



‘Winter Fit’: Pilot of the key role community pharmacy plays in prevention and protecting our older population during winter
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AIM

To demonstrate the value of community pharmacy in:

- helping the older population to be ‘winter fit’ during the winter period
- integrating and personalising care around the patient
- supporting the local community to cope with winter pressures
- reduce burden on healthcare by preventing avoidable admissions

BACKGROUND

Funded by SWL Innovation Fund, ‘Winter Fit’ intervention was delivered as a pilot scheme across the 6 boroughs of SWL. This was a collaboration between LPC, South London Partnership and the ICB, with the ICB supporting governance process in terms of contract set-up and finance arrangements. Winter Fit was based on the premise that the community pharmacist has a central role in community engagement and support around the older population. Community pharmacies are highly accessible, located in the heart of communities where people live,

METHODS

Using a Donabedian evaluation framework (Donabedian, 1988), a mixed methods approach was taken:

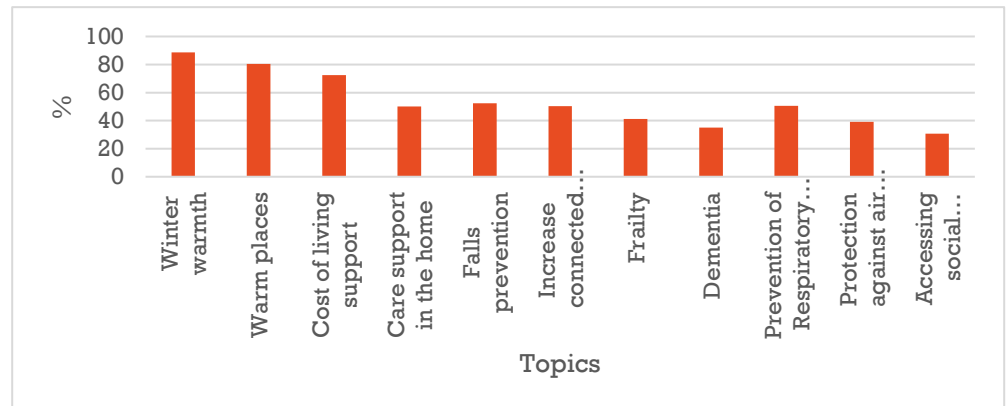
	Inputs	Process	Outputs	Outcomes
Measures	Staff training Staff time and resources Contracting Set up of EMIS	Use of EMIS (Pharmaoutcomes) Winter Fit Steering Group No of pharmacies that signed up	No of active pharmacies & location No of interventions given Type of interventions given Referrals Demographics of customers	Increased pharmacy connectedness with local community; Customer enabled to take action with advice
Methods	Online survey with pharmacies	Document analysis of minutes Interviews with pharmacies	Descriptive analysis of EMIS	Customer interviews Pharmacy staff interviews

RESULTS

Whilst 102 pharmacies signed up, 80 completed training and 10,000 interventions given within 4 weeks across SWL reaching 9922 between Feb 22nd and March 22nd 2023 (some people got the intervention twice but covered different topics the 2nd time). Vast majority of customers were aged 75+ years (N=5311). 88.7% of the conversations were on winter warmth, followed by warm places (80.4%) and cost of living support (72.4%). Conversations used a MECC approach and so were guided by what the customer wanted to have information on. Over half of all conversations included what was available for care in the home,

work and shop and many pharmacies are open for extended hours in the evenings. As well as the opportunistic possibilities, a substantial proportion of over 65s have repeat prescriptions and are regular customers.

increasing connectedness and prevention of falls and respiratory illnesses. 14.3% were referred onwards to a GP, social prescriber or social support.



WHAT IS WINTER FIT?



‘Winter Fit’ is a holistic support package for customers aged 65 years and older on key issues that can help them stay fit and healthy throughout the winter months and out of hospital. It utilizes a Making Every Contact Count (MECC) approach (e.g. ‘how are you today? It’s a bit chilly out there...’) covering topics like winter warmth, cost of living, fall prevention, social and activity groups and frailty support services.

The most active pharmacies were in low socio-economic areas with the least activity in the least deprived areas. This was due to staff thinking they may embarrass customers if they raised winter warmth etc. Analysis of the pharmacy feedback showed that whilst some staff struggled differentiating between MECC and signposting (asking for leaflets etc.), pharmacies adapted the training materials to curate and talk through what was meaningful to their customers, building upon their relationship with members of their communities. Customers were also followed up and feedback from customers was overwhelming positive, expressing feelings of being ‘listened to’ and supported.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

‘Winter Fit’ demonstrated the key role pharmacies play in prevention and protection of older SWL residents. This should be built upon, and pharmacies more widely used in personalised care and social prescribing, helping their local communities live healthier and longer. The collaboration between the ICS and Pharmacies with project support and a digital referral pathway demonstrated pharmacies are well placed for delivery of patient-centred services.