

# Pharmacy First

The views and experiences of Derbyshire residents

**Pharmacy First** for help with everyday health conditions

## Pharmacy First for sore throat




SAVE TIME AND AVOID WAITING TO SEE A GP

Ask your pharmacist **FIRST** for free and confidential advice, test and treatment for sore throat

HSC Health and Social Care

We provide NHS treatment for the following conditions:

- Sinusitis 12 years and over
- Sore throat 5 years and over
- Impetigo 1 year and over
- Infected bites 1 year and over
- Ear pain 1-17 years
- UTI in women 16-64 years
- Shingles 18 years and over



Ask staff for more information.

**Pharmacy First** for help with everyday health conditions

HSC Health and Social Care

## Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

Do you have any of the following urinary symptoms?

- PASSING URINE MORE OFTEN AT NIGHT?
- CLOUDY URINE?
- BURNING PAIN WHEN PASSING URINE?



## NHS Contraception Service



Already on the contraceptive pill?

Did you know you can get repeat supplies without the need for a prescription

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If you require this document in an alternative format, please get in touch with us using the details on the back page.

# About Us

We are an independent voice for the people of Derbyshire. We are here to listen to the experiences of Derbyshire residents and give them a stronger say in influencing how local health and social care services are provided.

## Our mission

We are a strong, independent, and effective champion for people that use health and social care services. We will continue to influence health and care services and seek to improve joined-up care for the people of Derbyshire.

## Our vision

We want to see consumers of health and social care services being put centre stage so that service providers and commissioners listen to what they have to say and use their voices to shape, inform and influence service delivery and design.

# Summary

## Awareness and experience of Pharmacy First

This work was carried out to promote and raise awareness of the Pharmacy First service which was introduced on 31 January 2024.

Healthwatch Derbyshire wanted to find out if people had heard of Pharmacy First and if they wanted to use it. For people who had used Pharmacy First, we wanted to know about their experience(s) to identify anything that could be improved.

Between July and October 2024, we collected the views and experiences of 220 people on Pharmacy First.

We advertised the survey on social media and sent it to our contacts to share. We also gathered feedback in person at groups, events and summer fetes.

## What is Pharmacy First

Pharmacy First allows community pharmacists to supply prescription-only medicines. This includes antibiotics and antivirals where clinically appropriate, to treat seven common health conditions without the need to visit a GP.

- Sinusitis – swollen nasal passages – aged 12 years old and over
- Sore throat – aged 5 years old and over
- Infected insect bite – aged 1 years old and over
- Impetigo – a bacterial skin infection – aged 1 years old and over
- Shingles – aged 18 years old and over
- Earache – aged 1 to 17 years old
- Simple urinary tract infection (water infection) – women aged 16 to 64 years old.

## How it works

You can ask for a private discussion with the pharmacist about these conditions. Your GP or the 111-helpline service may also refer you to the pharmacist.

The pharmacist may prescribe an antibiotic or antiviral medicine. They may suggest over-the-counter treatments and any self-help treatments that could help. They will ask for your consent to access your medical records.

## Key Information

- 55% of people who completed the survey had heard of Pharmacy First
- When people were given information explaining what Pharmacy First was, 66% of people who completed the survey said they would think about using Pharmacy First in the future
- 27% of people who completed the survey had used Pharmacy First
- Of the people who had used Pharmacy First, 80% were satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

## Key Findings

The main reason people said they would consider using Pharmacy First is because pharmacies are easy and quick to access. However, people had a wide range of views across the seven common health conditions that Pharmacy First can help with:

- 80% of people said they would consider using Pharmacy First for sinusitis (swollen nasal passages for people aged over 12)
- 44% said they would consider using Pharmacy First for earache in children aged 1-17 years, for a family member or someone they cared for (see Page 9 What did people tell us? for full details).
- Concerns were raised about accessing Pharmacy First for shingles
- Some parents said they would prefer to see their GP for health issues with their children
- Some people with existing health conditions said they preferred to continue to see their GP about health issues.

## Key Positive Feedback

- People had a high opinion of pharmacies and their staff. They said they were knowledgeable and approachable. They appreciated the service they offered including the convenience of locations and opening times
- Many people said they already use pharmacies for health advice and wanted to support the appropriate use of health services, reducing pressure on General Practice and urgent/emergency care.

## Key Issues

- There is a need to improve communication and awareness of Pharmacy First. Providing easy to understand information on the conditions that are covered by the service could help

- It may be important to highlight the benefits of Pharmacy First to Derbyshire residents and the wider healthcare system. This could ensure more people get the right care at the right time
- Looking at our survey results based on demographic data we received; it could also be important to target promotion to increase awareness and use of Pharmacy First with the following people:
  - People from a Black and Minority ethnic background
  - People under 25 years old
  - Men
  - Parents with dependent children (under 18).

