

Welcome to the September 2022 CPWY Committee Blog!

Communication

Spandau Ballet sang about it in the 80s.

'Communication let me down, and I'm left here, I'm left here again.'

They were wrong though. Communication doesn't let us down, it's the lack of it that causes problems. (I guess that singing about a lack of communication doesn't quite flow the same though, so we'll let them off.)

How many times do we hear about problems caused in healthcare by a failure of communication? Pharmacy is not immune to this and in recent times we have really seen some difficulties with communication when rapid changes were made to ways of working by all healthcare providers during the pandemic.

Good communication is the key to ensuring patient care is maximised. This includes communication with other healthcare providers, other pharmacies in the area, the LPC, PSNC and of course, our staff and patients. It's often referred to as being 'kept in the loop' and that is what good communication should be – a circle of information flowing smoothly between the parties involved. So, what can we do to ensure that circle is complete?

Traditionally we used to use the telephone to call our surgeries when we needed to communicate with them. The receptionist would pass us on to the doctor and we could have a chat about whatever issue we had. Those days are gone. Surgery telephone lines are incredibly busy and quite often prescribers are in a different building to the one you are ringing so this line of communication is not always successful. Patient information is confidential so what other communication channels can we use that keeps this information safe? In our pharmacy, we have found that using NHSmail to contact the surgery about non-urgent queries has good results. Surgeries usually respond the same day and we can work together to solve problems. The added benefit of using your shared pharmacy NHSmail to do this means that you are regularly logging in to your account and you can also see if you've had any CPCS or DMS referrals sent through as well. It's a good idea to ask the surgery what the best NHS mail address is to use to contact them as they tend to have a few different ones set up.

If you're logging on to your shared pharmacy NHSmail account, then you will also find messages from your Primary Care Network (PCN) Lead. These will be sent via a Gaggle email for your PCN area and this is a great way to keep in touch with your fellow PCN pharmacies. Gaggle mail is a group email, so an email sent to the Gaggle group address will be seen by everyone in the group. If you want to find out if another pharmacy in your area has a certain item in stock, you could use this email to find out. As we start with our immunisation programmes again, it's a great way of sharing who has stock so that you can direct your patients to an alternative pharmacy if you have run out. Remember though, communication works two ways so if someone asks a question on the Gaggle mail, please respond and complete the circle of communication.

That brings me to communication with your LPC and PSNC. As you're reading this, I'm assuming that you're already signed up to receive emails from CPWY, but if not, you can sign up [here](#). The LPC sends out regular emails with information about what is going on locally and if you want to be kept in the loop then this is a definite priority. Equally as important are the email updates from PSNC. You can sign up to their mailing on this [link](#). PSNC sends out so much important information and if you are not seeing it then you will be definitely missing out. It's essential to keep up to date with developments in services and the pharmacy contract to make sure that you know what is going on. This will provide you with knowledge to help make your job easier. Honestly, I can't stress enough how useful these updates are, so make sure you sign up to receive them. Once you've signed up, it's a good idea to **regularly check your junk/spam folder** as some emails can be marked as spam, even after you've marked them as coming from a safe sender.

We also have a more informal communication channel for you to communicate with the LPC in the form of our Telegram [chat group](#). This group is for anyone working in community pharmacy within West Yorkshire and is a great way to connect with the LPC and other pharmacies across our region.

Knowledge is power. The more we know, the more equipped we are to get through the huge amount of work that we are faced with every day. Opening these communication channels will allow information to flow to and from us more easily. Knowledge is power because it leads to anticipation, preparedness and confidence. If we are using communication effectively, we know what is going to happen, how to prepare for it and how to deal with it.

Our job is hard enough and we can do without that feeling of being isolated and bewildered about new developments. Taking these simple steps will ensure that you're on top of what's going on and not missing out on anything.

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