

## Greater Manchester's Pharmacy Health Champions: Helping people lead healthier lives



**Anne-Marie and Sharon, Centre Pharmacy in Cheadle Hulme**

**More than 90% of Greater Manchester pharmacies are now accredited as Healthy Living Pharmacies (HLP), committed to actively promoting wellbeing and helping people to lead healthier lives.**

Anne-Marie and Sharon, from Centre Pharmacy in Cheadle Hulme, are two of the Health Champions making a massive difference to people's lives through their Healthy Living Pharmacy work. "One lady who I'd put in touch with mental health services came back in afterwards with a box of chocolates to thank us," says Anne-Marie, "because she said it had made such a big difference to her life."

Health Champions are pharmacy staff who have completed special training and are skilled at advising patients/customers on health and wellbeing, and it's vitally-important work – especially as lifestyle and behaviour are the biggest risk factors for disease, accounting for 40 per cent of ill health in England\*.

For more HLP information and support for Health Champions, visit our website (<https://bit.ly/2EWJVV8>) or contact [enquiries@gmlpc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@gmlpc.org.uk) or 0161 228 6163.

Over the last few years, Anne-Marie and Sharon have offered advice and guidance on everything from support for carers, dementia, losing weight, stopping smoking, being more active, and reducing the risk of illnesses including heart disease and cancer.

They are highly-skilled at broaching sensitive issues like someone's weight, alcohol use or mental health, and it often starts with the simplest of conversations. "People might come in for one thing, you get chatting and five minutes later they will open up and ask about another health issue or concern," Sharon explains.

"The key is listening to people and offering them the opportunity to open up if they want to," adds Anne-Marie. "We get chatting and ask them how they're doing today. If someone says they're not sleeping well, for example, you can gently ask if anything in particular is keeping them awake.

"If they may mention they're caring for a family member, we can let them know about support for carers. If they say they've been having a few glasses of wine each night to help them sleep, we can explain why it might not be a good idea and suggest other ways to relax."

Health Champions usually work on the pharmacy counter in direct contact with patients and customers, so they're ideally placed to have health-related conversations. "One man came in and said he'd had a bowel cancer screening kit in the post but didn't fancy using it," says Anne-Marie. "I explained it was free, only took two seconds and that I'd definitely do it if I got one because it could save my life. I convinced him and he went home and did it."

Others she has helped include a woman who was drinking a bit too much while on blood pressure medication, and several people keen to lose weight or stop smoking. "We don't lecture people or tell them what to do," Anne-Marie explains. "Most of us know we need to eat healthier or lose a bit of weight, but it's not always easy to make a change. Our role is to listen to people and offer advice and information that will help them live a healthier, happier life."

Another way they do this is through eye-catching health campaigns and displays in the pharmacy. Anne-Marie, Sharon and their colleagues use all their creativity to get important health messages across, even decorating pink bras with sequins and feathers for a window display for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

They also think carefully about how to link health messages together. They accompanied their recent campaign to encourage everyone aged 60+ to take up their offer of bowel cancer screening with a campaign on healthy eating, explaining how people could reduce their risk of developing bowel cancer.

**Anne-Marie is Medicines Counter Supervisor at Centre Pharmacy in Cheadle Hulme. Sharon is Senior Medicines Counter Staff at Centre Pharmacy in Cheadle Hulme. Both are also qualified Health Champions.**

\*Source: Public Health England Strategic Plan (2016). Available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/516985/PHE\\_Strategic\\_plan\\_2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/516985/PHE_Strategic_plan_2016.pdf)

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Examples of Anne-Marie and Sharon's creative health displays:



Pink bras for Breast Cancer Awareness Month



Child oral health



Information display

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