

# National Self-Care Week 2024

## Evaluation



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## About the Self Care Forum

The Self-Care Forum is a charity and has been organising National Self-Care Week since 2011. As the UK's leading independent provider of evidence-based resources, expert insights, and best practices in self-care, we help organisations support their communities and individuals in taking better care of their physical health and mental well-being.

For further information about the Self-Care Forum, our work or how to get involved please contact [selfcare@selfcareforum.org](mailto:selfcare@selfcareforum.org). You can also follow us on X, Bluesky, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram, or [subscribe to our newsletter](#) via our website.

### Our mission

- Provide the most useful self-care resources
- Be a 'one-stop-shop' networking hub
- Campaign for more effective self-care



# 1 Foreword by the Self-Care Forum chair

Local and national activities for National Self-Care Week this year were inspiring, and whilst promotion on social media was down, engagement was up with many organisations choosing to hold 7-day programmes of activities and events.

We launched fascinating interim results from our “Living Self-Care Study” which showed low awareness about public health advice such as alcohol intake and exercise guidelines. This underlines the need for consistent public health campaigns like those promoted during Self-Care Week.

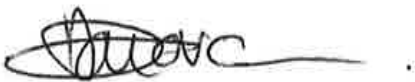
The *Help Us Help You* campaign, usually running alongside Self-Care Week, was not widely promoted this year contributing to a 50% fall in NHS participation. And, while Self-Care Week is a great opportunity to promote the work we do, self-care is important throughout the year and we expect engagement will pick up over the course of the year, especially with an NHS 10-Year Plan on the horizon in England.

There was strong support from health leaders this year with Care Minister, Stephen Kinnock MP reinforcing our message about the importance of community pharmacy. Northern Ireland’s Health Department issued a press release about winter wellbeing and, we worked with the Welsh Health Department on its Self-Care Week assets.

As a nurse, I was particularly pleased to see the contributions from many UK nursing organisations, using their platforms to support both nurses and patients.

While engagement has traditionally been strong across all social media platforms, this year saw a noticeable decline on X. Like many organisations we are moving to BlueSky and will monitor engagement on X before coming off completely.

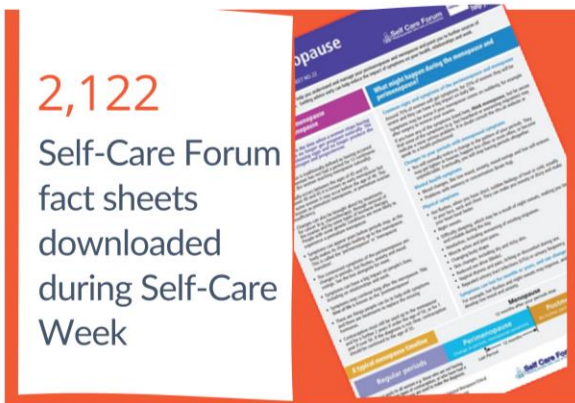
Finally, we would like to thank all organisations and individuals who have helped to make National Self-Care Week a success once again.



Helen Donovan, M.Ed. BSc. RN, RHV, Queens Nurse  
is Self-Care Forum Chair, independent nurse  
consultant and immunisation specialist nurse.



