

Enabling self care in Greater Manchester: a green paper



With the NHS facing an unprecedented financial challenge, it is critical that everything possible is done to limit pressures on services, reduce wasteful practices and shift the entire system towards a greater focus on preventative care.

There is increasing recognition from health experts and policymakers that this can be achieved via the promotion of self care for self-treatable conditions.

Indeed, in its own plans for health devolution, Greater Manchester has set out an ambition to help individuals “take greater charge of, and responsibility for, their own health and wellbeing”¹.



PAGB (Proprietary Association of Great Britain), which represents the manufacturers of branded over-the-counter medicines, self care medical devices and food supplements, has undertaken an audit of the levels of use of GP and A&E services for self-treatable conditions to inform further policy development.

It has found that:

- Greater Manchester has 12% more A&E attendances for minor ailments than the East of England (which is the region with the lowest proportion of attendances for minor ailments)²
- Almost one in ten patients (9%) in Greater Manchester lack the confidence to manage their own health, which is one of the highest levels in the country (although 91% do feel confident)³
- Greater Manchester spends over £5 million per year on prescribing medicines which are easily available over the counter⁴
- Greater Manchester has seen little improvement in its GP waiting times, which still hover around the national average⁵
- There is also variation in GP access across the region, with 10% more people in some parts of Greater Manchester being able to get an appointment with their GP compared to other areas⁶
- Greater Manchester directs one of the highest proportion (12.4%) of NHS 111 callers to self care⁷, but this figure is still significantly below the percentage that could be directed to self care (27.8%)^{8,9}

PAGB has estimated that by reducing A&E attendances, alleviating the pressures on GP services and prescribing more efficiently, the health system in Greater Manchester could save £22.5 million each year. This would pay for either 229 more doctors, or over 1,500 more nurses, every year^{10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17}.

Outlined below are the policy initiatives that PAGB believes Greater Manchester should consider as part of its strategy to empower individuals to take greater charge of, and responsibility for, their own health and wellbeing and, therefore, self care for self-treatable conditions:

1. Launch a campaign to increase awareness of the opportunities and means to self care
2. Enable community pharmacy to refer people who need medical attention on to the appropriate healthcare professional with priority
3. Empower community pharmacy to 'write' in patient medical records so any medication/advice offered can be recorded to ensure continuity of care
4. Ensure NHS 111 algorithms refer more callers appropriately to pharmacy and/or self care
5. Improve health literacy of young people and promote self care through the education system

PAGB is now keen to work with those involved in the Greater Manchester programme to:

- Identify what opportunities exist in Greater Manchester to further increase individuals' abilities to self care for self-treatable conditions
- Support the implementation of the policy initiatives we have suggested
- Measure improvements in the empowerment of individuals in Greater Manchester to self care

We would be delighted to receive your feedback on these proposals (please send any feedback to pagb@incisivehealth.com). We plan to use this feedback to develop a white paper on self care.

Introduction

The health service is currently facing unprecedented challenges, fuelled by a growing and ageing population and exacerbated by increasing financial pressures.

With the NHS required to find £22 billion of efficiency savings by 2020, it is critical that everything possible is done to limit pressures on services, reduce wasteful practices and shift the entire system towards a greater focus on preventative care¹⁸. Greater Manchester has pledged to make “significant progress” towards a £2 billion reduction in its own financial gap by 2020 to support the NHS¹⁹.

Encouraging people to self care could result in significant benefits for individuals, whilst helping to ease the financial pressures on the NHS. There is significant potential for savings to be found.

For example, nationally:

- There are currently too many people relying on A&E for self-treatable conditions. These self-treatable conditions were responsible for 19.1% of A&E attendances in 2014²⁰
- Inappropriate A&E attendance costs the NHS over £300 million a year and creates significant pressure on services^{21,22,23}
- There are around 57 million GP appointments each year for self-treatable conditions at a cost of £2 billion to the NHS²⁴

There is increasing recognition from policymakers of the need to promote self care for self-treatable conditions. In its plans for health devolution, Greater Manchester has set out a number of ambitions on self care to help individuals “take greater charge of, and responsibility for, their own health and wellbeing”²⁵.

