

Pharmacy Services in the London Borough of Bromley

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Contents

• Introduction	4
• Strategic Drivers	5
• Methodology	6
• Summary of Findings	7
• Demographics	8
• Overview	9
• Online Responses	18
• Conclusion and Recommendations	19
• Acknowledgments	20
• Appendices	21



Introduction

What is Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham?

Healthwatch Bromley is one of 152 local Healthwatch organisations that were established throughout England in 2013, under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The dual role of local Healthwatch is to champion the rights of users of health and social care services and to hold the system to account for how well it engages with the public.

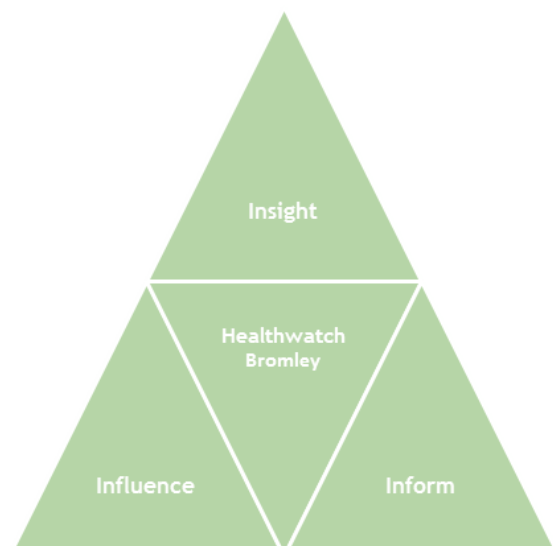
The remit of Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham as an independent health and social care watchdog is to be the voice of local people and ensure that health and social care services are safe, effective and designed to meet the needs of patients, social care users and carers.

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham (HWB&L) gives children, young people and adults in Bromley a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are purchased, provided and reviewed within the borough.

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham's core functions are:

1. Gathering the views and experiences of service users, carers, and the wider community,
2. Making people's views known,
3. Involving locals in the commissioning process for health and social care services, and process for their continual scrutiny,
4. Referring providers of concern to Healthwatch England, or the CQC, to investigate,
5. Providing information about which services are available to access and signposting,
6. Collecting views and experiences and communicating them to Healthwatch England,
7. Working with the Health and Wellbeing board in Bromley on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy (which will influence the commissioning process).

The following triangle is a useful way of seeing how the different parts of Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham form together to make the whole.





Strategic Drivers

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham's role is to ensure the voices and views of the local community are expressed and to ensure their opinions are taken into account when services are commissioned. This piece of research was undertaken to gain an understanding of how patients and service users experience pharmacy services within the borough. For most people visiting their pharmacy is a frequently used element of the health care system and it is therefore essential that local pharmacies offer an efficient and accessible service for all.

This report was composed to give insight into the patient experience and use of local pharmacies in the London Borough of Bromley. The research focused on the following areas:

- Dispensing - how advice is provided to patients regarding their prescriptions
- Promotion of public health and healthy lifestyles - exploring advice around healthy lifestyle choices, such as smoking cessation
- Signposting to other services - monitoring signposting advice to other care providers and support systems within the borough
- Patient feedback - monitoring the provision of practice leaflets, patient satisfaction surveys and feedback opportunities for service users

Following Healthwatch Bromley & Lewisham's GP Access report, it was evident that GPs were facing high demand for their services. Further routine engagement suggested that pharmacy services are often not considered by service users as an alternative to GP services. It was felt that in light of this, pharmacies are often underutilised by patients. This research was undertaken to gain

a wider understanding and appreciation of the people of Bromley's attitude toward pharmacies and in the hope that it would raise awareness around the services they deliver, perhaps alleviating the high demand GPs are currently facing.

This report will be shared with the Bromley Health and Wellbeing Board, all participating General Practices, the Voluntary and Community Sector, the Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Care Quality Commission (CQC), NHS England, Healthwatch England, and other Health subgroups.





Methodology

This report documents the findings of the research, which took place from July 2015 onwards. Ten pharmacies were visited between July and August 2015, covering a wide geographical area within the Bromley borough ranging from Crystal Palace to St Mary's Cray. This report aims to identify areas of success in the current system and suggest areas where services are currently underused or where patient awareness is low.

The survey was comprised of 20 questions, including five questions in order to gauge the demographics of those who responded to the survey. In addition, an online survey comprised of a condensed selection of questions (totalling 10) was also run simultaneously in order to acquire a wider sample. This was distributed through the website 'surveymonkey.com'. The findings of this are presented towards the end of the report as a supplement to the main body of data.

61 responses were gathered during the pharmacy surveys, roughly 5 to 6 responses per pharmacy, although some pharmacies produced more responses than others. Pharmacies were visited during their core opening hours, generally between 09:00-17:00 on a weekday. 16 responses were gathered online, giving a total of 77 responses. Of the 16 online responses, 13 different pharmacies were visited by the respondents giving a total of 23 different pharmacies from which responses were gathered. Due to the differing structure of the online survey, the results will be handled separately from the main body of findings.





Summary of Findings

The data suggests that overall, the patients and service users of pharmacies within the London Borough of Bromley are provided with a high quality of service by local pharmacies. In particular:

- Dispensing services are particularly well received, with positive opinions regarding the quality of service and the time taken to deliver prescriptions.
- Notably, a sizable group of those surveyed are failing to dispose of their surplus medicine in a safe manner via pharmacies, choosing instead to dispose of them along with household waste.
- Patients seem unfamiliar with some of the services provided by local pharmacies, instead preferring to seek advice and information from their GP rather than in a community setting. Furthermore, few looked to their pharmacist for signposting services.