## Why we did this project

**Our role is to listen to people who use health and social care services. We make sure that your feedback is heard by those who make decisions.**

Pharmacies, or chemists as they are still often referred to, are found in many convenient locations. This could be on a local high street, near another health service (A GP surgery for example) or within a supermarket.

Pharmacists are well-recognised and respected by local people. People already use pharmacists for health and care advice and for collecting medicines and prescriptions.

With the introduction of Pharmacy First at the end of January 2024, we thought it would help the Derbyshire healthcare system to find out if local people knew about the service after several months of it being in place. For those that had already used Pharmacy First, we wanted to find out what people thought about the service.

We want to make sure that Pharmacy First is helping as many people as possible and that the people who use it have a positive experience.



# How did we do it?

## Engaging local people and identifying Pharmacy First publicity

With the help of some of our Healthwatch Derbyshire volunteers, we developed a survey. The survey asked about people's knowledge of Pharmacy First and if they would consider using it. It also asked about people's experience if they had used the service.

Alongside the survey we produced a leaflet to help publicise the Pharmacy First service. The leaflet features on the Healthwatch Derbyshire website with advice and information: [Pharmacy First: What you need to know.](#)

Our volunteers across the county helped us to look where Pharmacy First was being promoted. They looked for promotional materials, such as posters in pharmacy windows, GP surgery pharmacy areas, and supermarkets with pharmacy services.

They found that promotion of Pharmacy First was present in all areas of Derbyshire as shown in the map to the right.

The map shows the amount of promotion our volunteers came across in each area, although they didn't visit every pharmacy service in Derbyshire.

It is worth noting that we don't have the same number of volunteers in each area of Derbyshire. The number of promotions our volunteers found were correct when they looked in their local areas in summer 2024.

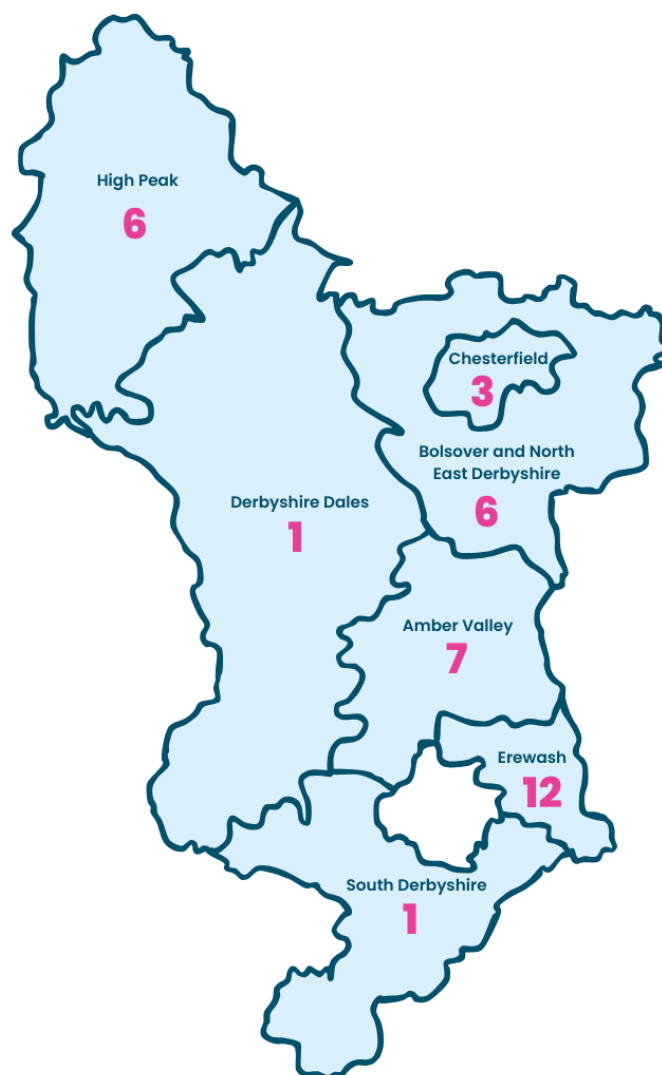
**99% of pharmacies** in Derbyshire provide the **\*free Pharmacy First Service**

They can support you with these seven common illnesses without a GP appointment:

- 1 Sinusitis (swollen nasal passages)**  
Adults, and children aged 12 years and over
- 2 Sore throat**  
Adults, and children aged 5 years and over
- 3 Earache in children**  
Children and young adults aged 1 year to 17 years
- 4 Infected insect bite**  
Adults, and children aged 1 year and over
- 5 Impetigo (a bacterial skin infection)**  
Adults, and children aged 1 year and over
- 6 Shingles**  
Adults aged 18 years and over
- 7 Uncomplicated urinary tract infections (water infection)**  
Women only, aged 16 to 64 years

**Blood pressure checks**  
Did you know your pharmacist can also check your blood pressure?  
If you're over 40 you can get your blood pressure checked for free at most pharmacies.  
Find pharmacies offering the service by searching online for: 'pharmacy blood pressure check near me'. Or scan this QR code.

