



Pharmacy Website Reviews

An observational review of the NHS
pharmacy websites within Luton: Revisit

January 2022

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Introduction

Luton has a population of 214,658 people (www.localhealth.org.uk), who have 45 pharmacies to choose from. In Luton there is a local pharmaceutical committee, which is part of the Bedfordshire Local Pharmaceutical Committee. ([About us : Bedfordshire LPC \(psnc.org.uk\)](http://About us : Bedfordshire LPC (psnc.org.uk))). The LPC is a statutory independent body, bound by the NHS Act of 1977, representing individuals at a local level ([National Health Service Act 1977 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://National Health Service Act 1977 (legislation.gov.uk))).

Pharmacists are medical professionals who have training to enable them to give advice about minor illness and general health and wellbeing. They are able to give clinical advice on some aspects of health, such as general aches and pains, skin ailments and digestive issues. All pharmacies dispense medication, with some having contracts for advance services, which include commissioned services relating to drug and alcohol, sexual health, smoking cessation, end of life medication, HIV and emergency medications.

Feedback Healthwatch Luton have received has been mixed, with some pharmacies mentioned more than once. Healthwatch Luton have followed the process with these trends by notifying the pharmacy area managers and sharing this feedback with them.

With the changes to primary care affecting access, there has been an increase in demand on the pharmacies. To enable patients to make an informed choice about the pharmacy they are going to use, there needs to be consistent information available for the pharmacies.

Methodology

Healthwatch Luton based the review criteria in a similar manner to the previous reviews carried out in 2020, using queries that had been raised and information needed to make an informed decision about care choices.

The reviews were carried out in a non-invasive manner, by visiting websites online and completing a checklist. This meant there was no need for consent from the pharmacies as all data collected was within the public domains.

Any recommendations made would have taken into consideration the pandemic at the time, the workload and capacity of the practices. Volunteers were fully briefed before completing the reviews. Once the reviews were completed, they were sent to be reported on.

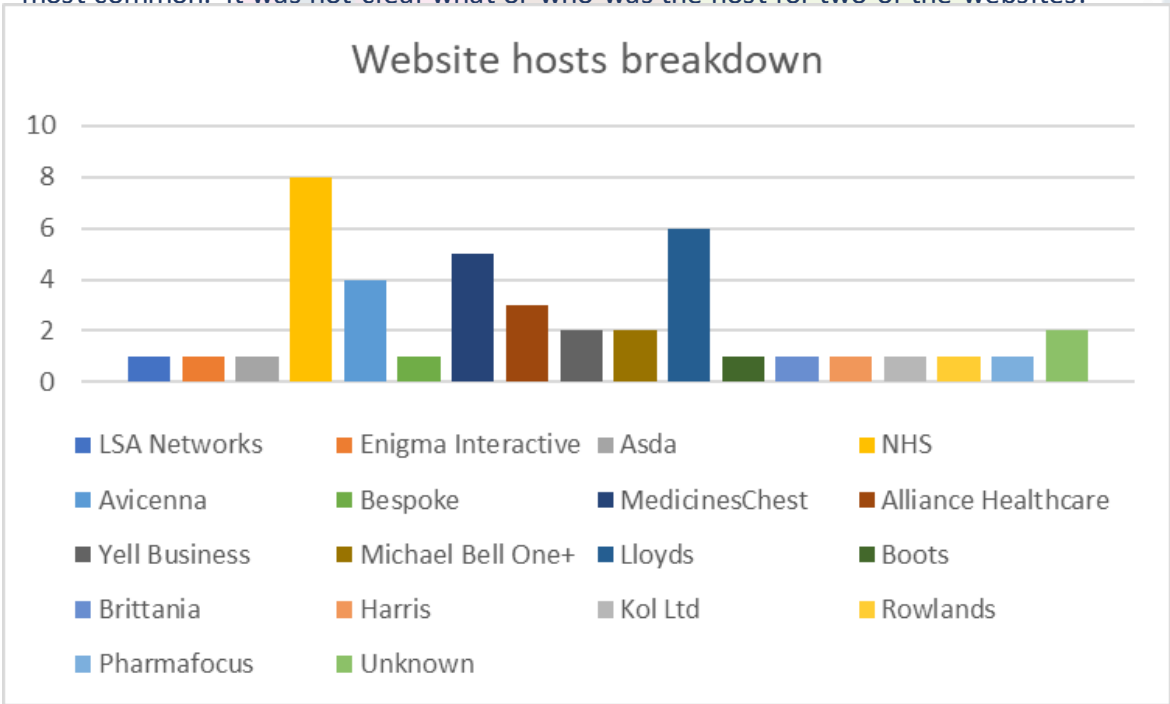
To ensure there were no changes missed, each website was reviewed in one go, with no return once completed. To allow for any conflict of interest, those carrying out the reviews did not carry them out on the pharmacy they used.



