

Green Medicine Bag Scheme to Improve Safety and Reduce Waste



Brighton and Hove CCG Innovation Fund Report 2014-15

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Dec 2015

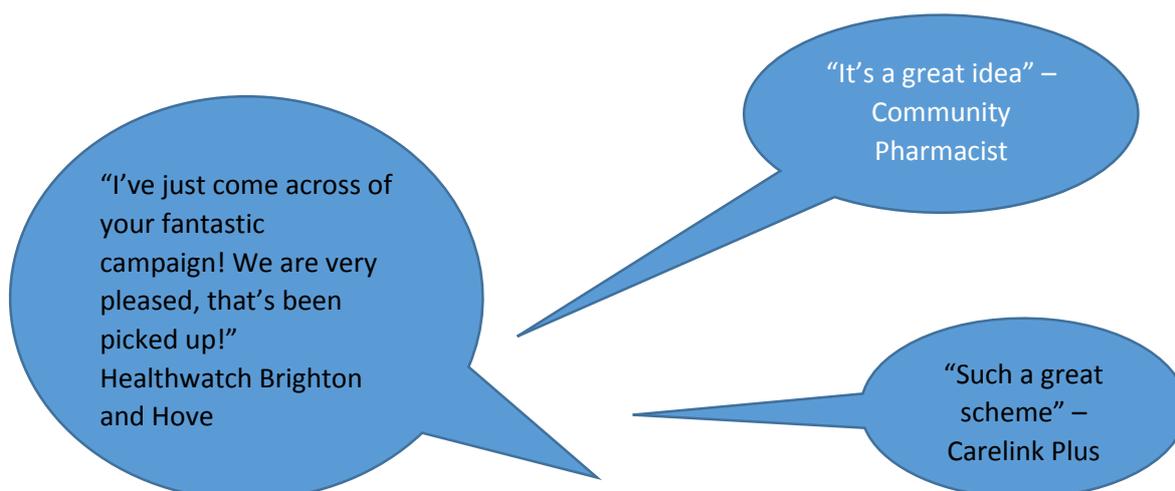
Executive Summary

This project involved the development and implementation of an integrated green medicines bag campaign for Brighton and Hove, where green medicines bags were issued to vulnerable patients as part of an admission avoidance service. Community pharmacies are a key location for medicines supply and advice. Pharmacy teams are well placed to help patients understand why it is important that their medicines stay with them when they move between care settings and provide the green bags.

In November 2014 all 60 community pharmacies in Brighton and Hove were supplied with a starter pack of green bags and other support materials. The green bag scheme was also highlighted to all local GPs and other relevant health services in Brighton and Hove (eg GP Out Of Hours, Care Homes, SCT, SECAMB and BSUH). During 2015 the green bag scheme was featured in the local paper and widely promoted with various pharmacy networks, Brighton and Hove City Wide Connect Partnership Members, Healthwatch and Neighbourhood Care Schemes.

Pharmacies across Brighton and Hove and other supporting organisations were issued with green bags between November 2014 and September 2015. Initial audits of patients admitted to BSUH between November and February 2015 failed to identify any patients using the bags provided via this scheme. However, following the increased publicity in early 2015, every audit between April and September demonstrated that 6-8% of newly admitted patients were using bags provided by the scheme to bring in their medicines. The average number of medicines prescribed for adult in-patients on admission is estimated at 8-10, with an average cost of £9-10. As well as the major benefits in terms of safety, avoiding missed doses, delays at discharge and waste, just one patient using a green bag (who would not otherwise have brought their medicines to hospital) can easily provide cost savings to the NHS of £70-£100.

Funding to continue the scheme has been agreed with the local acute trusts and we are now working with community pharmacy organisations to have a permanent supply route in place from April 2016.



Introduction and Objectives

Accurate and timely transfer of information when patients move in and out of hospital is a well-recognised problem in healthcare. Green bags are an easily identifiable, simple way of keeping a patient's medicines together when moving between health care settings. They have been used in some ambulance trusts including SECAmb for several years. In Worthing and Adur where green medicine bags are issued to patients via community pharmacies, successes were such that a special initiative to promote green bags across Brighton and Hove was supported by Brighton and Hove CCG Innovation Board in September 2014.