To help quantify these benefits and support the implementation of these proposals, PAGB has undertaken an assessment of the opportunity for Greater Manchester to encourage more self care – and the associated savings that could be delivered as a result.

The audit assessed the opportunity for health and care services in Greater Manchester to:

- Improve an individual’s ability to manage their own health
- Alleviate pressures on emergency services
- Reduce unnecessary prescribing practices

This green paper sets out the key findings from the audit, alongside proposals for how Greater Manchester can help improve individuals’ ability to self care. PAGB hopes that the proposals within this paper will prompt discussion and debate both within Greater Manchester and throughout the country on how policymakers can enable more self care, improve patient outcomes and relieve financial pressures on the NHS.

The case for change

Patients' confidence to manage their own health

Analysis of the GP Patient Survey by PAGB has found that Greater Manchester has the joint highest percentage of patients in England who are not at all confident or not very confident in managing their own health²⁶. Whilst 91% of patients stated that they were confident managing their own health, Greater Manchester had (with London) the joint highest percentage of people who said they did not feel confident managing their own health (at 9%): equivalent to over 250,000 of the region's population²⁷. This compares to an England average of 7%²⁸.

Building patients' confidence to self care for self-treatable conditions, and their knowledge of how to access support to self care, could alleviate pressure on GP services. The more confident the individual, the more likely they are to self care when they can as opposed to using health services. Whilst it is positive that 91% of people feel confident to self manage their health in Greater Manchester, it is important that people are aware of how to put this into practice, and that the 9% who are not confident are upskilled. Improving public awareness of how to access support for self-treatable conditions through services, such as community pharmacy, could unlock significant savings in Greater Manchester.

Referrals from NHS 111 services

Given the pressures on emergency services and general practice, it is important that referrals from NHS 111 to these services are appropriate. Nationally, Greater Manchester leads the way in directing people to self care through its NHS 111 service, with 12.4% of NHS 111 callers directed either to self care or given health information leaflets. This is more than any other region in England. However, studies have shown that 27.8% of callers could be advised to self care²⁹. If Greater Manchester's NHS 111 service was able to refer more callers to self care and directed fewer inappropriately to A&E, this could save over £1 million every year^{30,31}.

Improving NHS 111 algorithms could reduce the number of people visiting GPs or A&E unnecessarily, and provide more and better options for appropriate care, while taking advantage of the extended evening and weekend hours of many pharmacies. PAGB has welcomed the announcement, as part of the Government's pharmacy reforms, that NHS 111 will directly refer people requiring urgent repeat prescriptions to community pharmacy. However, we believe that more could be done to ensure people contacting NHS 111 are directed to pharmacy for advice and/or non-prescription medicines where this is appropriate.

Pressures on accident and emergency services

A&E attendance for minor ailments is a good indicator of how knowledgeable and confident a population is of how to access support for self-treatable conditions. Almost one third of all attendances at A&E in Greater Manchester are for minor ailments, at an estimated cost of £16 million every year^{32,33,34}. If all of these attendances were diverted to self care, it could pay for over 150 extra GPs, or over 1,000 more nurses every year^{35,36}.

Research recently commissioned by PAGB of 1,007 adults living in Manchester, discovered that over half of people surveyed admitted to using GP and A&E services for minor conditions. However, 79% would be more likely to seek advice from pharmacists and self treat if they understood their impact on the NHS³⁷.