Results

Healthwatch Luton reviewed the websites of 45 pharmacies within Luton. One was now permanently closed, and two did not have websites. These included those which are independently located kerbside, but also some which were inside supermarkets or other buildings. All reviews were carried out within a two week period. Of these 45 pharmacies, one had no website as it has permanently closed, 19% (8) had NHS links to the NHS website, 5% (2) did not have a website, and the remaining 76% (34) had a combination of individual and larger company websites. Where the pharmacy was part of a larger organisation, the individual pharmacy websites were reviewed separately., for example Lloyds.

The websites were hosted by a variety of organisations, with Lloyds and MedicineChest being the most common. It was not clear what or who was the host for two of the websites.



It proved difficult to see when the websites were updated, however, if the data was updated before 2020 (ie 2018/2019) it was deemed that it was

not updated recently. Of those pharmacies with a website, 66% (28) had been updated recently, 10% (4) were not up to date, and for 24% (10) it was not clear when they were last updated at all.

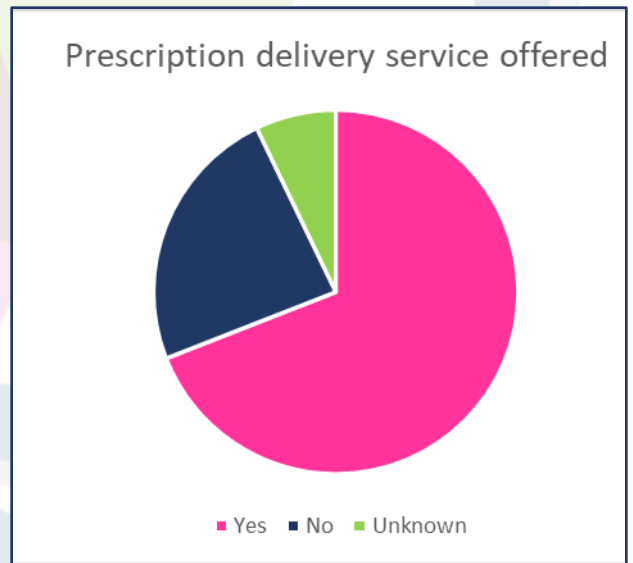
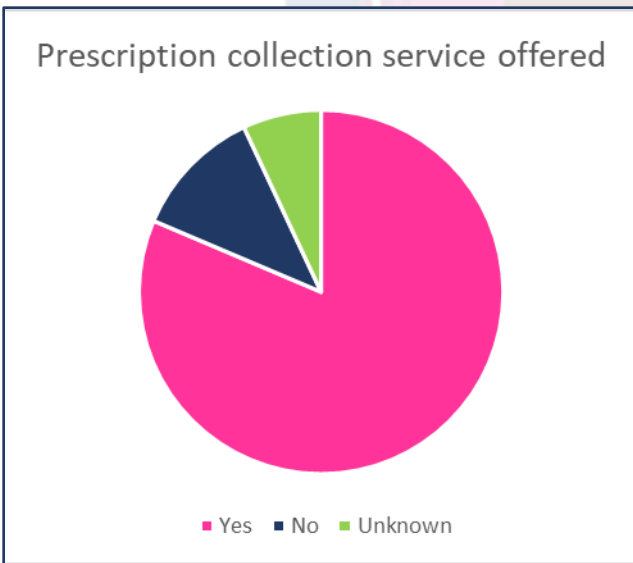
Despite England having less restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic than at the time of the previous reviews, it was still reviewed to look at whether or not there was information about coronavirus on the websites. Of the pharmacies with a website, 55% (23) websites either had their information pages or a link to the government coronavirus webpages.



Results

When looking at the prescription delivery and collection services, websites had details about this on them. In terms of collection, 83% (35) stated they did collect prescriptions, although some required a form filling in and some (3) did not have this information clearly on their website. 12% (5) did not offer this service.

