

## Implementation of a social network tool designed to assess, engage and link people with social activities and support

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We have developed an online website which we have called GENIE to help people with long-term conditions think about the people and groups who help them to manage day-to-day life. Our work has shown that a networks approach is a good way to engage people in thinking about how they manage their condition and to raise awareness of the support they have and need. The approach helps people to build up and use their network of support by connecting them with resources and support in their local communities.

We think a networks approach works because healthy behaviours are a collective activity and not purely down to an individual, the work and decisions related to long-term conditions are done with members of personal and social networks. We know that diverse networks are good for health and that having a variety of links and connections are better than networks centred on close family members. We have also found that there are health benefits for people who are isolated or live in deprived circumstances but who have connections to community organisations.

The interactive website starts by getting people to map out their social support network and then leads them through a series of questions designed to find out the activities they like or used to do as well as any support they want. They are able to prioritise their preferences which are then linked to a database of local groups and resources and highlighted on a map.

We have been working with people and groups across CLAHRC Wessex to train them in how to facilitate and use GENIE and have undertaken case studies to find out how to implement our approach.

**We still have important questions to answer, some very practical such as the best ways to keep information up-to-date on the website, others concern where such an intervention might work best, who could facilitate it and how commissioners could use it to obtain useful data on commissioning services. GENIE has excited and enthused many people and we hope to expand its use throughout Wessex CLAHRC over the coming year as part of our ambitious programme of getting evidence of what works for patients into practice, so we are looking for potential project partners.**