



# Living with a long term health condition in Stockport?



## An introduction to self care

You are probably reading this leaflet either because you, or somebody you care for, is living with a long term health condition.

You may have only recently found out you have the condition, or you may have been living with it for some time.

You will know already or soon realise, that you only spend a small amount of time with health professionals such as your GP or practice nurse.

The rest of the time you will be taking care of yourself and making the day to day decisions that will affect how well you live with the condition. This is called self-care or self-management.

## Why is self-care important?

Living with a long term health condition can be challenging. However, being more confident about self-care and knowing how the things you do affect your health, can help you live as well and healthily as possible.

It can help you to:

- live the life you want to and not miss out on things because of your condition.
- feel more in control of your health and feel more able to cope
- manage any pain better
- have fewer flare ups of your symptoms
- have more energy to get on with your life

## Nobody expects you to become an expert in self-care overnight.

Small steps are key, building up your knowledge and skills so that you become more confident and able to cope. As your confidence grows you will be able to do more and more yourself.

Your GP/health professional will be able to work with you, supporting and advising you along the way to help you make decisions about your health that are right for you and how you want to live.

Dr Cath Briggs, a GP at Bracondale Medical Centre in Stockport says:

“Self care is about looking at what’s available and becoming experts in our own conditions and in our own health. We only see health professionals for a small proportion of our lives and actually the rest of the time it’s up to us to look after ourselves. I hope that the following information will help you do that”



**Visit Healthy Stockport today and choose self care for life!**

## What do I need to know and where can I find things out myself?

Try to learn more about your health condition - what causes it, what are the symptoms, how does it affect your body and mind, how is it treated and what can you do yourself to help manage your condition?

There are many different tools and resources that you can use to help you develop this knowledge. These include websites, courses, helplines, books, health apps and online forums where you can speak to others with the same condition as you.

Increasing your knowledge in this way can also help you to come up with the questions that you need to ask of your GP and others that provide your care.

It's a good idea to explore what is available and then use the things that will help you.

## What do I need to do?

For most long term health conditions, making healthy lifestyle changes can help to reduce your symptoms, help to prevent your condition getting any worse and reduce the chance of you developing any further conditions.

You could start by setting yourself some small goals of what you want to achieve

Changes you want to make may be around healthy eating and being a healthy weight, stopping smoking, being more active, drinking less alcohol and looking after your mental wellbeing.

## Who else can help?

In the Stockport area there are many different services, groups and organisations that can help you whether you just want some advice and guidance or need some support.

**Here is more information about some local support**

### Healthy Stockport website

This is a great place to start your search for self care information.

Explore the website and find out what you can do to live as healthily as you can with your



long term health condition and improve your quality of life. There is information to help you understand more about your condition, learn new skills and things you can do to take care of yourself. There are also lots of links to other websites, resources and places where you can go for information and practical support.

You can also find online information, advice, top tips and links to support to help you make healthy lifestyle changes.

[www.healthystockport.co.uk](http://www.healthystockport.co.uk)



## Your local library

Stockport Libraries have lots of books to help support you in learning about your condition.

The Reading Agency have compiled leaflets of books and websites that have been recommended by professionals. The books are available in Stockport Libraries and there is free access to computers and Wi-Fi for library customers.

### The leaflets and collections are:

- Reading Well for people with long term conditions
- Reading Well for Mental Health-for adults
- Shelf Help-mental health and wellbeing for young people
- Reading Well for Children
- Reading Well Dementia

Relaxing with a good book, or an e-book/e-audio book, can also help with your self care. Stockport Libraries have a wide selection available for all tastes.

For details of your local library and opening times, facilities, activities and the library catalogue visit the Stockport Council website [www.stockport.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/libraries)

## Digiknow – helping you get online?

So much health information and support can now be accessed online. To get the most out of this, you may want some help to use the internet or to improve your skills so you can become more confident online. Stockport libraries offer basic digital support for customers where staff can answer simple digital questions and help you to use the internet. Many other groups and organisations in Stockport are also helping to introduce people to the benefits of being online. If you want more

detailed digital support or need some further advice, please call **0161 494 9947** to discuss.

## Wellbeing and Self Care Team

Your local Wellbeing and Self care advisor can offer support to help you live with and manage your long term health condition. They can help with practical issues such as housing or finance, or help with your mental wellbeing if you are experiencing low mood, anxiety and loneliness. They can arrange to meet with you on a one to one basis and can also link you in with groups in your community.

Speak to your GP receptionist to access this service.

For further information visit [www.viaductcare.org.uk](http://www.viaductcare.org.uk)

## Expert Patients Programme

The free 6 week Expert Patients Programme can help you learn new skills to manage your condition and take more control day to day. Each 2 1/2 hour session is delivered by 2 trained volunteers who also live with long term health conditions.

For further information visit [www.stockport.nhs.uk](http://www.stockport.nhs.uk) and search for Experts Patient Programme or call **0161 426 5576**. You will need to be registered with a Stockport GP to attend the course.

## Stockport Local

This is Stockport's online directory where you can find out about community groups, services, events and activities in your area. You can also search for groups offering support with developing digital skills.

Visit [www.stockport.gov.uk/stockportlocal](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/stockportlocal)

Visit Healthy Stockport: [www.healthystockport.co.uk](http://www.healthystockport.co.uk)