Unnecessary prescribing

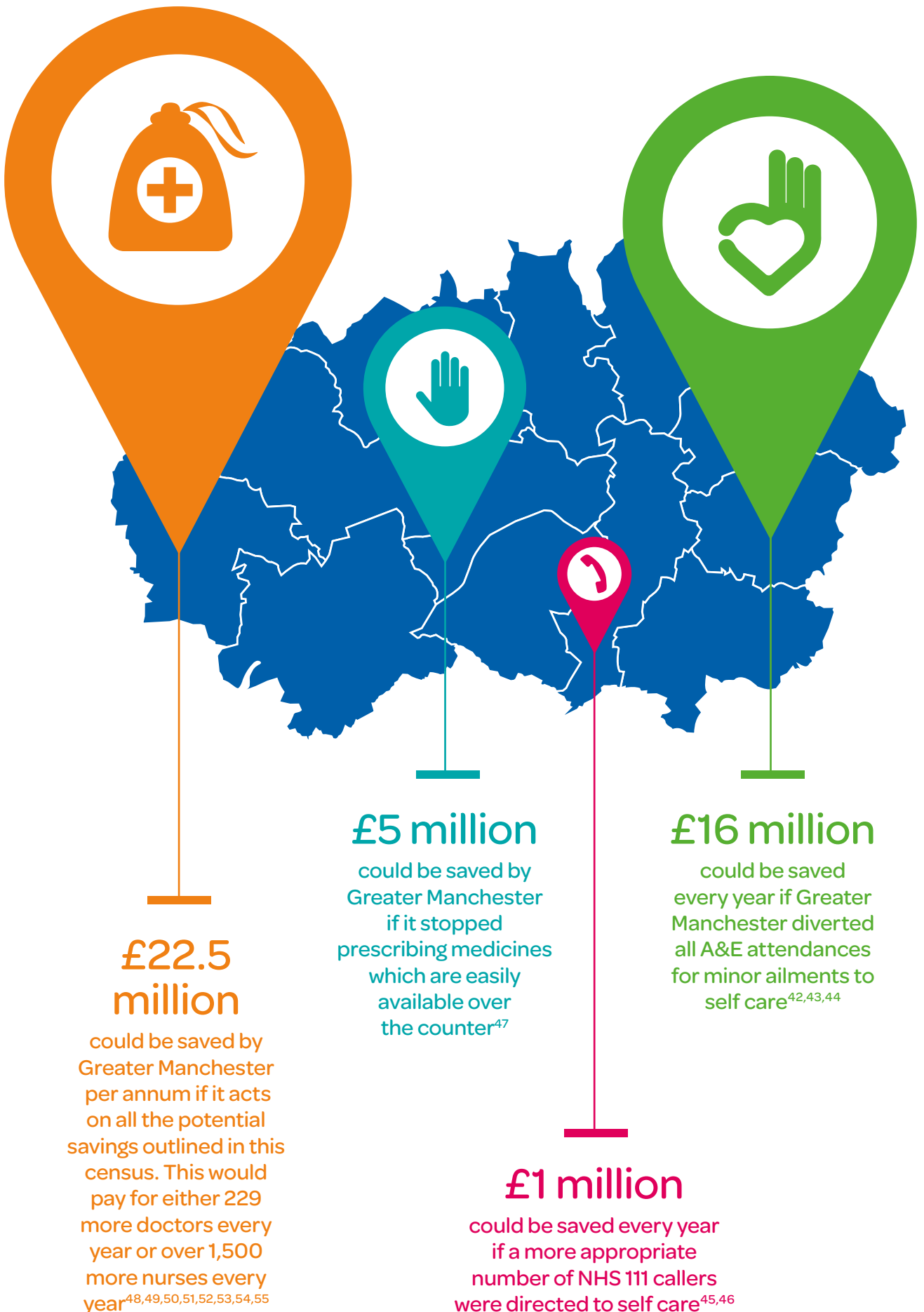
Some prescriptions are for cheap to buy over the counter medicines and patients purchasing these individually could save health services a significant sum of money. PAGB's assessment has identified that each year Greater Manchester spends:

- Over £5 million prescribing medicines which are cheaply and easily available over the counter³⁸
- Over £150,000 per 100,000 people on prescribing paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin – all of which are cheaply and easily available over the counter^{39,40}

Furthermore, the results from PAGB's research in Manchester revealed that when made aware of the cost of self treatable conditions to the NHS, nearly one third (29%) of those who qualify for free prescriptions said they would be willing to purchase an over-the-counter medicine for a self-treatable condition⁴¹.

