

October 2016

## PSNC Briefing 060/16: Patient activation and why it is relevant to community pharmacy

It is widely recognised that people who feel in control, empowered and confident to take a lead role in their healthcare have better outcomes. Supporting patients to act in this way is a fundamental component of person-centred care which is a key feature of NHS England's Five Year Forward View (5YFV) and a central feature of manifestos and policy guidance from leading patient groups.

This briefing summarises information from [NHS England](#) and the [King's Fund's](#) briefing on Patient Activation Measures (PAM) to explain about the concept of patient activation and how it is relevant to community pharmacy services.

### What is patient activation?

Patient activation describes the knowledge, skills and confidence a person has in managing their own health and care.

The concept of patient activation links to the principles of person-centred care, which seeks to offer care that is suitably personalised and supports people to recognise and develop their own strengths and abilities. It supports people by giving them information they can understand and act on, and provides them with support that is tailored to their needs.

It is closely linked to other concepts such as 'self-efficacy' and 'readiness to change', and is a broader and more general concept, reflecting attitudes and approaches to self-management and engagement with health and healthcare, rather than being tied to specific behaviours.

### What is the 'Patient Activation Measure' (PAM) and how is it measured?

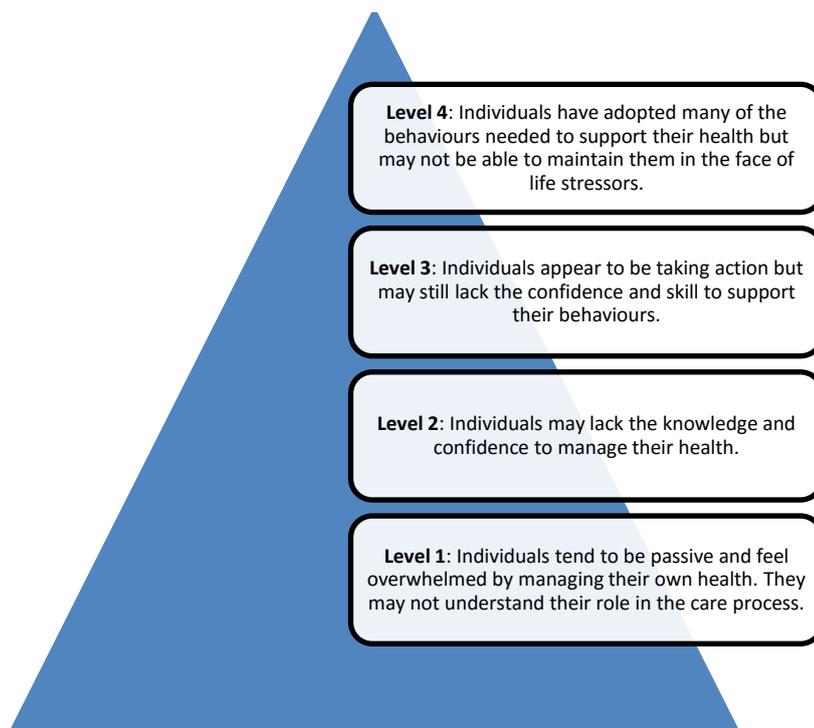
PAM is a validated, commercially licenced<sup>1</sup> tool and has been extensively tested with reviewed findings from a large number of studies, as evidenced in the King's Fund report. It helps to measure the spectrum of skills, knowledge and confidence in patients and captures the extent to which people feel engaged and confident in taking care of their condition.

The PAM contains a series of 13 statements designed to assess the extent of a patient's activation. These statements are about beliefs, confidence in the management of health-related tasks and self-assessed knowledge. Patients are asked to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement. These answers are combined to provide a single score of between 0 and 100, which represents the person's concept of themselves as an active manager of their health and healthcare. Although patient activation scores lie between 0 and 100, for the purpose of healthcare interventions they are often subdivided into four groups, known as 'levels of activation'.

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<sup>1</sup> The PAM tool is licensed by the US company, Insignia Health LLC.

The four levels of activation are:



### Why is patient activation important in the context of the NHS?

In England, more than 15 million people have a long-term condition (LTC). According to the King’s Fund report, this group tend to be heavy users of the health service, accounting for at least 70% of all NHS spend, but are likely to spend less than 1% of their time in contact with health professionals.

