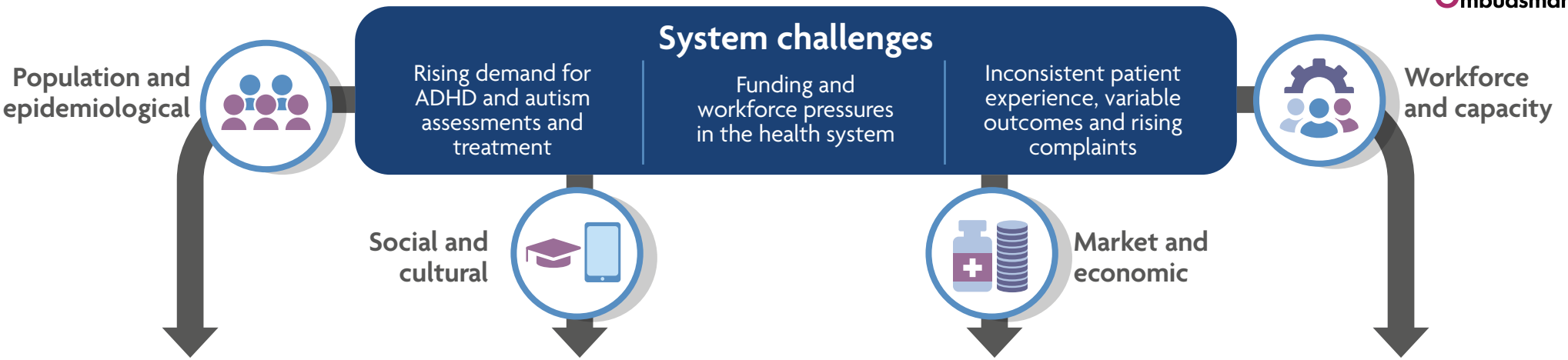
System challenges and long-term shifts in ADHD and autism care

Public Service Ombudsman



Factors contributing to rising demand, service pressures and increasing complaints

- Historically low rates of ADHD and autism diagnosis in the UK compared with other nations
- Increasing clinical understanding of ADHD and autism and co-occurring conditions
- Increasing media and social media attention
- Reduced stigma around conditions
- Digital-first shift and expansion of online assessment tools
- Regulatory gap around diagnostic-only providers
- Global medication supply issues
- Reliance on the reducing psychiatry workforce and long training pipelines
- ICB workforce cuts and mergers
- GP workload saturation

Long-term and/or national shifts required

- Increased focus on early identification and holistic, needs-led support, with or without diagnosis
- Integration of ADHD, autism and wider mental health diagnostic criteria
- A multidisciplinary approach to care and support, building on integrated and neighbourhood health models
- Improved training, guidance and awareness-raising of ADHD and autism for GPs and wider health professionals
- Expansion of training and awareness-raising across different sectors, including education, employment, social care, housing and the criminal justice system
- A long-term national plan for improving ADHD medication supply
- Requirement for CQC registration for diagnostic-only providers and more coordinated evidence generation for digital diagnostic tools
- Long-term plans for Right to Choose and Shared Care that balance patient entitlement, local funding pressures and clinical discretion
- Long-term education and workforce plan for the psychiatry profession
- Improved training, guidance and standards for ADHD specialism across wider health professions
- Opportunity in the future Strategic Commissioning Development Programme to support ICB capabilities around Right to Choose commissioning duties and Shared Care Protocols
- Shared accountability for ADHD and autism improvement across DHSC, NHS Regions and ICBs