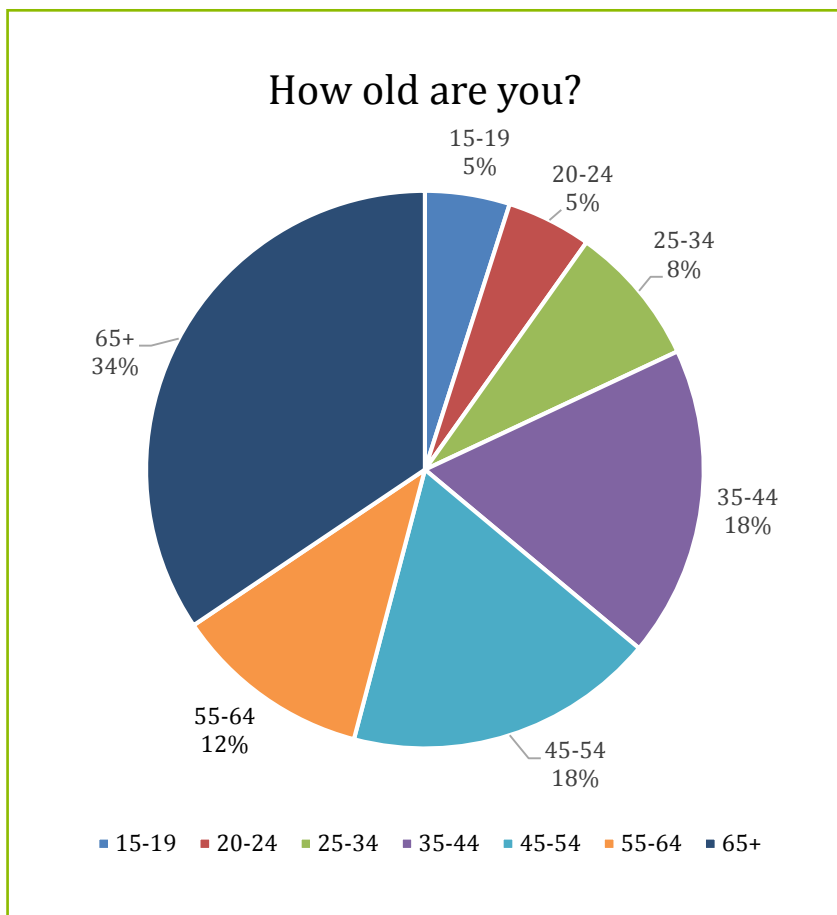




Demographics

Of those surveyed 34% were over 65 years of age and 36% were aged between 35-54 years of age. The higher percentage of older service users may be reflective of an ageing population and their increased reliance on the health service. The figures also highlight the importance of community care in provision for the elderly within society.

Of those surveyed, 61% of respondents were female and 39% male. 85% of respondents were white, 3% Asian and 3% black. 26% identified as being a carer or a guardian of a child under the age of 16.

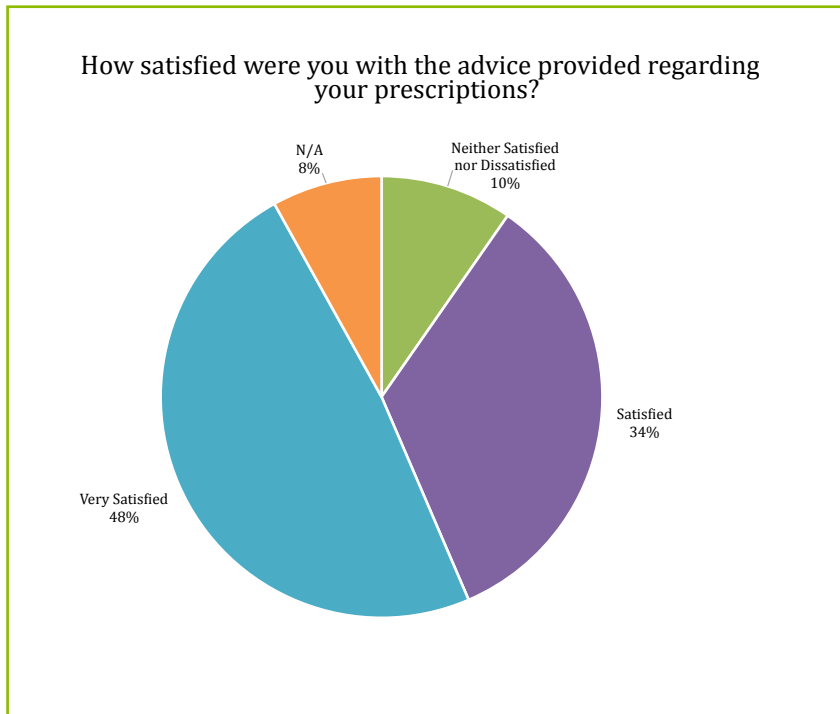
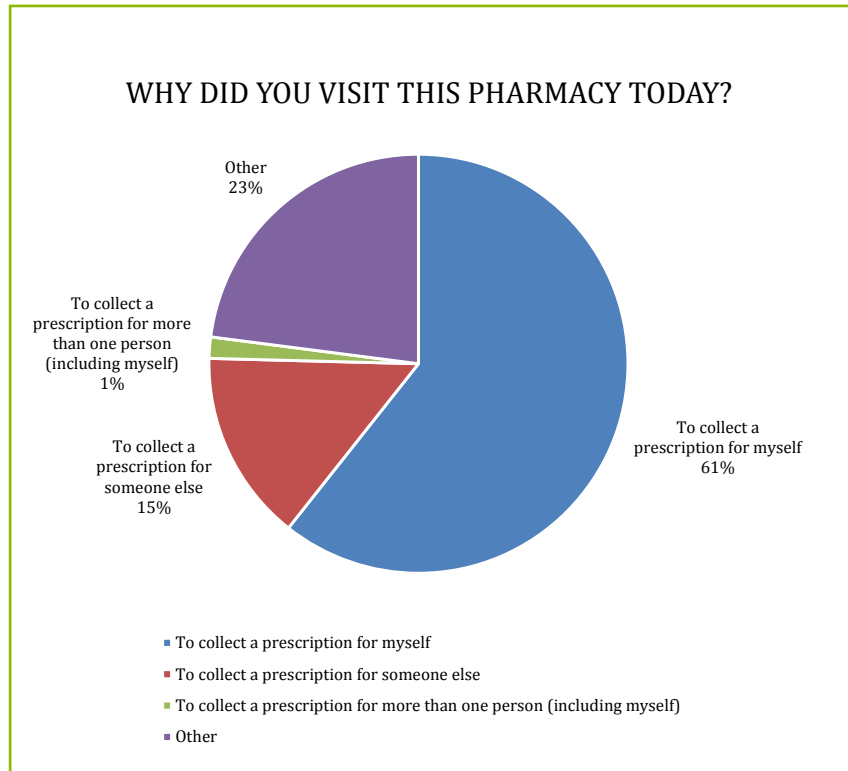




Overview

61% of those surveyed were collecting a prescription for themselves, 15% were collecting a prescription for someone else, and 23% were visiting for another reason.

