

Final Report on the Collaborative Working Project Between the National Pharmacy Association, Gen X Media Ltd t/a Pharmacy in Practice, and Pfizer UK Ltd

‘Community pharmacy the front door of healthcare’

Project Duration: November 2023 – November 2024

Introduction

This report details the innovative, collaborative project undertaken by the National Pharmacy Association (NPA), GenX Media Ltd t/a Pharmacy in Practice (PIP), and Pfizer UK Ltd. The collaboration aimed to enhance community pharmacy's role as the "front door of healthcare" providing patients with improved access to clinical services to potentially alleviate pressures on the NHS. This initiative aligned with the goals of the NHS Long Term Plan¹, leverages the strengths of each organisation to create impactful change in pharmacy practice and patient care. Throughout the project, the group of organisations was aware of the sector's pressures and sought to contribute and provide support where possible.

The overall objectives of this collaborative working approach are to develop a comprehensive suite of educational guidelines and materials through five broad areas of focus: IP Micro-credentialling, Workforce Development, Patient Group Partnerships, ICB/ICS integration, and promoting health equity through minority communities' health education. These materials are designed for Community Pharmacists and their staff, including a service training framework to support them in delivering robust clinical advice, treatments and services. These services aim to address local health needs and increase commissioned clinical services. By providing robust training materials that enhance sector expertise in delivering local healthcare solutions, the collaborative working project seeks to significantly improve patient care.

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The 2024 project successfully delivered on its objectives, and it was decided to develop the areas of work and increase the number of organisations involved in 2025.

The following sections outline each organisation's contributions, actions and their respective impacts on the project's outcomes. Each organisation contributed in its own way, calling on its expertise. However, the project was a collaborative effort, and the outputs come under the banner of the collaborative group and not any individual organisation.

Project Overview

The collaborative team developed the project into five broad areas of focus. These areas were as follows:

1. Independent prescribing micro-credential programme

Pharmacy in Practice had developed a novel micro-credential programme that they brought to the collaborative. This project element aimed to support pharmacist independent prescribers in demonstrating competence in travel health services. The programme will enable pharmacists to document their expertise, undergo a short exam-style assessment, and receive feedback from a subject expert to validate their proficiency in this clinical area.

2. Workforce development

This element of the collaborative working project focused on sharing knowledge and best practice with community pharmacy owners to empower community pharmacy teams to meet the growing needs of their communities further establishing their key role in primary care. It aimed to support pharmacy owners in unlocking the full potential of their teams through a series of online modules focused on business development, communication skills and pharmacy skill mix. This also highlighted the critical need for significant workforce development in community pharmacy.

3. Minority communities' health education

Ethnic minority groups in the UK typically have poor access to and engagement with healthcare in their community. These groups often have unique travel patterns, frequently visiting countries with varying levels of health risks, including regions with endemic diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, or hepatitis. It was highlighted that this population needed support to engage with healthcare.

This element of the collaborative working project aimed to tailor travel health information to ensure that cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors are considered, making the advice more accessible, relevant, and actionable. It helped address potential barriers such as language differences, varying health literacy levels, and culturally specific health beliefs, fostering better awareness and compliance with preventive measures like vaccinations, medications, and safe travel practices. Resources were produced that had the endorsement of the British Islamic Medical Association and the Muslim Council of Britain.

4. Patient group partnerships

Listening to and understanding the patient's voice is essential for pharmacists and their teams to deliver high-quality, patient-centred care through services. By actively engaging with patients, pharmacy teams can better align their approaches with the expectations and needs of those they serve, ultimately improving outcomes and satisfaction. This part of the collaborative working project involved establishing deep relationships with several patient organisations and collaborating to bring insights and education to pharmacists and their teams. Most notably, we recorded and published an

interview with the founder of the UK Sepsis Trust, Dr Ron Daniels, on the importance of community pharmacy and its critical role in supporting early detection of sepsis.

5. Community pharmacy integrated joint board strategy

Integrated Care Systems (ICS) and Integrated Care Boards (ICB) are new entities within the UK healthcare system, designed to bring together stakeholders across health and care sectors to deliver more coordinated and efficient services aligned to their local population needs. However, community pharmacists and their teams currently lack adequate representation in these structures, which limits their potential contributions and influence in shaping integrated care delivery. This part of the collaboration involved a fact-finding exercise to establish how community pharmacy fits in this new and evolving system and how best they can engage to deliver improved patient care.

