Self Care: A National View in 2007 Compared to 2004-05

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The Executive Summary, Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3 of this study are available as separate documents. Pages are numbered separately for each of the parts. Please follow the page numbering accordingly.
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Only some specific changes have occurred between 2004-05 and 2007 in the self care behaviours and views of the public, indicating that it would take longer for the full impact to be realised of recent policies and programmes supporting self care.

Wellbeing among all people

Three-quarters of people say they feel satisfied with their life, and a similar proportion say they feel in control over their life, rising further among older people (aged 65+) and those in the higher social grades. On the other hand, people with long term health conditions are significantly less likely to say they are satisfied with their life than those who do not have a long term condition.

Although younger people are more likely to take regular exercise, it is older people and those in the higher social grades who lead the healthiest lifestyles. For example, fruit and vegetable consumption increases with age and social grade. People with long term conditions are more likely to say they lead a healthy lifestyle than those who do not have a long term health condition.

Although half of respondents say their health has been ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’, two-thirds say they eat less than the daily recommended intake of five portions of fruit and vegetables during an average day.

People with long term health conditions

Two in five British adults say they have a long term health condition, a finding consistent with the 2004-05 studies on attitudes of the public towards self care. More than three-quarters say they play an active role in treating their condition, also in line with findings from 2004-05.

The majority of adults with a long term condition say they are comfortable with taking responsibility for self care of their condition, a slight increase since 2004-05. As with the previous findings, the most commonly cited advantage of self care is independence – this is particularly the case with older people. Reflecting the findings on leading a healthy lifestyle, older people and those in the higher social grades are more likely to feel comfortable taking responsibility for their condition, suggesting that younger people and those in the lower social grades may need extra self care support. Three in five people with a long term health condition say they prepare questions when they visit health or social care professionals (an increase from 2004-05); again this is more likely to be the case among older people and those in higher social grades.

Findings suggest that it is those people who say they ‘sometimes’ take care of their long term condition who may benefit most from extra self care support. They may be physically able to care for themselves but feel that they could take more responsibility to self care with the right advice and skills. For many, better knowledge and understanding of their condition is deemed helpful, as is better knowledge and understanding of the treatment. It is notable that a majority of the people would prefer better understanding of their condition, of the healthcare available and of living a healthy lifestyle.
Health and social care services support for self care

The vast majority of British adults think that people should take responsibility for their own well being and that people with long term health conditions should be responsible for regular monitoring of their condition. Among those who feel that the NHS and social care could do more to provide self care support, the most common suggestion is that the NHS and social care should enable people to self care.

In terms of self care support provided, the vast majority of people say they follow instructions given to them by a doctor, nurse or pharmacist when taking medicines. Nearly half of those who have been in hospital in the past six months say they were provided with written instructions for taking medicines. This is similar to the findings in 2004-05. The vast majority of patients who received written instructions say they took their medicines regularly and the majority of patients provided with a care plan say they followed it.

Information and Advice

The preferred source of information and advice is the family doctor. This is in keeping with the 2004-05 studies that family doctors are among the most trusted professionals in society. However, it is practice nurses and not GPs, hospital doctors or pharmacists that are felt to be more likely to encourage people with long term health conditions to self care.

Two in five adults with a long term condition say they have not approached any person or organisations for advice on self care or information on their long term condition.

Compared to only a third in 2004-05, more than half of respondents say they are aware that pharmacies can provide medicine reviews for people on multiple medicines. Also 80% of people with a long term condition say they know that pharmacies can offer information and advice on use of medicines.

Self care skills training

Self care skills training courses may give individuals the skills that would enable them to care for their condition, however, four in five adults with a long term health condition say they have not heard of such courses. Among those who have heard of skills training courses, only a quarter have used one. As might be expected, it is those who already self care who are most likely to have heard of such courses.

Other self care support that can benefit lifestyle and health

Friends and family, followed by leisure and pets are felt to be most likely to support self care and have a positive effect on a person's long term condition. Compared to one in ten in 2004-05, nearly a third of the respondents thought that social care has a positive impact on health, and the perceived positive impact of leisure activities has also risen since 2004-05.

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Table showing impact of self care support between 2004/05 and 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General public including people with LTCs</th>
<th>Proportion of general public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase in wellbeing but decrease in satisfaction with life</strong></td>
<td>2004/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People whose health has been ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ over the last six months</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People feel satisfied with their life ‘all or most of the time’</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Improvement in self care behaviour</strong></th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People who <strong>do not drink</strong> any water in an average day</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who <strong>eat less than the daily recommended</strong> intake of five portions of fruit and vegetables during an average day</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who follow their care plan ‘all of the time’</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>People with long term conditions</strong></th>
<th>Proportion of people with LTCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase in self care</strong></td>
<td>2004/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with LTCs who feel ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ comfortable taking responsibility for self care of their condition</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with LTCs who prepare questions ‘all’ or ‘most’ of the time when they visit health or social care professionals such as doctors, nurses or social workers</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Substantial increase in awareness</strong></th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People with LTCs who have heard of a training course that would provide them self care skills, such as the Expert Patients Programme</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with LTCs who are aware that pharmacies can provide medicine reviews for people on multiple medicines</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with LTCs who believe that leisure activities generally have a positive impact on health</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with LTCs who believe that social care can have a positive impact on health</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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