

WiPP National Self Care Conference: Commissioning Self Care for Life

31st October 2007

- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

What is self care?

Self care is the care taken by individuals towards their own health and wellbeing throughout life. This includes the care extended towards children, family, friends and others in the community.

Informed opinion

"Do you believe that self care support services are worth investing in?"

Delegate opinion at the start of the conference

Yes - 83% No - 0% Need more convincing - 14% Don't know - 3%

Delegate opinion halfway through the conference

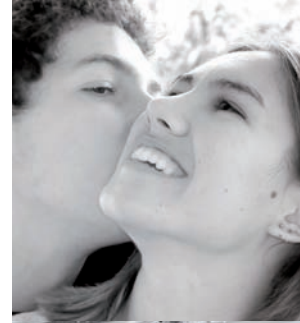
Yes - 95% No - 1% Need more convincing - 4% Don't know - 0%

Delegate opinion at the end of the conference

Yes - 100% No - 0% Need more convincing - 0% Don't know - 0%

Executive Summary

- The conference marked the launch of the NHS Working in Partnership Programme's new online self care resource and networking organisation, Self Care Connect (www.selfcareconnect.nhs.uk).
- Self Care Connect will be a fantastic source of information for many health and social care professionals at a time when it is most needed, according to Falklands veteran Simon Weston OBE.
- Today's sedentary lifestyles will cost the NHS billions of pounds in the future, so people must be supported in making healthier lifestyle choices, said Helena Jordan, WiPP National Project Manager, Self Care for Primary Care.
- Self care leads to reduced utilisation of health services in both primary and secondary care, more appropriate use of medicines, and shorter and less acute episodes of chronic conditions, according to Mike Farrar, Chief Executive of North West Strategic Health Authority.
- Self care services can be commissioned at all stages of life. Seven initiatives and services were explored by delegates in a series of workshops themed around the seven ages of man.
- Through additional workshops, delegates gained insight into how to commission for self care and how to influence others to do so.
- At the end of the day, 100% of delegates said they believed self care support services were worth investing in, compared with 83% at the start of the day.



Introduction

No one can say that looking after your own health is a bad idea, but should the NHS pay to help you do it? On one side of the argument are those who believe that commissioning for self care may not deliver an acceptable return on investment. They say the evidence that self care works is sketchy and that even if it were not, self care is based on lifestyle decisions that lie outside the remit of the NHS. By contrast, supporters of self care say it reduces utilisation of health services and generally improves the nation's health. Accordingly, it should sit at the vanguard of a modern health system.

On 31 October 2007, the NHS Working in Partnership Programme (WiPP) hosted a national conference on self care, with a focus on investing in self care. It brought together health professionals, practitioners and policy makers for a day of discussion and debate, built around the seven ages of health: infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, working life, retirement and end of life - theming which aimed to illustrate that self care is about the whole of life, rather than just managing long term conditions or the end of life.

The day marked the launch of a new website: Self Care Connect (www.selfcareconnect.nhs.uk), a pioneering and dynamic new resource and networking organisation for those with a professional interest in self care.

After opening comments from the chair, independent health broadcaster Sharon Alcock, Helena Jordan, WiPP National Project Manager, Self Care for Primary Care explained that Self Care Connect had been set up in response to specific demand from health professionals. She then introduced a short film, which had been commissioned to launch Self Care Connect.

Workshops followed, when participants were given the opportunity to explore self care at one particular stage of life. Delegates came together for a debate on the pros and cons of investing in self care, with three commissioning professionals laying out the arguments. More workshops followed lunch, then delegates were given a seminar on influencing skills by independent facilitator Jo Hollands. The conference closed with an inspirational presentation by Falklands veteran Simon Weston, who shared his personal experiences with self care.

Self care connect

When **Helena Jordan** was training as a nurse, self care was very low on the agenda.

"Back in those days, health care was based on a paternalistic model. When we were with our patients, we were the ones telling them what they needed to do to improve their condition," she said, noting that this model is no longer appropriate in today's changing health service.