1. Contributions of The National Pharmacy Association (NPA)

The NPA played a central role in ensuring the project's alignment with the needs of community pharmacists and their teams. Their actions were pivotal in creating resources, engaging stakeholders, and advocating for enhanced pharmacy services. The NPA developed a webpage to highlight the various aspects of the project and host resources and outputs of the collaborative.

Development of Educational Resources

- Collaborated with PIP to scope education and support materials tailored for community pharmacists.
- Developed digital learning modules to support workforce and business development.
- Co-created resource to engage with minority communities.
- Highlighted micro-credentialing of Independent Prescribers (IPs) as an innovative validation pathway.

Integration with NHS Structures

- Sought insights from leading early adopter pharmacists within ICS/ICB structures and co-developed a questionnaire to seek national feedback.
- Took a leadership role in representing community pharmacy teams within emerging ICS/ICB structures.
- Advocated for better representation of community pharmacists in national healthcare planning, ensuring their inclusion in decision-making processes.

Public Awareness Initiatives

- Discussed strategies to inform the public about the expanded role of community pharmacy services, including health promotion for minority communities and pilgrims travelling abroad.
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2. Contributions of GenX Media Ltd t/a Pharmacy in Practice (PIP)

PIP's communication and content development expertise was integral to the project's success. They provided innovative solutions to promote education, mentorship, and public awareness.

Educational Content Development

- Brought a micro-credential competence framework for community pharmacists to the collaborative.
- Brought an Independent Prescriber Support Programme, introducing a novel approach to assessing prescriber competence to the collaborative.

Patient Engagement and Advocacy

- Produced a series of podcasts highlighting the patient's voice, showcasing experiences and feedback from diverse patient groups.
 - Forged relationships with a range of patient groups in the clinical areas. This activity raised awareness of sepsis and meningitis within the community pharmacy ecosystem.
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3. Contributions of Pfizer UK Ltd

Pfizer UK Ltd provided essential financial resources and strategic input, ensuring the project's objectives were delivered to time and aligned with national healthcare priorities.

Strategic Planning and Guidance

- Collaborated with the NPA and PIP to design training materials.
- Contributed expertise in aligning project initiatives with the goals of the NHS Long Term Plan, particularly regarding post-pandemic recovery and reducing GP workloads.

Financial Support

- Funded the development and dissemination of training and educational materials, enabling pharmacists to upskill and deliver enhanced clinical services.

Facilitating Partnerships

- Introduced NPA and PIP to national patient group organisations, broadening the scope of the patient engagement workstream.
 - Supported the production of patient-focused podcasts and materials to improve public awareness of pharmacy services.
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Project Achievements and Impact

1. Workforce Development

- Successfully planned the deployment of the micro-credentialing programme (Travel vaccination) for IPs to enhance their competence and confidence.
- Developed a series of educational modules to raise the awareness and importance of understanding your business and the necessary workforce development needed for future growth.

2. Public Awareness

- Expanded the awareness of community pharmacy capability and services across the UK, improving patient access to pharmacy services in minority communities

3. Patient-Centric Care

- Amplified the patient voice through podcasts and publications, fostering a deeper understanding of patient needs and expectations.

4. NHS Collaboration

- Contributed to the NHS Long Term Plan's objectives, supporting the integration of community pharmacy into national healthcare strategies.
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Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges

- Initial resistance to the expanded role of community pharmacy required significant advocacy and awareness efforts.

- Variability in the readiness of community pharmacies to adopt new clinical services highlighted the need for tailored support.

Lessons Learned

- Collaboration across diverse organisations amplifies impact, complementing each partner’s strengths.
- Continuous mentorship and education are critical to ensuring sustainable improvements in community pharmacy practice.
- Engaging patients as active stakeholders enhances the relevance and acceptance of healthcare initiatives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The collaborative project between NPA, PIP, and Pfizer UK Ltd exemplifies the power of partnership in transforming community pharmacy. The project achieved advancements in workforce development, public awareness, and patient care by leveraging each organisation's expertise.

Recommendations

1. Deploy the micro-credentialing program.
2. Engage in further public awareness work to solidify community pharmacy’s role as the “front door of healthcare.”
3. Foster ongoing collaboration between community pharmacy and NHS structures to ensure alignment with national healthcare priorities.
4. Drive engagement with workforce development to ensure the sector is fit for future.
5. Optimise accessible and equitable advice and treatment on prevention and care of health services through community pharmacy.

This project has set a foundation for the future of community pharmacy, demonstrating its potential to play a central role in modern healthcare delivery.

References

1. [NHS Long Term Plan » The NHS Long Term Plan](#)