The objectives of the project were to:

Improve Quality by enabling healthcare staff in the hospital to understand how patients manage their medicines at home; allowing faster admission and discharge.

Improve Medicines Safety by ensuring the patient's medications are always moved along the care pathway with the patient allowing patients to maintain familiarity with their own medicines; ensuring medicines prescribed on admission correspond to those the patient was taking before admission; reducing confusion.

Improve Communication by ensuring healthcare professionals along the care pathway are all aware when any changes are made following an acute admission; empowering patients to understand the importance of taking their own medicines to and from hospital.

Improve Cost Efficiency and Decrease Waste by reducing the re-supply of medicines.

Method

The project was launched at the beginning of November 2014. All GPs were made aware of the scheme and asked to flag up frail elderly patients and those patients frequently admitted to hospital. This information was communicated to community pharmacies via the prescription form. The initiative was also supported in many other health settings, such as the local Ambulance Trust, GP Out Of Hours, and Acute and Community NHS Trusts.

All 60 community pharmacies in Brighton and Hove were supplied with a starter pack for green bags containing 6 large bags, 6 small bags, 20 leaflets, 1 poster and about 30 stickers. Pharmacies were contacted by phone, email, fax and regularly via the East Sussex LPC newsletter to explain the scheme and were encouraged to provide green bags to: anyone flagged by their GP as needing one; anyone identified as having a planned hospital admission; people with COPD or heart failure who are unstable or who have had previous admissions; and frail elderly patients on multiple medicines (including housebound or care home patients). Follow up phone calls were made to all pharmacies in January and to 25 selected pharmacies in March to: obtain feedback from staff; identify any barriers to the scheme; and establish if further supplies of bags were needed. Care Home Managers in 88 Care Homes across Brighton and Hove were made aware of the scheme and each sent two bags. The CCG Pharmacy team that work with Care Homes also promoted the bags.

Publicity and Media

Locally the awareness of the scheme was raised amongst pharmacists and pharmacy teams by East Sussex Local Pharmaceutical Committee, The Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education

(CPPE), Sussex Local Practice Forum (LPF) and the Local Professional Network (LPN) for pharmacy. An article was published in the local paper, The Argus.

The Brighton and Hove Citywide Connect Partnership cascaded information to community and voluntary sector organisations in Brighton and Hove. This included the police service and fire service and voluntary groups who work with the lonely, isolated and vulnerable people in the City. Circulation also included home care providers and residential care homes on the Brighton and Hove City Council's list. Brighton and Hove Healthwatch and the Brighton and Hove Neighbourhood Care Scheme included it in their newsletters. During September 2015, East Sussex LPC promoted the Green Bag Scheme in three showcase presentations to the Citywide Connect Partnership Locality Hubs across the City.

Evaluation

Data was collected over 10 months and the evaluation measures were:

- Uptake: Green bags distributed to local pharmacies and other health and social services.
- Utilisation: Brighton and Sussex University Hospital (BSUH) audit (one day a month) of the number in-patients with green bags and the source of the green bags (identified by specific bag labels for each service.) This was conducted as part of the on-going medicines reconciliation audit work.
- Informal Feedback: From services and patients to understand any problems and identify potential improvements.