Of those visiting for other reasons, many were visiting in order to acquire advice and information on health issues, such as sore feet or medication for a cold. This suggests that pharmacies are acting as more than distribution centres but also serving in a consultancy role for minor illnesses.



48% of respondents were 'very satisfied' with the advice and information provided to them by the pharmacy team during their visit. A further 34% said they were 'satisfied' indicating a high level of appreciation for the healthcare advice being provided by pharmacies within the borough.



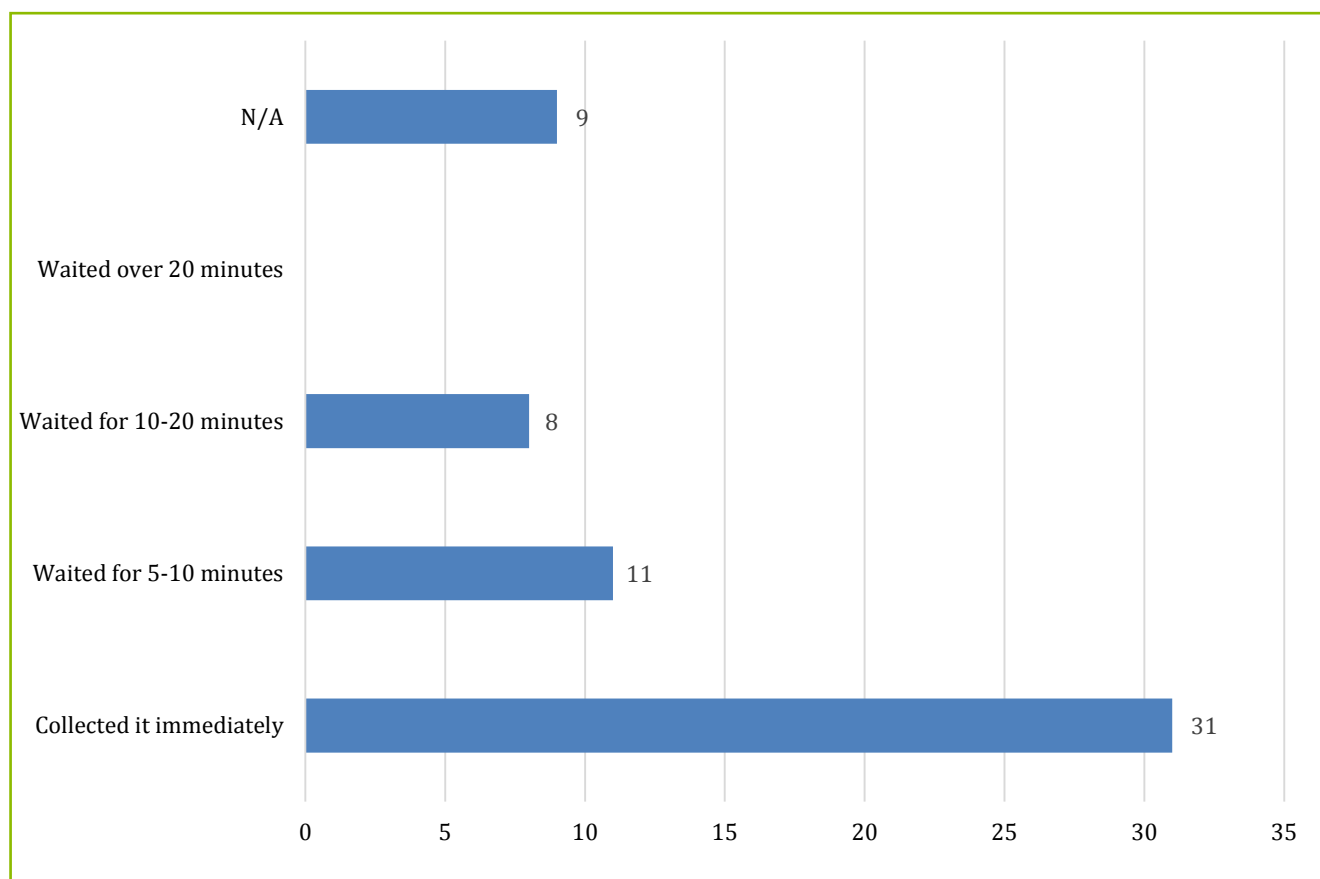
Waiting times

(Please note that the answer 'Immediately' was taken to mean any time between one and five minutes)

51% of respondents reported being able to collect their prescriptions immediately and a further 18% of respondent's prescription were ready for collection within five to ten minutes. Encouragingly no service users reported having to wait for over twenty minutes.

The majority of people managed to collect their prescriptions within ten minutes. Of those who had to wait slightly longer for their prescription, most commented that this was due to a queue within the pharmacy itself rather than the actual dispensing time.

All in all, 56% of respondents reported being 'very satisfied' with the time it took to receive their prescription and no respondents reported being dissatisfied.





Pharmacy Team

The questionnaire asked several questions regarding patient opinion of the pharmacy team.