## 2 Self-Care Week Highlights



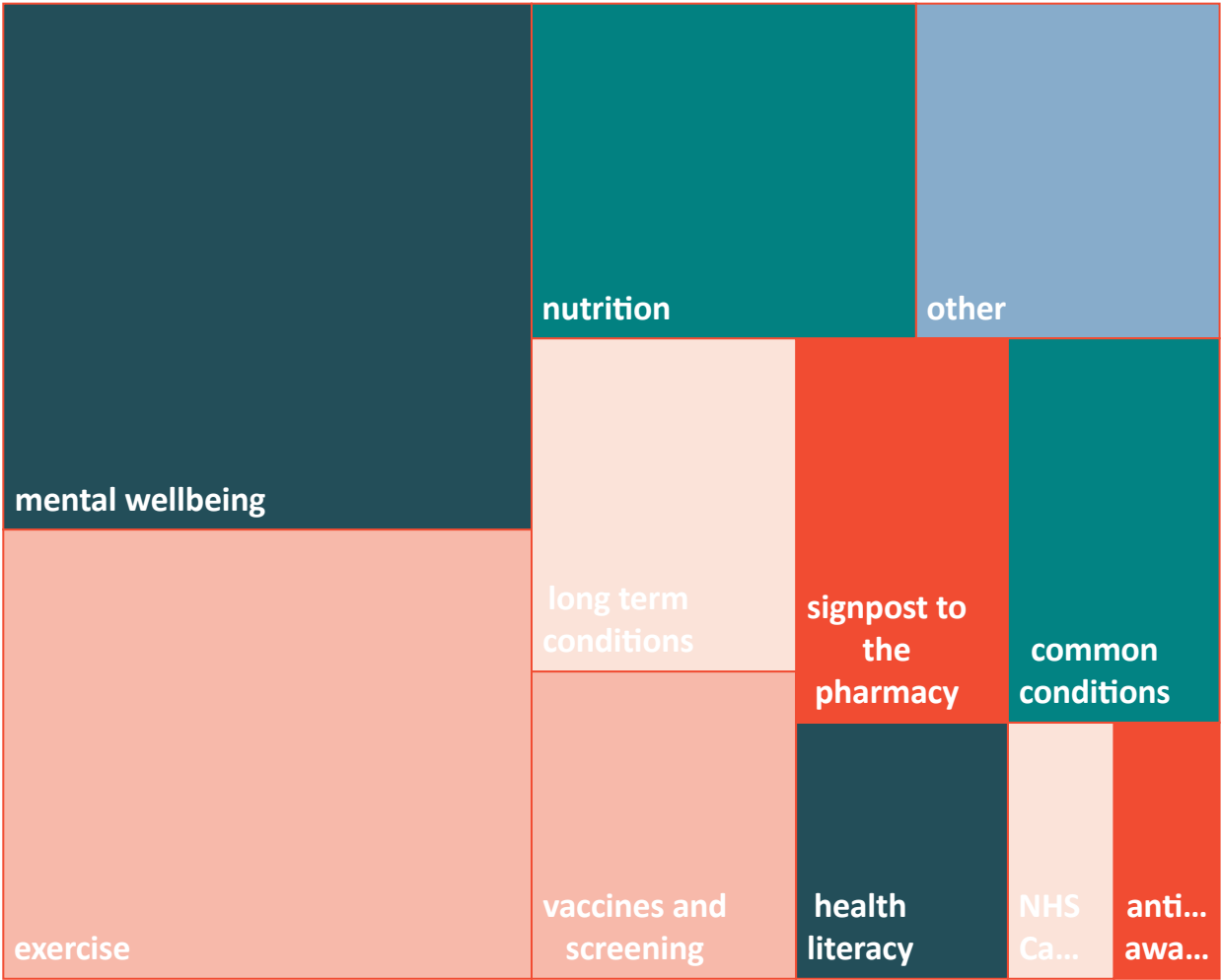
National, regional and local engagement at an all time high



Mental wellbeing, exercise and nutrition were  
the top 3 Self-Care Week messages

