

# Prioritising self-care in the first 100 days of Government

With the NHS under unprecedented pressure - including continued difficulties in accessing a GP appointment, persistent waiting lists and ambulances queuing outside A&E - the public's concern for addressing issues in the NHS are at an all-time high. **Prioritising deliverable actions on self-care - especially in these first 100 days - could deliver quick and cost-effective wins for this Labour Government and help reduce the burden on the front door of the NHS ahead of the winter illnesses season.**

Self-care comprises the actions that individuals take for themselves, on behalf of and with others to protect, maintain and improve their health, wellbeing and wellness. Each year, at least 25 million GP appointments and 5 million A&E visits are used for self-treatable illnesses, such as headaches, colds, allergies and indigestion. If the individuals using these appointments

were empowered to self-care instead, it could save the NHS at least £1.7bn per year in costs.<sup>1</sup> Eliminating these appointments could also save the economy an additional £350m per year as employees would not need to take time out from work for unnecessary NHS treatment.<sup>1</sup>



**25m** GP appointments and  
**5m** A&E visits are used for  
self-treatable illnesses.



**£1.7bn** per year could be  
saved by empowering individuals  
to self-care instead<sup>1</sup>

To realise the benefits of self-care to the public, NHS and wider economy, PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, recommends prioritising **six key actions** on self-care in the first 100 days.



Embed self-care fully in primary care, to realise its full potential in reducing the burden on the front door of the NHS, by:



Improve patient awareness of, and confidence in, self-care, to empower them to access the right care at the right place, by:



Promote an attractive environment for the over-the-counter (OTC) sector, to ensure its continued investment in, and prioritisation of, the UK market, by:

**1** Making a commitment to ensure sufficient pathways and IT infrastructure are introduced to enable community pharmacists to refer patients directly to the full range of primary care services, and where appropriate, to secondary care and to routinely populate medical records

**3** Launching a nationwide campaign to enhance public awareness of comprehensive primary care services that prioritises easily accessible information on the importance and methods of accessing trusted self-care advice, which industry is willing and ready to support

**5** Leveraging the collaborative research already undertaken by DHSC, the MHRA and industry (led by PAGB) on widening patient access to OTC medicines by announcing an update on the conditions and categories that have been identified as suitable for reclassification

**2** Reviewing and improving the accessibility and navigational pathway of the NHS App and website to better support users to find accredited information and manage self-treatable conditions

**4** Committing to uphold the recently proposed addition to the relationships, sex and health education curriculum that self-care for minor ailments, and the role of pharmacists as a knowledgeable healthcare professionals be covered by the end of secondary school

**6** Putting in place OTC sector representation on the Life Sciences Council through PAGB, the consumer healthcare association

# Prioritising self-care in the first 100 days of Government

## The scale of the opportunity for the Government

Self-care can benefit the entire population, with 96% of people in the UK experiencing at least one self-treatable condition annually:



Self-care could mitigate the time and effort wasted by members of the public through arranging and attending GP appointments for minor health issues. **Currently two out of five adults are still asking for a GP appointment** for such issues despite 53% of those being told by the GP to use OTC medicines<sup>2</sup>



Self-care is also what people want. **71% of the population want more medicines to be available without prescriptions<sup>2</sup>**



Effective use of OTC medicines and self-care can positively impact the population's quality of life, with **an estimated quality-of-life benefit of £15bn to UK consumers<sup>1</sup>**

Empowering people to self-care can reduce the burden on the front door of the NHS, with at least 25 million GP appointments and 5 million A&E visits used each year for self-treatable illnesses:<sup>1</sup>



**£6.4 billion could be saved** annually by the NHS in avoided prescription and appointment costs<sup>1</sup>



On reclassification specifically, **£1.4bn could be saved** by a 5% reduction in NHS prescribing<sup>1</sup>

The benefits of self-care are also seen across the broader economy:



**£18bn is saved annually** due to 164 million avoided lost workdays per year – that's equal to five days per year where employees rely on OTCs to work<sup>1</sup>



The OTC sector contributes **£3.5 billion to the UK economy** each year, with £2.8 billion of this from exporting products manufactured in the UK and ~.£600 million stemming from the wages that the OTC sector is responsible for<sup>1</sup>

## Learn more

At PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, we have a proud history of supporting self-care in the UK. We are an active member of the Self-Care Strategy Group, a collective of leading health and pharmacy organisations committed to advancing the self-care policy agenda. We are likewise the leading voice for industry in MHRA and DHSC collaboration on reclassification and have recently undertaken our own audit on furthering digital tools in self-care.

We are eager to work with this Labour Government to share our expertise in these areas and ensure that self-care is considered and incorporated into all planning on how we solve the challenges facing primary care within the NHS going forward.

If you would be interested in a meeting to discuss self-care further, please contact: **Farhana Hawthorn (she/her), Head of Public Affairs and Communications** at [farhana.hawthorn@pagb.co.uk](mailto:farhana.hawthorn@pagb.co.uk).



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1. Frontier economics, The economic impact of over-the-counter products in the UK, July 2023.

2. PAGB, Take care of yourself and the NHS, November 2023.