

**Written evidence submitted by Imperial College London Self-Care Academic Research Unit (SCARU)
(PHS0040)**

The UK should establish itself as the world leader in Self-Driven Healthcare to support the health and wellbeing of people from all walks of life and in various settings

Executive Summary

Self-Driven Healthcare (SDH) is a term introduced by Innovate UK to conceptualize aspects of healthcare delivery that can support people in becoming more engaged in the management of their own health and wellbeing rather than being passive receivers of healthcare. Cross-cutting SDH solutions for leveraging the power of self-generated data should be supported by government to drive health improvement and prevention in schools, workplaces, social care and in the community.

Introduction

1. The [Self-Care Academic Research Unit \(SCARU\)](#) at Imperial College London was established in 2017 and is the only academic research unit globally that is dedicated to the study of self-care policy and practice.
2. [SCARU Director](#) holds a managerial position at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, is Director of the Self-Care Forum UK and Director and Trustee of the International Self-Care Foundation.
3. SCARU received [funding from Innovate UK](#) in 2022 to support the development of thought leadership around the emergent concept of self-driven healthcare (SDH).
4. Initial work resulted in the publication of an [article in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine](#). The article proposes a working definition of SDH and articulates how SDH could help improve health and social care outcomes and reduce costs.
5. The development of an accessible SDH Portal is crucial to supporting people in taking more ownership in their health and wellbeing journey and to positioning the UK as a world leader in SDH.

Why the Health and Social Care Committee should consider this issue as part of its Prevention inquiry

- Digital health innovations like SDH can play a significant role in supporting proactive care and prevention to drive improvements in health and wellbeing outcomes.
- SDH solutions that promote citizen engagement whilst streamlining access to evidence-based self-care interventions in educational, home and workplace settings could reduce the demand for social care.
- At-scale deployment of SDH solutions could also help the UK government and health organizations, including the NHS, to improve health outcomes while controlling costs and addressing priority areas such as equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Why the Committee should look at it now: in particular, whether there is an opportunity for it to add value to existing research and evidence

- In the UK, the patient role is rapidly shifting away from being a passive actor and information receiver to becoming an empowered self-carer with the ability to share self-generated data and participate in decision-making to inform their health and wellbeing journey
- The development of SDH also presents an opportunity for the UK to grow companies in this area.

Why this area would benefit from scrutiny

- Health system sustainability is a construct of both economic and social sustainability, as both are needed for the system to guarantee accessible and adequate care for all citizens and satisfy their needs.
- Because SDH will be technology-driven, it is crucial to ensure the movement does not exacerbate inequalities due to the digital divide.

Why the Government needs to take action in this area

- Introducing SDH could allow the development of cross-cutting healthcare innovations designed to operate at system level and therefore help address some of the barriers that hindered the success of earlier SDH attempts.
- When digital health companies are developing their online innovations, it is more efficient if they can use platforms and 'off-the-shelf' components that allow them to concentrate on their area of expertise and innovation, and not have to reinvent technology or build disconnected digital silos.
- This is particularly important in areas concerned with securely accessing or storing health data, having integrated and interoperable systems, secure commercial environments or when developing a more holistic approach to improving motivation.
- The UK is a significant exporter of a world-leading knowledge economy, and the development of SDH presents a key opportunity for the UK to build companies with a large international market share.

Recommendations

1. Proper consideration should be given to the emergent concept of Self-Driven Healthcare as a key driver for health maintenance, health improvement and to support the prevention agenda in the UK
2. The UK should invest in cross-cutting solutions to become the world leader in SDH and increase its market share
3. The UK should establish an SDH Ecosystems Hub to help unlock the potential of self-driven healthcare solutions.
4. The SDH Ecosystems Hub should be supported to assess UK readiness and commission the development of a national SDH portal earmarked for launch by 2030 for people and patient benefit.

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