

Welcome to the June 2021 CPWY Committee Blog!

Will COVID-19 be a turning point for community pharmacy?

Even under normal circumstances community pharmacies are one of the most frequented health care settings - about 1.6 million people visit a pharmacy in England every day. We are accessible in a way that few other professions can claim.

The pandemic has been a reason for change elsewhere within the NHS. In community pharmacy we have seen high and low points during the last 16 months, but we have remained open throughout, where many other healthcare professionals were less accessible. This accessibility and resilience needs to be our unique selling point to patients and commissioners going forward.

The sector's response during the pandemic has given commissioners a fresh opportunity to have a rethink about community pharmacy and its position within the healthcare system, with a view for it to integrate the sector into future patient care pathways that fully utilise the accessibility and skills of pharmacy teams. Fair funding, of course, remains a necessity and a challenge. But while we wait for PSNC and DHSC to thrash this matter out, there are plenty of positives that we can take away from the last 16 months.

Commissioners of pharmacy services have always insisted that community pharmacy needs to demonstrate evidence that it can play a bigger role in primary care. The last 16 months have provided plenty of evidence that we can, and have, delivered valuable care for patients in their hour of need above and beyond what is currently commissioned. PSNC audits have revealed:

- *Pharmacy teams provide more than 58 million informal healthcare consultations every year.*
- *44 million people self-refer to a pharmacy for healthcare advice.*
- *5 million of these are unable to access other healthcare.*
- *Pharmacies have remained open during the pandemic with 1 in 4 consultations involving advice related to COVID-19.*
- *Pharmacy teams were able to provide advice to an incredible 97% of those who sought it. Wow. How many other professions can claim that level of engagement?*

It's clear to see that pharmacy teams have not only stepped up to the pandemic challenge but also stepped in to fill a void that many patients found themselves in when looking for everyday healthcare support. This should be the catalyst and the evidence for fresh thinking and long-term change for the sector.

For example, it makes sense for CPCS to evolve into a self-referred service. We know that millions of people already informally self-refer to a pharmacy for healthcare advice. But patients who first seek advice for minor illnesses from a GP, NHS 111 or A&E should instead have an option to be redirected, via the NHS app for example, to a formal self-referral to a community pharmacist. It's quick, flexible, accessible over extended hours, reduces pressure elsewhere and is more cost effective.

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Pharmacy teams are capable of delivering successful health checks including blood pressure testing; particularly for hard-to-reach groups who do not often visit a GP practice. We can identify people with undiagnosed diabetes or high blood pressure by offering ad-hoc testing while providing lifestyle interventions to those with moderate risk.

Pharmacy teams successfully deliver NHS funded stop smoking or sexual health consultations, but such services are few and far between. All pharmacies are now required to be accredited to HLP standard and so why not make use of that by commissioning such services from all pharmacies? Many more patients would quit smoking if they had access to “in the moment” advice and support.

Pharmacy staff trained as mental health champions can have conversations and offer brief advice to people who they think may be experiencing mental wellbeing issues. They can make a positive contribution in promoting individual and community wellness.

There are so many more examples of what that pharmacy teams can do; too many to list on a short blog.

Will pharmacy teams be viewed in a new light in a post-COVID world? The pandemic has clearly demonstrated a “can-do” and “open come what may” resilience from community pharmacy teams. It has also shown that there are aspects of NHS work that can be transferred to community pharmacy and that patients find this much more accessible and efficient. Time will tell but I know that PSNC nationally and CPWY locally will work hard for commissioners to see the evidence that was laid in front of them during the pandemic. We will continue to push hard for community pharmacies to be integrated into patient care pathways because it’s been clear to see that it makes sense for patients and the NHS.

Find the latest on PSNC negotiations here: <https://psnc.org.uk/psncs-work/the-latest-from-psnc/negotiation-updates/>

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CPWY Tribute and Thanks to West Yorkshire Community Pharmacy Teams

Community pharmacies in West Yorkshire have been working tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure patients and the public can continue to access their medicines. Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire has created this tribute and thank you for all community pharmacy teams. You are all amazing! Thank you. The tribute can be found [here](#) and on twitter [here](#).

Sign up to the PSNC mailing list to ensure you receive the weekly newsletters, alerts and updates [here](#). Sign up to our mailing list [here](#). Join [CPWY Connect](#) on the social media site Telegram and connect with pharmacy teams across West Yorkshire. Join by [clicking here](#).

Details of any upcoming CPWY Zoom Events can be found on our website in the [training section here](#).

Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire’s Role: We recognise and understand how much you and your teams are having to cope with right now. Please remember, you are not alone at this time. We’re here to support you, providing advice and information on COVID-19, as well as pushing to make sure your work is properly recognised and fully supported throughout this pandemic. You are our eyes and ears - please let us know of any problems and we will do our best to help.

For COVID-19 related issues email: covid-19@cpwy.org / For non-COVID-19 issues email: info@cpwy.org