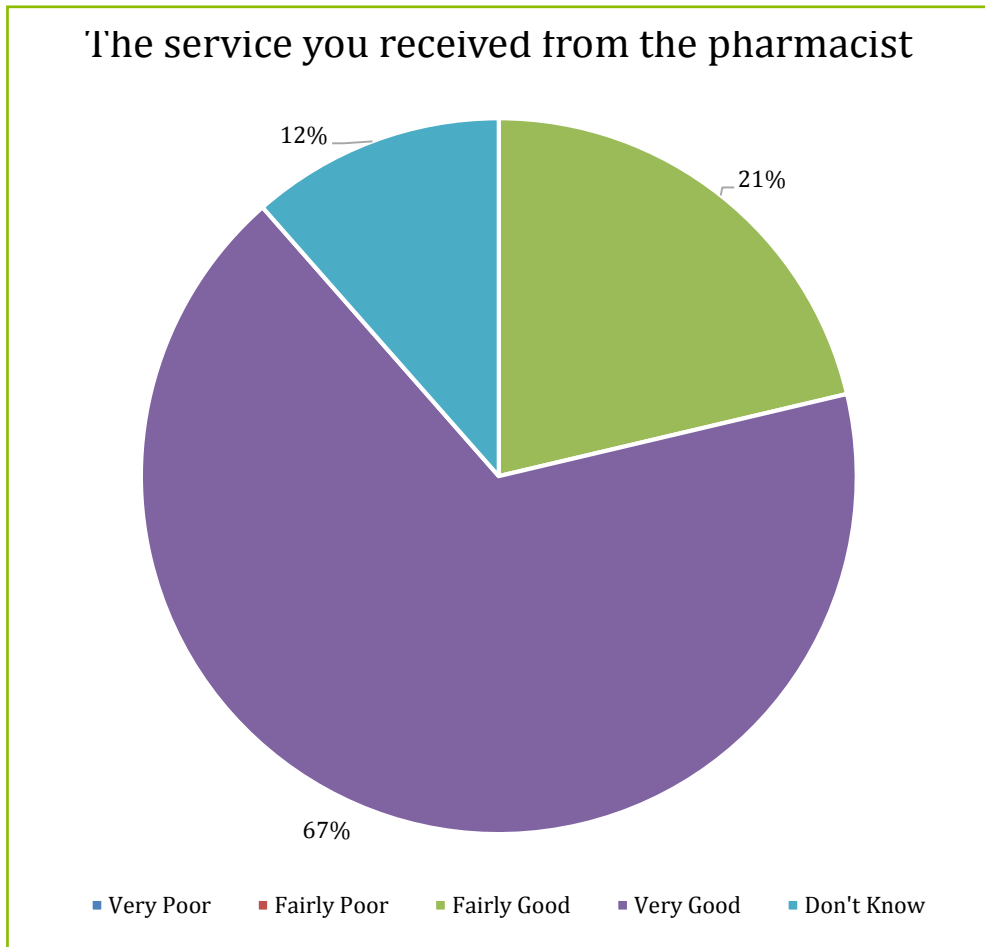
The public were asked to rate the team on:

- Their politeness and listening skills
- Answering any queries or concerns
- the pharmacist themselves
- The service overall.

The responses indicate that the majority, 67%, of people considered the pharmacist and their staff to be 'very good' in the service they provide and in particular at answering any patient queries.

Interestingly, when asked about other members of the pharmacy team, 16% ticked 'don't know' suggesting a lack of awareness of additional services provided by frontline dispensing staff.

The survey results indicate an overwhelmingly positive response to the staff overall, with no negative comments. 66% felt the service was 'very efficient' and 18% said it was 'fairly good'.



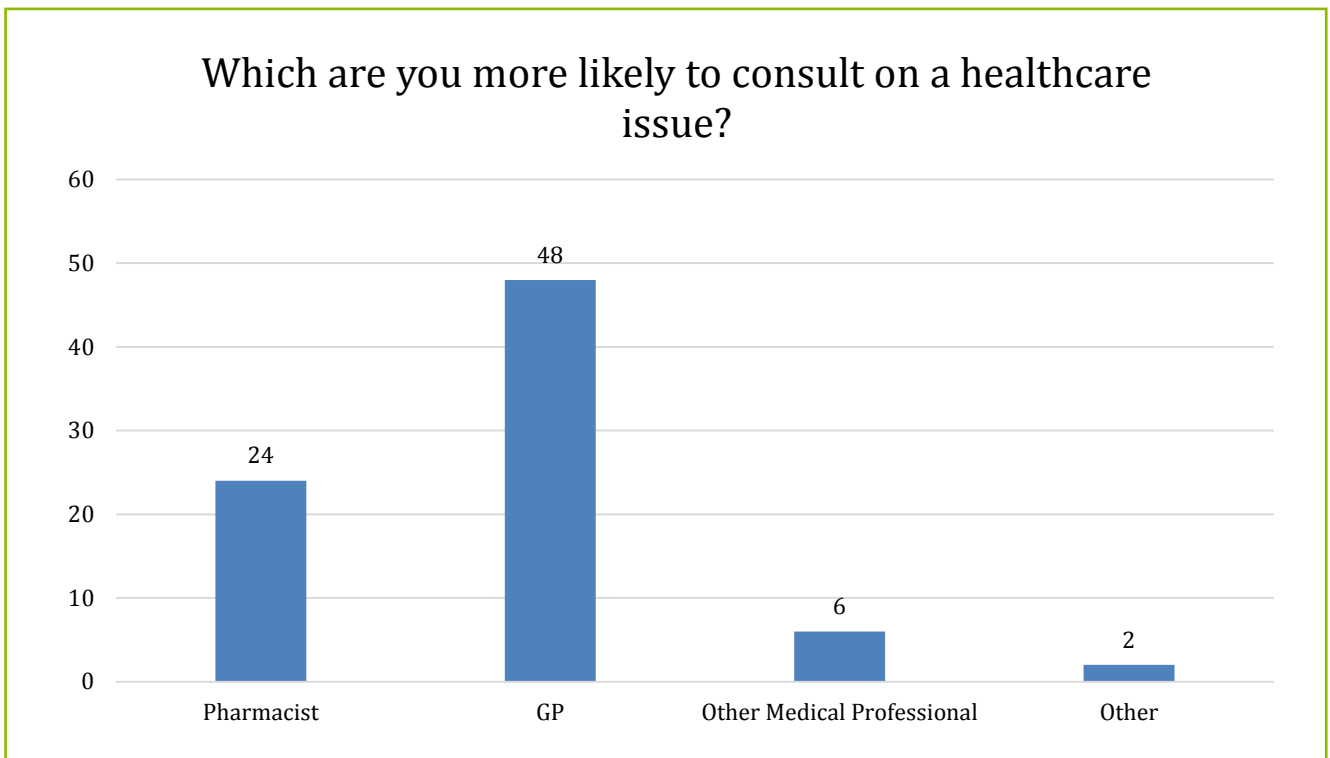


Consultancy services

This question was asked in order to ascertain whether the person responding to the survey typically consulted the pharmacist regarding a healthcare matter. Please note that for this question, while the number of responses was the same, the number of answers is higher. This is because responders were allowed to select multiple answers to this question, as many people seek various avenues when consulting on a healthcare matter. Other sources refers to resources such as the internet, textbooks and alternative non-professional sources.

From a glance we can tell that the GP is the main source of medical advice for most people within the sample and serves as their primary consultant on a healthcare issue. However, the pharmacist is also quite important for a significant number. Many of those who did respond listed only their pharmacist and one or two did express doubts about the quality of their GPs pastoral care compared to the pharmacist.

It would be fair to summarise that the GP is the primary source for people seeking consultation on healthcare issues, although many do augment their advice with information from other sources.





Advice and Signposting

The questions in this section of the questionnaire focused on pharmacies role around:

- Providing advice on a current health problem or a longer-term health condition
- Healthy living advice
- Providing advice on other health services or signposting people elsewhere.

