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LPCs in the Spotlight – Resourcing your LPC for the Future, A South East Experience - Community Pharmacy Surrey and Sussex

In this Spotlight we look at Community Pharmacy Surrey and Sussex (CPSS) a new overarching administrative support tier for three LPCs: West Sussex, East Sussex and Surrey LPCs.

Three years ago, the then Chief Officers of the three committees Vanessa Taylor (East Sussex and Martin Mandelbaum (West Sussex and Surrey LPCs) had both decided that they would retire with effect from April 2018. This triggered the LPC Chairs, two Chief Officers and Treasurer to form a management committee to scope the future structure – the outcome was an agreement of the three LPCs to form an overarching administrative tier with one Chief Officer with a small team to support the three LPCs.

LPC leaders also recognised that local support for contractors and their teams had never been so important, with the growing complexity of local commissioning; wider changes to the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework and continued funding pressures.

The key to getting agreement, say's Vanessa, was a clear and transparent process which all LPC members agreed and bought into; Vanessa added that one element that helped assuage any concerns about each LPC getting its fair share of support from CPSS, was a Collaboration Agreement, legally drafted, agreed and signed by each LPC.

With go ahead from the LPCs work began on implementing the plans.

Building the team

CPSS was formed in April 2017 and the LPCs secured an office for CPSS in Leatherhead Surrey, sharing a building with a similar federated structure, [Surrey & Sussex LMCs](#), supporting LMCs - like the LPCs in the area the LMCs did not merge.

The LPCs formed a small group to lead the recruitment of CPSS staff and drawing up job descriptions. An advertisement for a Chief Officer was published and competency-based questions prepared for interviews and selection. An open and transparent process to secure the best person for the job.

James Wood, a former LPC Chief Officer for Sheffield LPC, independent contractor and NPA Board member was appointed as Chief Officer. The office team was completed with Communications Engagement Senior Officer Penny Woodgate, Service Development Senior Office Hinal Patel and Business Administrator Michaela Cassar.

Governance

Whilst CPSS is not an LPC (the LPCs remain accountable to contractors and cannot delegate any responsibility), CPSS can be and is the unified local voice for community pharmacy for Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex Local Pharmaceutical Committees (LPCs), steered by a governance structure headed up by the LPCs.

Based on the collaboration agreement the three officers from each LPC (Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer) form an Executive committee, meeting six times a year overseeing CPSS governance, management, priority setting and strategy. The Executive Committee also manages James.

The three LPCs have each reduced the number of LPC members from thirteen to nine (which has helped fund the new structure) with James and his team attending all LPC meetings. James explains that before each LPC meeting, the LPC's contractors are surveyed by CPSS for current issues and items they would like raised at the LPC meeting ([link](#) to survey example), after the meeting CPSS provides formal minutes for contractors and a digest for a more conversational style of report.

Contractor engagement

One of the challenges of any federated administration is making sure all contractors across, in this case the CPSS footprint, feel involved with their local views and issues recognised and considered.

This is a priority for CPSS. James explains that whilst much core information is common across the three LPCs, it's important that the individual LPCs specific needs are addressed. So, for example the [CPSS website](#) has pages dedicated areas for each of the three LPCs. There is a similar approach to the [CPSS Newsletter](#) and CPSS is developing core strategy applicable to all LPCs but with separate arms to tailor the strategy to local needs.

To maintain a more personal contact across a large geography, the CPSS team will be running webinars for Surrey and Sussex contractors in addition to local training and contractor visits. A license has been agreed with the provider WorkCast and the template format can be viewed [here](#).

Launch events

James joined the CPSS team in February this year, allowing a couple of months to work with Martin and Vanessa before their retirement. In February and March CPSS held a roadshow for contractors and their pharmacy team in six venues across the CPSS area. This gave James a chance to introduce himself and CPSS's aims and aspirations, as well as updating contractors on current issues.

90% of delegates surveyed after the events now understand how Community Pharmacy Surrey & Sussex can support them and their teams, with 93% more likely to get in touch with one of the team

The PowerPoint and other material from the events can be found [here](#).

The impact on contractors

Through excellent communications, Surrey and Sussex contractors were kept informed throughout the creation of CPSS, culminating in contractors giving an enthusiastic endorsement of the plans and promises given by James and his team at the launch events.

The formation of CPSS is an excellent example of how to bring several LPCs together through a single administrative support team. The existing LPCs continue, but removing duplication of work and resources through CPSS, means that for the same levy, contractors will benefit from enhanced resources, support and representation; building on the great work of Vanessa and Martin.

Mark Donaghy, Chair of West Sussex LPC, recently commented:

“Not only have Martin and Vanessa superbly represented and served the profession for many years but they have been instrumental in developing CPSS as an overarching structure across the three LPCs. These have the potential to be both difficult and exciting times for community pharmacy. CPSS will represent community pharmacy locally whatever happens and will be a legacy, that they should be rightly proud of.”

To find out more about CPSS visit the website at communitypharmacys.co.uk/ or for specific information about the Collaboration Agreement, job descriptions and launch event materials, please contact James Wood, CEO by email jameswood@communitypharmacys.co.uk

Related PSNC resources

[LPC sizes and structures briefing](#)

[LPCs options for restructuring](#)

[Checklist for merging LPCs](#)

For more information about the LPCs in the Spotlight series contact mike.king@psnc.org.uk