

EXPERT PATIENT PROGRAMME FACT SHEET FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

What is the Expert Patient Programme - A lay led self-management programme for all who live with long-term conditions who have the potential to improve their quality of life or of those for whom they care

Who is it for – people over 18 who have any kind of long term condition, chronic or otherwise or people who are carers e.g. asthma, diabetes, depression, M.S. arthritis etc. Anything that is controlling your life in terms of pain, discomfort or needs treatment.

Who is it not for – not for husband and wives/partnerships together. Not for carers to do with the person they care for. This is permitted in some circumstances but is not encouraged as it can restrict the benefits of being able to speak freely.

Why is it called 'Expert' patient – patients who have a long-term condition, may be very knowledgeable about their condition, but not so good at managing it. The course enables people to be experts in 'self-management'

What happens on the course – a group of individuals meet and share their experiences. Two specially trained voluntary tutors will facilitate and support the group by taking them through a series of techniques to help with self-management. The group is informal and social interaction is encouraged. Anything discussed at the course is treated confidentially within the group.

What sort of thing does the course cover – action planning, cognitive symptom management, relaxation, breathing, exercise, goal setting, fatigue, nutrition, anger/frustration, living wills, communication, medication, treatment decisions, depression, working with your healthcare professionals, future plans.

How long is the course – you will need to attend 4 out of 6 sessions to benefit. These are held weekly for 2 ½ hours, in a comfortable room with tea and coffee breaks.

What will I expect to get out of it – a more positive outlook for the future and a range of skills to better manage the condition, instead of it managing you. Meet new people who have similar frustrations (and in many cases stay friends). A better understanding of what it means to live with a long term condition.

I already manage my condition well – you may take your medicine or do your exercises, but are you aware of the mental and social constraints of your condition? The Expert Patient Programme is not for everyone, but the majority of people who attend will take away something from the course once they have made the decision to take the first step and join.

Will it cost anything – no! it is funded entirely by the NHS. You are expected to be able to make your own way to the venue, but car sharing can usually be arranged if required.

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Will I have to write things down – no, you are given a free manual to keep and the tutors do any writing that is required. There is also a resource table of useful 'local' services of which you may have previously been unaware.

I have special needs – the application form will help you to identify if you have any special needs, such as help with hearing. If you are uncomfortable sitting for long periods or frequently need the loo, you will be encouraged to move around during the course, or take a break whenever it is needed.

What happens when it is over – you will meet again a few months after the course for a reunion and lunch. Many people say they feel sad when it is over and frequently stay in touch with their new friends which helps to remind them of things they covered on the course. The handbook is yours to keep and will help you to remember the techniques.

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