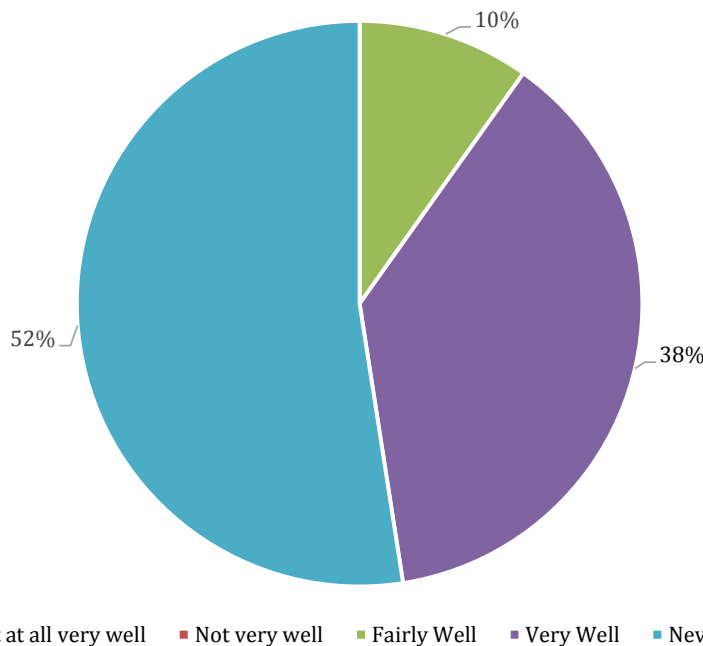
Of those who had utilised this service and asked for advice regarding a long term health condition, 82% answered that they were treated 'very well.' For those who are using pharmacies for general medical advice, there appeared to be a high level of satisfaction with the advice being given.

With regards to more general advice around healthy living and healthy lifestyle promotion, 60% answered that they had never used this service at their local pharmacy. This suggests that despite the fact all pharmacies visited were displaying leaflets

and posters related to healthy lifestyle choices, such as help for smokers, very few people are in fact using pharmacies as a resource. However, it must be noted that of those who did choose to use a pharmacy to provide advice on leading a healthier lifestyle many, 35%, were highly satisfied with the advice they were given.

In terms of acting as a signposting service, roughly half the respondents, 52%, indicated that the public had never used this service. Despite the fact that all the pharmacies visited had clear information on display signposting patients and service users to other NHS services. Once more, those who did seek further information on NHS services or other issues found that they received 'very good' directions on how to access it (38%).

Providing advice on health services or information available elsewhere.

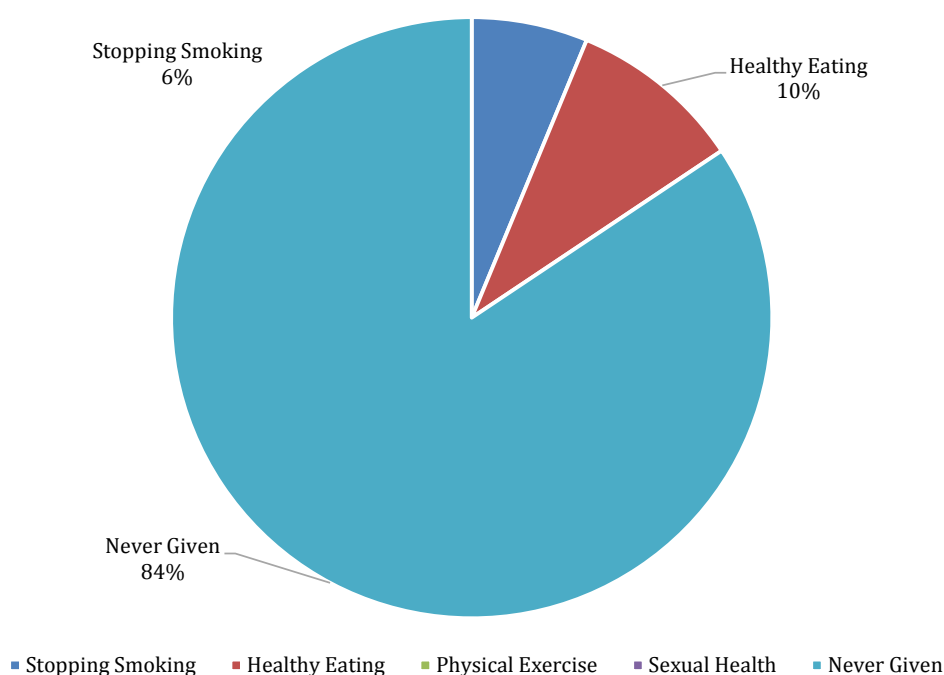


Categories of advice

This question aimed to uncover information on specific sectors of health advice and services being delivered by the pharmacies, as well as identifying how many are actually utilising these services via pharmacies. Respondents were allowed to provide multiple answers.

Of the sixty-one responses within the survey group, four had been given advice about stopping smoking; six on healthy eating and fifty-four (equating to 84%) had never been given advice. While this appears to show a lack of engagement from pharmacies around healthy living, it must be noted that most of those questioned did mention that they had never asked for the advice. Indicating that most people are not using their pharmacy as their main source of health consultation - indicative perhaps of peoples understanding of the services offered by local pharmacies.

Have you ever been given advice about any of the following by the pharmacist or pharmacy staff?

