

People's experiences of pharmaceutical services in North Tyneside



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People's experiences of pharmaceutical services in North Tyneside

1. Introduction

“A PNA describes the health needs of the population and the pharmaceutical services which are in place, or could be commissioned to meet identified health needs” (North Tyneside Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, 2015¹)

The Health Act (2009) introduced a legal requirement for all primary care organisations (PCOs) to publish a pharmaceutical needs assessment (PNA) by 1 February 2011. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 transferred the responsibility for developing and updating PNAs to Health and Wellbeing Boards and required Health and Wellbeing Boards to publish a Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment by April 2015. The Health and Wellbeing boards are required to update the Needs Assessment within 3 years of the date of publication.

North Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board are in the process of revising the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. The revised document will be published in 2018. As part of the process of revision the Health and Wellbeing Board are required by statute to consult with local Healthwatch.

Healthwatch North Tyneside have gathered local people's experience of using local Pharmacy services to support them to amplify local people's views and put these at the centre of the discussions on local pharmacy need. This document sets out our findings and will be presented to the steering group responsible for the revision of the PNA and in support of our formal response to the consultation on the draft document.

Healthwatch North Tyneside are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services in North Tyneside. We talk to local people and gather their views and experiences to improve the services that they use.

¹ http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=559462

2. Methods

In order to gather the views of local people on pharmacy we primarily collected data through an online and printed survey which ran from 30 June to 18 August 2017. The survey was compiled of both open and closed questions and largely focused on how people use pharmacy services, what was deemed as good practice and areas which needed to be improved. In order to maximise local people's opportunity to give feedback the online survey was widely promoted through social media, our regular e-newsletter and website. The printed survey was distributed to each pharmacy across the borough and at our engagement events with freepost envelopes to ensure ease of return.

In addition to our survey we utilised data obtained from the past 12 months of NHS choices reviews and existing feedback HWNT had received relating to pharmacies through our engagement events and online feedback centre, to inform our overall findings.

Breakdown of feedback collected:

Data Source	Response/Feedback
Online Survey	271
Printed Survey	80
General Engagement	17
Online Feedback Centre	2
NHS Choices Data	19
	Total feedback: 389

Demographic breakdown of respondents can be seen on the next page. Overall more women than men responded. Most respondents were over the age of 50. It is not clear if this reflects the patterns of user groups of pharmacy or represents a limitation in the reach of the survey.

We have achieved a good geographic spread of respondents across the borough. 24% of respondents come from NE12 postcodes (Killingworth, Longbenton, Forest Hall, Benton, Palmersville, Camperdown) and 21% of respondents come from NE28 (Wallsend).

Demography

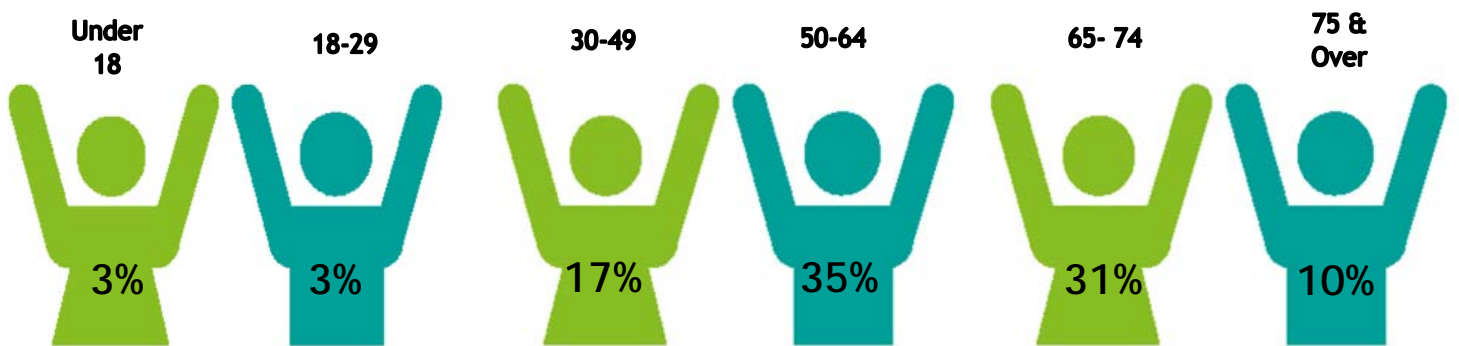
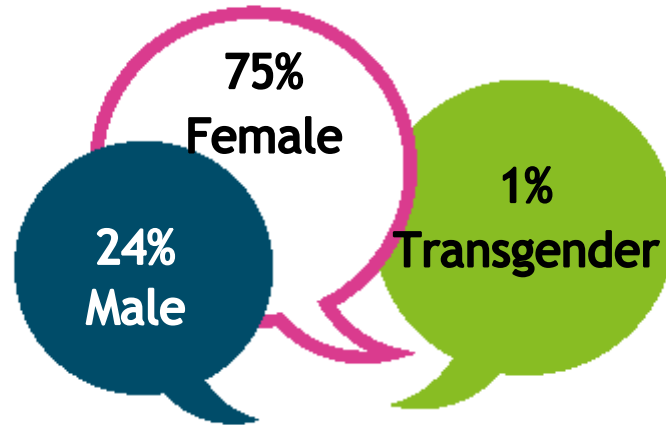


