

My Health, My Life

Achieving Engagement

The Self Care Forum Manifesto

Engagement and empowerment through self care

The Self Care Forum believes that the personal engagement needed to ensure the future success of the NHS will be achieved by putting people in charge of their own lives, giving them the information to make their own decisions and by using health services as a support and a resource when needed.

Some of the most powerful sections in the NHS Five Year Forward View, published in October 2014, deal with patient empowerment and engagement as suggested 12 years ago in the Wanless Report, but there is little that describes how this engagement might be achieved.

This Manifesto gives positive and practical steps to achieve maximum engagement. Only then will the benefits outlined in the Wanless Report and the Five Year Forward View be realised.

Our fully engaged self care model

In this model of self care, people are educated throughout life and given the tools and resources to be confident in looking after themselves, taking healthy lifestyle choices and with health and care services working for them when needed. They become the expert on their own lifestyle and their own health, and on those for whom they care, knowing when to seek help and support.

Professionals will have better, more timely information to support the care they give to the informed person.

Messages will be consistent and dependable across the whole range of lifestyle, care and health. Self care will become the norm throughout life. Informed healthier people will be empowered expert patients when health issues arise, knowing when and how to seek information, help and support.

“...many (but not all) people wish to be more informed and involved with their own care, challenging the traditional divide between patients and professionals, and offering opportunities for better health through increased prevention and supported self care.”

Five Year Forward View

The Four Pillars of Engagement



1. Lifelong Learning

Provide education and personal resources at every stage of life to encourage self care and empowerment.



2. Empowerment

Promote the use of health and care services as a way of supporting personal and home care decisions, blurring the lines between patient and professional.



3. Information

Provide reliable, consistent information, evidence-based where possible, to support confident decision-making.



4. Local and National Campaigns

Use national and local campaigns to focus on a rolling programme of education with consistent messages.

All of these areas should be underpinned by the fullest use of new and current technology.



Self Care Forum
Helping people take care of themselves

The Four Pillars of Engagement

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This Manifesto gives positive and practical steps to achieve maximum engagement. Only then will the benefits outlined in the Wanless Report and the Five Year Forward View be realised.

1. Lifelong learning about lifestyle, health and care

Provide education and personal resources at every stage of life to encourage self care and empowerment.

Early years and at school. Make the encouragement of healthy lifestyles and self care a mandatory element of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in schools. Educate children in self care, from knowing why it's important to brush your teeth to not smoking, taking exercise and recognising symptoms that can be taken care of at home as well as being supported to self-manage long-term conditions in schools.

During pregnancy (when young women and often partners are engaging with services). Provide extra resources to pregnant women and young mothers on healthy lifestyle for themselves and their children, as well as information on how to care for childhood symptoms and common conditions from teething, chicken-pox to head lice.

During adulthood, at work and in later years. Teach about healthy lifestyle using self-assessment tools, including those assessing mental health.

Promote use of workforce health programmes by employers and make health education available in benefit agencies.

Throughout life encourage understanding of the impact of self care across the whole continuum (see back page) and throughout life with messages through national and social marketing campaigns targeted at specific audiences on specific conditions and taking account of age, gender and ethnicity.

Promote healthy communities whether at home, in neighbourhoods, at work or in faith or interest groups to play an important part in developing engagement.

2. Empowerment

Most care is self care. Self care does not mean no care. We need to promote the use of health services as a way of augmenting and supporting personal care decisions.

The Five Year Forward View talks of “challenging the traditional divide between patients and professionals, and offering opportunities for better health through increased prevention and supported self care. As people become expert patients, the need to use services will reduce. The intention is to break the cycle of unnecessary dependency on direct medical advice when this is not necessary.”

The paradigm changes as society accepts that for many conditions, the GP has no greater access to knowledge than the individual. Only 8% of those experiencing symptoms visit their GP; most symptoms are already dealt with at home.

Supported self care can be accessed from health professionals other than the GP, nurses and pharmacists in particular, as well as from digital, phone and traditional paper methods. The paradigm needs to embrace all touch points to engender the literate, engaged and empowered person.

The following changes will facilitate greater empowerment and result in greater resilience and self-confidence, as well as better health outcomes and greater wellbeing.

Ownership of health records, which should include entries from free online and app self-assessment tools from the teenage years onwards along with recording of people's preferences. Having access to their health records will help people engage in self care aware conversations/consultations when they need to see a healthcare professional.

