

How to improve engagement

What is community engagement?

Within Health+ Pharmacies could we aspire to “people working together collaboratively, through inspired action and learning, to create and realise bold visions for their common future”? Maybe put more simply, community engagement is about getting communities involved in decisions that affect them (NICE Guidelines).

Many would say there are five levels of community engagement, starting at Information Giving and moving to Acting Together and Supporting. The more you engage, the more you can move beyond information/ leaflet giving so that communities, individuals and pharmacists receive greater benefits.

Why should you be engaging with others?

No one person has all the answers to tackling individual and community health issues. Within Health +, engaging with people will help us understand better what barriers people face to making positive health choices and starts us thinking about who else we should work with eg other services to help tackle issues.

Projects like Building the Community Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) have encouraged pharmacists to work with other providers. For example a recent project in Dungannon, enabled the pharmacist to connect with podiatry, local police, counsellor, CAB, Cancer organisation, HSCT Addiction team. Before that the pharmacist had no idea of what was available, even though he had lived there his whole life. He now has the ability to signpost people to other services and as he has worked with organisations directly, he can be confident that this is the best thing for that person.

Who and how are you going to engage?

Community - You will already be engaging with people in and outside of the pharmacy. This could be enhanced through using your staff (eg Health + Advisor) to start more conversations with people, providing the place for one-to-one consultations; going to health fayres & community events; hosting an information session in your pharmacy and in community venues; through social media.

Other providers – it is always difficult to get a perfect and up to date directory of local and regional services and the list of services and organisations could appear endless and overwhelming. Start locally – get to know what is going on locally with groups eg luncheon club, mothers and toddlers, day centres – try and develop a few key contacts – ask your staff! Then think about services – your local HSCT services as well as other organisations dealing with specific issues. Think about issues specific to your community eg older people, mental health and get in contact with organisations that deal with that issue. Again, start small and be realistic and make a few phone calls or visit them. For example

- If you are working on mental health issues, have you considered connecting with organisations like Aware Defeat Depression

If you are working on drug and alcohol misuse, have you considered working with the Drug and Alcohol teams which are funded through the Public Health Agency.

Help! As a starting point, CDHN have compiled a snapshot of organisations that work across the region on various issues - www.cdhn.org/bcpp/resources. Also included is the **Health + Pharmacies** resource compiled by the PHA that provides details of the Health and Social Well-Being Training Opportunities. Remember, every group and area is different and they all have different resources available. For engagement to truly work, requires effort and taking time to understand what each can offer – be realistic!



COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
AND HEALTH
NETWORK
NORTHERN IRELAND

www.cdhn.org