Figure 1- Respondents by first part of postcode

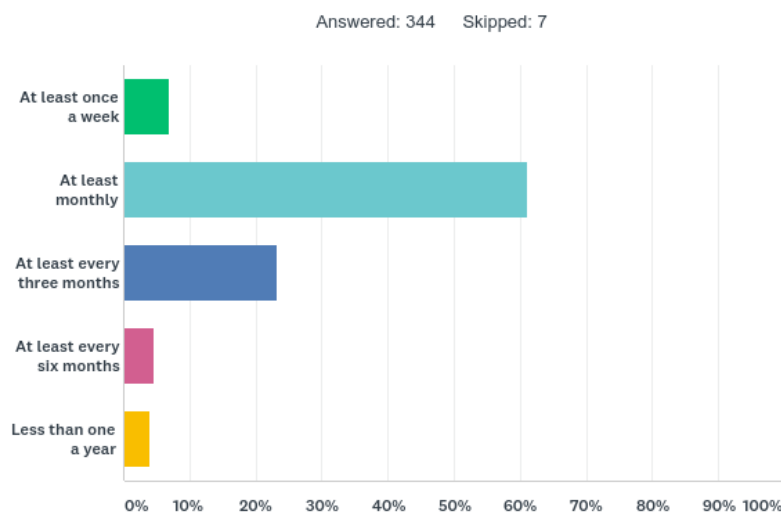
Of the 52 pharmacies in North Tyneside we received feedback on all but 15. The amount of people contributing feedback ranges from 1 to 21 per pharmacy with some people commenting on more than one pharmacy.

3. What people told us

3.1 People's pharmacy usage in North Tyneside

The first part of our survey focused on how, when and where people go to meet their pharmaceutical needs. Understanding how residents use the existing services may identify potential gaps in service provision and consider where access needs to be improved.

Q1 How often do you use pharmacy services in North Tyneside?

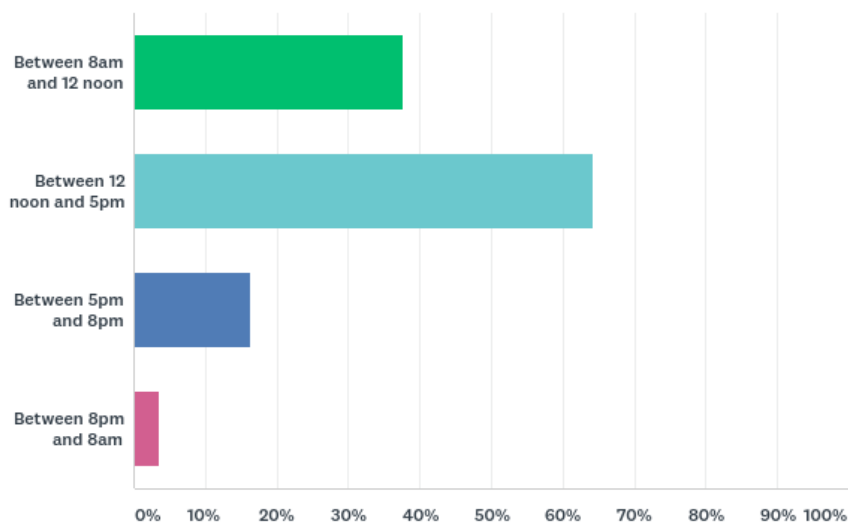


The majority (61%) of people told us that they used a pharmacy at least every month. When visiting the pharmacy 48% of people agreed that they would always use the same pharmacy with 37% stating that they would usually use the same pharmacy. Just under 15% said they do not always use the same pharmacy.

We asked people what time of the day that they are most likely to use the pharmacy. People used the pharmacy throughout the day but most commonly between 12-5pm. However, it is important to note that this may reflect pharmacy opening hours and not necessarily indicate when people would prefer to use their pharmacy.

Q3 What time do you use the pharmacy

Answered: 338 Skipped: 13

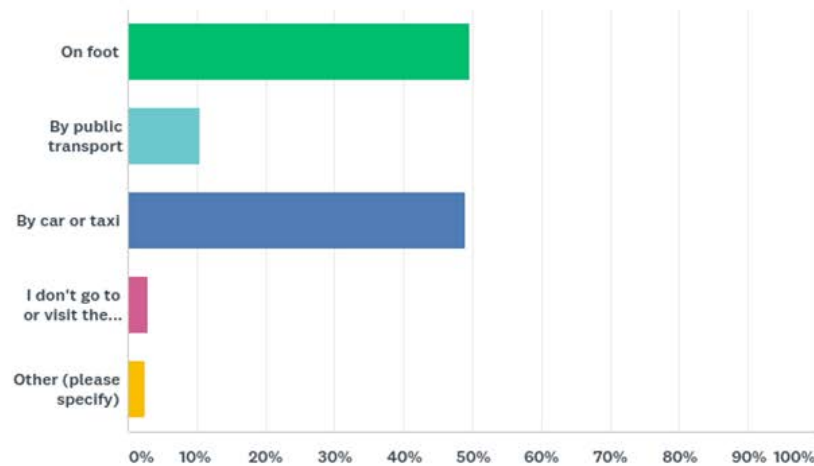


We asked what type of pharmacy people used. Almost half of the respondents said that they used a high street pharmacy. Just under 20% stated that they used a health centre pharmacy and the remainder chose a supermarket, retail park or other type of pharmacy.

