

improving care for people with
long term conditions

information sheet 6

goal setting and action planning

as part of personalised care planning



an 'at a glance' guide for healthcare professionals

goal setting and action planning

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About this information sheet

This information sheet describes some practical tips to support individuals to set their own goals as part of the care planning process.

Who should read it?

Anyone involved in the delivery of healthcare to someone with a long term condition, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, those delivering personal health budgets and health trainers.

Understand the individual's situation

When someone has been diagnosed with a long term condition, even though this may not be clear to them at the time, they will be embarking on a life-long journey. This journey will involve them developing an understanding of their condition, how to manage it and the impact it will have on their lives. The aim is for individuals to live their lives to the full and not have their lives dominated by the long term condition.

Individuals living with long term conditions spend approximately 3 hours every year with healthcare professionals – for the other 8,757 hours they look after themselves.

Individuals with long term conditions will be at different stages of their journey and some will already have a good understanding of their condition, while others will need much more support.

Find out what the individual wants to do

Many individuals will want to return to the lives they had before they developed their long term condition. Some may feel that they have to give up normal activities such as socialising, or going to work. Some individuals do not know what to do or know what is possible.

It is also common for individuals to worry, feel anxious and low or even have clinical depression, which can also be a barrier to motivation or feeling able to manage. In fact, people with one long term condition are two to three times more likely to develop depression than the rest of the general population. People with three or more conditions are seven times more likely to have depression.* It is therefore important to discuss emotional and psychological problems routinely.

It is important to work with individuals to establish what is important for them right now and in the future, what they want to do and what their strengths are. It may be that they want to return to work or start a family. It may be that they feel a return to simple day to day activity is important, but they do not know how to do this.

Work with the individual to make a list of those activities they would like to return to, for example meeting a friend, feeling less isolated or returning to work. Ask them to choose three from the list that they would most like to do and then work with the individual on an action plan to help achieve them.

*NICE 2009: Depression in adults with a chronic physical health problem



Resolving ambivalence is key to motivating people to change. The healthcare professional can inform and advise, but ultimately the individual decides whether to change.

If an individual is unsure about changing a health behaviour (i.e. stopping smoking, losing weight), help them to weigh up the pros and cons by asking what the good things and the bad things would be about the change. Getting them thinking and talking about change in their own words helps to move things on in a collaborative way, and takes the emphasis away from healthcare professionals trying to “persuade” individuals to make a change or set a goal.

Partnership working is key to enabling individuals to achieve their goals. People need to feel able to explain what it is that they want to do, how important it is to them, how they can achieve it and then think about how it will help them to live better; otherwise they might just say they will do what they think the healthcare professional wants them to do (such as taking medicine or doing exercise).

Find out what the individual’s strengths are

Finding out an individual’s strengths is very important. This will provide a platform to build on. They may have existing skills or knowledge to help them to self care more effectively.

For example, individuals may understand the importance of planning and prioritising activities at work – but may not have thought about applying this at home. If they are used to helping or being with others, encourage them to join a self help group, which promotes self care.

Many individuals with long term conditions are unaware they already set goals. It is important to find out what they are doing now and build on their skills.

What if the goal is too big?

To enable individuals to achieve their goals, they may have to set smaller goals called action plans. An action plan is something that can be run over a shorter period of time such as a day or a week. Identifying the goals individuals want to achieve for themselves and helping them to break them down into manageable steps as a series of action plans can be extremely helpful.

The goals belong to the individual; they have to be meaningful for them to have ownership and to want to try to achieve them.

Keeping people on track

Many individuals stop setting goals once they are diagnosed. If their condition means that they have stopped doing normal activity, once they are out of their usual routines one day blends into the next. It is important to reinforce the message that their life has not come to a dead end but has just taken a different and unexpected turn.

Confidence is key to effective goal setting. However, many individuals lack confidence. For example, they know professional time is limited and may feel uncomfortable asking too many questions. Help them to feel confident enough to ask the questions they need answering.

What if things don’t go to plan?

Individuals will not always attain their goals, or it may take them longer than they think. They need to be encouraged not to see this as failure but rather supported for the efforts and achievements they have made.