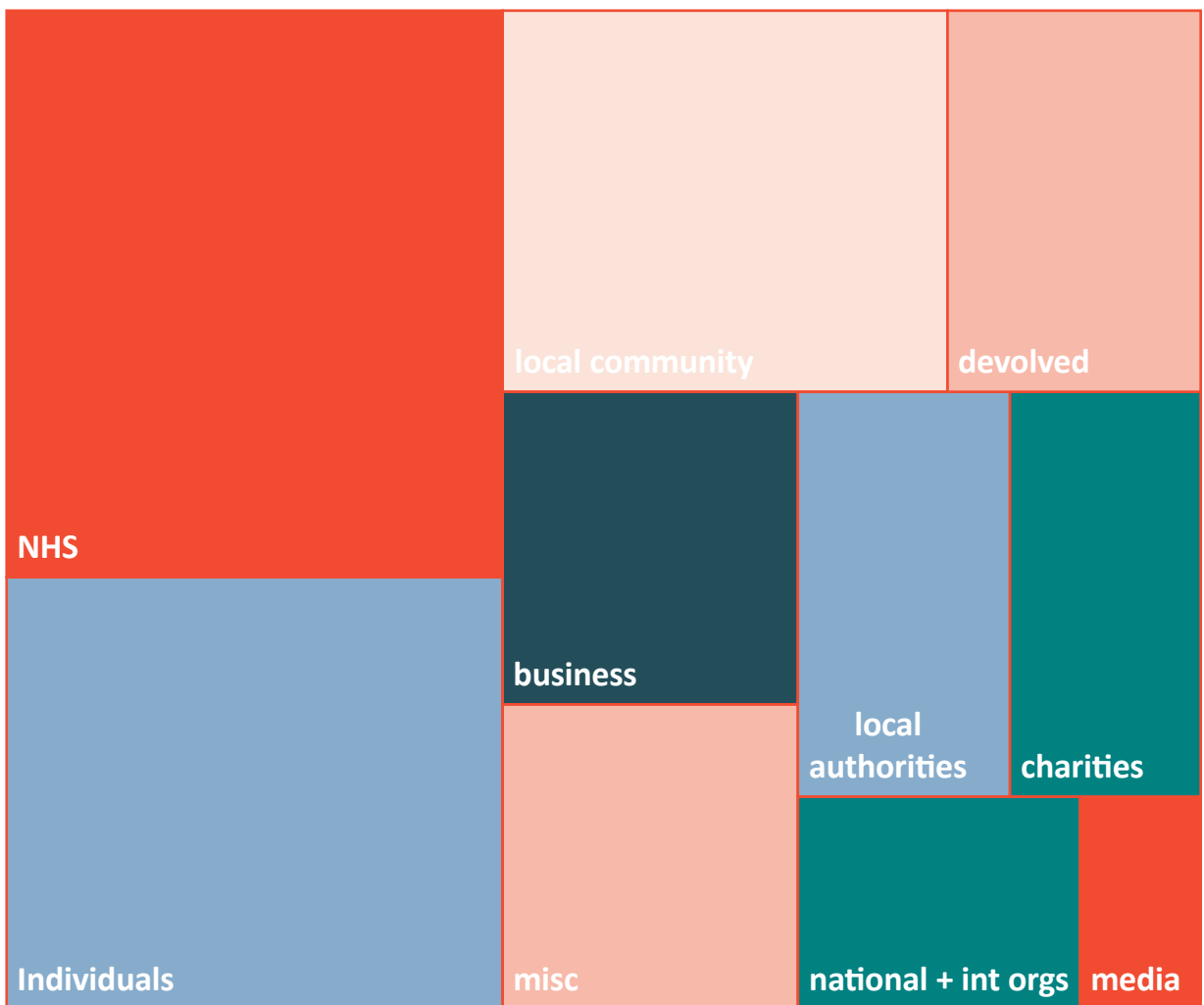
# 3 Top Self-Care Messages

A Self-Care Week survey reveals the breadth of self-care messages being promoted during Self-Care Week with 2024’s **top message being “mental wellbeing”** closely **followed by “exercise” and “nutrition”**. The survey also revealed a dip in promotion of NHS campaigns compared to previous years where the *Help Us Help You* campaign was used to also promote Self-Care Week.



## 4 Who is taking part?

More than 500 organisations and individuals took part in Self-Care Week with NHS organisations still the largest group although numbers were down this year. Because Self-Care Week can be used to communicate a range of relevant messages, there is a wide diversity of organisations getting involved.



Represented in the “misc” section are therapists, bloggers, gyms, universities, schools, colleges, whilst the “local community” section includes youth groups, social group, faith groups and more.



## 5 National Activity - Wales

We worked with the Welsh Government on social media assets raising awareness of both National Self-Care Week and *Help Us Help You*. These posts were reposted by **Sue Tranka, Welsh Chief Nursing Officer** and **Sir Frank Atherton, Welsh Chief Medical Officer**.



The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at **Swansea Bay University Health Board** also participated with messages on eating well for health.





## 6 National Activity – Northern Ireland

For National Self-Care Week the Northern Ireland **Health Department** issued a **press release** with advice to “Take simple steps to improve your wellbeing this winter.” There were quotes from **Health Minister, Mike Nesbit** and **Chief Medical Officer Prof Sir Michael McBride**.

Northern Ireland’s **Public Health Agency** promoted Self-Care Week on socials with the message “getting active is a form of self-care” as part of its “Choose To Live Better” campaign.

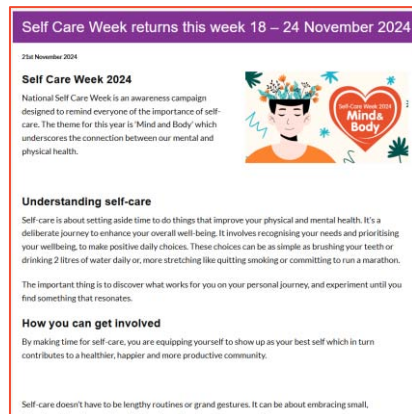
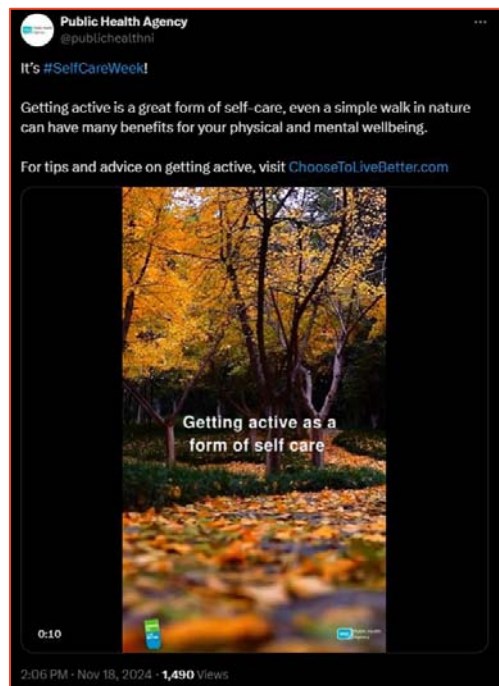
**Senior Principal Pharmaceutical Officer, Christopher Garland** helped to launch Self-Care Week as part of the X-chat on Monday 18 November.

