

*Our vision is of a society in which people with long-term health conditions have control over their lives and can live them to the full.*

**We want different - not simply more: David Pink**

Most people with long-term conditions do not want to be dependent on the state or - even worse - in the direct care of the state for a large portion of their lives. We aspire to self-determination even though we might routinely need access to various services. We need information and understanding if we are to achieve a healthy self-determination.

People need to understand the condition, its day-to-day implications, how to take care of themselves, how to make best use of medicines, the importance of lifestyle, including exercise and diet.

All three of our manifesto demands (improved access to specialist services; clear and comprehensive information; an agreed care plan) were aimed at increasing the ability of people with long-term conditions to live their own lives to the full, under their own control. They were not demands for an increase in 'sickness services' - all too often these services increase dependence.

The country's future health cannot be sustained if we only deliver rescue services for ill people long after they could have been helped to stay well. We believe that if you supply millions of people who have long-term conditions with information and care plans, then they will be able to retain responsibility and control of their own lives.

The priority is to think in a different way, not simply to think that more services are needed. Don't measure what state services do for you, measure what you have been able to do for yourself as a result of the support of state services.

We have established self-care as one of our priorities. Now the NHS needs to play its role in equipping frontline staff with the right combination of medical, nursing and social skills. The training of frontline staff is vital. It would help if there was a more structured route to communicating with the many varied and important voices involved in the national policy debate.