

## Collaborating with community pharmacists to deliver sexual health services

**20**  
YEARS OF  
**NICE**  
1999-2019

Umbrella has transformed sexual health services for Birmingham and Solihull residents, by improving accessibility, health promotion and closer working with community partners. As part of my NICE Fellowship and Umbrella, we collaborated with the local pharmaceutical committee (LPC) to develop sexual health services within community pharmacies.

*“Collaborating with pharmacists has improved access to sexual health care, and led to better integration between primary and secondary care.”*

**Nicola Thorley**, Sexual Health and HIV Consultant, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust



### What we did and why

Umbrella transformed a traditional sexual health service that focused on treatment, into a prevention-based, community-focused service, removing fragmentation and barriers to access.

We also:

- Collaborated with Birmingham and Solihull LPC to design and deliver sexual health services in community pharmacies across Birmingham.
- Established service user feedback: via surveys and case-based workshops, informed care pathways (using a “no wrong door” approach), community hub settings and partners, and health promotion strategy.
- Developed a pharmacy working group: comprising clinicians, business manager, managers in health promotion, finance and education and LPC representation.
- Utilised an electronic patient record (PharmOutcomes) which community pharmacists were already using.
- Established a quality-driven training program for pharmacists with face-face and online components.
- Communicated regularly and shared examples of good practice with the LPC and pharmacists via forums and meetings.

### Outcomes and impact

The Umbrella pharmacy network creates multiple access points to the service across the city. Umbrella branding and health promotion materials are de-stigmatising sexual health across the city.

Service-users can now attend a community pharmacy, local to where they live or work to access services including free condoms, emergency contraception, regular contraception, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing kits for infections and Chlamydia treatment.

163 community pharmacies now deliver sexual health services on behalf of Umbrella. Service activity in community pharmacies continues to increase (monthly service activity in October 2018: provision of: 2040 Emergency hormonal contraception, 123 Chlamydia screens, 1022 condoms, 323 STI kits, 46 Chlamydia treatments, 342 combined oral contraception pills, 182 progesterone-only pills, 33 Sayana Press contraceptive injections).

Improved access to screening enables earlier diagnosis of STI and blood-borne viruses, potentially reducing pressure on staff at overbooked Umbrella clinics.

### What we learnt

- Stakeholder engagement is vital:
  - Establish steering groups and forums.
  - Clinicians and managers should work closely together.
  - Understand community pharmacy needs.
- Invest in training and health promotion.
- Build and reflect upon relationships.
- Be aware of IT system barriers: the heterogeneity of IT systems across healthcare settings can create barriers to integrated care. We used an IT system that pharmacists were already familiar with.
- Keep it simple:
  - From procurement to provision, streamline processes where possible.
  - Procure services according to need.
  - Time is money, but quality is essential.
  - Work together to get the balance right.

**Celebrate success:** sharing success stories supports providers and is good for morale.