We asked people how they travelled to the pharmacy.

Q6 If you visit the pharmacy, how do you get there?

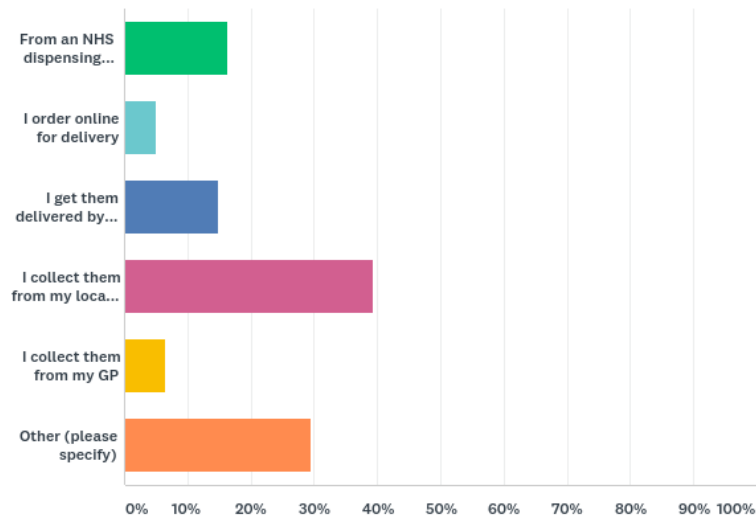
Answered: 345 Skipped: 6



50% of respondents stated they travel to their pharmacy by foot and 49% stated that they travel by car, with only 10% of people travelling by public transport.

Q14 If you get appliances prescribed, such as stoma, catheter, bandages, hosiery, please tell us how you get these items.

Answered: 61 Skipped: 290



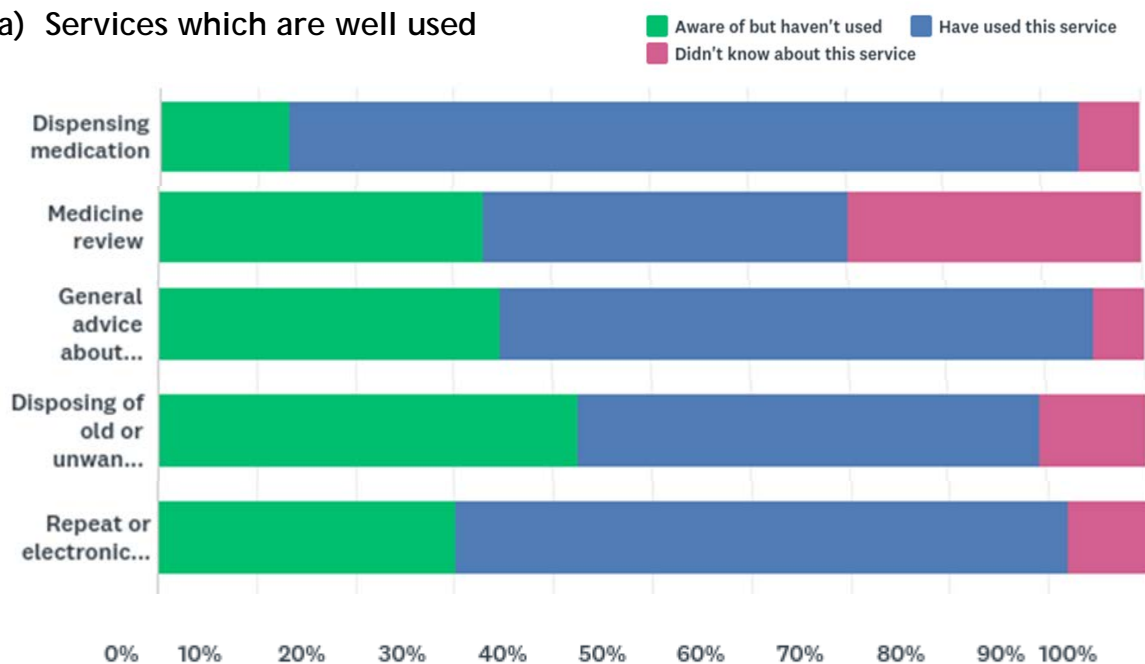
Other means of transportation described included cycling and using a mobility scooter. A small number of respondents saying that they got a home delivery or relative to pick up prescriptions on their behalf.