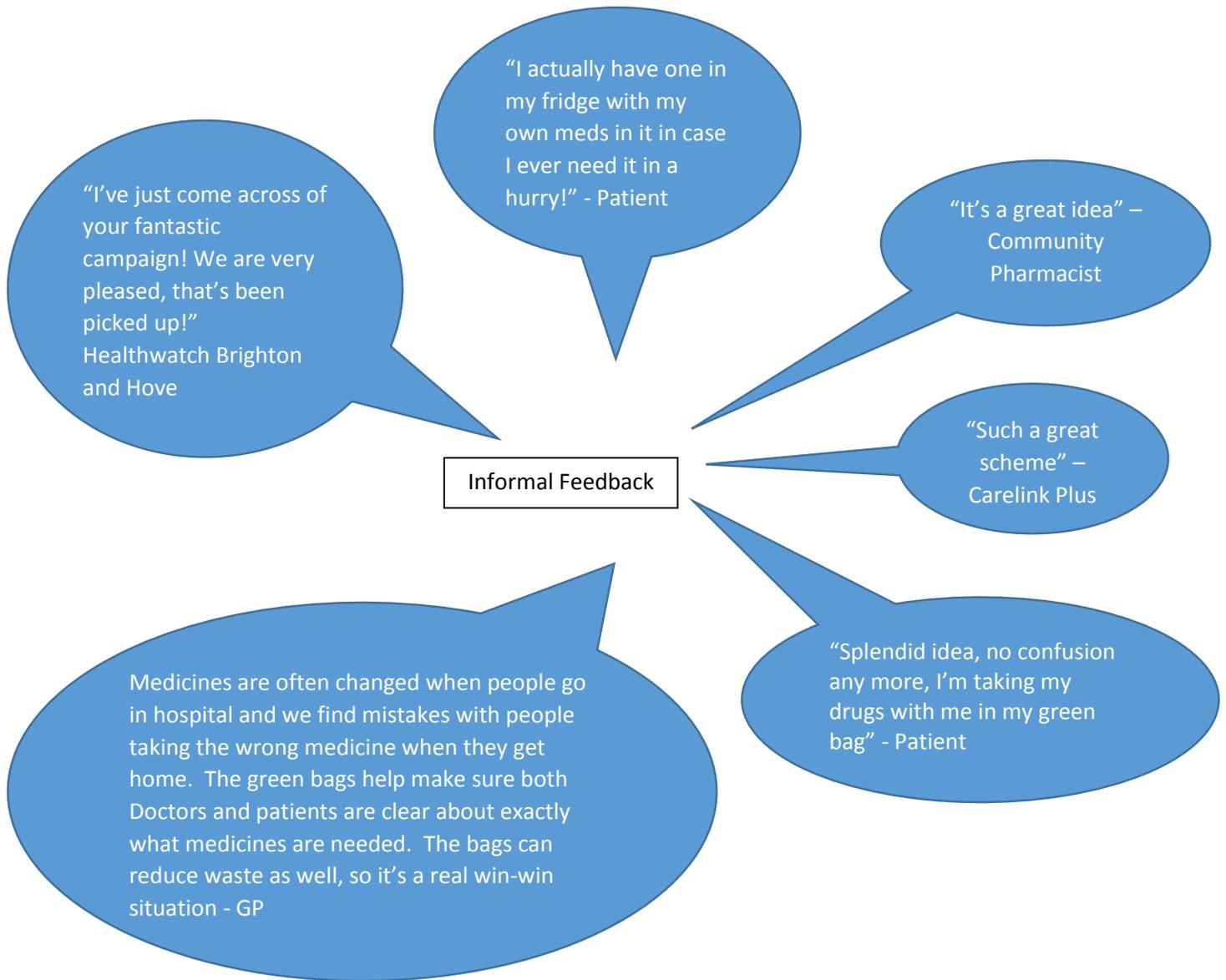
Results and Findings

Uptake: Green bags were distributed to 60 community pharmacies, 88 Care Homes, GP Out Of Hours Service Provider, Sussex Community Trust (Community Rapid Response Service, Intermediate Care Beds, Integrated Primary Care Teams) and various social care organisations. It was not possible to determine the total number of green bags issued to patients by each service.

Utilisation: Data from the BSUH green bag audits are shown in the appendix. Audits conducted between November 2014 and February 2015 failed to identify any patients using the bags provided via this scheme. However, following the increased publicity in early 2015, audits between April and September consistently demonstrated that 6-8% of newly admitted patients were using bags provided by the scheme to bring in their medicines. The project was not resourced to collect detailed data on all medicines contained in the green bags.

Informal Feedback: Pharmacies were generally positive about the scheme. Pharmacists reported actively targeting suitable patients such as; COPD patients, those in care homes, housebound patients via the community pharmacy delivery service, blister pack patients and those who received a Medicines Use Review (MUR).

Identifying suitable patients did present some problems as pharmacists did not always know when a patient would be going into hospital, particularly if this was at short notice. Barriers around continuity of staff were overcome by ensuring the whole pharmacy team were aware of the scheme. Careful explanation of the scheme was essential to avoid the misconception that the green bag implies the patient would be going in to hospital.