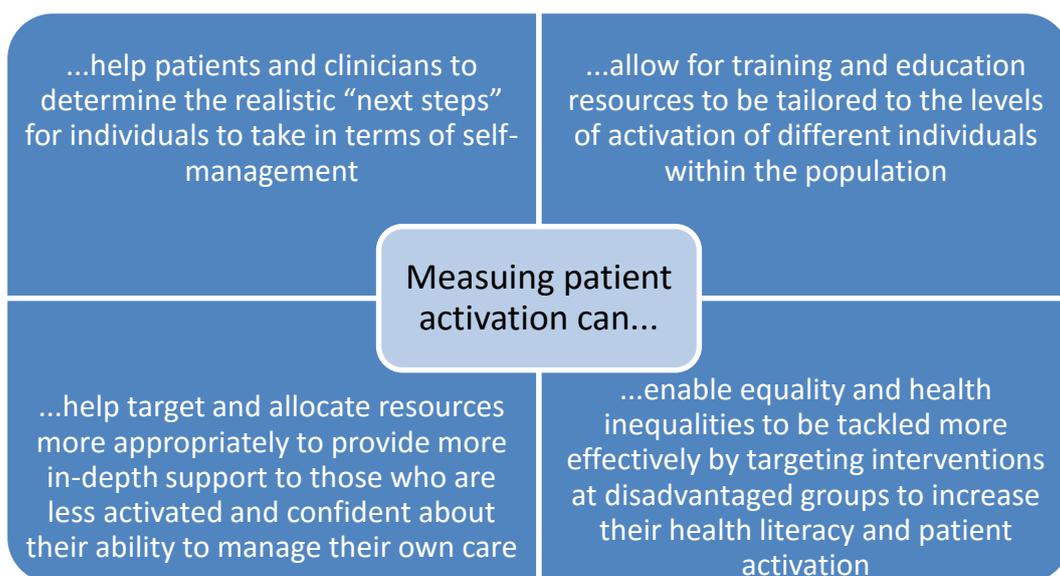
As the individual’s ability to successfully self-manage their LTCs and to stay well at home depends on their knowledge, skills and confidence, it is in the NHS’ interest to understand what their activation level is. This can then be used to ‘meet people where they are’ to support them in ways appropriate to these individuals on their ‘journey of activation’.

Evidence from the Kings’ Fund shows that as the level of activation is improved, people experience better health, have better outcomes, report better experience of care, engage in healthier behaviours, and have fewer episodes of emergency care that leads to lower costs for the NHS.

### How will PAM benefit patients?

Evidence shows that people at higher levels of activation tend to experience better health, have better health outcomes and fewer episodes of emergency care, and engage in healthier behaviours (such as those correlated to smoking and obesity). On the other hand, patients with lower activation have low confidence in their ability to have an impact on their health and often feel overwhelmed with the task of managing their health.





A number of programmes have demonstrated the ability to raise activation scores in people – these typically focus on the individuals gaining new skills, encouraging a sense of ownership of their health, changes in their social environment, health coaching and educational classes. All of these help to empower people to take greater control of their health, leading to better outcomes and improved experience of the health service.

### How will PAM benefit clinicians?

Measuring patient activation gives healthcare professionals a starting point to meet the patients ‘where they are’, helping them to tailor their approaches to the individuals appropriately. Using a measure helps the professionals to assess the ability of the person to take on self-management tasks and generally respond to their health needs, rather than having to depend on guesswork. It shapes the agenda for the consultation, including exploring patient expectations and motivations and ways in which the patient’s level of activation may be increased or maintained.

It can also help identify where a carer’s help may be needed in, say, adherence to a medication regimen. It can help clinicians to monitor progress, for example, where a care plan is being used. Measuring a patient’s activation at different stages in the plan provides objective feedback to both clinician and patient on goals relating to self-management. This concept is being tested within the [Community Pharmacy Future 2](#) project in pharmacies in West Yorkshire. The approach is also contained within the future vision of community pharmacy support services for people with LTCs set out in the [Community Pharmacy Forward View](#).

### What are the types of interventions that can help to increase patients’ activation?

A range of interventions tailored to individuals’ needs are required to support people to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence, such as, social prescribing, volunteer health roles or time banking in local areas.

NHS England’s [Realising the Value programme](#) has also identified five evidence-based approaches that engage people in their own health and care. The five areas of practice are self-management education; peer support; health coaching; group activities that promote health and well-being; and asset-based approaches in a health and well-being context. NHS England has bulk purchased a number of PAM licenses for use by CCGs and other NHS bodies within the Vanguard sites and it is likely that much greater use of the measure will be made across the NHS in the years to come.

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information please contact [Zainab Al-Kharsan, Service Development Pharmacist](#).