Most people rely on their local pharmacy to get access to appliances. 54% collect or get them delivered by their local pharmacy.

Pharmacy usage by service

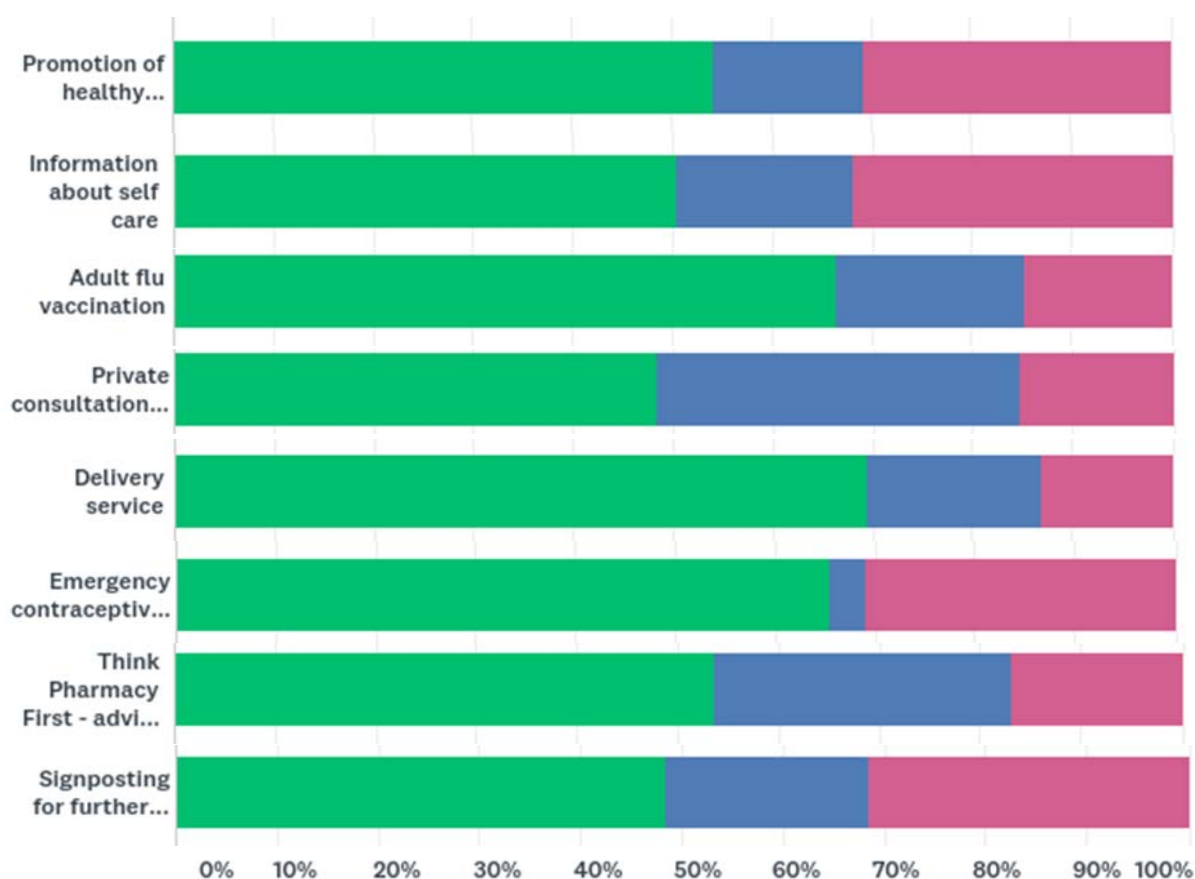
304 people told us which services they used at their local pharmacy, which services they were aware of and which they were unaware of. We have clustered these services under headings based on the response of the majority of respondents.

a) Services which are well used



There is clear evidence that a number of services were well used within the pharmacy. Dispensing of Medicines was the most used service (81% of respondents) followed by repeat or electronic repeat dispensing (62%) and general advice about medicine (60%). Disposing of old/ unwanted medication has been used by 47% of respondents and medication review had been used by 37% of respondents.

