

Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Self-Care Strategy Group to congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. With the NHS and primary care facing unprecedented pressures – which without urgent action is only set to increase – we look forward to working with you and the Government to unleash the full benefits of self-care and to building an NHS fit for the future.

As you will be aware, self-care for minor and self-treatable conditions is a vital tool in managing capacity within primary and emergency care settings. With the NHS requiring significant investment to reduce waiting lists, improve diagnostic capacity and tackle the workforce crisis, cost-efficient means of relieving capacity in GP practices and A&E departments, as well as across primary care, are clearly needed. Self-care offers one solution to this problem, enabling systemic change to the UK's approach to healthcare, including in deprived and rural communities.

In 2021, the Self-Care Strategy Group (SCSG) – comprised of leading pharmacy groups, professional organisations, trade associations and charities committed to self-care – published a [blueprint for a national self-care strategy](#) outlining nine recommendations to better support and encourage self-care in England. From improving health literacy in the school curriculum and modernising digital health infrastructure, to empowerment of pharmacists and widening patient access to self-care medicines through reclassification, our recommendations provide a roadmap towards a future where all people have greater agency over their health and confidence to utilise the full range of primary and community care services, not just GP practices.

With the support of multiple Labour MPs and Peers, we have welcomed progress by the NHS to implement self-care policies that improved access to pharmacy and primary care navigation. However, significant room remains to fully capitalise on the benefits of self-care. In line with your manifesto commitments, we believe opportunities exist to expand prescribing rights, optimise digital health tools (such as the NHS App), and enable direct referrals between primary, diagnostic and specialist care services – but also that there is potential to go further. By widening access to self-care medicines in pharmacies, training Primary Care Network (PCN) staff to support patients in navigating the care system, promoting credible health information and expanding public awareness campaigns, the benefits of self-care could be fully realised.

With this in mind, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how self-care can help the Government to reduce pressure on GPs and A&E departments and form the foundation of an NHS fit for the future. The SCSG stands ready to support you and your colleagues in realising this ambition by contributing our expertise. We would be happy to work with your office to find a mutually agreeable time to meet, and to answer any questions you have.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Graham Jackson
GP and Chair of the Self-Care Strategy Group

