

Patient Activation: At the heart of self-care support

How do health and care systems support people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to manage their health and wellbeing?

The NHS Five Year Forward View set out a central ambition for the NHS to become better at helping people to manage their own health: 'staying healthy, making informed choices of treatment, managing conditions and avoiding complications'. To meet this commitment, NHS England has established the Self-Care Support programme to scale-up support for people living with long-term conditions (LTCs) to manage their own health and wellbeing, empower them to make decisions about their health and care whilst delivering financial benefit to the wider healthcare system.

People who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to manage their own health experience better health outcomes.¹ Yet the ability of people to successfully manage their LTCs and to stay well at home can vary considerably from person to person. This is why understanding people's ability to manage their conditions is so important.¹ The Patient Activation Measure (PAM) is a validated tool which enables this and captures the extent to which people feel engaged and confident in taking care of their health. This can be described as their level of activation.

Health and care systems that know the activation level of their populations can begin to tailor their services in order to support people to develop their ability to self-manage, thus helping them lead better lives at a lower cost to the system. Supporting people to improve their levels of knowledge, skills and confidence is a core enabler for the Self-Care Support programme.

NHS England has agreed a five-year licence to use the PAM tool with up to 1.8 million people across the NHS. In June 2016, NHS England announced that 47 organisations had been granted licences following an application process. These organisations include key NHS change programmes, such as the new care model vanguards, integrated personal commissioning demonstrator sites and test bed sites. These programmes will have a major impact on how national policy develops and making sustainable change happen within the NHS.

The 47 sites, who are key partners in the national Self-Care Support programme, have started to use the PAM to understand the levels of knowledge, skills and confidence of their local population. It is expected that measuring and supporting improvements in patient activation locally will lead to patients having better outcomes, improved patient experience, increased engagement in healthier behaviour (such as those linked to smoking and obesity), and fewer episodes of unplanned and emergency care.

¹ The King's Fund (2014) [Supporting People to Manage their Health: An introduction to Patient Activation](#)

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Further information on the PAM tool and how the sites are using it is available on the NHS England webpages and in the [Patient Activation - Frequently Asked Questions](#).

By making patient activation central to the Self-Care Support programme, NHS England is sending a clear signal to the wider health and care system about the importance of supporting people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to manage their own health. Understanding and responding appropriately to an individual's level of activation is a key skill for clinicians and a key priority in realising the national aspiration for person-centred and personalised care in the NHS.

For more information, email england.patientactivation@nhs.net