



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 a HC is to provide people with information about their health and signpost them to other community services (including commissioned pharmacy 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. This role and qualification is also recognised by other health providers and public health commissioners.

Why are Health Champions needed?

It is a key requirement in achieving Healthy Living Pharmacy (HLP) Level 1 status to have at least one full-time equivalent HC as part of their pharmacy team. HCs can also effectively support recruitment into pharmacy services, help deliver some of these services and lead local health promotion events. Evidence² shows that this role is beneficial to the individual, the pharmacy and the population it serves.

Who can become a Health Champion?

Any member of the pharmacy team can become a HC and there are no specific entry requirements. 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.

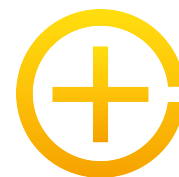
When deciding who should become a HC in the pharmacy it is beneficial to engage the whole team in a discussion about the vision for the pharmacy and how the team will be playing a greater role in health and wellbeing issues.

The ideal Health Champion has the following attributes:

- 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 and 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

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>



- 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.

What training is available for Health Champions?

There are a number of accredited centres for the provision of the Health Champion course (Understanding Health Improvement Level 2 qualification accredited by the RSPH³).

The course takes about 8 hours to complete and consists of four core modules with an updated syllabus for 2017:

- 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

At the end of the course content the pharmacy requests and completes the formal RSPH assessment invigilated by their pharmacist under exam conditions. This assessment is then marked by the RSPH who issue a certificate to successful candidates.

Once the Health Champion has received their award, there are opportunities for further development of skills and knowledge. The RSPH offer a range of Level 2 awards including:

- Applied health improvement
- Encouraging physical activity
- Understanding alcohol misuse
- Understanding dementia
- Encouraging a healthy weight and healthy eating
- Supporting smoking cessation
- Understanding behavioural change
- Understanding delivery of an NHS Health Check
- Award in mental wellbeing
- Understanding the misuse of substances
- Understanding sexual health

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