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LPCs in the spotlight– Devon LPC

North Devon LPC has its office near Exeter, in a building it shares with the LMC and LOC. This says LPC Chief Officer Sue Taylor gives many benefits through collaborative working, sorting out problems and sharing ideas and good practice. It also means there are shared space areas such as meeting rooms which make it a cost effective arrangement too.

In addition to Sue in the LPC office there is administrator Kathryn Jones, who like Sue, works full time for the LPC. Sue provides the support to the committee and the implementation of its work plans with Kathryn dealing with the administration of this busy LPC including the management of the accounts.

Devon LPC is a good example of collaboration with a neighbouring LPC: Kathryn also provides the administrative support for Cornwall LPC which includes maintaining their website and managing their accounts. Devon LPC cross charges Cornwall for Kathryn's support - it averages out at 4 hours a week.

To make the most effective use of existing resources, the two LPCs opted for closer joint working through the sharing of administration and holding a quarterly joint executive meeting where the two LPCs look for further opportunities for sharing work, resources and developing services.

Devon LPC has 240 contractors in a mix of rural areas and urban areas such as Plymouth and Torquay. It is particularly challenging in parts of North Devon where there are some of the most deprived areas in England, very rural areas and an influx of holiday makers during the summer months

The LPC covers 2 CCGs and 3 Local Authorities. To support contractors on professional issues the LPC employs a Consultant Pharmacist Mark Stone for 2 ½ days a week. Mark's work evolves depending on the commissioning environment but currently includes developing Medicines Use Reviews toolkits in partnership with key stakeholders for publication and wider circulation to share best practice; Healthy Living Pharmacies, getting pharmacies ready for research work; evaluating local projects and talking to patient groups such as the Stroke Association about medicines related issues; as well as providing professional support and information to local pharmacy contractors. Together with Sue, Mark supports the closer working with federating GP practices – a priority area for the LPC.

Devon LPC is not currently planning to get involved in setting up a provider company. Rather it sees the future as greater collaborative working and relationship building. The LPC has worked with a GP lead provider to secure a weight management service in community pharmacies with pharmacies sub contracted by the GP lead provider company. The LPC feels that working collaboratively with GPs helps build the case for successful bids and is exploring further opportunities for joint bids to local authorities and CCGs.

The LPC Chair David Bearman, who also chairs the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LPN, plays an important part by, with office support, developing relationships at a strategic level. David 'opens doors' for the LPC, says Sue, facilitating the closer working with others and promoting a better understanding of how pharmacy can contribute. David is heavily involved in working up innovative ideas for changes in practice with the CCGs and GP providers.

Ways of working

Devon LPC has 14 members: 10 CCA, 3 independents and 1 AIMp. The LPC meets every six weeks on average with a mix of evening and daytime meetings. An Engagement and Delivery sub group monitors services and advises on the best way to "land" new services and support established ones. A Strategy and Development group which scopes future opportunities for pharmacy, has recently designed a roadmap for the next five years, looks at the acceptability of terms for community pharmacy involvement in tenders and sets the strategic direction for the LPC.

The Finance subcommittee meets to construct a budget for the LPC to consider, meeting again mid-year to review the budget. Otherwise the subcommittee work is done by email and teleconferencing. The group monitors spend very tightly and supports the treasurers regular reports to the LPC.

A further group deals with new market entry applications and works by email and conference calling if need be.

LPC meeting costs are covered by sponsorship as are the many training events and road shows that the LPC runs for its contractors and pharmacy teams.

The Devon LPC website is one of the LPC sites with the greatest number of hits across the country providing a wealth of resources, information, LPC meeting minutes and agendas and other key documents. Take a look at <http://devonlpc.org/>

Contractor engagement

Sue says that the Devon LPC contractor events are designed to be relevant, timely and benefit pharmacy practice. Thanks to LPC secured sponsorship food is provided. The events are evening meeting and contractors know that they will not finish later than 9pm (a strict rule). Because of the size of the county meetings are dotted across Devon to help with access. All of this means the events are well supported and valued by Devon contractors.

The LPC monitors closely service delivery. With Local Authorities paying for PharmOutcomes through the LPC it means the LPC has the information to support its contractors.

LPC member engagement is very important to the Executive. Recently a number of contractors failing to deliver on services were visited by an LPC member to find out why (usually time constraints) and offer support if need be. After the visits all improved service delivery – Sue firmly believes the face to face approach makes a big difference.

The LPC Newsletter also helps with contractor engagement – a lively read that is well received by contractors providing a constant reminder of events, news and what the LPC is doing on behalf of community pharmacy in Devon (see the LPC website for the latest and back copies of the newsletter). Social Media is playing an increasingly important role in promoting community pharmacy services and improving communications on a wider scale. Join in the chat @DevonLPC on Twitter.

Relationships

The theme running through the way the LPC operates is building relationships: from working with other LPCs and contractor engagement to joint working on commissioning. The LPC, LMC and public health commissioners meet jointly which helps relationships and develop opportunities for joint working.

Last year the LPC ran a series of dinners with key commissioning leads, GPs, and key Local Authority, NHS England and LPC personnel. The aim of the dinners was to get a primary care perspective to inform the LPC response to the Pharmacy Call to Action. These were structured occasions with pre-set questions to consider and follow up notes with action points agreed during the evening. This paid off with a greater understanding of pharmacy, a building of trust and a foundation for future working.

Subsequent actions arising from the dinners included a willingness to work up a proposal for delivery of health checks in community pharmacy sub contracted through federated practices; local appointments of community pharmacists to support community pharmacies in delivery of local medicines optimisation services; and working up a business case for community pharmacies to support the early identification of mental health needs. In addition, the LPC successfully bid for funding to provide a Pharmacy First Service from community pharmacies, including the management of winter ailments, minor ailments via PGDs and an Emergency Repeat Prescription service. The service is commissioned by NHS England South (South West) and the LPC supports the project management.

Devon LPC offers a good service to its contractors grounded on good relationships and effective management by the LPC. The levy income from its 240 contractors, a healthy sponsorship program, sharing resources with neighbouring LPCs and rigorous financial management of the income ensures contractors get good value. To find out more visit the Devon LPC website at <http://devonlpc.org/>

For more information about the LPCs in the Spotlight series contact mike.king@psnc.org.uk