In terms of prescription deliveries, 69% (29) offered a delivery service, some of which were chargeable, although it was noted on two that this was waived if the person was deemed vulnerable. 24% (10) did not offer this service and it was not clear on 7% (3) of websites if this was available.



Compared with the reviews last year, this is in an increase in collection of prescriptions by 22% as the last observations reviews noted 61% offered a collection service.

Equally, the delivery service had changed by 10% on the previous offerings of only 59%.

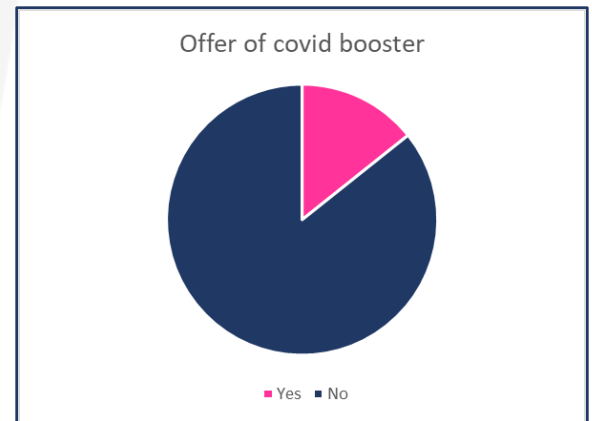
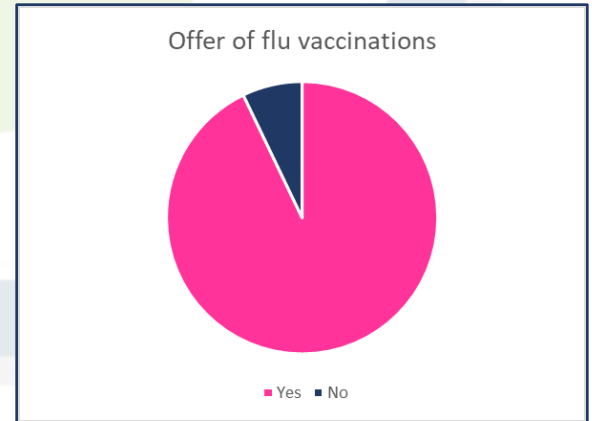
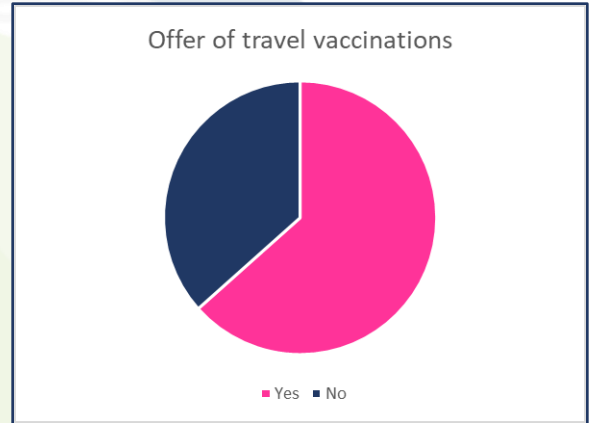
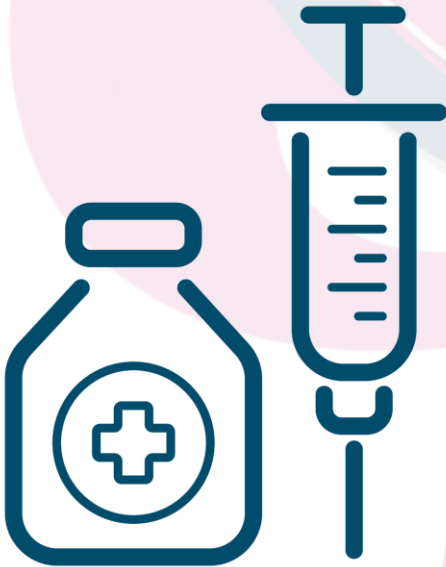


Results

Some pharmacies offer vaccinations as part of their services, including travel immunisations, flu vaccinations and the coronavirus vaccinations.

Out of the 42 pharmacies with a website, 62% (29) offered travel vaccinations, 14% (6) offered the coronavirus booster, and 93% offered the flu vaccinations.

