

NATIONAL EVALUATION OF EXPERT PATIENTS PROGRAMME

**National Primary Care Research and Development Centre
January 2004**

Several recommendations are outlined for further development of EPP. Two main points are that EPP needs a higher profile in the business of PCTs to progress beyond the pilot phase and health professionals need to be engaged in the benefits of introducing self-management programmes to their patients.

The rigid over-interpretation of the need for generic recruitment is likely to inhibit the uptake of EPP, as there appears to be demand for disease specific self-management training from some patient groups.

There was also some indication that such a condition specific focus would more readily gain the confidence of professionals in the NHS who are in a position to promote EPP and incorporate it into existing chronic disease management. Many PCTs wanted to run courses for disease specific groups but had been discouraged from doing so. Carers were not being encouraged to attend courses, but some PCTs were developing plans to run special courses for carers.

Organisationally it seems important for EPP to have a distinctive home eg, as part of PALS, NaTPACT or clinical governance.

This might encourage PCT leads to see their roles more as product champions rather than simply administrators of EPP courses.

The design and presentation of printed materials advertising courses needs to be substantially improved to be made as attractive as possible and to present a professional image to potential sources of recruitment.

This needs to be countered with face to face engagement with those who are in positions to increase recruitment and the acceptability of EPP in the wider health and social care community.

In positioning the Expert Patients Programme for the future, it is important to work with and forge close partnerships with local individual volunteers and small and large, local and national voluntary sector agencies to enable them to be key players in framing and delivering the programmes with PCTs and assisting with potential problems of recruitment. This will also help the future sustainability of the programme within the NHS.

A high priority is to focus on more effective awareness raising strategies and to encourage professionals to promote EPP to their patients. The EPP strategy could be linked more to the efforts of professionals in improving clinical care for managing chronic conditions and developing wider strategic policy goals in public health.