourhealth

The resource pack will continue to be developed and revised over time as more practitioners share their own examples of best practice.

Acknowledgements
With thanks to colleagues at Skills for Care and Haringey Council for their contribution to this document.