

Oldham Pharcay Walks: Test and Learn

Pharmacy Walks - Promoting Physical Activity to Improve Self-Care in Target Audiences

This was a pilot with 2 pharmacies which started in May 2021, 1 in the Glodwick area and the other in Failsworth. It built on a previous commission that was offered to 2 community health pharmacies in each area with strong links to local GP practices through Public Health / CCG co-ordination - Pharmacy diabetes testing was undertaken, and people referred onto the national diabetes Prevention Programme.

The aim of this as a **test and learn** was to build on this work, but with the pharmacists providing both additional **MECC advice** and in particular emphasising the importance of being active to help prevent/lower risk scores. In addition, during these conversations and where appropriate, the pharmacists were asked to promote a weekly walk that would leave from outside their respective pharmacies to see if this would encourage those, they had spoken to increase their levels of physical activity. This was supported by in-store promotion materials. The 'theory' was:

- **If** we promote how people's health and wellbeing (inc long-term conditions such as Type 2 Diabetes) can be improved through physical activity as part of a wider programme of self-care whilst also providing accessible and appropriate activities such as led walks in their local community **Then** these individual may increase how active they are, make appropriate behaviour changes **Because** these messages have been given by people whom they trust and view as important, and, the activity is perceived as suitable and achievable.
- The outcome is we have **more people who change their behaviours and increase how active they are**, thus improving their health and wellbeing.

In the case of Glodwick, we found that the messaging from the pharmacist as a **trusted source and very well respected in the community** was important. The weekly walk was also supported by staff from BAME Connect so in addition to the walk leader from UProjects, there were also trusted community individuals who joined in the weekly walk. The benefit of this was that they could also share and **promote other opportunities available in the local community**. The

pharmacist also often joined in the walks and fed back that this was useful for him as it gave him the time to gain more insight into his customers concerns, particularly as this was post covid. The walk continued until late Autumn. The weather, however, became a barrier to attendance and the walks were stopped for Winter.

In Failsworth, this walk was and still is hugely popular, and its weekly numbers are around 20+ walkers. It grew not only via promotion from the pharmacy but through word of mouth and local social media channels. Although many of those who attended said it was initially to **improve their health** (as they recognised they were not active enough, exacerbated by lock down), the incentive to keep coming back week in week out, was largely for **social reasons**. For many, loneliness had been a huge issue, and walking alone a safety concern. Therefore, the self-reported improvements to their mental and physical wellbeing were huge.



There were less Diabetes Type 2 risk assessments and signposting to the national diabetes prevention programme undertaken at this pharmacy, (possibly due to the size and how busy the pharmacy seemed to be). Therefore, unlike Glodwick, we cannot say that the messaging from the pharmacists was an influencing factor. However, **the suitability of the activity** and the start point being somewhere easy to get to and familiar with people did seem to be. Also, the lead pharmacist would regularly come out and talk to the walkers, and it **provided opportunities to promote other health campaigns** such as Flu vaccines. So, there were clear benefits of having a meeting point outside the pharmacy for both local people and the pharmacists.

Although the group continues to be supported, this is gradually being reduced at a pace which suits the walkers to meet their levels of growing confidence. **6 members have undertaken their Emergency First Aid, and they have some volunteers who will lead the walks** on the weeks where UProjects are not there. It is also linked to and promoted by Failsworth Walking Group, so there are **exit routes** to other walks lead by individuals in the local community.



