



## NHS South Tyneside CCG - Think Pharmacy First

The Think Pharmacy First scheme was developed by NHS South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in partnership with GP practices and local pharmacists following a NHS services review in South Tyneside.

The scheme encourages people to visit their pharmacist for help and advice. In addition, people who receive free prescriptions can go straight to the pharmacy instead of booking a GP appointment for treatment of common illnesses. This initiative was a response to increased pressure on GPs in South Tyneside, which was becoming problematic. The intention was to support patients to change their health-related and care-seeking behaviours. A social marketing campaign was adopted to encourage this change.

### The Aims

People often visit their GP for minor illnesses which could more easily and cost-effectively be treated by a community pharmacist. This means that those who are in genuine need of a GP appointment find it difficult to access one, resulting in increased pressure on NHS services as patients who want to see their GP instead visit walk-in centres or A&E.

The CCG wanted to tackle this issue and Think Pharmacy First was developed to help alleviate pressures in other NHS service areas. The scheme's aim was to provide better access to NHS services via pharmacies and to save the need for GP appointments.

This was supported by a social marketing campaign which focused on pharmacies as the place to go for minor illnesses, highlighting convenience and ease of access, as well as free medication for those who don't pay for prescriptions.

The overall objective was to reduce presentation at GP surgeries by patients who could quickly and easily be dealt with in a pharmacy, freeing up capacity for patients with more complex health needs.

### The Tasks

The Think Pharmacy First campaign focused on clear messages to the public about the role of community pharmacies as part of integrated health care. The scheme was targeted at those eligible for free prescriptions, who might be more likely to go to GPs for a prescription for minor illnesses rather than pay for over-the-counter medication.

These patients included:

- Low income parents with children under 16 years
- Unemployed residents under 65 years
- People aged 60 and over

These groups were mapped against Mosaic profiling (demographical information based on area) to give a clear picture of the people we needed to reach and their communication preferences. Insights into the target groups' perspectives of pharmacy services were also reviewed to ensure that messages about the scheme were focused and helpful.

For example the lack of privacy was perceived to be a barrier in pharmacies, so messaging included an emphasis on the availability of private consultation rooms.

Before the campaign was launched, the CCG undertook several workshops for staff within GP practices and pharmacies. This ensured that the scheme was embedded prior to launch so that messages were consistent as well as clinicians playing a key role in this campaign research has highlighted that clinicians are key influencers of public behaviour.

To ensure that the campaign had maximum impact, a digital first approach was used all year round as via mosaic profiling it was identified that this was the preferred communication for the target audience.

For further details please contact:

**North of England Commissioning Support Unit** – Helen Fox, Senior communications manager **T: 07789 062721** **Email: helen.fox6@nhs.net**

## The Execution

This was a digitally-led marketing campaign with low level campaign activity with a focus on key points as follows:

- April – launch
- June/July – hay fever focus and aligned to pollen levels
- September – head lice for school children (back to school)
- December – general winter illnesses

Activity included:

- Regional and local PR activity
- Live webchat on same day as newspaper content
- Digital including Google adwords, online advertising and social media
- On street activity
- Advertising on bus shelters close to pharmacies
- Distribution to GP practices, pharmacies and community venues
- Dedicated webpage site - [www.southtynesideccg.nhs.uk/thinkpharmacyfirst](http://www.southtynesideccg.nhs.uk/thinkpharmacyfirst)

## The outcomes

The campaign has been prominently featured in the regional media. Social media was used to feature digital content, including videos featuring participating community pharmacists.

100 respondents from Mosaic target audience groups were selected to participate in market research. In general the scheme was seen in a positive light, with people noting that the service could reduce GP workload, speed up the process of accessing medical help and conserve appointments for those in urgent need. Around 63% of participants agreed they would go to a pharmacy first for advice. 84% agreed they understood the message of the campaign.



## Scheme impact

- From 1 April 2015 to 31 July 2016 there were 24,728 minor ailment consultations delivered, that's currently around 400 consultations in community pharmacy per week
- 71% of consultations to date have been for 18 years and under
- 7% of consultations to date have been for the over 65's
- Potential scheme savings of £316,000 per year (cost comparison at GP appointment average: £35, Minor Ailment Consultation: £3.40 + price of the drugs supplied)

## CCG Learning

- Any behavioural change projects require regular insight from end users to ensure success.
- Utilising word of mouth is useful for spreading the key message of a behavioural change project, making sure it is as visible as possible.

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