

February 2020

## A clinical consensus statement on self care

Self care comprises the actions that individuals take for themselves, on behalf of and with others in order to develop, protect, maintain and improve their health, wellbeing or wellness. The benefits of self care are wide-reaching and interlinked:

- **Self care empowers people:** it allows people to take ownership of their health by recognising the symptoms of self-treatable conditions and how to act on them to stay well when experiencing minor illnesses.
- **Self care reduces demand on the NHS:** it has an important role in minimising unnecessary GP appointments and A&E attendances for minor illnesses, freeing up healthcare professionals' time to dedicate towards people who are in more need of their help.
- **Self care reduces health inequalities:** where there are wider social determinants impacting on an individual's health, there is a greater need to empower them to know how to take care of themselves, as well as how, where and when to access advice.
- **Self care improves health outcomes:** by equipping people with the knowledge to take greater care of themselves and freeing up healthcare professionals' time, self care can play a significant role in driving improvements in population health.

Despite these widely recognised benefits, there are numerous barriers to maximising the opportunities to self care: rigid patient pathways, inefficient prescribing habits and persevering perceptions of hierarchies in the NHS all stifle progress. Nevertheless, there are pockets of best practice taking place across the country, demonstrating that with the right system levers in place, these barriers can be overcome.

To truly deliver the benefits that self care can bring, a wholesale cultural shift is needed. Both the public's perception of health and wellbeing, and healthcare professionals' perceptions of the role they can play in need to change.

**We support the call for a national strategy for self care and the recommendations in the *Building clinical consensus* roundtable report, set out below.**

**We are committed to playing our part, both individually and collectively, to support the development of policies to encourage self care for self-treatable conditions.**



## **Recommendations within the *Building clinical consensus* roundtable report**

1. The Department of Health and Social Care should develop a national self care strategy
2. NHS England & Improvement should explore the implementation of self care recommendation prescriptions to support clinicians to discuss and refer patients towards self care
3. Primary Care Networks should consider ways to improve self care in their local populations as part of the development of their network across their local health system
4. NHS England & Improvement should enable community pharmacists to refer people directly to other healthcare professionals
5. NHS England & Improvement should support moves towards community pharmacists being granted read and write access to give them full integration and interoperability of IT systems as part of local health and care records (LHCR) partnerships, and promote national support for such data sharing agreements
6. The Government and royal colleges should include self care modules in healthcare professionals' curricula and the national curriculum, in a way that is sustainable for schools to deliver
7. NHSX should explore technologies that can be used to promote self care and manage demand on the NHS