b) Services which people are aware of but have not used



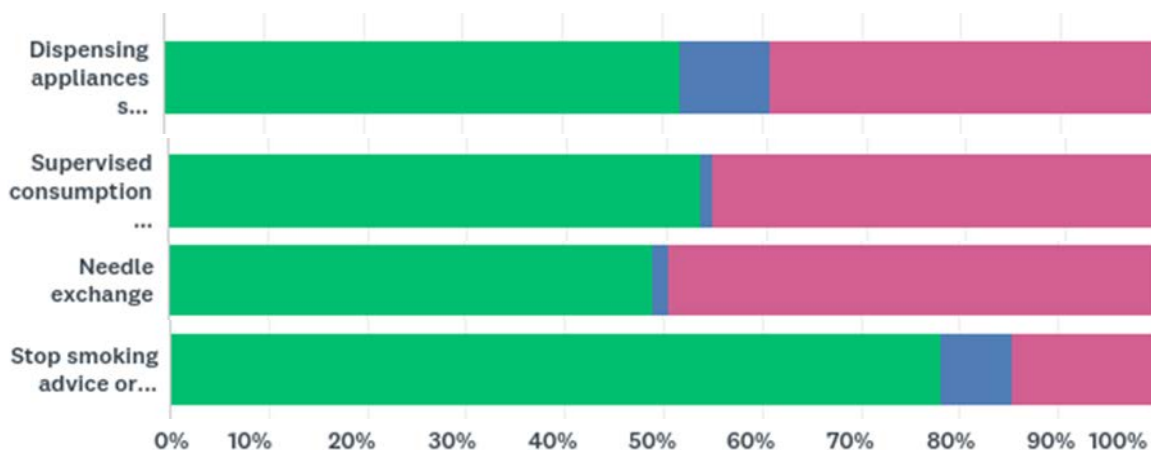
There were a number of services which are a universal offer, open to all users of pharmacy (i.e. not specific to a condition or behaviour) which the majority of people were aware of but usage was reported to be lower:

- Delivery service (69% aware but only 18% had used)
- Adult Flu vaccination (66% of respondents aware but only 19% had used),
- Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles (54% of respondents aware but only 15% had used)
- Information about self-care (50% were aware of but only 18% had used).
- Signposting for further advice and support (49% aware but only 20% had used and 31% not aware)

Other services had slightly larger uptake but still large number of respondents not using them:

- Private consultation (49% aware but 36% had used)
- Think Pharmacy First (54% of respondents aware, 30% had used)

We understand that many of these services are commissioned to relieve pressure on other parts of the health and care system. It is not clear from the responses why the services were not being used by the majority of respondents. This may require further investigation to understand if the findings are supported by pharmacy usage data and if so, how best to increase uptake of these services.

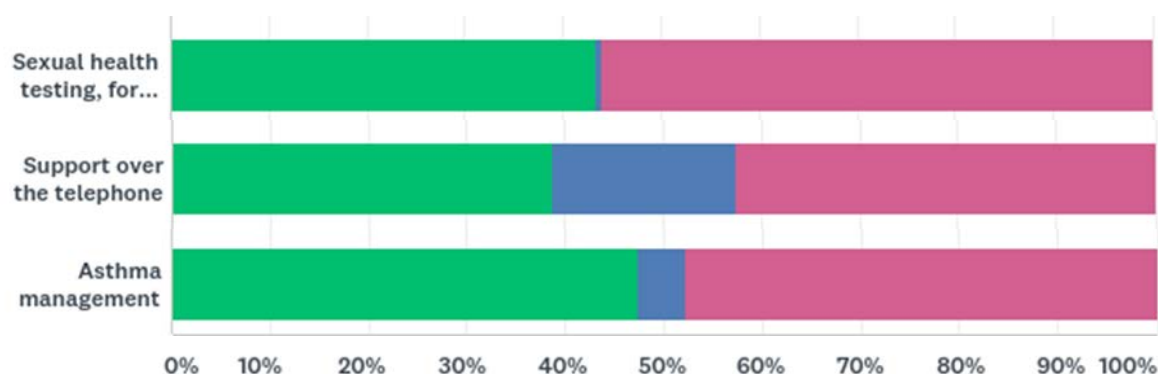


There are some services which are specifically targeted at certain parts of the population where more than half of the respondents were aware of the service but had not used them:

- Stop Smoking Advice or Services (78% of respondents)
- Emergency Contraceptive (66% of respondents)
- Supervised consumption of methadone (54% of respondents aware, 46% didn't know, 1% had used the service)
- Dispensing of appliances (52%)
- Needle exchange also had relatively high levels of respondents who didn't know about the service (49% didn't know, 47% aware, 2% had used the service)

It may be that usage of these services is reported to be low as the majority of respondents do not require these services.

c) Services where awareness is low



The services where awareness levels amongst respondents was lowest were:

- Sexual Health Testing (56% didn't know about the service, 43% were aware, 1% had used the service)
- Asthma management (48% of respondents didn't know about the service, 47% were aware and 5% had used the service)
- Support over the telephone (42% of respondents didn't know about the service, 39% were aware and 19% had used the service)

3.2 People's experiences of accessing their pharmacy

We asked people to tell us their experience of using their pharmacy and where they could improve. We analysed the survey responses alongside feedback from NHS choices (from the past 12 months), our engagement over the past 12 months and our feedback centre to understand the trends in people's experiences of using their pharmacy. Trends in positive experience and suggested improvements are set out and then further explored thematically below.

Positive experience of access to pharmacy

Overall there was a sense that pharmacy perform pretty well in patient experience. People described a range of services that pharmacies were delivering to a high standard.