"We really need to move away from that paternalistic model, and start to work in partnership with our patients," she said.

For any sceptics in the audience who doubted that self care has a significant impact on patient health and, consequently, demand for health services, Ms Jordan had a message packed with compelling data.

"We know that the sedentary lifestyle that many of us have these days is going to have a huge impact on the NHS in the future. We know that a million people every decade are developing long-term conditions. By 2050, it is forecast that obesity will cost us £45 billion a year, and we know that people need support to live healthier lifestyles. Today is about broadening our thinking about self care," she said.

Ms Jordan explained the purpose of the new website being launched at the conference (www.selfcareconnect.nhs.uk), which has been designed to encourage



greater engagement among professionals working in the area of self care.

“At WiPP we feel it’s really important to provide a service for you and your colleagues who are also interested in self care, as a kind of one-stop shop where you can access information around self care. Self Care Connect is about supporting professionals who work in the area of self care. On the Self Care Connect website you can find facts, you can find information, resources - anything you can think of around self care is there for you.”

She explained that the site was designed to be very interactive, so “the more that you put in, the more you will get out.”

During this session, delegates were asked a number of questions, which they answered using a handheld keypad. The results were displayed on the main screen. The principal question, “Do you believe that self care support services are worth investing in?” would be repeated twice during the day, to monitor how the opinions of the delegates changed as they explored the arguments. At the start of the day, 83% of delegates gave the answer yes, 14% said they needed more convincing, 3% didn’t know, and no one said no.

A short film then played, during which [Simon Weston OBE](#) officially launched the website, and high level advocates such as Niall Dickson, David Colin-Thome, Professor Alan White and Ayesha Dost explained the value of this new resource.

In his contribution, Simon Weston outlined how important self care had been to his recovery and ongoing good health.

“There hasn’t been a single day since my injuries when I haven’t had to, in some way, maintain my wellbeing with some form of self care,” he said. “And let me tell you, it’s no easy thing caring for yourself. In my experience, both patients and professionals need all the help they can get.”

He went on to applaud the new website, suggesting it would make a significant contribution to increasing self care in the country.

“As I see it, Self Care Connect will be a fantastic source of information for many health and social care professionals at a time when it is most needed. It will make sure the most up to date ideas and success stories are shared to help people like me help themselves,” he said.

Seven ages of self care

Eight workshops were held in the morning and again in the afternoon, seven themed after the seven ages of man and one focused on commissioning for self care. The workshops were led by facilitators who shared their experiences of successful self care initiatives and services.

1. Infancy: Pre-birth Education, facilitated by Ann Rowe and Claire Brackenbury

In this workshop, delegates heard about the Family Nurse Partnership, a national trial of an American early intervention and prevention programme for pregnant mothers and their babies. In the programme, nurses form steady relationships with vulnerable young women during their first pregnancies, through house visits.



www.selfcareconnect.nhs.uk



Simon Weston launches Self Care Connect



Delegates heard about the positive outcomes of the pilot scheme, which has improved the lives of young women and their children.

2. Childhood: Making Sense of Health, facilitated by Simon Fradd

Delegates attending this workshop heard about the success of the child health project Making Sense of Health, designed to be a one-stop health resource for teachers, parents and students in primary and secondary education. The project is built around a series of BBC TV programmes, printed resource materials for teachers, a health encyclopaedia for students and an interactive website. To date, it has been piloted in 300 schools in England and Wales, with impressive results.

3. Adolescence: Tackling Childhood Obesity, facilitated by Kath Sharman of SHINE (Self Help, Independence, Nutrition and Exercise)

Director of SHINE Kath Sharman shared success stories from her groundbreaking programme for young people, focused on healthy eating, physical activities and emotional wellbeing. She showed how the young people who participate in SHINE see a great improvement in their general health and confidence by participating in a wide range of activities, including camping and rock climbing, and by learning about nutrition.

4. Young Adults: Sexual Health, facilitated by Angela Costetsos of the Terrence Higgins Trust

Delegates who opted for this workshop heard about the scope of the sexual health services offered through the Terrence Higgins Trust. They were shown a film developed by young people taking part in a sexual health project run by the trust, and heard how the project gives young people room to explore their sexuality without being pressured into becoming sexually active.

