



# Making the most of your pharmacy: a Healthwatch Bucks street view project

November 2017



## What was the project about?

We wanted to get out and about to talk to people in Buckinghamshire and find out what they knew about the services offered by their community pharmacy (sometimes called a chemist or high-street pharmacy). We wanted to understand what pharmacy services they use and, as importantly, why they might not use them.

## Why did we do the project?

One of our priorities for 2017/18 is 'prevention and primary care'. Community pharmacy is a key part of the NHS primary care system but we receive little patient feedback about the services it provides. We wanted to increase awareness of the services that are available to help reduce the burden on other parts of the healthcare system and to find out resident's views on them.

## What did we do?

We developed our survey with input from the Buckinghamshire County Council and the Buckinghamshire Local Pharmaceutical Committee (that represents the pharmacies).

We tested:

- **awareness of what services people knew pharmacies delivered.** We used the list of pharmacy services on NHS Choices. We did not include every service but aimed to reflect the range that can be offered;
- **whether people used the services and why.** We chose three services (advice about a minor condition; having a 'flu jab and healthy lifestyle advice), focusing on those that could help reduce pressures on other parts of the health and social care system.

Healthwatch Bucks volunteers and staff visited 11 venues or events across the county (locations are listed in Appendix 1). A total of 211 people filled out our survey. A further 58 residents completed the on-line version (that was available on our website from 4th July to 31<sup>st</sup> July).

## What did we discover?

This section gives an overview of what we found. A detailed summary of the responses can be found in Appendices 1 and 2. Appendix 1 summarises the responses we received to each question. Appendix 2 gives some further analysis looking at some of the interesting findings in more detail. For the most part, we looked at how answers varied based on the age of the person responding.

## Awareness of what services are offered by your local pharmacy

Our survey showed that:

- nearly everyone said they visited a community pharmacy for themselves or for someone else. Those in the 66-75 age range made the highest proportion of weekly and monthly visits
- just over half knew that different pharmacies offered a different range of services. When we grouped the results into two groups (18-55 and 56-85+) we found that the older age group were more aware of this.

We asked people whether they knew if the pharmacy they normally used offered the core services (known as essential services). See question 4 in Appendix 1 for the full list. We found that:

### Dispensing medicines

- most people knew that their pharmacy dispensed medicines (98%).

### Advice on treatment of minor conditions and healthy living

- most knew that pharmacies provided advice on the treatment of minor conditions (88%)
- the 46 and over age groups were more aware that pharmacies can offer advice on the treatment of minor conditions
- only about half (53%) knew that it also provided advice on healthy living.

### Disposal of out-of-date medicine

- awareness that a pharmacy can dispose of unwanted or out-of-date medicine was much higher in the 46 and over age groups
- those who replied in the “Other Ethnicities”<sup>1</sup> group were less aware of this service than those in the “White British” group.

We then asked if people knew any pharmacy that offered a wider list of nine services (such as the New Medicines Service, help to stop smoking, sexual health services and home delivery). The results showed that:

- people’s awareness of a pharmacy that offered these services generally ranged between around 40 and 60% though 77% said they knew a pharmacy that offered the ‘flu vaccination
- we saw some differences in awareness depending on the age group. There was evidence that older patients were more aware of Medicines Use Reviews and the 45 and under age group were more aware of sexual health services. The over 65s were less aware of the NHS Health Check than younger respondents.

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<sup>1</sup> Because we had such small numbers of respondents from ethnicities other than “White British” we combined these into a single group, to compare against the “White British” majority.

## What services do you use and why?

### Minor conditions advice

We found that 77% of the people we asked said they had gone to a pharmacy for advice when they, or a family member, have had a minor condition.

The top three reasons that people gave for going to a pharmacy for this sort of advice were:

- I don't have to make an appointment (71%)
- I had good advice and information from a pharmacist in the past (65%) and
- I know that a pharmacist has the right medical knowledge (65%).

Of people who said they **wouldn't** go to the pharmacy for advice about a minor condition just under half (48%) said that they would find out for themselves and just over 25% said they would prefer to give this sort of advice from a doctor or nurse.

When we asked people (who don't go to the pharmacy) who they were **most likely** to go to for advice about a minor condition just over 30% said they would go to their GP surgery, with only a few people saying they would go to NHS 111, NHS Choices or the Minor Injuries and Illnesses Unit.

### Having a 'flu jab

The majority of the 167 who said they had a 'flu vaccination were in the 56+ age group (75%). Only 30 of those that had a 'flu jab said they went to a pharmacy to have it. The top three reasons these gave for choosing a pharmacy were:

- the pharmacy could do the jab at a time that was convenient for me (73%)
- I didn't have to make an appointment (50%) and
- I know a pharmacist has the right training to do this (43%).

When we asked those who didn't go to the pharmacy for the vaccination why they chose not to the top reasons were that:

- It is easier to go my GP surgery (49%)
- Invited specifically by GP (28%)
- I would trust only my doctor or nurse to give me an injection (11%).

### Healthy lifestyle advice

We asked people whether they had gone to the pharmacy for healthy lifestyle advice for themselves or a family member (such as healthy eating, physical activity, and stopping smoking). The majority of people (95%) said that they hadn't been to the pharmacy for this sort of advice. When we asked why not, the top answers were:

- I would find out for myself from the internet/books/magazine/family/friend/tv/radio (40%)
- Not applicable/I don't need this advice (36%)
- I would prefer to speak to my GP about this sort of thing (23%).

## Our recommendations

We recommend that:

- the Buckinghamshire Local Pharmaceutical Committee (that represents community pharmacy contractors) and community pharmacies review our detailed findings to understand more about the specific groups who don't know about their services so that they can focus their awareness raising efforts effectively
- commissioners of pharmaceutical services, the Buckinghamshire Local Pharmaceutical Committee and community pharmacies do more to ensure people in all age groups know about the range of services pharmacies offer that could help ease pressures on other parts of primary care and A&E
- in view of the low interest in /awareness of healthy lifestyle advice, commissioners of public health services work with Buckinghamshire Local Pharmaceutical Committee look at how to raise awareness of the services on offer that can help people to stay healthy
- community pharmacy contractors check the patient feedback on our website at regular intervals and use it to improve their service.

## What are we doing to ensure these are delivered?

- We will send our findings to the Health and Wellbeing Board, the commissioners of pharmaceutical services and public health services (Buckinghamshire County Council, NHS England and the Clinical Commissioning Group) and the Buckinghamshire Local Pharmaceutical Committee
- We will publicise other organisations' work to promote the range of services offered by pharmacies to make sure people know where to get the help they need
- We will encourage everyone to comment on the draft Buckinghamshire Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) that is currently out for public consultation. The PNA maps the provision of pharmaceutical services across the county and identifies any gaps
- All our reports are shared with Healthwatch England as the independent national champion for people who use health and social care services.

If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us.

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