

For immediate release

PAGB welcomes Thérèse Coffey's plans to utilise the pharmacy workforce to help ease pressures on the NHS

PAGB, the consumer healthcare association has welcomed plans from Thérèse Coffey, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and Deputy Prime Minister, to help people access the care and support to meet their health needs. In particular, the Consumer Healthcare Association has welcomed central role that pharmacists will play in delivering support to patients and easing pressures on GPs and has offered to work with the Government to help achieve these aims.

['Our Plan for Patients'](#) recognises pharmacies as the key workforce to help protect NHS resources. Pharmacists will be able to free up GP time for appointments by managing and supplying more medicines such as contraception without a GP prescription; this could free up to two million GP appointments a year. The Minister's plans also mean that pharmacists will be able to take referrals from emergency care for minor illnesses or symptoms, such as a cough, headache or sore throat.

PAGB Chief Executive, Michelle Riddalls, said: 'It is encouraging to see the new plans set out by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and Deputy Prime Minister today. 'Our Plan for Patients' sets out how pharmacists can play a key role in preserving precious NHS resources. This is a step in the right direction to ensuring we have the infrastructure in place to make the NHS sustainable.

'At PAGB we know that self care can also reduce pressure on the NHS and empower people to take control of their health. That's why we've worked collaboratively with pharmacy and healthcare organisations to develop a blueprint for a self care strategy¹ which would achieve the goals the Minister outlined today. A strategy would help address the systemic problems which lead to people unnecessarily seeking care in A&E and support people to self care safely.

'Alongside the Government's plan, the Department of Health and Social Care has said that the public will be called on to do their bit as part of a 'national endeavour' to support the NHS. We know that the public already want to do their bit. There has been a huge shift in attitudes to health and self care as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Recent research from PAGB shows that 65% of people believe the NHS should make it easier for people to care for themselves, without using GP services or A&E.

'Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 18 million GP appointments and 3.7 million visits to A&E for self-treatable conditions, which could have been managed at home with support and advice from a pharmacist.

'If the Government is willing to work with the sector to embrace self care, the NHS could steer people away from unnecessary GP and hospital visits. We look forward to engaging with the Government on the much needed development and implementation of these plans.'

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¹ <https://selfcarestrategy.org/>

Note to editors:

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

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