Experience shows that when individuals have set a goal or an event, if they fail or something goes wrong, they stop planning and looking forward, and their confidence decreases.

The point of goal setting and action planning is that individuals immerse themselves in the process. They learn from their successes and they also learn when they do not attain their goals.

For this process to be established, there needs to be consistent follow-up. Individuals need to be encouraged to think about rewarding themselves when they do attain their goals. Without this positive reinforcement and feedback, the discussion process does not achieve its full potential.

It is common practice to work with individuals to continuously refine and adapt their goals and action plans. Think about cross-talking and flexibility between individual treatment/management plans and the overarching personalised care plan to achieve this aim.

Other people can help support individuals to achieve their goals

It is not practical for healthcare professionals to provide all the support. Many community organisations (both national and local) could support the person.

Many individuals feel isolated living with their long term condition and often do not know anyone else with similar conditions. Meeting others in the same situation (through national or local support groups) can make a huge difference, but the timing of this is important.

Many are not ready to do this at the beginning, but it is for the individual to decide when it is right. Simply knowing that there is a group is useful and reassuring. Different groups are accessible in different ways – meetings, phone, online – which means individuals can choose how they access them, according to how confident they are feeling.

There are also excellent self care and self management programmes individuals could attend such as the Expert Patients Programme www.expertpatients.co.uk or Arthritis Care www.arthritiscare.org.uk

These programmes provide self care strategies that will increase their self efficacy to self care and help them to reach their goals.

A large part of self care and self management is the person finding out about practical support and self care. Encourage people to find out more. **See information sheet 7.**

Further information for healthcare professionals

Health needs assessment tool

A health needs assessment (HNA) tool developed by NHS Kirklees helps healthcare professionals to identify the needs of the individual and target resources more effectively, offering more personalised support to individuals with long term conditions. For more information on the HNA tool in Kirklees, please visit www.kirklees.nhs.uk/your-health/helping-yourself-to-better-health/self-care-toolkit/overview-of-self-care-options/health-needs-assessment/

Well-being Star™

The Well-being Star™ for long term conditions is another free tool that can support healthcare professionals in their care planning discussions. The tool works by encouraging the person to consider a range of factors that impact on their quality of life. These are not restricted to health, but cover a broader range of issues including lifestyle, looking after themselves, managing symptoms, work/volunteering/other activities, money, where they live, family/friends and feeling positive.

The PDF version of the tool is free to download and use within your organisation. To register please go to www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Personalised Care Planning and Information Prescription e-learning toolkits*

NHS Employers has produced two e-learning packages to help develop the skills and knowledge needed to produce personalised care plans and Information Prescriptions.

www.nhsemployers.org/PlanningYourWorkforce/LongTermConditions/Pages/LongTermConditions.aspx

Supporting Self Care e-learning toolkit*

This is designed for healthcare professionals supporting people with long term conditions.

www.e-lfh.org.uk/projects/supportingselfcare/index.html

End of Life Care for All e-learning toolkit*

This enhances the training and education of all those involved in delivering end of life care.

www.e-lfh.org.uk/projects/e-elca/index.html

More information on personal health budgets can be found at:

www.personalhealthbudgets.dh.gov.uk

Publications and other resources on long term conditions management are available at:

www.dh.gov.uk/longtermconditions



*Please note you will need to register with the site provider to access these toolkits

The series of information sheets is available to download at www.dh.gov.uk/longtermconditions and covers the following topics:

Information sheet 1: Personalised care planning

Information sheet 2: Personalised care planning diagram

Information sheet 3: Care coordination

Information sheet 4: Assessment of need and managing risk

Information sheet 5: What motivates people to self care

Information sheet 6: Goal setting and action planning as part of personalised care planning

Information sheet 7: How information supports personalised care planning and self care

Information sheet 8: End of life care and personalised care planning

Look out for further information sheets covering other relevant topics.

Your feedback is extremely important to us. Please send your comments/suggestions for this information sheet, or good examples of personalised care planning and supported self care within your area, to longtermconditions@dh.gsi.gov.uk