



August 2016



## **LPCs in the spotlight– Thames Valley**

Thames Valley LPC was created in April 2015 following the merger of Berkshire and Oxfordshire LPCs.

With 275 contractors (159 Berkshire and 116 Oxfordshire) it has seen the benefits of being a larger LPC coming from the economies of scale. Its full time Chief Officer, Carol Trower, said that levies were cut when the new LPC was formed and again in June of this year with the hope that a further reduction may be possible later this financial year– mainly due to having 13 instead of 26 members, one rather than two meetings, and other administrative savings from eliminating duplication of work and resources.

### **LPC meetings**

The LPC meets every two months – there are 13 members (7 CCA, 4 independents and 2 AIMp) – with most of the business dealt with by the full committee rather than subcommittees. There is a HR group and a finance group which meet on an ad hoc basis but otherwise the LPC feels that it is more effective to dispense with subcommittees and deal with business in full committee.

The LPC meetings are daytime (10am to 4pm) and are closed meetings but their contractors are always welcome to attend. Carol provides a report to members in advance of the meeting reporting on the work she has done since the last meeting and her activities in the upcoming period – this, says Carol, means that the LPC can, for example, discuss upcoming meetings to have an input into the meetings and also to see if it is a good use of her time, thus helping Carol prioritise her work.

### **Planning**

The PSNC self-evaluation tool was particularly helpful at the start of the new LPC, helping members focus on what needs to be done – the LPC regularly review the self-evaluation (which is completed by an LPC member) to make sure things haven't slipped by challenging the assessments to make sure they are still right and to monitor any areas needing improvement.

The self-evaluation also informs the LPC plans: they have a strategy from which a 12-month business plan is prepared which in turn gives a 90-day plan which is reviewed every quarter. The 90-day plan is where the committee details specific activity which can be monitored to ensure the work has been completed and if not, why? The 90-day period also gives flexibility to respond to the changing pharmacy environment and what the Chief Officer should focus on.

To support Carol there is a part time (20 hours a week) engagement officer whose responsibilities include the LPC website, newsletter and event/ LPC meeting administration.

### **Joint working**

Thames Valley LPC works closely with neighbouring Buckinghamshire, Dorset and Hampshire and Isle of Wight LPCs, the Chief Officers meeting every couple of months to share ideas, plans and opportunities for collaboration. One major piece of work is a provider company across that 4 LPC areas- the LPCs hope that the plans will go to a contractor vote later this year.

### **Achievements**

In addition to the more cost effective working, Carol says that the bigger LPC has given other advantages: covering a bigger area, representing many more contractors, means it has more authority with other organisations such as CCGs; NHS England like it too as they can deal with one LPC rather than two. In fact, the synergy of bringing the two LPCs together is greater than having two separate LPCs.

### **Contractor benefits**

At the start the LPC was worried that contractors would feel that they had lost the local touch of a local LPC to one of a larger area. However, the better resourced organisation is able to provide better communications, updates and training events to assuage any concerns. Contractors benefit from a programme of sponsored clinical training evenings with the same event run in Oxfordshire and Berkshire to help with travelling.

Carol concludes that the merger process cannot be undertaken quickly and careful planning is needed but for Thames Valley LPC it was worth it.

To find out more about Thames Valley LPC visit their website:

<http://www.pharmacythamesvalley.org.uk/>

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