

GPhC contribution to the Inclusive Pharmacy Practice bulletin

Theme: Supporting mental health and wellbeing through pharmacy regulation: IPP bulletin contribution

Mental health is an integral and essential component of health. The **World Health Organisation** (WHO) constitution defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

For many of us, our local pharmacy is the first place we'll go when we are unwell, but being unwell can be about more than just physical health. There is a common misconception that physical and mental health are separate conditions. However, we know that poor physical health can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems. Similarly, poor mental health can negatively impact on physical health, leading to an increased risk of some conditions.

Pharmacy professionals play a crucial role in helping to support people with their mental health and wellbeing. Through our inspections, we check that pharmacies are meeting our standards, which includes looking at whether services are being delivered safely and effectively and how vulnerable people are safeguarded. We also look at how pharmacies are delivering new services such as the Antidepressants New Medicine Service. We identify good and excellent examples of innovative practice, and we publish these as examples of notable practice in our Pharmacy Inspections website's Knowledge Hub.

Knowledge hub example 1: This pharmacy made a difference to patients by working with local charities to provide tailored services, including support for patients with mental health issues. An age-related charity was invited to the pharmacy and older patients were encouraged to ask any questions to open discussions about health and well-being. A common theme from the event was loneliness and as a result a walking initiative was explored by the pharmacy.

The pharmacist also promoted a charity that provided 24-hour phone support, encouraging older people to phone with any questions or if they were lonely. An elderly patient, prescribed an antidepressant for the first time, was flagged as a potential Chronic Medication Service and New Medication Service review patient and the phone service was promoted during these reviews. The patient reported back that she had used the service and found it helpful, especially at night when she couldn't sleep and felt very lonely and stressed. The feedback was used to promote the services to other patients.

Additionally, the pharmacist obtained public health population data which confirmed the ageing demographic of the area, including the common conditions experienced by patients, and used a tool to identify community groups to target services and information. **[Read more about this here.](#)**

We're also very aware of issues affecting the mental health and wellbeing of the profession and we're mindful of the fact that this can have implications for patient safety. Although as a regulator our primary focus is on the safety of the public, we acknowledge that this is inextricably linked to the wellbeing of the pharmacy professions.

Some of the ways we support wellbeing through our regulatory work include: being inclusive in our approach, treating everyone fairly and without discrimination or bias; setting clear regulatory standards and guidance to help safeguard pharmacy staff, as well as patients and members of the public; supporting people to raise concerns or seek help or advice when they are facing pressures; and, taking a person-centred approach to managing concerns, treating those involved with dignity, respect, empathy and compassion.

We raise awareness and signpost people to different sources of mental health and wellbeing support or guidance, applicable to different contexts and scenarios. We use our influence and work with other stakeholders, to ensure a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to issues of wellbeing in pharmacy. For example, we recently highlighted workforce wellbeing and discrimination to the Health and Social Care Committee as part of its inquiry into the Future of Pharmacy, and we also work closely with organisations such as Pharmacist Support to raise awareness of key services and resources. Our Chief Executive, Duncan Rudkin, recently took part in the latest RPS/Pharmacist Support roundtable to review the results of the latest workforce wellbeing survey, identifying further collaborative action that is needed. [Read about the roundtable here](#) and [our statement on wellbeing here](#).

Through our standard setting work and our inspections, we also look at how pharmacy employers are creating and maintaining workplace environments where the safety and welfare of both patients and pharmacy teams are protected.

Knowledge hub example 2: This pharmacy supported the mental health of its team members by encouraging them to download and use 'Headspace', a science-backed App in mindfulness and meditation. The App was the subject of clinically validated research and designed to help reduce stress, build resilience and aid better sleep. This made a difference to patients, as pharmacy team members were able to focus on their mental wellbeing. As a result, this helped to ensure the pharmacy's services were provided effectively for people. [Read more this approach here](#).

As an employer, we hold ourselves to the same high standards we expect of others. We recently achieved Silver Accreditation in the MIND Workplace Wellbeing Index, showing progress in promoting staff mental health and wellbeing, that we are taking action across several key areas, and demonstrating impact over time. The award was based on results of a staff survey and analysis of our existing policies, procedures, management style and wellbeing support available.

We created a workplace wellbeing group, with members of our Employee Representative Group with an interest in wellbeing, to take forward additional actions following our accreditation. We also support staff by publishing blogs and resources on topics such as burnout and stress, with essential information for all staff about how to access support from GPhC Mental Health First Aiders and our Employee Assistance Programme as well as our Workplace Wellbeing information and resources.