5. Workplace: Self Care for You, facilitated by Julia Wickett of Oldham PCT, Dr Emmanuel Gye, and Practice Nurse Kath Kinsey

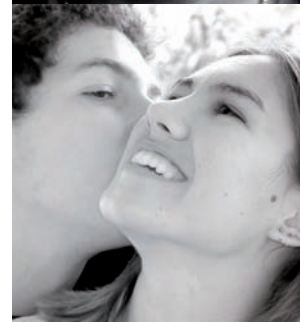
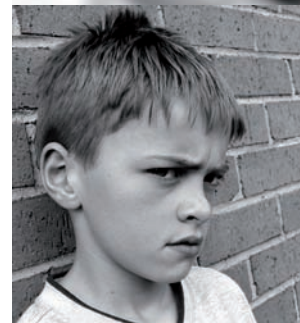
Three health professionals from Oldham told the story of their self care course Self Care for You, conducted among patients at a practice in Oldham. The six-week course taught patients how to make small changes to their eating and exercise habits, how to deal with minor ailments and how to handle stress. The results were very positive, with several patients making dramatic changes to their lifestyles.

6. Retirement: EPP - Self Management Programme 'Will You Still Need Me', facilitated by Jane Church of the Expert Patients Programme (EPP) Community Interest Company and Simon Knighton, Chief Executive of the EPP

This workshop explored how the Expert Patients Programme can play a role in self care, focusing on people of retirement age. Facilitator Jane Church told delegates that the programme is now much broader than it was in past, and is more proactive than reactive. Participants discussed the benefits of EPP and how to influence decision makers in their organisations and in their geographical areas, so that EPP is commissioned more frequently.

7. End of Life: End of Life Care Programme Self Care for Carers, facilitated by Eleanor Sherwen

Facilitator Eleanor Sherwen led delegates into the often-ignored realm of end of life care, and showed how patients would benefit if end of life self care was higher on the agenda. She focused on the need to challenge cultural barriers around this topic, so that health professionals have the ability and confidence to have the right conversations with patients, empowering them to make their own decisions about their deaths.



8. Self Care Commissioning Framework, facilitated by Usha Chappiti, Andrew Donald and Tim Jones

This workshop aimed to focus participants' attention on how self care can be commissioned successfully and what tools are needed to do this. Delegates discussed examples of good practice locally or nationally and the challenge of building a business case around commissioning for self care. As a case study, Andrew Donald, Director of Redesign and Commissioning at Birmingham East and North PCT, shared the results of a self care programme carried out by his PCT.

Self care is happening

After the first set of workshops, delegates convened for a lively debate on the central question: Why invest in self care? It was chaired by Sharon Alcock, with the different positions represented by Mike Farrar, Chief Executive of North West Strategic Health Authority, who was in favour of investment; sceptic Commissioner Tim Jones; and in the middle, Andrew Donald, Director for Redesign and Commissioning at Birmingham East and North PCT.

Tim Jones laid out some key challenges to investing in self care. He questioned whether it was appropriate for the NHS to get involved at all.

"A lot of it seems to be about lifestyle, eating fruit, cycling and so on. I'm not sure that's really my business. How people choose to live their lives is up to them," he said. "If you look at the GP contract, the GP is required to treat people who are ill or perceive themselves to be ill, not people who think they might get ill in the future if they don't eat enough fruit. We pay extra for that, it's not core NHS."

He expressed concern that patients' ability to self care was likely to be determined by their education and background, which might increase health inequalities, not decrease them.

Another challenge he identified was a lack of evidence that investing in self care would yield an adequate return on investment. Having spent the last 10 years trying to raise standards of commissioning so that services were contracted on the basis of outcomes, Mr Jones said commissioning self care was a "leap in the dark".

"Are we ready to let the genie out of the bottle?" he asked. "If we're asking people to self care, are we prepared for the consequences? Are we ready?"