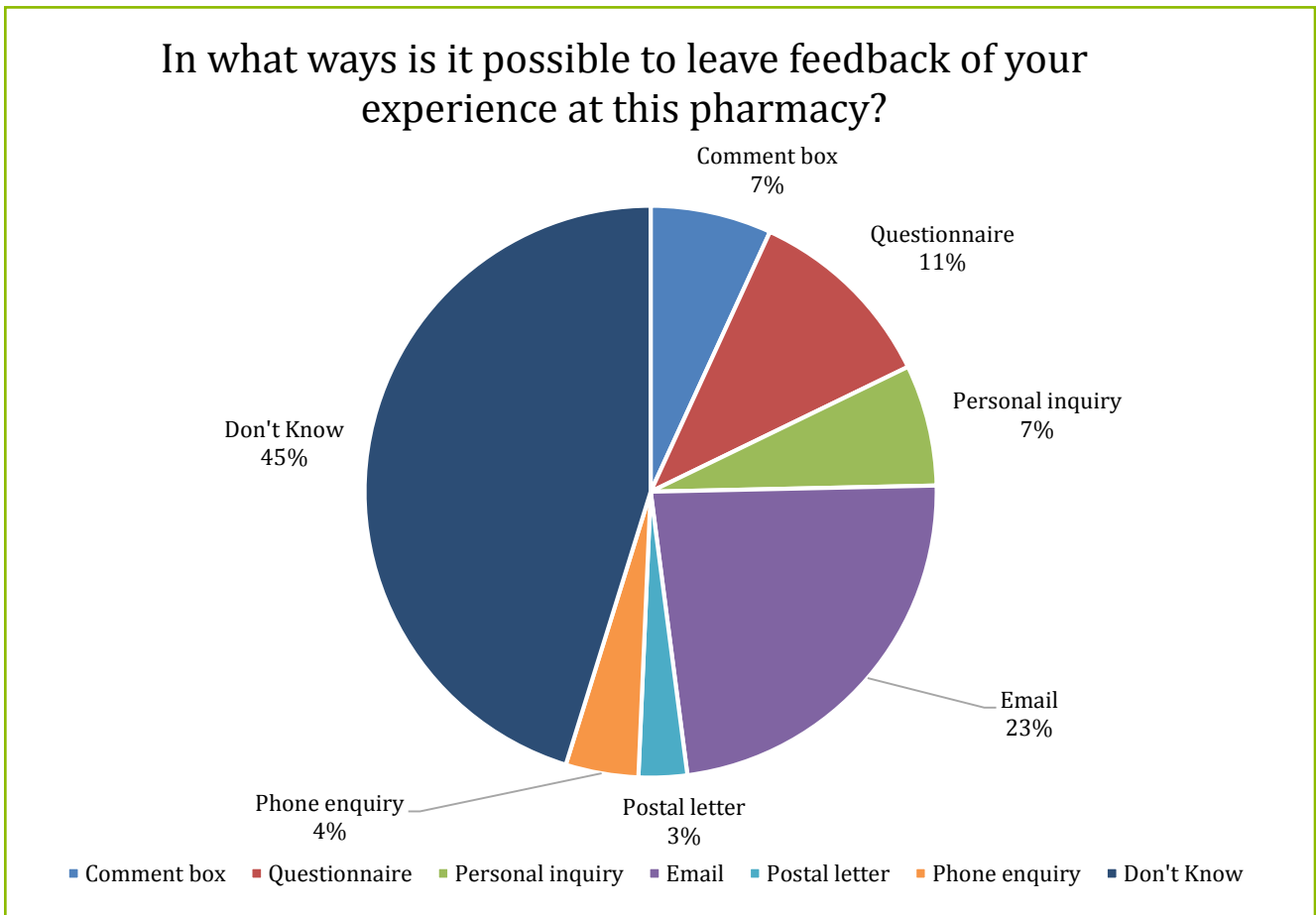




Feedback

When asked about leaving feedback 45% of respondents indicated that they do not know how to leave feedback regarding the service they receive. Furthermore, when asked if their local pharmacy conducted patient satisfaction surveys, only 18 respondents answered yes and nineteen very clearly stated no. When asked about patient engagement and the presence of a practice leaflet, 38% stated they had never seen one and a further 42% ticked 'don't know.'

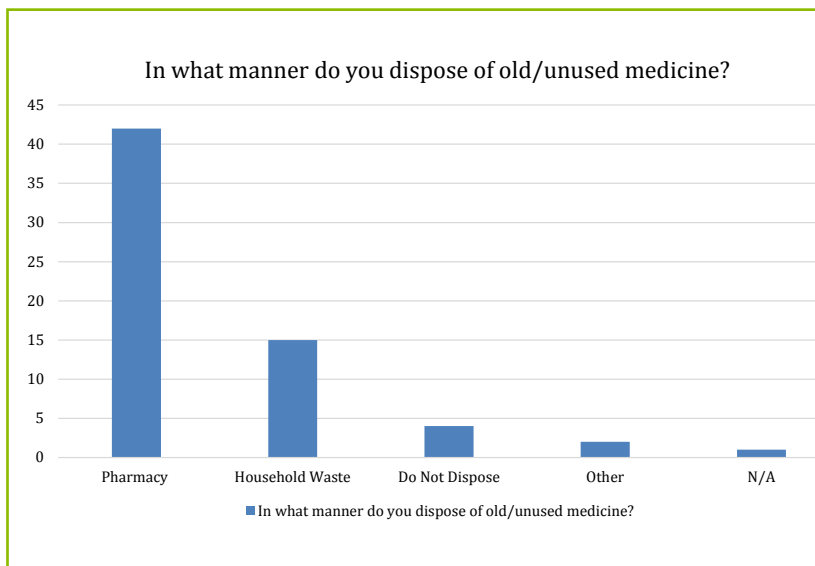
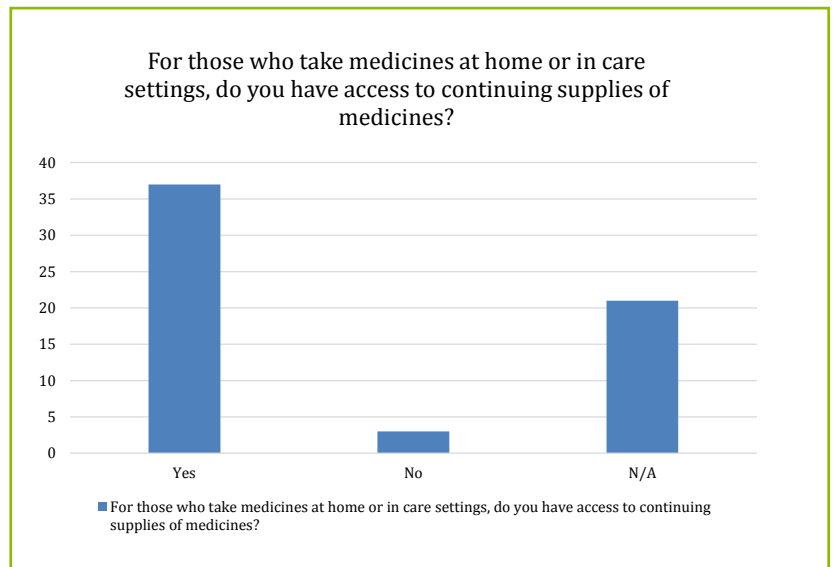
However, the vast majority of pharmacies surveyed did have a practice leaflet of some description, it seems patients were simply unaware of it. It would be beneficial for pharmacies to encourage feedback and an open dialogue with their service users.