A blog encouraging readers to take 5 steps to self-care was published by **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**



Department of  
**Health**

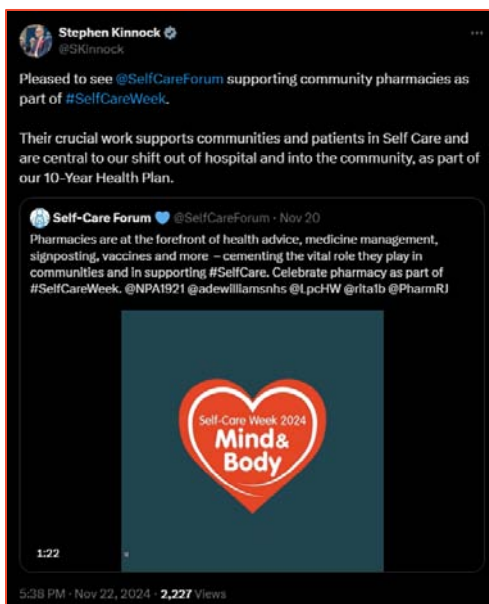
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## 7 National Activity - England

**Minister of State for Care, Stephen Kinnock MP** reposted a Self-Care Forum post with a message supporting community pharmacy.

**Darren Jones MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury** spoke to Jess Williams from Bedminster Pharmacy in Bristol about his own self-care practises.



**NHS England's Kate Jackson and Fez Awan** helped to launch National Self-Care Week by contributing to **the Xchat** on Monday 18 November. They also helped to **judge the Self-Care Awards**



## 8 Gov.UK Blog

A blog by the Self-Care Forum's chair, **Helen Donovan** was published on the **Gov.UK website**, highlighting why we need awareness weeks like National Self-Care Week.

NHS England's **Chief Nursing Office, Deborah Sturdy** posted a link to the blog on social media during the Week.

### Why we need Self Care Week

[Helen Donovan](#), 19 November 2024 - [Care and support](#), [Communities](#), [Events](#)



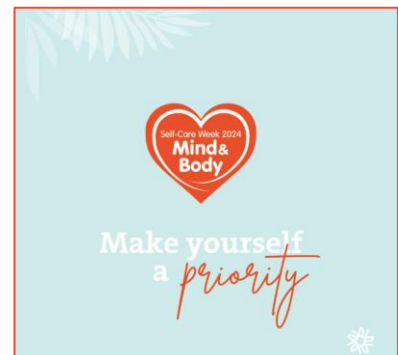
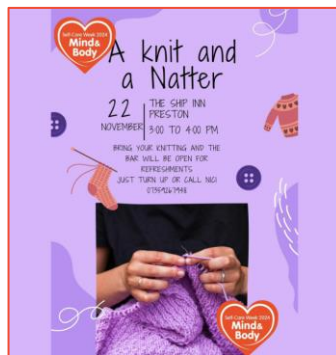
### Getting healthy messages out there

Awareness weeks, like [National Self-Care Week](#) (18-24 November 2024), play a crucial role in communicating important public health messages.



## 9 Self-Care Week Icon use

In 2023 we were honoured to have the award-winning designer Mark Osborne create our National Self-Care Week icon which has become our permanent brand. Here are a few examples of **how our icon is being used** during Self-Care Week.