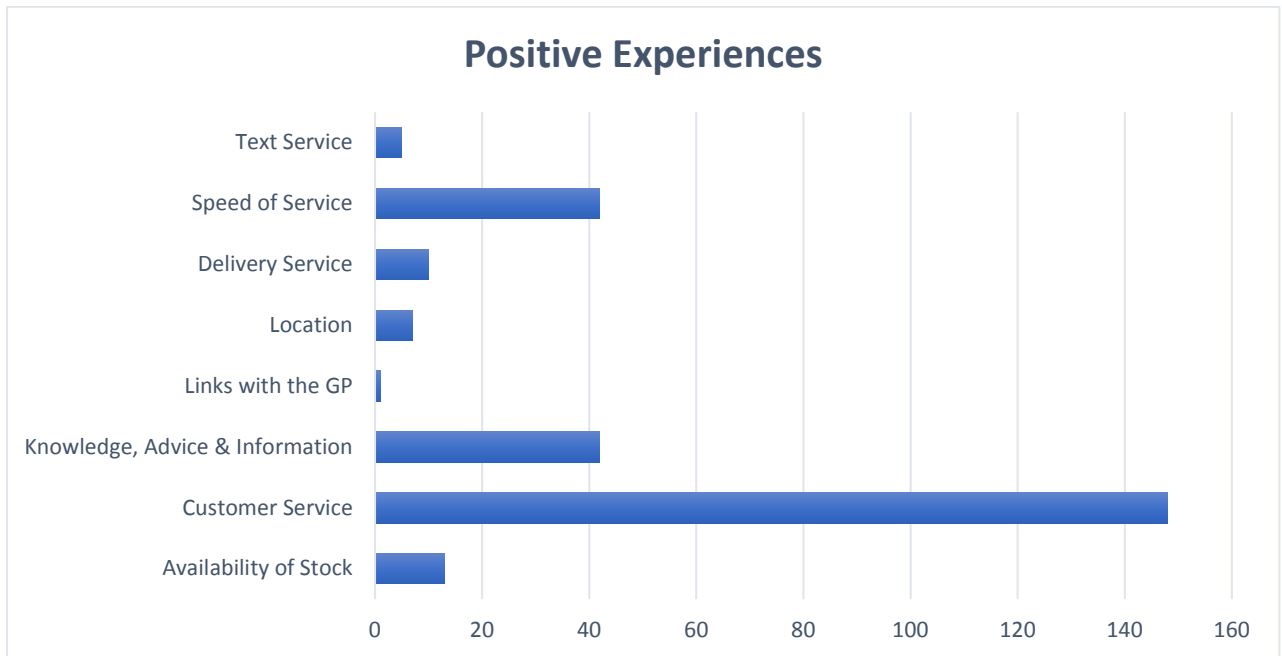
"Local, well-stocked and efficient!"

54 of the survey respondents stated that their pharmacy could not improve.

"Speaking personally there is nothing further this particular pharmacy could do to improve what already is first class"

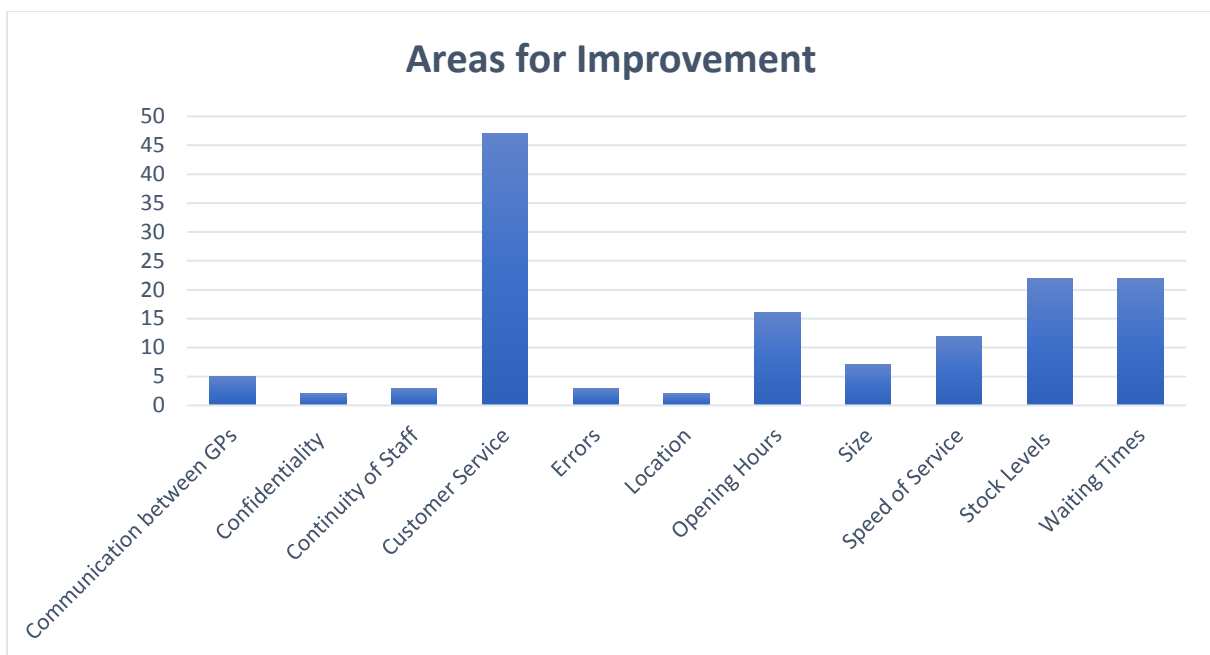
“I am totally satisfied with the service I receive”

The main trends in people’s experience of good practice people were primarily in relation to quality customer service, sound knowledge and advice, speed of service and availability of stock.



