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Writing a convincing case study: top tips

As part of the campaign to promote community pharmacy, contractors and LPCs have been collecting excellent case studies of patient care. These can now be used in media work and in responses to the consultation on changes to community pharmacy in 2016/17 and beyond. This briefing sets out some advice on writing up your case studies.

What makes a good case study?

A good case study is one that tells a story that illustrates the human side of what you're talking about – describing how a community pharmacy service helped an individual, how it affected them and what impact it had on them and their health. Case studies go beyond simple testimonials by highlighting real-life examples of your day-to-day work. People enjoy reading a story. A great case study will allow someone to really get to know the patient, to see how you helped them, and to appreciate what impact your help had on their condition as well as the value of that service, as well as understanding the value of community pharmacy more broadly within the range of NHS services.

Issues to consider

Before writing up your case study here are some issues to think about:

- Who is the patient and what condition did they need help with?
- What were the patient's needs?
- How did you go about helping the patient?
- Was this part of a local or national service?
- What impact did your help have on the patient?
- Did the help you gave them mean the patient avoided complications or seeing other professionals?

Structuring your case study

Think about how your case study will then be structured in order to tell that story:

- **Context:** This introduces the patient and the condition they needed help with
- **Action:** This sets out how you were able to help them
- **Result:** What was the result for the patient and how did they find the service

Think about what MPs and policy makers are interested in

Remember politicians are looking for certain things from your case study to highlight to them the value of community pharmacies. It is important to consider the following issues when writing your case study:

- How convenient was the experience for the patient?
- Can you show how you provided a range of services?
- Do you have an idea of how much it cost to provide those services?
- Did you prevent someone having to go to the GP or even A&E or pick up on a more serious condition?
- Did the patient comment on how valuable having the community pharmacy service was?

Questions to consider

Here are some questions you may want to think about when writing your case study:

1. Context: *Tell the patient's story*

- Who was the person?
- What were their circumstances? i.e. were they elderly/ a busy mum etc.? What do we know about them as a person?
- What condition did they have?
- How common is this condition – is something that most people would go to a GP to be treated?
- What impact was it having on their health/life?

2. Action: *Focus on how you solved their problem*

- What action did you take?
- What services/ facilities did you have at your disposal?
- How quickly were you able to provide the services?
- What actions did you take to make them feel more comfortable – e.g. did it require a consultation room?
- Did you provide other services/ advice while you were treating them?

3. Result: *Did your actions work?*

- Why did they decide to use the pharmacy?
- Did the service meet/ surpass their expectations? – did they leave feeling reassured etc?
- Did you prevent someone having to go to the GP or A&E?
- Did you spot something that the patient was going to ignore that required urgent medical attention?
- How much did your services cost?

Your case study should not be too long; you can tell a good story which covers many of these points in 200-300 words. To add to the case study a photo can also help to bring the text to life. Sometimes, small details can make a story much more memorable. Physical descriptions (sizes, colours) and mentions of tangible objects (did they use their inhaler with their ear? Did they bring a jar of sweets to an MUR?) can help the reader to visualise the situation.

Remember to share your case study with us using the email address: campaign@psnc.org.uk

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information or help with writing up case studies, please contact [Zoe Smeaton, Head of Communications and Public Affairs](#).