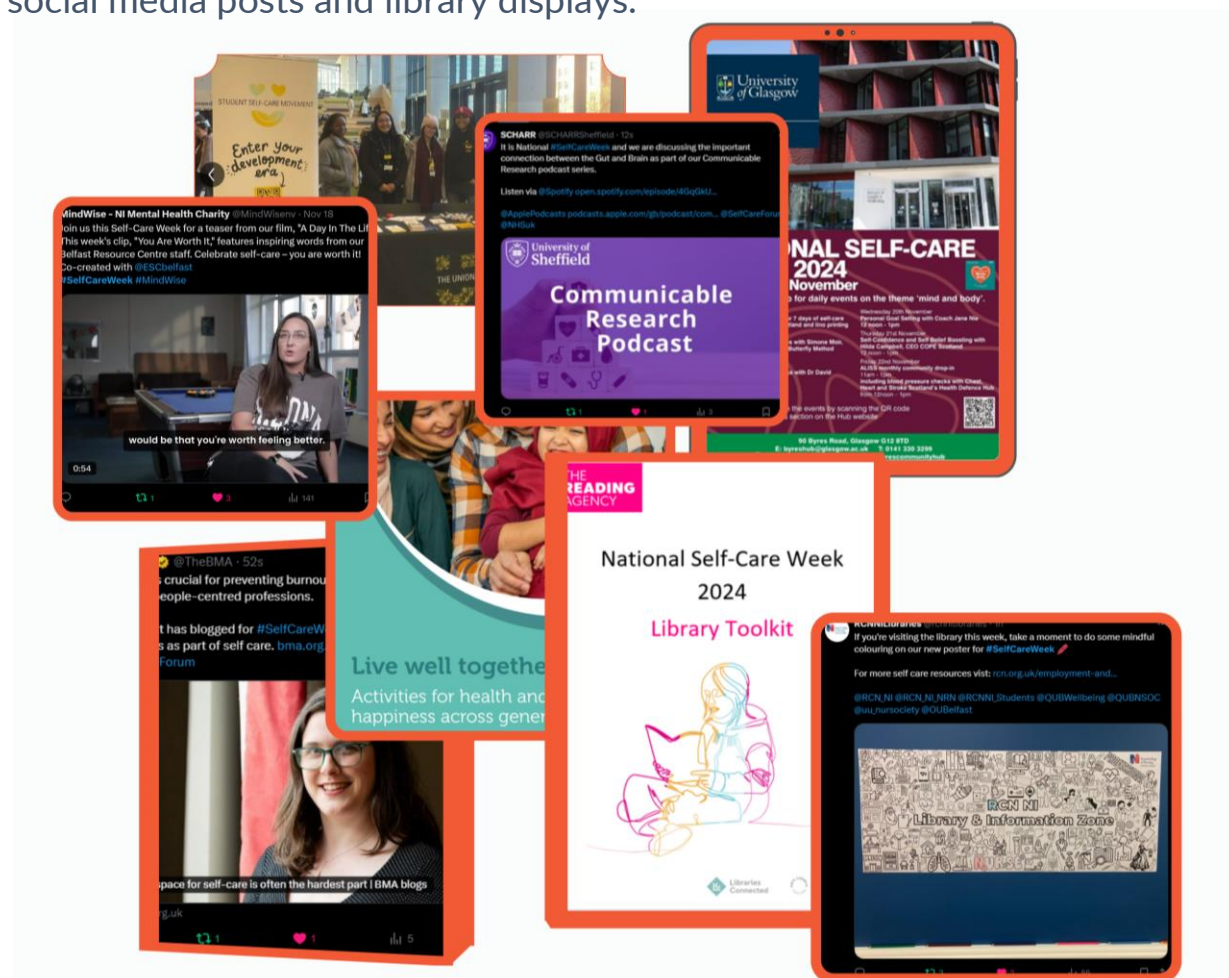
## 10 Local involvement

Here are some examples of local organisations' National Self-Care Week activity: **Torbay Wellbeing Network Group** ran a 7-day information programme for carers and about baby care, **Citizens Advice Wirral** launched a self-help terminal, **CLS Midlands** shared self-care message. **Oxted Library** showcased self-help books, **Prospect View Health Centre & Citizens Advice Worcester** held a self-care event, **Bromley Well** organised social activities. **Stockton on Tees Council** and **North Tees and Hartlepool Hospital** organised a self-care drop in event.



## 11 National and Regional Involvement

Many national and regional organisations got involved in National Self-Care Week, here are examples: The **BMA** produced a blog supporting self-care. **Glasgow University & Cope Scotland** ran a 7-day programme including blood pressure checks, mindfulness, goal setting and self-care score cards. **Manchester Metropolitan Student Union** held a week of events for student self-care. **RCN NI Library** organised a colouring-in wall for visitors while **Open University** launched “live Well Together - activities for health and happiness across generations”. **Sheffield University** did a “Gut-Brain Connection” podcast. **The MOJ** used the Week to support its workforce of 1500. And, **The Reading Agency** shared a library toolkit, with advice on social media posts and library displays.





## 12 Quotes from participants

University isn't just about a degree; it is about finding your independent self. Using National Self-Care Week to promote the 5 areas of personal development, we ran a hybrid campaign consisting of online and in person elements because students don't always have time to attend. **Gracie Otley, The Union Wellbeing Officer, Manchester Metropolitan Uni**

As a team we place great importance on self-care for our patients and our staff. Food and nutrition play a massive role in prevention and management of many health issues, and we try to promote 'Self-Care week' as a team as we firmly believe that everyone needs a reminder to take care of themselves, as lives are busy and sometimes, we forget! **Rhiannon Rogers, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Swansea Bay University Health Board**

Self-Care Week is a great opportunity for us to remind community nurses and midwives about the importance of self-care and we are very grateful to the Self-Care Forum for all the work it does to make it such a successful campaign. **Helen Riley, Public Affairs, Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland.**

This year's Self-Care Week highlighted how community pharmacies are highly accessible and can provide advice and services that support people to look after their physical and mental wellbeing and make better use of health resources. **Chris Garland, Sr Principal Pharmaceutical Officer, Department of Health NI**

## 13 Website highlights

Our website is always busy in the lead up to National Self-Care Week with many organisations accessing resources and some finding out for the first time about the Week. Here are our metrics:

- **21,000** users, **52,000** page views from Sept – Nov 2024 and the **Self-Care Week icon** was the most popular download
- From 18-24 November there were **3,800** users (**3,400 new**), **8,400** page views with **2,100** users on **Monday 18 November**.
- The **National Self-Care Week website page** was the most popular during the Week with **2,700** views
- During Self-Care Week the **fact sheets** had **2,122** page views and the **menopause fact sheet** was the most popular resource with **231** views.