Areas for improvements to pharmacy

Other respondents identified areas that needed further improvement - including customer service, waiting times, stock levels and opening hours.



The trends identified in both positive experience and areas for improvement are explored below in more detail under the following themes:

- Customer Service
- Knowledge and Advice
- Speed of Service
- Availability of Products
- Access and Opening Hours

Customer service

96% of survey respondents feel that pharmacy staff were polite and helpful when visiting their pharmacy. Staff were largely praised as being 'friendly', 'personal', 'polite' and 'helpful' when respondents described what worked well within their pharmacy.

"They know me by name and are always polite helpful and caring"

"Tries to get meds I can take e.g. white pills as I am allergic to pink ones, communication very good"

"They are very kind and helpful"

Quality customer service was valued highly by respondents but not always consistently received between pharmacies.

"Staff are always helpful at Billy's, but when I use Lloyds they aren't"

However, of those in the minority who had experienced poor customer service when using their pharmacy often indicated that this linked to staff availability and resources, rather than staff attitude (although this was noted by a limited number of respondents). This was evident when respondents were asked how their pharmacy could improve:

"More staff"

"Staff need more time"

"Get rid of the automated phone system"

Knowledge and advice

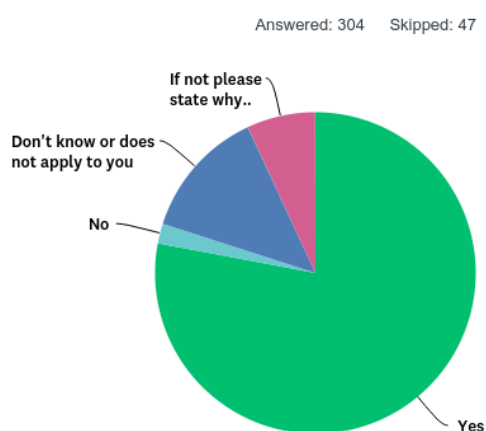
Staff's ability and knowledge to provide sound information and advice is highly valued by local people. This was highlighted as positively experienced by respondents.

"For general health advice, he offers sound help and recommends generic products where these are suitable"

"Great advice on products and medical information"

When asked if they felt comfortable talking to their pharmacist and receiving advice 78% of respondents told us that they did. Although it was often when people required more specialised advice that they did not feel comfortable discussing this with the pharmacist and chose to consult the GP instead.

Q10 Do you feel comfortable talking to your pharmacist and getting advice about health problems?



Barriers people described when accessing advice at their pharmacy included a lack of confidence in the pharmacists' knowledge and issues around confidentiality.

"I don't feel they are knowledgeable and that their expertise is only related to medication and not "health problems", they are not medically trained"

"Staff confidentiality is terrible. Lives in a small village. Everything gets discussed where that shouldn't happen"

It was also noted that the pharmacy itself was not private enough for people to feel comfortable addressing personal health issues.

“[The pharmacy is] Very public...shoppers passing by and usually queues at pharmacy”

We asked people if information was provided at the point of receiving new medication. The majority (76%) of respondents stated that their pharmacist told them how, when and why they should take their new medication. However there 12% of people say that they are not receiving this important information when using their pharmacy.

Speed of service

Another factor that respondents deemed as important when accessing their pharmacy was the efficiency and speed of service. Pharmacy staff were praised largely for their ability to work efficiently and deliver services in a timely manner by 38 people.

“Deals with the dispensing of my prescription promptly and efficiently”

“They are really quick at getting the medicine to you when you need it”

However, almost as many respondents that praised the speed of service said that this was an area for improvement. This relates to waits to be served, waiting times for prescriptions to be filled in the pharmacy, lack of accurate information about length of wait and where dispensing is not possible due to the absence of the pharmacist (e.g. on lunch).

“Often stood a long time waiting”

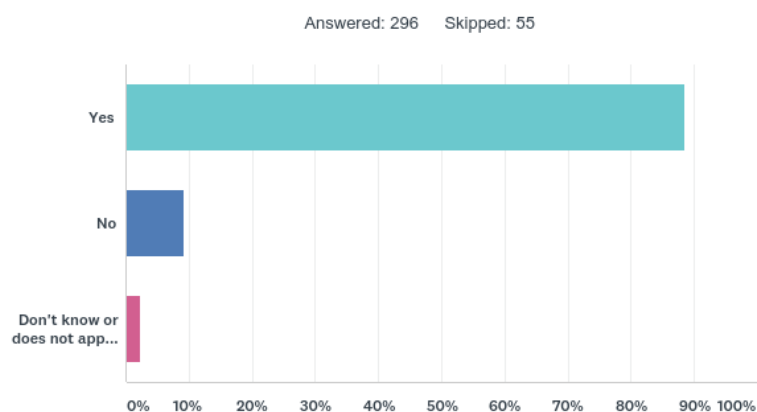
“There seems to be a lot of people dispensing but very few serving, long waits”

The text service was noted as a useful tool in delivering an efficient service, although this was only noted by a small number of people and it should be considered if awareness or uptake of this service needs to be reviewed.

