

Self Management Courses and Support Groups

- A number of organisations run free self-management courses in the UK for people with a long-term health conditions and/or pain. You don't have to be referred; you can take part by contacting the organisations directly.
- There are a small number of Pain Support groups operating in the UK. Some run in conjunction with pain clinics, while others are linked to interested organisations.
- Some websites provide a form of support through an online 'forum'.

Self Management Courses

One way to manage your condition and the pain it causes is by taking part in a self-management course. There are a number available in the community to people with a long-term health conditions and/or pain. The courses discussed in this information sheet are not Pain Management Programmes (PMPs), although they may involve similar issues and coping strategies. Self-management courses focus on developing skills that help people to take an active role in looking after their health condition. The courses typically include approaches used to cope with pain and fatigue, healthy eating and exercise, and ways to cope with the emotional side of living with a long-term condition.

A number of organisations run free self-management courses in the UK, for example, the Expert Patients Programme Community Interest Company (EPP CIC), the charity Arthritis Care, and Pain Association Scotland. You don't have to be referred by your GP or other healthcare providers; you can take part by contacting the organisations directly. Contact details for these organisations are shown in the contact list below.

Expert Patients Programme Community Interest Company (EPP CIC)

The Experts Patient Programme (EPP) is a six-week course for people with chronic or long-term conditions, which is available in England and Wales. The course is delivered by trained tutors who themselves live with a long-term health condition. It aims to give people the confidence to take more responsibility and self-manage their health. In addition to their general self-management courses the EPP CIC runs Persistent Pain Programmes in some areas of England. Leaflets about the individual courses can be found on the EPP CIC website under 'Publications'.

Arthritis Care

Arthritis Care is a UK charity that provides information and support for people with arthritis, their families and carers. The charity organises self-management courses for people with arthritis and also a number of courses for people with other conditions. The courses run in areas of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Arthritis Care runs four different courses that may be relevant to adults with back problems. The first two are courses for people with arthritis: 'Challenging arthritis' and 'You can break the pain cycle'. The other two courses are for people with any long-term health condition: Challenging Your Condition (The same format as the Expert Patient Programme) and Challenging pain, a two and a half day course which aims to help people tackle their pain and improve the quality of their lives through pain management techniques.

Pain Association Scotland

In addition to their support groups Pain Association Scotland run the 'Living with Pain' programme that looks at the mechanisms of how we perceive pain, and a range of coping strategies. It consists of a session a week for 7 weeks with an information session for partners/families/friends, and a review day 2 months after finishing.

In addition to the programmes above there may be other services that could help you manage your back problem. Back Schools, and Return to Work programmes may be available depending on your personal circumstances and where you live. These types of courses might involve some of the techniques of the programmes described in this information sheet. You can find out about any relevant courses by talking to your employer/employment advisor, and asking about local services at the library.

Pain Support Groups

There are only a small number of Pain Support groups running in the UK. Some of these are in conjunction with pain clinics, while others are linked to interested organisations for example charities. A few websites provide a form of support through an online 'forum'.

The contact list below shows a selection of groups with an interest in pain and/or issues surrounding back problems. Your GP surgery or local hospital would be a good source of information about Support Groups. The local community press, library, or an Internet search can also help you find local groups. There also may be support groups with an interest in specific conditions, for example arthritis.

Contact Information

- Action on Pain 0845 603 1593
Web www.action-on-pain.co.uk Email aopisat@btinternet.com
- Arthritis Care
Website: www.arthritiscare.org.uk/Home Helpline: 0808 800 4050
- BackCare Local Branch network 0845 130 2704
Web www.backcare.org.uk
- British Pain Society 020 7269 7840
Web www.britishpainsociety.org.uk Email info@britishpainsociety.org
- Coping – Derbyshire Chronic Pain Support Group 07964 293398
Web www.coping.org.uk Email Derek@coping.org.uk
- Dipex – Website with personal experiences www.healthtalkonline.org
- Expert Patients Programme Community Interest Company (EPP CIC) 020 7922 7860
Website: www.expertpatients.co.uk/public/default.aspx Email: get.info@eppcic.co.uk
EPP CIC Wales contact: Heather Owens heather@eppwales.org Tel: 02920 826526
- Long Term Conditions Alliance (LTCA) 020 7813 3637
Umbrella body for national voluntary organisations in the UK working to meet the needs of people with long-term health conditions.
Website: www.ltca.org.uk Email: info@ltca.org.uk
- Neuropathic Pain Network www.neuropathicpainnetwork.org
- Pain Association – Scotland 0800 783 6059
Web www.chronicpaininfo.org Email info@painassociation.com
- Patients Association - A national healthcare charity with information about pain in older People 0845 608 4455
Web www.patients-association.org.uk Email helpline@patients-association.com
- Pain Concern - Run by volunteers with experience of chronic pain 01620 822572
Web www.painconcern.org.uk
- Pain Relief Foundation 0151 529 5820 Web www.painrelieffoundation.org.uk/index.htm
Email secretary@painrelieffoundation.org.uk
- Pain Support - web site based non-profit organisation www.painsupport.co.uk

Relevant Information

- BackCare Information sheets - Pain Clinics, Pain Management Programmes, and Functional Restoration Programmes, Drugs for Pain Relief, TENS Pain Relief.
- BackCare Booklets - Managing Back Pain, Basic Back Care, Active Back Care
- Talkback articles can be searched for at www.backcare.org.uk/779/Talkback-articles.html
- BackCare website www.backcare.org.uk Links to Getting Help – Self Management

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