## 15 Social media

Since 2014, social media has been vital in spreading National Self-Care Week messages. It continues to play a key role in promoting essential self-care messages during Self-Care Week.

X, (formerly twitter) was once the leading platform, but this is no longer the case, reflecting broader trends of declining use by organisations and individuals.

During Self-Care Week there were **6 daily posts** on **4** Self-Care Forum accounts (FB, Instagram, LinkedIn and X) totalling **168 posts**. The Week ended with **263 new followers** across all platforms.



# 16 Facebook, Instagram, X and LinkedIn

**Facebook's** participants during National Self-Care Week were largely surgeries, local charities and local community groups. Engagement reached 1,600 there were 2,300 views, and our account increased by 40 new followers.

**Instagram** is gaining momentum by participants who largely make up therapists, beauticians, libraries and community groups with some local and national charities also getting involved. During National Self-Care Week there was a 585 reach with 1,900 views. There was also 57 new followers.

Whilst engagement on **X** has fallen compared with previous years, the analytics show during National Self-Care Week it had 13,000 impressions with 180 likes and 118 reposts. Our account also had 34 new followers (but overall followers had decreased by 10).

**LinkedIn's** engagement is mostly from professional individuals although some posts were from national charities and national organisations. During National Self-Care Week there were 6,892 impressions with 342 reactions. There was also 132 new followers.

Across the 4 platforms, there were 24,000 views and impressions, and 2825 reactions and reach we had 263 new followers.

## 17 Launch - Self-Care Forum

The Self-Care Forum **launched the International Self-Care Observatory** and an infographic with interim results of the **Living Self-Care Survey Study** (a joint study with Imperial College London's Self-Care Academic Research Unit (SCARU)) during National Self-Care Week.





## 18 Launch- Self-Care Awards 2024

The winner and highly commended of the Self-Care Forum's **Self-Care Award** were announced in the run-up to National Self-Care Week. Judges were from NHS England, International Self-Care Foundation and the Self-Care Forum. The **top 4** were announced and the **top 8** promoted during Self-Care Week.

True You Today CIC - Circus for survivors

Headucate UK - mental health outreach in schools

Nilaari Agency - Black men talk health

Locala Health & Wellbeing CIC - Initiation Patient S-M Team

LUS & Wellbeing, Culture & Development Team, NHS Grampian - CAKE

Eczema Outreach Support - Grab a cuppa

Action Menopause Warwicks - Menopause Support

Central Bournemouth PCN - Living Mindfully Patient Group



## 19 Launch – the Scottish Opera

At the beginning of National Self-Care Week, the **Scottish Opera** choose to launch their free resource “The Small Magician”.



Launching The Small Magician during National Self-Care week was a conscious decision. The project provides people with an avenue to explore their voices and come home to their bodies and minds in a way that only the voice can provide. Because this is the project's aim, it fit right in with the themes of the week! **Lea Shaw**, Scottish Opera's Education Artist in Residence and creator of the Small Magician

## 20 Self-Care Forum promotion

The **Journal of Community Nursing** published a Self-Care Forum article “Supporting people towards wellbeing: promoting self-care” in the lead up to Self-Care Week.

The **Personalised Care Interprofessional Education Network (PerCIE) International Conference** was held during National Self-Care Week with presentations from trustees and a Self-Care Forum Self-Care Champion. It also showcased a Self-Care Forum Poster outlining activities.

**37k Pharmacy Magazine subscribers** were sent an email with links to Self-Care Forum fact sheets and the National Self-Care Week page.

Comment

### Supporting people towards wellbeing: promoting self-care

*Here, Professor Michelle Howarth, professor in health and social care, associate director CSR (Centre for Social Responsibility), Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine, Edge Hill University, Rhinoceros, more education. Self-Care Forum self-care champions and Lily Whitehead, Self-Care Forum manager, explore the findings of a report undertaken last year on self-care, highlighting ways that community nurses can support self-care both in their day-to-day role and more strategically across primary care populations.*

**WHAT IS SELF-CARE?**

The Self-Care Forum defines self-care as ‘the actions that individuals take for themselves, on behalf of or with others in order to develop, protect, maintain and improve their health, wellbeing or welfare’ (Self-Care Forum, 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO) has a similar definition and reports that self-care is ‘the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider’ (WHO, 2020).

