

Self-care recognised for essential role in building NHS for the future in Government's 10 Year Health Plan

PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, welcomes the publication of the 10 Year Health Plan (the Plan), which outlines the Government's ambitions to reform the NHS and recognises the important role that self-care plays in improving the health of the nation.

The Plan outlines how the Government intend to deliver three key shifts: hospital to community; analogue to digital; and sickness to prevention.

Michelle Riddalls OBE, CEO at PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, comments:

"The 10 Year Health Plan marks an important step forward in recognising the valuable role that self-care plays within our healthcare system. At PAGB, we have long been advocating for measures to prioritise and promote self-care, engaging with Government and key stakeholders to provide insights, evidence and solutions to ease the burden on the NHS."

"We are particularly pleased to see that self-care is explicitly mentioned in the Plan and its principles woven throughout. It's encouraging that the Government has clearly listened to the evidence and insights PAGB has provided — through briefings, stakeholder engagement and parliamentary activity — to ensure self-care is reflected in this vision for the future."

The Plan recognises that good self-care depends on the right knowledge, skills and support, and commits to supporting patients to be more active in managing their own health. A key announcement in the Plan is the move to a 'digital-by-default' service with an overhaul of the NHS App to support this. Individuals will have access to advice, guidance, self-care support and appointment management via the NHS App. Plans for the NHS App also include directing patients to well-evidenced consumer healthcare products to support their self-care where appropriate. This is a major step forward and reflects a long-standing PAGB ask.

Michelle continues:

"This shift towards a digital-first model of care will be key in supporting timely access to reliable health information and encouraging people to manage self-treatable conditions at home. We know from our work that digital tools, used well, can break down barriers to care and reduce health inequalities."

The Plan also sets out ambitions to deliver more easily accessible care closer to home, with a focus on addressing health inequalities — which will be vital to improving confidence to self-care across all demographics. It highlights the vital role that pharmacy will play in the launch of a Neighbourhood Health Service, rolled out across the country, bringing healthcare to people's doorsteps. The aim is to give a greater role to community pharmacy in supporting people to manage their long-term conditions and to bring 'health to the heart of the high street'.

Community pharmacy will also have a key role to play in supporting the prevention agenda by keeping people well in the community and will form part of the Plan's ambitions for neighbourhood health teams and neighbourhood health centres. This will be enabled using electronic patient records which will support integration across healthcare professionals, ensuring more holistic, patient-centred care.

Michelle shares:

“It is really promising to see that pharmacy will be at the centre of this new infrastructure to ensure greater accessibility to self-care. We know that pharmacy services deliver care closer to home, helping to reduce unnecessary GP and hospital attendances and offering an important reminder that self-care doesn’t have to be practised in isolation. We also welcome the Plan’s commitment to link pharmacy into the Single Patient Record, another key PAGB ask.”

The role that over-the-counter medicines play in the prevention of illness is also underscored in the Plan, with the Government acknowledging that their history of *“striking out alone on primary prevention”* has often been *“without cohesion or real strategy”*. The Plan highlights where new innovations are making progress on prevention possible, also noting the strength of the consumer health market, valued at £4.1 billion in 2024, with sales up 8% on 2023.

Michelle continues:

“Widening access to medicines through reclassification forms a key pillar in the work that we are doing to build a sustainable healthcare service fit for the future and realise the full potential of self-care. Brands can expand into new categories and release products to treat new conditions, encouraging more self-care by building on the trust and confidence that already exists with consumers. Greater reclassification of medicines goes hand-in-hand with the Government’s commitments to move to community and pharmacy fronted healthcare, empowering patients to self-care at home. Through effective use of over-the-counter medicines and self-care, people can prevent worsening of symptoms, avoid unnecessary GP appointments, and ultimately improve their quality of life.”

A final note:

“Today’s announcement represents an important step forward in embedding self-care into the fabric of the NHS. We look forward to working with the Government and the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure the ambitions around self-care are fully realised in practice.”

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About PAGB

PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, represents the manufacturers of branded over-the-counter medicines, self-care medical devices and food supplements.

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