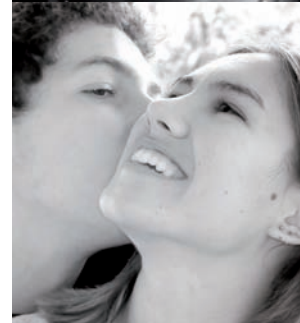
In response, Mike Farrar pointed out that the genie had already been let out.

"It doesn't matter if the commissioners want to buy it or not, self care is happening," he said. "The vast majority of care is by people by themselves, who understand their own issues and problems better than any other person does. Self care has at its heart a philosophy of empowering the individual. If we do this well and properly, we are fundamentally empowering individuals in our society to take responsibility and control of their own health, and we will get better health as a consequence."

He continued: "The evidence base is huge. This is not just about another project that commissioners are being asked to buy; it's about seeing the health service in a completely different way. Self care is at the vanguard of a modern health system. It fundamentally changes the power relationships between the individual and the state."

Andrew Donald echoed Tim Jones's suspicion that commissioning for self care might not deliver an adequate return on investment. Mike Farrar was in no doubt.

"Where people have been empowered by self care initiatives, what you see is reduced utilisation of health services in both primary and secondary care," he said.



“You see reduced utilisation of medicines and more appropriate use of medicines, and shorter and less acute episodes of chronic conditions. There’s a whole raft of evidence to show that self care leads to reduced utilisation.”

Questions from the floor reflected the extent to which delegates had considered this matter and were broadly in favour of investing in self care. One delegate said her patients continually brought up self care, and considered it a health issue, not a lifestyle issue as had been suggested by Tim Jones. Another reiterated the importance of defining self care so that commissioners fully understood it, and recognised how it could be used to tackle health inequalities.



Mike Farrar & Andrew Donald discuss the value of commissioning self care

Towards the end of the debate, ‘sceptic’ commissioner Tim Jones confessed that he had been playing a part, to help illustrate the current split in attitudes towards self care.

“I will come clean and say it’s all been a big bluff. I actually do believe in self care,” he said. “The name of the game at the moment is service redesign. I’m working on projects on diabetes and cardiovascular disease and so on, and we should be including self care elements integrally as part of the service. That’s the way to get it on the agenda, not to put it forward as a separate business case.”

At the end of the debate, delegates were asked once again to answer the question, “Do you believe that self care support services are worth investing in?” This time 95% of delegates gave the answer yes, 4% said they needed more convincing, 1% said no, and no one didn’t know

The session ended with a moving performance by teenage participants in SHINE, who demonstrated the positive effects of the programme with their polished and confident delivery.

Power and influence

In the afternoon, independent facilitator [Jo Hollands](#) led a plenary session on influencing, focusing on different influencing styles that might be used when discussing commissioning for self care. While delegates at the conference were clearly in support of commissioning self care support services, convincing others in their organisations can sometimes be challenging.

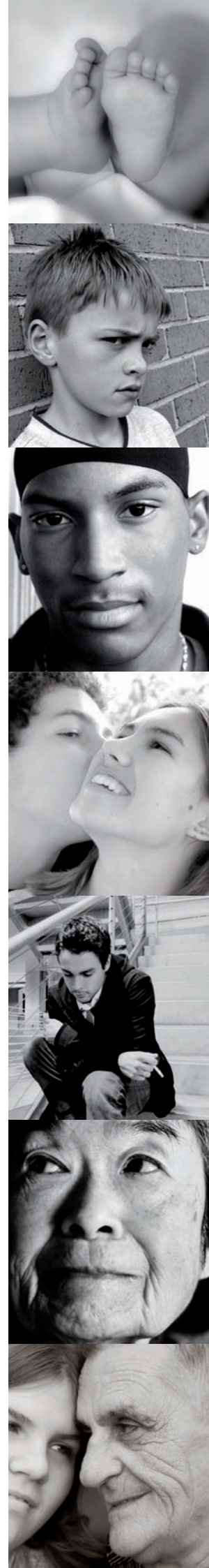
Bringing people with you and putting forward a compelling argument were some of the key skills Ms Hollands explored in this session.