Self-assessments and evidence-based advice, which should be offered in ways relevant to people's time of life, as they increasingly access their records online (see 'information' below). Assessments need to identify the onset of mental health problems. Self-assessments should also be promoted and discussed in pharmacies, where people should be offered self care advice including information about healthy lifestyles.

Strengthening of the element of personal responsibility for health and self care in the NHS Constitution to match this increased power.

Increasing the availability of evidence-based over-the-counter treatment with appropriate advice.

Using new or underused technologies to assist with self-management. Telecare may not improve outcomes, but it may encourage greater self-reliance and confidence in managing short and long-term conditions.

Encouraging everyone to be an expert patient, going to trusted sources online and knowing when to turn to a pharmacist, nurse or their GP, the expert medical generalist, when further help or advice is needed.

3. Information

Provide reliable, consistent information, evidence-based where possible, to support confident decision-making.

Ensure health advice is high quality and accessible. All health advice for people must be appropriate, readable (when written), understandable and can be acted upon, as well as provided at multiple points in life. People need to be educated to have the literacy to understand it and be something that can be acted upon.

Develop a national self care resource to include materials and links covering lifestyle, (including self-administered health, mental health and dementia assessments), covering the whole of life.

Change 111 to include direction to national self care resources as an outcome rather than directing people to A and E. This should also include signposting to online mental health assessments and treatment options.

Instruct NICE to develop a specific self care element of its evidence with self care included in all its guidelines and standards.

Ensure consistent messages for all about self care, with the same advice being given at multiple points of access and by all health professionals.

Include online assessments covering a wide range of issues including mental health in the information people are given.

Exploit new technology where possible for messages to seldom heard people.

4. National and Local Campaigns

National and local campaigns, including public health, to focus on a rolling programme of education with consistent messages.

Short, positive, consistent messages to be developed and given to people attending A and E, general practice and pharmacies for self-limiting conditions, to break the cycle of dependency and empower patients to be their own medical expert with support from their clinicians when needed.

Education, good information and national campaigns to encourage confidence in self care to build on the success of public health programmes such as stopping smoking and reducing antibiotic use.

Local public health messages to reach beyond national campaigns to cover local and targeted wellbeing and health issues.

The engaged person:

- Is confident about when and what to do about looking after their own and their family's health and illness, by maintaining good health, taking steps to prevent ill health, taking care of common symptoms, recognising serious symptoms and seeking advice quickly when appropriate, and self-managing long-term conditions
- Knows when to seek appropriate advice from a GP and when to use a nurse, pharmacist or other healthcare professional and is not dependent on the NHS but sees it as a resource when needed
- Responds to messages about self care, including prevention and treatment by acting upon them
- Is confident to initiate and become involved in conversations with their healthcare professionals about what they want in the way of support in caring for themselves
- Is educated from school age about self care and the effective use of the NHS and healthcare professionals
- Understands the impact of their choices on their health, wellbeing and illness and the wider NHS
- Has access to a wide range of information which is easily understandable, consistent, culturally and socially relevant, which can be acted on and is accessible via a variety of routes
- Engages with healthy communities – at home, at school, at work, in faith and at leisure
- When becoming a carer, is able to be engaged as described above on behalf of the person being cared for

Self care throughout life

Every day throughout life people make decisions that have an effect on their wellbeing and health. These range from a decision to brush one's teeth, exercise, eat and drink healthily and relax, through dealing with minor symptoms, short term minor and major illnesses and long-term conditions.

Even a long-term self-managed condition such as diabetes may involve very little professional support. As a child, many of these issues are managed by parents, increasing the child's involvement and responsibility with age. Carers consider these issues involving the cared-for wherever possible.

Very occasionally a professional will take almost complete control such as during an operation, when someone is unconscious or when someone is sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

The continuum of self care

The self care continuum indicates how an engaged person uses self care to different degrees depending on the situation. As one moves from left to right across the continuum, the extent of professional involvement is likely to increase. Self care ranges from lifestyle choices, through preventing ill health, managing self-limiting conditions, living with long-term conditions, to situations where one has little control.

An individual engaged and empowered throughout this continuum will *"be more informed and involved with their own care, challenging the traditional divide between patients and professionals, and offering opportunities for better health through increased prevention and supported self-care."*