Research by the consumer health association, the Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB), found that education is key to increasing self-care with four in five (85%) of those surveyed saying they need more education to encourage people to take a more proactive approach. The research also found that two in five adults (39%) requested a GP appointment for common health conditions, including colds, a blocked nose, insect bites and stings and headaches, with 8% of people visiting A&E for conditions such as dandruff, acne, head lice and other non-urgent and relatively minor health conditions (PAGB, 2023).

There is a need to support people through education to better take care of their own health. This piece describes an initiative undertaken by the Self-Care Forum to design and deliver education about self-care and prevention of illnesses to a range of people who attended GP services. Financial support for the project was provided as an independent medical education grant from Pfizer Limited.

**OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM**

Recently published research undertaken by the Self-Care Forum and Imperial’s Self-Care Academic Research Unit (SCARU) suggests that there may be a discordance between professional and public attitudes to self-care (Smith et al., 2023). This may contribute to poorer take up of self-care behaviours both in the general public and professionals. The research demonstrated that, while professional views on self-care changed dramatically during the pandemic, there was a consistent view that the greatest barriers to self-care were public understanding of self-care and willingness to engage. Yet, as far back as the first full NHS baseline research into attitudes to self-care in 2005 (Department of Health [DH], 2005), the views of the general public suggested that they were already undertaking self-care and had not received encouragement to do so. Moreover, Google hits for ‘self-care’ have risen from 330 million in 2017 to over six billion (an 1800% increase) in 2023. During the pandemic there was a report that ‘self-care’ was the most searched for term on Google. Presumably, partly as a result of the significant hurdles of cost and effort required to publish peer-reviewed papers, self-reported changes in attitudes in the research suggest that the importance of self-care has taken on a greater significance since the onset of the pandemic. Findings also suggested that professionals themselves have not fully embraced self-care in their own lives.

In the last 10 to 15 years there has been a huge increase in the evidence base which supports the adoption of self-care practices (Hughes et al., 2020), such as good nutrition, movement, connection, meditation, green exercise, as well as preventative measures such as early diagnosis, vaccinations and screening. Moreover, findings from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that in the UK, deaths from causes considered avoidable, treatable, or preventable given timely and effective healthcare or public health interventions in those aged under 75 years was ‘statistically significantly higher in 2020 than all years since 2010’.

Professionals tasked with looking after the population are also struggling to stay well themselves. Sickness absence rates in NHS staff, according to the King’s Fund, are higher in comparison to the rest of the economy (Copeland, 2019). Hadley and Kar in their blog for the BMJ, ‘the cobbler’s children have no shoes’ use the familiar aviation analogy about putting on your own oxygen mask first to illustrate the problem, explaining that healthcare workers simply cannot help those around them if they do not look after themselves first (Hadley and Kar, 2022). While there is clear evidence on what we should be doing to better take care of our physical health and mental wellbeing, there is a lack of evidence on why individuals and health workers are not heeding the advice and putting the theory into practice.

**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME**

An education programme was thus designed by the Self-Care Forum to raise the understanding of health literacy and views of self-care in the public and professionals, make access to evidence-based resources more readily available, and to serve

JCN 2024;39(16):160-163 43

### How to shift mindsets in education, policy makers and organisations to promote positive wellbeing in health and social care to support people

**Rationale: Why should we shift mindsets?**

Because preventable illnesses are significantly impacting wellbeing, increasing demand and costs to the NHS and the economy and resulting in avoidable deaths:

- There were **125,612 avoidable deaths** (deaths from causes considered treatable or preventable given timely and effective healthcare or public health interventions) in 2021/22 in England and Wales.
- **Preventable conditions take up 40 per cent of the NHS budget** and with demand on services increasing, NHS staff are getting sicker with 27m sickness days recorded in 2022.
- The UK economy is also affected by long-term sickness with **preventable conditions costing it £2.5m in 2022**.

**Activity required:**

- Universities and colleges tasked with training health and public health students must include ways to empower service-users and patients, every interaction with individuals must incorporate discussions on self-care;
- **All organisations in health and public health, including employers, should participate in events like National Self-Care Week** promoting the benefits and the practises of self-care to help people take better care of their physical health and mental wellbeing;
- Bodies such as national and local governments, BMA, RCP, RCN, RCGP, PCI etc should provide leadership and guidance on self-care practises;
- **Health and public health organisations must provide tools to support people to self-care such as the Self-Care Forum’s fact sheets** which includes crucial information people need to understand how to take care of illnesses and when it’s time to seek professional help (self-care is not no care).
- Schools and colleges must include comprehensive health education as part of the national curriculum.

**Organisation/community involvement:**

There is not one thing by one organisation that will improve health outcomes in the population which is why there must be a concerted effort by many organisations at national and local levels to collectively join forces to promote a better understanding of how and why people should take care of their physical health and mental wellbeing. It also requires leadership.