This is an increase in flu vaccinations of 30% (vs last time 63%). However, the travel vaccinations and advice remained the same.



Results

Some local pharmacies offer an appointment service where individuals can get advice about a minor illness or medical assistance from the clinically trained staff within the pharmacy. Of the websites reviewed, this was an option for 50% (21). It was not clear on one website if this was on offer. This was a slight decrease compared with the last review. On 7% (3) of the websites, there was information about what could be done in an emergency out of hours. The recommendation from all of these pharmacies was to contact 111.

There was information on how to make complaints or leave compliments on 48% (22) of the websites, although some of these were 'leave a review' whereas others had the complaints process outlined. Again, this is an increase on the last review, which was on 40% of the websites.

None of the websites had a link or how to contact Healthwatch Luton on their websites.

According to the PSNC main website, there ought to be a way for complaints and compliments to be made within the pharmacy and then if unhappy, this would progress to the NHS Complaints.

Under the provisions of the National Health Service (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013 pharmacy contractors are required to have in place arrangements for the handling and consideration of complaints. These arrangements must ensure:

- complaints are dealt with efficiently;
- complaints are properly investigated;
- complainants are treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants receive, so far as is reasonably practical—complainants receive a timely and appropriate response;
 - assistance to enable them to understand the procedure in relation to complaints; or
 - advice on where they may obtain such assistance;
- complainants are told the outcome of the investigation of their complaint; and
- action is taken if necessary in the light of the outcome of a complaint.

Taken from [NHS complaints procedure : PSNC Main site](#)



Recommendations

Based on the results from the reviews of the websites, Healthwatch Luton would like the following recommendations to be considered by all Luton based pharmacies and the Local Pharmaceutical Committee, to enable the public to access consistent information about the pharmacy, whichever they chose to use.

- **Include information about Healthwatch Luton**

Websites did not contain information about Healthwatch Luton. Whilst it is not a contractual obligation to have this information on the website, it would be a recommendation of this report that this information is added to the websites. It would also be of benefit to the pharmacy, as there would be an opportunity for Healthwatch Luton to share any information gathered about them in a Brief Summary Report, which could be produced monthly and quarterly.

- **Website**

In this current time in particular, with increasing struggles to access primary care, it would be useful for individuals to be able to access information about the local pharmacy to them. This does not need to be a large website, but a small personal website where people can easily understand the information provided and the information to be specific to that pharmacy.

- **Complaint information**

It would be useful for people to be able to find the information about the complaints process and how they would make a complaint if they were unhappy with the service, care or treatment they had received at a pharmacy. It would be a recommendation of this report that an easy way for individuals to make compliments or complaints to the pharmacy be considered.

- **Services available**

As some pharmacies have advanced contracts which mean they provide extra services, it would be a recommendation of this report for it to be clear what services there are available at the pharmacy in addition to dispensing, such as vaccinations.



Quality Assurance

To quality assure the work, Healthwatch Luton reviewed a small and random sample (4 pharmacy websites) of the reviews, to ensure they were an accurate reflection of the information found on the websites.

Healthwatch Luton ensured the information was a correct and true reflection of the websites and will ensure any recommendations are shared with LCCG, NHS E, CQC, pharmacies and LPC.

Data Information

Whilst the data was in the public domain, it was gathered and collated by Healthwatch Luton and as such this report will remain the property of Healthwatch Luton and any use for sources should be referenced.

Evaluation

Healthwatch Luton have carried out a schedule of these observational reviews and have continued this for a second cycle to revisit and compare the websites and any potential changes. It has been useful to carry out, however, due to the pandemic continuing there has not been much change to a lot of the websites. It might be an activity that could be considered to be completed again in the future, post pandemic.

After the last review, there was a lot of support from the Local Pharmaceutical Committee in the recommendations and interest in the report.

This piece of work has been useful as a starting point for the pharmacies work in Luton, however those who are digitally excluded or live in digital poverty are not taken into account as they would not be using websites regularly.

Healthwatch Luton will share the information in this report with the local CCG, NHS E, Local Pharmaceutical Committee and the pharmacies in Luton.

Healthwatch Luton will continue to gather information and feedback about experiences of those within Luton accessing the pharmacies and share this where appropriate with providers. Recommendations will be reviewed in the next twelve months.



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