Availability of products and stock levels

Although people described varied experiences of the availability of stock at their pharmacy in other parts of the survey, when asked if their pharmacy usually had their prescribed medication in stock 89% answered 'yes'. It is of note that of the 25 people who answered 'no', 11 of these stated that they use a branch of Boots pharmacies.

Q15 Does the pharmacy usually have your prescribed medication in stock?



“My husband has an extensive amount of medication, some of it outside the more common range of drugs. In our previous area we regularly had difficulties with supplying the drugs - we don't experience that at all”

A number of people described difficulties in accessing their medication due to lack of stock. For example, this was in relation to accessing larger quantities of medication to receive their full prescription in one trip.

“Sometimes a return visit is required when items are out of stock”

“[What could be improved?] Be able to supply my full prescription

Opening times

We asked people if they found it easy to access pharmacy services and 94% of the respondents stated yes. Those who did not find pharmacy services easy to access said that this was often to do with their mobility or the pharmacy opening times.

“Closing times are a bit tight when I have to collect prescription and I work until 6pm”

“I work full time this pharmacy is closed on Saturday”

When asked what could be improved by their pharmacy 14 people mentioned opening hours. This was especially in relation to opening hours over lunchtimes and the weekend.

“Open at more accessible hours”

“Not close for lunch”

“Open Saturday pm”

As we didn't receive feedback about all pharmacies and the response rate varies significantly, it is not possible to look at patterns of satisfaction across the borough or by provider. However, we looked at the patterns of feedback we received for each pharmacy to identify any where there were patterns of good practice in order to acknowledge their contributions and identify pharmacy who could share best practice with others.

The Top 3 Local Pharmacies where people reported positive experience were:

- Well Chemist, The Green, Wallsend -11 people reported positive experiences.
- Halls Pharmacy, Forest Hall - Where 9 people reported positive experiences
- Willington Quay Pharmacy Newline - Where 7 people reported positive experiences.

There are also patterns for pharmacy which highlights that measures are needed to improve them. HWNT will consult with NHS England about how best to achieve this.

4. Conclusion

The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment should identify measures required to “secure improvements or better access to pharmaceutical services in the area”² (The National Health Service (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013-Schedule 1).

Whilst it is acknowledged (and should be highlighted in the PNA) that there is a high level of satisfaction about the service received from pharmacy in North

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/349/schedule/1/made>

Tyneside, there are a number of areas which Healthwatch North Tyneside has identified where improved or better access to pharmaceutical services can be achieved.

Use of services

Many of the additional services are commissioned to divert people with needs that can be met in the pharmacy from overburdened General Practices and Hospitals.

Where awareness of a commissioned service is low, the PNA Steering should consider how this can be addressed to improve access to these services. In particular focus should be given to:

- a. Support over the telephone
- b. Asthma management
- c. Sexual health testing

Furthermore, for those commissioned services where awareness of services is high, but uptake low it is important for the PNA Steering Group to understand if the findings of the survey are borne out in the accounts from pharmacies and consider if they are delivering on the outcomes expected.

If our findings are indeed supported by the pharmacists experience, further work is required to understand why despite awareness of these services being high, they are not achieving the uptake anticipated.

In particular this should focus on improving access to those services targeted at the general population where uptake is reported to be low:

- a. Adult Flu Vaccination
- b. Promotion of healthy lifestyles
- c. Information about self-care
- d. Signposting

and possibly to include those with room to increase the uptake:

- e. Think Pharmacy First
- f. Private consultation

Quality of services

To improve the access to pharmaceutical services in North Tyneside the PNA Steering group should also consider how the quality of the service provided by local pharmacy can act as a barrier to access. In particular where people are unable to get their prescription filled within reasonable timescales this could have an overall impact on health and push people into other services.

Therefore the PNA should address how pharmacy quality is monitored and improved across North Tyneside including indicators relating to patient experience and how local people will be engaged in this process on an on-going basis. In particular this should focus on stock levels and waiting times. The PNA steering group should give consideration to the opening hours of pharmacies, especially in relation to pharmacists' availability over the lunchtime period, evenings and weekend opening hours.

NHS England should ensure that measures are taken to improve the quality of services delivered by specific pharmacies where levels of patient satisfaction have been identified to be low in response to concerns of local people.

Healthwatch North Tyneside look forward to receiving a draft of the PNA which they will provide formal comment which will be publically available.

Healthwatch North Tyneside

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