

Healthy Living Pharmacy

The Role of the Health Champion

What are Health Champions?

Within a community pharmacy, Health Champions (HCs) are members of the pharmacy team who are trained and accredited to provide customers with health and wellbeing advice. The key role of an HC is to provide customers with information about their health and signpost them to other community services (such as commissioned NHS Enhanced Services) that will help them to adopt healthier lifestyles and access the support they need to do so. HCs have achieved the Royal Society for Public Health (RPSH) Understanding Health Improvement Level 2 award¹.

The ideal Health Champion:

- lives in the community that they work in
- works on the medicines counter or, if within the dispensary, has plenty of opportunity to interface with customers
- is passionate about helping individuals; wants to make a difference
- is prepared to engage in proactive conversations about an individual's health
- wants to develop their role further and invest time in their development has or can develop skills in questioning, listening and establishing rapport
- has or can develop a knowledge of health related issues such as obesity, smoking and alcohol
- works well in a team; prepared to take a lead in activities such as health promotional activities
- may be engaged in service delivery already (although this is not essential, it suggested a synergy between the proactive engagement with individuals and follow-up in service delivery)
- should be able to research and keep an up to date a local directory of health and wellbeing services in the local area.

Why are Health Champions needed?

It is a key requirement for any pharmacy wishing to become a Healthy Living Pharmacy (HLP) to have at least one HC as part of their pharmacy team. However, if not an HLP, HCs can also effectively support recruitment into and delivery of many pharmacy services and local health promotion events. Evidence² shows that this role is beneficial to the individual, the pharmacy and the population it serves.

¹ <https://www.rsph.org.uk/en/qualifications/qualifications.cfm?id=level-2-award-in-understanding-health-improvement>

² <http://psnc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/HLP-evaluation.pdf>

Who can become a Health Champion?

Any member of the pharmacy team can become an HC. The HC training course will increase the communication skills of the individual and enable them to enhance and promote health and wellbeing effectively. This can benefit the pharmacy business as well as the individual personally.

Community pharmacies may want to consider the following points when assessing members of the pharmacy team regarding their suitability to become an HC:

- Can their job be done flexibly with other staff taking over or is their work non-urgent so it can be done after a session with a client?
- Will someone new need to be recruited to the team either part or full-time?
- What happens when the HC is on holiday?
- Does the individual engage positively with customers?
- Does the individual live and as work in the area?

What training is available for Health Champions?

There are many national and local organisations that provide HC courses including the core 'Understanding Health Improvement' Level 2 qualification accredited by the RSPH³. This course consists of four modules followed by an MCQ assessment:

- Inequalities in health
- How effective communication can support health messages
- Importance of promoting improvements in health and wellbeing
- Impact of behaviour change on health and wellbeing

In addition the RSPH offer other qualifications⁴ to further develop the skills and knowledge of a Health Champion:

- Level 2 Award in Applied Health Improvement
- Level 2 Award in Encouraging a Healthy Weight and Healthy Eating
- Level 2 Award in Encouraging Physical Activity
- Level 2 Award in Health Promotion (General Health and Wellbeing)
- Level 2 Award in Health Promotion (Oral Health)
- Level 2 Award in Supporting Smoking Cessation
- Level 2 Award in Understanding Alcohol Misuse
- Level 2 Award in Understanding Behaviour Change
- Level 2 Award in Understanding the Delivery of an NHS Health Check
- Level 2 Award in Understanding Dementia⁵

³ <https://www.rsph.org.uk/en/qualifications/qualifications.cfm?id=level-2-award-in-understanding-health-improvement>

⁴ <https://www.rsph.org.uk/en/qualifications/qualifications.cfm?cat=health>

⁵ <https://www.rsph.org.uk/en/qualifications/qualifications.cfm?id=understanding-dementia>