Medicine Management

This question was asked in order to gain detail on the quality of care, as well as provide further insight in how patients and service users are using pharmacies as part of their healthcare. The data here suggests that for the overwhelming majority of people who are taking medicines at home or in care settings, pharmacies are working well to provide access to continuing supplies of medicines.



This question was asked in order to ascertain how patients and service users were managing their medicine. This is an important question not only because of the safety concerns of poorly disposed medicines but also because of unnecessary waste due to the repeat prescription of medicine.

A mostly positive response, the majority of people surveyed (66%) did use the pharmacy to dispose of their unused or old medicine safely; however, a significant number are failing to do so. Suggesting this is an area where more work could be done to address the issue of safe medicine management.

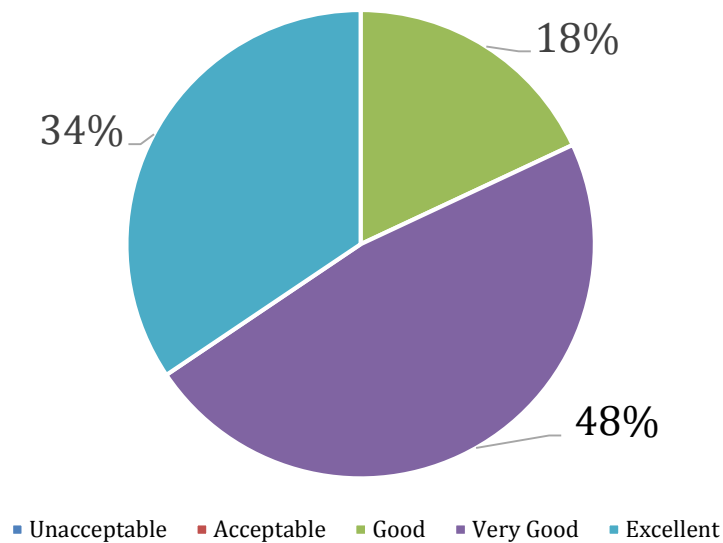


Overall rating

Respondents were asked to rate the pharmacy overall, taking into account the staff, the shop and service provided.

Of the total responses, 48% considered the pharmacy to be 'very good' and a further 34% considered it to be 'excellent'. This data suggests that the pharmacies within Bromley are performing quite well overall.

Finally, taking everything into account - the staff, the shop and the service provided - how would you rate the pharmacy where you received this questionnaire?

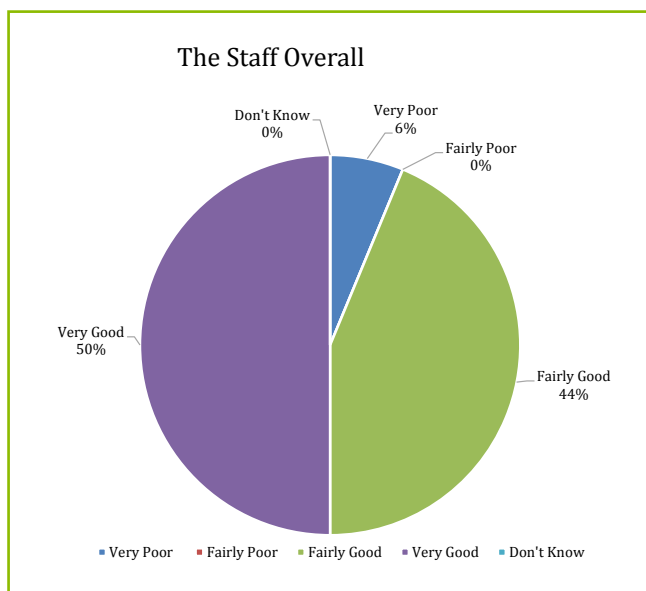




Online Survey Results

Of those who responded online the majority, 11 out of 16, were collecting a prescription for themselves. When asked how satisfied respondents were with the advice provided regarding their prescription, a quarter of respondents were not satisfied with the advice offered. Although, over a quarter also reported being 'very satisfied' with the service offered.

50% of respondents were able to collect their prescriptions immediately and 25% only waited between 5-10 minutes. Notably, 13% of the online respondents reported having to wait over 20 minutes, a significantly higher proportion than those who answered the questionnaire in person. The pharmacy team were generally noted as being polite towards patients, with only 12% of those surveyed answering 'fairly poor' or 'very poor' with regard to customer relations.



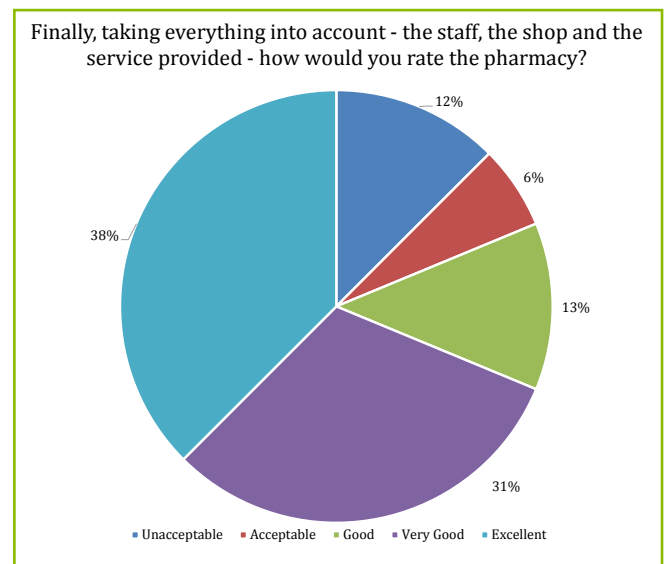
However, this remains a small level of dissatisfaction. 63% of respondents indicated that they considered the team to be 'very good' at answering any queries they had. Only 7%

considered the service they received directly from the pharmacist to be 'fairly poor', with 67% considering the service to be 'very efficient'.

When asked if people ever consulted their pharmacist regarding a healthcare issue, only one respondent answered yes. All the others only consulted their GP if they had any concerns. When asked about healthy living advice, only one respondent said they had received advice and that was regarding smoking cessation.

