**Care Navigation – a guide for Community Pharmacy Independent Prescribers**

Care navigation gives people options to access the care and information which best meets their health and social care needs. This helps them to be seen by the right person, at the right place and at the right time.

Most care navigation resources in primary care are developed for GP practices but remember care navigation is a two way process so the principles and processes can be used to introduce care navigation in community pharmacy. It is important that the community pharmacy team are also able to navigate patients through the health care and social systems. This guide is based on the [Health Improvement Scotland 10 step guide to care navigation](https://ihub.scot/media/7466/cn-10-step-guide-v010.pdf)

**How ready is your pharmacy for care navigation?**

Think about and map out:

* Current ways of working within your pharmacy. Who is front line? What information is collected from the patient before they see the pharmacist?
* The motivation of your team to develop, test and implement care navigation
* Resources

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**What does your TEAM currently know about care navigation**?

Identify your team members and clarify their current understanding of care navigation. Use these video resources for training: [Care Navigation on Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/343236689); [Implementing Care Navigation within Biggar Health Centre on Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/343640991)

Do you need to review the design of your pharmacy? How will patients flow through the space? Do you need to identify a quiet area that can be used to gather information from the patients?

**What do PATIENTS know about care navigation and local services?**

It is important to understand what your patients know about care navigation so that they understand about the services available from community pharmacy and when they will be referred to another health care professional. They may understand care navigation from the GP practice but do they understand your role?

The video resources can also be used for patients. Do you have a TV screen in the pharmacy that can be used to play the videos? Do you have an information leaflet that describes the services that your pharmacy can offer? Do you have a website that describes services that you can direct patients to?

A [patient awareness questionnaire](https://ihub.scot/media/6292/20190507-care-navigation-patient-awareness-questionnaire-v1-0.pdf) can also be used (adapted for community pharmacy).

**What care navigation is already happening locally?**

There is no “one-size fits all” approach to care navigation and processes will need to fit your local context. Think about **what** you are currently navigating? **Who to?**

Use a [tally sheet](https://ihub.scot/media/7454/data-collection-tool-10_step-guide_cn.pdf) that could be adapted for community pharmacy.

Use this [care navigation flowchart example](https://ihub.scot/media/7455/flowchart-10_step-guide-cn.pdf) to design your own.

Remember to think about all services and professionals. For example, do you have a local private physiotherapy service or practitioners offering alternative health care services. Find out what services they deliver, how they deliver them and when so that you can offer patients accurate advice and guidance. Information about services in your local area is available on [NHS Inform Scotland’s](https://www.nhsinform.scot/) Service Directory

**Which services will you start navigating to?**

Having worked through the previous step you now know which services are available in your area. This knowledge will help to prioritise which services to navigate to. Start by prioritising the most frequently accessed services first.

Invest the time to have conversations with your local health care professionals to develop your care navigation pathways. All team members can benefit from meeting with your partner services to build relationships and awareness of services. Can you establish a regular forum (meeting or phone call) to discuss care navigation? Collaboration is essential. Can you offer to train GP practice staff on the services your pharmacy offers? Can your team go and spend time in the GP practice?

For each service you want to navigate to, you will need to develop a navigation criteria summary for your team to follow. Examples of GP practice [care navigation templates](https://ihub.scot/media/7456/guideline-template-10_step-guide_cn.pdf) can be adapted. When developing care navigation templates, be sure to involve both clinicians and team members who will be using the template.

It’s recommended you contact your indemnity provider and notify them of your new processes before you get started.

**Do your team members have all the skills they need?**

Use a blend of existing expertise, wider local collaboration and national support to meet the needs of your team. Consider this [list of activities.](https://ihub.scot/media/7457/learning-comms-10_step-guide-cn.pdf) Consider any gaps team members may have in their ‘softer skills’ too, such as communication, active listening, handling difficult conversations.

**How will your patients know about your new processes?**

The key is communication. As suggested previously, can you have information about care navigation available in the pharmacy? Use a range of different ways to get your message across to maximise reach and uptake. It may take time for your patients to understand why things have changed - understanding and patience will support this

**How will you know if your new processes work for everyone?**

Care navigation is an ongoing process and there should be regular reviews and updates on progress and processes. Remember to consult regularly with team members, colleagues and patients to ensure your processes are working for everyone involved. Safety is essential, so if ongoing issues arise or you anticipate any safety concerns, review and revise your plans immediately.

Finally, remember to celebrate your success and the difference it has made for your patients, partners and team.

**Care navigation resources**

Health Improvement Scotland. Care Navigation Toolkit. Available at:

<https://ihub.scot/project-toolkits/care-navigation-toolkit/care-navigation-toolkit/> [accessed 28 August 2023]

British Medical Association. Care navigation and triage in general practice. Available at: <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/managing-workload/care-navigation-and-triage-in-general-practice> [accessed 28 August 2023]

Health Education England. Care Navigation: a competency framework. Available at:

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Care%20Navigation%20Competency%20Framework_Final.pdf> [accessed 28 August 2023]