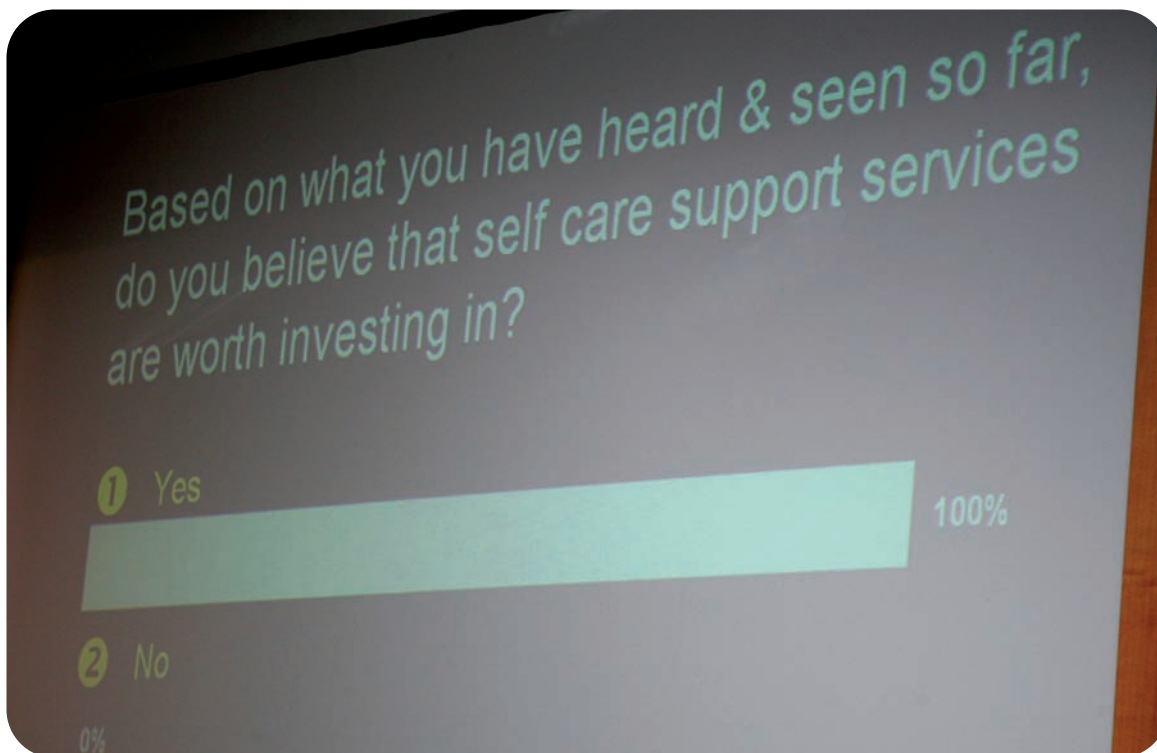
Inspiring self care

The conference closed with a presentation by Simon Weston OBE, who was badly burned when his ship the Sir Galahad was bombed during the Falklands conflict. He took delegates through his journey from injury to recovery, highlighting the ideas that kept him going through his bleakest moments.

“The difference between winning and losing comes down to a simple attitude. Either you believe in yourself or you don’t. If you don’t believe in yourself, why should anybody else? That’s why you should invest in yourself,” he said.

Before delegates left the auditorium they were asked for a third time to answer the question, “Do you believe that self care support services are worth investing in?” This time 100% of delegates gave the answer yes.





Conclusion

The WiPP National Self Care Conference brought together commissioners, educators, opinion formers, policy makers, self care advocates and others for a thought-provoking day of discussion, debate and revelation. Many delegates left with a greater awareness of why self care should be commissioned as part of the health and wellbeing framework and a better idea of how to make it happen. It was widely acknowledged that the new online portal Self Care Connect would provide health professionals with the information and resources they need to build robust self care support services in their communities.



www.selfcareconnect.nhs.uk