With regards to medicine management, 32% reported disposing of unused medicines at their local pharmacy and 19% along with their usual household waste. Again, this broadly falls into the pattern of behaviour observed in the data collected from the in-person survey where a significant percentage of people are disposing of medicines safely.

Of the online responses, there was more evidence of dissatisfaction with local pharmacy services. Although statistically quite small, it is still something to take note of.





Conclusions and Recommendations

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham's research suggests that the patients and service users of Bromley are provided with a high quality of service by the pharmacies within the borough. Patients are able to access a high quality service, reflected in their high satisfaction levels. It is worth noting, that only one or two negative responses can be observed within the entire data set, with the online survey providing the bulk of negative responses.

With regards to dispensing services, Bromley pharmacies can be seen to be performing very highly with the overwhelming majority of responses showing positive opinions of this service, both in the quality of the service and in the time taken to deliver prescriptions.

One area that could be a potential concern is the disposal of old and unused medicine. While the majority are properly disposing of their surplus medicine in a safe manner via pharmacies, a sizeable group are failing to do so.

Lack of awareness around the promotion of public health and healthy lifestyles by pharmacies is also evident. The collected data suggests a lack of understanding of the role of pharmacies in healthcare outside of their dispensing role. However, it must be noted that, as mentioned above, the pharmacies visited were clearly providing these services.

From the questionnaire, we can see that most people consult their GP as their main source of advice on healthcare issues. The same can be said for signposting services.

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham would recommend:

- Further promotion of the additional services offered by pharmacies by Public Health England. A high percentage of those surveyed were unaware they could access advisory services at their local pharmacy. An increase in the uptake of these services would be hugely beneficial to the community.
- Increased display space for signposting information to improve patient access to the full array of services available.
- Targeted work around medicine management and the disposal of unwanted drugs by local commissioners and health authorities.

Overall, the collected data indicates that the pharmacies within the London Borough of Bromley are providing a good service to the people of Bromley. It is a service that can be built on if patients are encouraged to utilise their local pharmacy for its additional services. General awareness raising, as well as a coordinated marketing campaign to encourage people to use the wide variety of services available within pharmacies, would potentially lessen the strain GP services are currently experiencing.



Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham would like to thank the pharmacies of the London Borough of Bromley for their cooperation and assistance during these visits. Healthwatch Bromley and Lewisham would also like to express gratitude to our Authorised Representative, Thomas Conning, for the work he put in to helping us engage the people of Bromley and to improve local services.

Appendix 1: Pharmacy Questionnaire

1. Why did you visit this pharmacy today?

To collect a prescription for myself:

To collect a prescription for someone else:

To collect prescriptions for more than one person (including myself):

For some other reason (please give reason in box below):

2. How satisfied were you with the advice provided regarding your prescriptions?

Very dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Satisfied

Very Satisfied

3. If you collected a prescription today, how long did you have to wait?

Collected it immediately

Waited for 5-10 minutes

Waited for 10-20 minutes

Waited over 20 minutes

4. How satisfied were you with the time it took to provide your prescription and/or any other services you required?

Very Dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied

Satisfied

Very Satisfied

5. Including any previous visits to this pharmacy, how would you rate the pharmacist and the other staff who work there? Please tick one box for each aspect of the service listed below, to show how good or poor you think it is:

	Very poor	Fairly poor	Fairly good	Very good	Don't know
Being polite and taking the time to listen to what you want	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answering any queries you may have	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The service you received from the pharmacist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The service you received from the other pharmacy staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing an efficient service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The staff overall	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



6. Which are you more likely to consult on a healthcare issue?

Pharmacy	<input type="text"/>
GP	<input type="text"/>
Other Medical Professional	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>

9. Which of the following best describes how you use this pharmacy?

This is my preferred pharmacy, the one I choose to visit if possible	<input type="text"/>
This is one of several pharmacies that I use:	<input type="text"/>
This pharmacy is convenient but not my preferred pharmacy	<input type="text"/>

7. Thinking about all the times you have used this pharmacy, how well do you think it provides each of the following services?

	Not at all well	Not very well	Fairly well	Very well	Never used
Providing advice on a current health problem or a longer term health condition	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Providing general advice on leading a more healthy lifestyle	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Providing advice on health services or information available elsewhere	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

10. In what ways is it possible to leave feedback of your experience at this pharmacy?

Comment box	<input type="text"/>
Questionnaire	<input type="text"/>
Personal inquiry	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>
Postal letter	<input type="text"/>
Phone enquiry	<input type="text"/>

11. Does your Local pharmacy conduct patient satisfaction surveys?

Yes	<input type="text"/>
No	<input type="text"/>

8. Have you ever been given advice about any of the following by the pharmacist or pharmacy staff?

Stopping smoking	<input type="text"/>
Healthy eating	<input type="text"/>
Physical exercise	<input type="text"/>
Sexual Health	<input type="text"/>

12. If no, would you be interested in this?

Yes	<input type="text"/>
No	<input type="text"/>

13. Does your local pharmacy provide a practice leaflet?

Yes	<input type="text"/>
No	<input type="text"/>



14. For those who take medicines at home or in care settings, do you have access to continuing supplies of medicines?

Yes	<input type="text"/>
No	<input type="text"/>
Not applicable	<input type="text"/>

15. In what manner do you dispose of old/ unused medicine?

Pharmacy	<input type="text"/>
Household Waste	<input type="text"/>
I Don't Dispose Of Old/ Unused Medicines	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>

16. Finally, taking everything into account - the staff, the shop and the service provided - how would you rate the pharmacy where you received this questionnaire?

Unacceptable	<input type="text"/>
Acceptable	<input type="text"/>
Good	<input type="text"/>
Very Good	<input type="text"/>
Excellent	<input type="text"/>

17. How old are you?

16-19	<input type="text"/>
20-24	<input type="text"/>
25-34	<input type="text"/>
35-44	<input type="text"/>
45-54	<input type="text"/>
55-64	<input type="text"/>
65+	<input type="text"/>

18. Are you...

Male	<input type="text"/>
Female	<input type="text"/>

19. Which of the following apply to you:

I am the parent/guardian of a child/children under 16 years of age	<input type="text"/>
I am a carer for someone with a longstanding illness or infirmity	<input type="text"/>
Neither	<input type="text"/>

20. How would you describe your ethnicity?

White	<input type="text"/>
Chinese	<input type="text"/>
Asian	<input type="text"/>
Mixed	<input type="text"/>
Black	<input type="text"/>
Other ethnic group	<input type="text"/>

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