MEDIA RELEASE

**PAGB calls for self care guidance to be included as mandatory on the national curriculum for children in England**

* **School-based interventions must go further to reduce health inequalities and embed a lifelong culture of self care**
* **PAGB intensifies calls for a national self care strategy as the Government and NHS England work to implement the ambitions of the NHS Long Term Plan**
* **Coordinated national action is vital to reduce NHS pressures and ensure the NHS’s future sustainability**

PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, is today calling for the Government to go further with its plans to make self care a mandatory part of health education for children in England.[[1]](#endnote-1)

PAGB does not believe the recently published Department for Education guidance on health education1 goes far enough to improve health literacy. All children should be educated about how to self care and manage self-treatable conditions, as well as the different roles of healthcare professionals so they grow up knowing how to use NHS services appropriately.

John Smith, PAGB Chief Executive, comments: “PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) is currently only compulsory in independent schools, so we welcome the requirement for health education in all state-funded schools in the new guidance. However, we are concerned there is not enough time available to devote to health literacy and wellbeing education and there is not a standardised approach across schools.

“Our research has found that 71% of people think there should be better education around self-treatable conditions and relevant services, to encourage more people to self care.[[2]](#endnote-2) School-based interventions to increase health literacy and boost understanding of self care are a crucial starting point to embedding a lifelong culture of self care.”

GP Dr Sarah Jarvis says: “Recent draft guidance from the Department for Education regarding health education is encouraging, but does not adequately address the need to educate pupils on the importance of self care and the impact on NHS services. The guidance refers to “simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family and the benefits of hobbies and interests” in addition to basic first aid. Of course these messages are important, but I believe that equally crucial are messages about taking responsibility for looking after your health and managing self-treatable conditions. The NHS Stay Well pharmacy campaign is encouraging exactly this sort of awareness among adults, but we need to start younger. Improving health literacy from a young age should be a priority, so that when children become adults, they feel equipped to make informed decisions when it comes to accessing healthcare services appropriately.”

## Dr Selwyn Hodge from the Self Care Forum concludes: “The renewed focus on prevention and helping people to stay healthy, outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan, should start to transform services and ensure they are fit for the future. However, health literacy is key to reduce unnecessary demands on the NHS by empowering people with the information they need to self care appropriately. We believe that the opportunity to ensure the youngest members of our society receive that information at school is a missed opportunity and urge the Government to look again at its draft guidance.”

The recommendation for self care to be expanded on as part of the national curriculum is included in a new White Paper\* published by PAGB in response to the NHS Long Term Plan. The White Paper outlines key policies which must be implemented to create and embed a culture of self care, including supporting people to manage their own health, tackling health inequalities and reducing pressures on NHS services.

**-ENDS-**

*\*A Self Care White Paper: supporting the delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan*

**Notes to editors:**

In addition to the requirement for self care to be included as mandatory on the national curriculum for all children, the specific policies PAGB is calling for as part of a national strategy for self care include:

* Explore digital solutions to support and increase self care
* Introduce recommendation prescriptions for GPs
* Tackling health inequalities by improving health literacy
* Introduce a year-round pharmacy awareness campaign
* Enable community pharmacists to refer to other healthcare professionals, fast-tracked if appropriate
* Give community pharmacists “write” access to patient medical records so any medication or advice offered can be recorded consistently

To receive a full copy of the white paper, or for further information please contact: Lauren Walker or Maria Boiling on 01273 712000 / PAGB@thisispegasus.co.uk

PAGB defines Self Care as the actions people take for themselves and their families to promote and maintain good health and wellbeing and to take care of their self-treatable conditions.

PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, represents the manufacturers of branded OTC medicines, self care medical devices and food supplements in the UK.

1. Department for Education (2018), *Relationship (and sex) education and health education,* available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/relationships-and-sex-education-and-health-education> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. PAGB (2016), *Self Care Nation,* available at: <https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2016/11/PAGB-SELF-CARE-NATION-REPORT-NOVEMBER-2016-1.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)