Discussion

Initial uptake of the scheme was slow. However, once established and the knowledge of the benefits of the scheme spread across the City, utilisation of the green bags increased. Patients, carers, Healthwatch and healthcare professionals welcomed the scheme as a simple means of increasing patient safety and reducing medicines waste.

Despite the modest number of bags being issued by community pharmacies in this scheme, once the initiative became embedded, many were being appropriately used by patients admitted to BSUH. The value of a patient's own drugs in each green bag from a community pharmacy could well exceed £100, but if the value is only £50, and 3 bags are presented at the hospital per day, an annual saving of more than £50,000 could be achieved solely from the reduced re-supply of medicines. The initial investment cost in the green bag scheme appears to be easily recovered in efficiency savings from reduction of the re-supply of medicines and the decreased amount of medicines waste, even without consideration of other benefits to patient safety.

Once implemented, running costs of this model for an integrated supply route for green bags are low. Funding to continue the scheme has been agreed with the local acute trusts and we are now working with community pharmacy organisations to have a permanent supply route in place from April 2016.

Acknowledgements

The project was supported by Brighton and Hove CCG, NHS Specialist Pharmacy Service, GPs, Brighton University Hospitals Trust, South East Coast Ambulance Service, Sussex Community NHS Trust, East Sussex Local Pharmaceutical Committee and Citywide Connect Partnership.

APPENDIX Green Bag Utilisation: Brighton and Sussex University Hospital (BSUH) Green Bag Audit

Date: 26/11/14	Total no. of pts. audited	Total no. brought in PODs	Total no. CCG green bags	Total no. hospital green bags
Acute Medicine	9	6	0	0
Surgical	36	18	0	5
Renal	12	7	0	1
Paeds	13	7	0	1
Haem/Onc	10	7	0	0
Cardiac	4	2	0	0
Medical	24	12	0	1
Elderly Care	23	13	0	0
ID	7	4	0	3
Total	138	76	0	11

Date: 15/01/15	No. of New Patients	No. with PODs	CCG Green Bag	Hospital Green Bag
Surgery	9	5	0	0
Acute Medicine	13	8	0	3
Paeds	?	?	0	0
Renal	2	1	0	0
Cardiac	15	?	0	1
Haem/Onc	0	0	0	0
Elderly Care	2	2	0	0
Medical	3	1	0	0
ID	1	1	0	0
Total	45	18	0	4

Date: 12/02/15	No. of New Patients	No. with PODs	CCG Green Bag	Hospital Green Bag
Surgery	14	8	0	1
Acute Medicine	12	10	0	5
Paeds	0	0	0	0
Renal	3	1	0	0
Cardiac	11	6	0	0
Haem/Onc	0	0	0	0
Elderly Care	1	1	0	0
Medical	9	7	0	0
ID	0	0	0	0
Total	50	33	0	6

Date: 01/04/15	No. of New Patients	No. with PODs	CCG Green Bag	Hospital Green Bag
Surgery	31	20	5	1
Acute Medicine	12	7	1	1
Paeds				
Renal	10	8	0	1
Cardiac	4	3	0	0
Haem/Onc	12	6	0	0
Elderly Care	8	4	1	2
Medical	5	4	0	1
ID	1	0	0	0
Total	83	52	7	6

Date: 07/07/15	No. of New Patients	No. with PODs	CCG Green Bag	Hospital Green Bag
Surgery	12	7	2	2
Acute Medicine	1	1	1	0
Paeds	3	3	0	0
Renal	0	0	0	0
Cardiac	5	2	0	1
Haem/Onc	0	0	0	0
Elderly Care	11	7	0	5
Medical	8	2	0	1
ID	2	2	0	0
Total	42	24	3	9

Date: 02/09/15	No. of New Patients	No. with PODs	CCG Green Bag	Hospital Green Bag
Surgery	19	7	2	1
Acute Medicine	11	8	1	1
Paeds				
Renal				
Cardiac				
Haem/Onc	10	7	0	0
Elderly Care	2	1	0	0
Medical	1	1	0	1
ID	6	0	0	0
Total	49	24	3	3

CCG Green Bag = Green bag supplied from the community setting.

POD = Patient Own Drugs.