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LPCs in the spotlight– Norfolk

Norfolk LPC is an organisation that prides itself on being a relatively small LPC that packs a punch for its 165 contractors.

With such a large geographical area (it can take around two hours to drive across the county) a merger with neighbouring LPCs with equally large areas is not on the cards at the moment but there is good collaborative working with Suffolk and Cambridgeshire LPCs.

The LPC is always looking at ways to keep costs down and increase the service it offers to its contractors. To keep travelling and office costs down Chief Officer Tony Dean, a pharmacist and former area manager for a large multiple, is home based in the north west of the county and works part time. The same for Lauren Seamons the LPC Services and Communications Manager who supports contractors in the south west of the County and LPC Support Officer Charlotte Woolston who is on the county's east coast. Both Charlotte and Lauren are pharmacy technicians with wide experience of community pharmacy. None of the three charge the LPC for using their home as an office.

With the members of the LPC office team based across the county, it means they are strategically positioned to support contractors with service delivery. We are proud of our contractors and the quality of the services they provide says Tony, adding that the LPC is equally driven to offer the best and most accessible support to Norfolk contractors to help them deliver services- whether it be visiting contractors in their pharmacy, providing resources on the LPC website, or just being on the end of a phone.

The LPC meets every two months. The committee has 14 members (9 CCA nominees and 5 Independents): they all work together very well says Tony; they are a great team, all committed to providing the best service to the contractors as a whole irrespective of their contractor background.

The LPC, says Tony, is not one for a complex subcommittee structure. Two LPC members are governance leads who check expenses and ensure that the advice in PSNC's governance guide is adhered to. There is a contracts subcommittee which can be called upon if necessary but otherwise work is done by ad hoc groups with specific work streams. Members of these ad hoc groups are not

necessarily all LPC members as the LPC likes to involve other contractors too if they have valuable expertise to contribute.

The LPC has a strong sense of direction and backs and trusts its officers to get on with the job. The LPC does not have unwieldy strategy either says Tony- there is a statement of the relationships that need to be nurtured and the outcomes that are needed but not minutiae – no RAG rating, it's a focus on outcomes not activity. Best things happen when an unexpected opportunity presents itself out of 'left field' says Tony. Grab it and run with he adds.

Relationships

Building and maintaining successful relationships and influence is the bedrock of the LPC's work: whether it is with contractors, the media, GPs, politicians, Area Team or other commissioners the LPC has nurtured relationships with them all and it pays dividends. All pharmacy public health contracts, for example, have been renewed with better terms and greater integration into care pathways.

The LPC meetings themselves always have a guest speaker, perhaps from a CCG or local authority, so they can see the work of the LPC and meet with the members.

Norfolk LPC is successful in making sure contractors perform well. If there is a problem with a multiple, regional managers (many of whom are on the LPC) are alerted and do the necessary. For others, Tony knows the contractors well and has their respect – issues are confronted and dealt with. As a result there is 100% contractor compliance with CPAF and clinical audit, and an Area Team keen to work with and support the LPC. As Tony says the LPC supports the Area Team, we make them look good and that brings benefits in return.

LPC Chair Geoff Ray speaks to the Chief Officer at least once a week and attends key meetings such as those with the Area Team. As a critical friend the Chair will challenge the office and make sure that what is being done is in line with the LPC objectives but is equally supportive of their work.

Within the office team there are complementary skills: Lauren facilitates service delivery, training, one-to-one support with contractors who need extra help, marketing and media relations. Charlotte also supports contractor delivery but with a focus on HLP and deals with general contractor queries and administration.

Media success

Using the media effectively is strength in Norfolk LPC. The LPC is regularly featured on BBC Radio Norfolk and in the local newspapers. The Radio Norfolk Breakfast Show was presented from a community pharmacy last year to highlight the flu vaccination service. Earlier this month the Breakfast Show again found a home in a community pharmacy to feature health checks to capitalise on New Year's resolutions.

Such coverage in many cases does not come from press releases; it again comes down to relationships. A call to someone who knows you at the local radio station with something of interest is the best way to get coverage- it's not difficult says Tony – they have a lot of time to fill, so helping them fill it with a local interest story involving pharmacy often hits the spot, he adds.

Most of the LPC members have had media training or experience of dealing with the media and for a reactive story the LPC has got down to fine art the rapid delivery of a briefed and well prepared pharmacy spokesperson, vital in such a fast moving environment.

Resources

The LPC website is the hub of support for contractors who are regularly encouraged to visit the site to keep up to date. The LPC also uses Twitter and Facebook and contacts contractors by email (never fax). There are regular newsletters which are emailed and sent by hard copy. For multiples emails are sent via the regional managers- this has the added benefit of being sent to the branches by their boss!

The flu vaccination service is a good example of collaborative working with a successful Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire LPC's joint bid. Work was allocated across the LPCs with a strong plan, project management, contractor communication and marketing: £7k was paid by the LPCs for marketing material which is on course to triple the number of vaccinations over last year.

Norfolk LPC's ethos is building relationships and if you do that well (which they do) things fall into place. To find out more about Norfolk LPC visit their website:

<http://psnc.org.uk/norfolk-lpc/>

If your LPC would like to contribute to this series contact mike.king@psnc.org.uk