**Outcomes and impact:**

Empowering people with self-care knowledge helps them make better choices about their health, improving wellbeing, increasing health outcomes and helping to close the health inequality gap.

It will also reduce demand and costs on the NHS, helping to lower sickness days, impacting the UK and the NHS economies.

**Self-Care Forum**  
Helping people take care of themselves

## 21 Blogs

Self-Care Week provides an opportunity to highlight self-care advice and experiences through blogs and this year was no exception. Many were published including these 6 from **NI Department of Health, Belfast Health & Social Care**, the **Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland**, the **Mental Health First Aid England**, **Sussex Health & Care** and **Doctors in Distress**.

### Take simple steps to improve your wellbeing this winter

Date published: 18 November 2024

The Department of Health is highlighting the importance of taking steps to care for yourself this winter.

Winter can affect people's health, particularly those over 65 and people who have a long-term health condition.

Marking this year's National Self Care Week, which aims to empower people to better look after their physical and mental wellbeing, Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said: "Self Care Week

**Latest News**



### Self Care Week returns this week 18 – 24 November 2024

21st November 2024

#### Self Care Week 2024

National Self Care Week is an awareness campaign designed to remind everyone of the importance of self-care. The theme for this year is 'Mind and Body' which underscores the connection between our mental and physical health.



#### Understanding self-care

Self-care is about setting aside time to do things that improve your physical and mental health. It's a deliberate journey to enhance your overall well-being. It involves recognising your needs and prioritising your wellbeing, to make positive daily choices. These choices can be as simple as brushing your teeth or drinking 2 litres of water daily or, more stretching like quitting smoking or committing to run a marathon.

### An invitation to enhance our own self-care and manage our emotions

19th November 2024

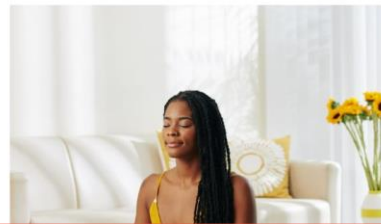
As Self-Care Week 2024 gets underway, Nancy Adams, Trainer and Communications lead at Capacitar Scotland, discusses practices that allow us to support our own self-care and better equip us to also support others.

Are there times during your day that you are so exhausted or stressed that you would do anything to be able to recapture the energy you know you used to have? Are there times when you feel anxious or angry or fearful, or just incredibly sad that there are not enough resources to support people who are in need these days?

Did you know that you have within yourself the means to increase that energy and manage those emotions?

### Elevating mind and body: The art of self-care during National Self Care Week

18/11/2024



### Self-Care Week: Empowering you to stay well this winter

This Self-Care Week, we're celebrating the theme of "Mind and Body" by encouraging everyone to take charge of their health and look after each other this winter. As the months turn colder, it's the perfect time to focus on small steps that can make a big difference in staying well.

#### Why self-care matters

Self-care isn't just about looking after yourself when you're unwell; it's about building habits that keep you healthy year-round. Eating a balanced diet, staying active, and taking time for mental wellbeing are all essential, especially in winter when the cold weather can take its toll.

Find out more tips and actions you can take, including an 8-point plan to look after your mind and body, on the [Self Care Forum website](#).

### My Journey to Rebellious Health



Dr Emma Presern

This week is National Self-Care week. As a GP trainee, my mental health took a nose dive in 2023. As a healthcare professional is fundamental and lifesaving. And no one is going to do it for you, support you when you decide to prioritise you, finally.



## 22 Self-Care Week 2025

We are sticking with our heart icon for now and hope you will continue to love it as much as we do. Our **Mind & Body** theme covers the range of self-care messages on both physical health and mental wellbeing. So, we hope it will still fit with your intended use.



Stay up to date, subscribe to the newsletter and follow us on social media.

## 23 Self-Care Awards 2025

The Self-Care Forum holds annual **Self-Care Awards** to recognise the hard work and inspiration that goes into local self-care initiatives, empowering people to better take care of their health and wellbeing. The entries also serve as inspirational best practise case studies with the **top 8 entries** being added to the “Best self-care practise” page of the website.



Awards will open in **February 2025**, and we would like to invite you to apply.



## 24 Thank you to our sponsor

We would like to thank the International Self-Care Foundation for its continued support in providing the prize fund for the Self-Care Awards and as an integral partner in increasing awareness globally of the importance of self-care to people and health systems.



## 25 Can you help?

The Self-Care Forum is a charity. All our resources are free and to continue our work, including National Self-Care Week, we rely on donations, grants and sponsorship.

Do get in touch if you would like to donate to the charity or discuss sponsorship opportunities.



Get in touch via email  
[selfcare@selfcareforum.org](mailto:selfcare@selfcareforum.org)

Thank you for your support and we hope you will continue to work with us to help increase levels of health literacy and improve people's ability to take care of their own physical health and mental wellbeing. Please stay in touch and follow us on social media.