Through reviewing its approach to prescriptions, and ensuring vulnerable patients are still protected, Greater Manchester could deliver significant savings to its health and care services.

The scale of the opportunity



Opportunities to help improve the ability of individuals to self care in Greater Manchester

Our research has identified that there are significant savings that could be delivered if public awareness of how to self care, and access support for self care, was improved.

Outlined below are the policy initiatives that PAGB believes Greater Manchester should consider as part of its strategy to upgrade its approach to self care.

1. Launch a campaign within Greater Manchester to increase awareness of the opportunities and means to self care and the expertise of pharmacists.

National polling by PAGB has identified that the main barrier preventing people from visiting a pharmacist rather than their GP or A&E for advice is a lack of awareness of the expertise of pharmacists. It is essential that people receive consistent information on how to self care and that, where advice is required, the pharmacy is the first port of call for self-treatable conditions.

2. Enable community pharmacy to refer people who need medical attention on to the appropriate healthcare professional.

This would encourage people to visit a pharmacy should they require healthcare advice, as they would understand they would leave with either a medicine, advice to make them feel better, or a referral/ appointment to another healthcare professional (fast-tracked if the pharmacist felt this was necessary).

3. Empower community pharmacy to 'write' to patient medical records so any medication/ advice offered can be recorded consistently.

Most pharmacies can now access health records, but they cannot record the advice/medication they give to people. Enabling pharmacists to write to these records would mean that advice and treatment given in other health settings (GP and hospital) can take general health, underlying conditions and medicines use into account, providing a consistent and comprehensive record of a patient's treatment.

4. Ensure NHS 111 algorithms refer more callers appropriately to pharmacy.

Research shows that at least 27.8% of callers to NHS 111 could be advised to self care. Given that at present only 12.7% of callers in Greater Manchester are advised to self care, there is an opportunity to review the approach of the NHS 111 service, reduce the number of people visiting their GP or A&E unnecessarily, and provide more and better options for appropriate care, while taking advantage of the extended evening and weekend hours of many pharmacies.

5. Improve health literacy of young people and promote self care within the education system.

PAGB's research has identified that there is scope to improve people's confidence to manage their own health. PAGB believes a focus must be placed on ensuring children receive the basic information and tools to self care effectively at school and at key points throughout their lives. Greater Manchester could consider how it can enhance the education young people in the area receive on how to self care.

Your views

PAGB has developed this green paper to identify the scale of the opportunity for Greater Manchester, and start a discussion on how the region can help empower individuals to self care for self-treatable conditions.

PAGB is now keen to work with those involved in the Greater Manchester NHS to:

- Identify what opportunities exist in Greater Manchester to further increase individuals' abilities to self care for self-treatable conditions
- Support the implementation of the policy initiatives we have suggested
- Measure improvements in the empowerment of individuals in Greater Manchester to self care

Please find below questions to guide your feedback, which should be submitted to pagb@incisivehealth.com.

We will be using submissions along with meetings with interested stakeholders to inform the development of our white paper on self care.

Consultation questions to guide submissions

01

What sectors do you think Manchester devolution will impact the most, and why? (eg health/social care/transport etc)

02

Is self care a priority for Greater Manchester? Do you believe it should be a priority, and why?

03

Are you supportive of the recommendations included within this green paper? Are they implementable? And if so, how?

04

Are there any further recommendations that should be included?

05

To what extent is Greater Manchester already incorporating the recommendations of this green paper into devolution plans/STP? What other initiatives are being pursued to support self care for self-treatable conditions?

06

How should increased self care and its benefits be measured? Should targets be set, and if so at what level?

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