**Contraception**  
Some pharmacists can also prescribe the contraceptive pill.  
You can get the contraceptive pill without seeing a GP first.  
Find pharmacies offering the service by search online for: 'NHS pharm contraception service'. Or scan this QR code.



During the summer of 2024, most of the feedback was collected at community events, such as summer fetes and carnivals across Derbyshire.

We ran a survey which we shared with our contacts and on social media. The survey could be filled in online or as a paper version.

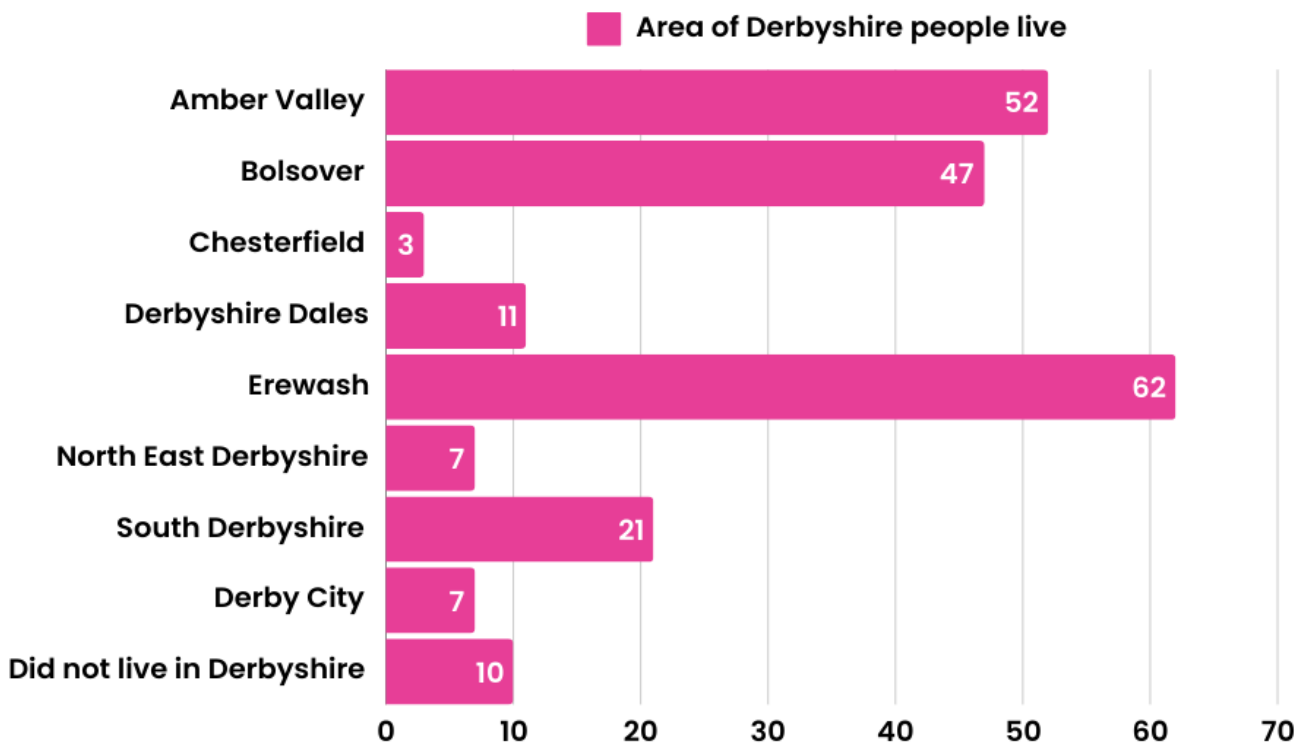
For people who use smart phones we made a QR code which was displayed at our engagements. People were also able to complete the survey using our tablets, with the support of our staff if required.

# Who did we hear from?

## Area

We heard from 220 people. This included seven people from Derby City and ten who don't live in Derbyshire. We didn't hear from anyone living in the High Peak.

See the chart below:



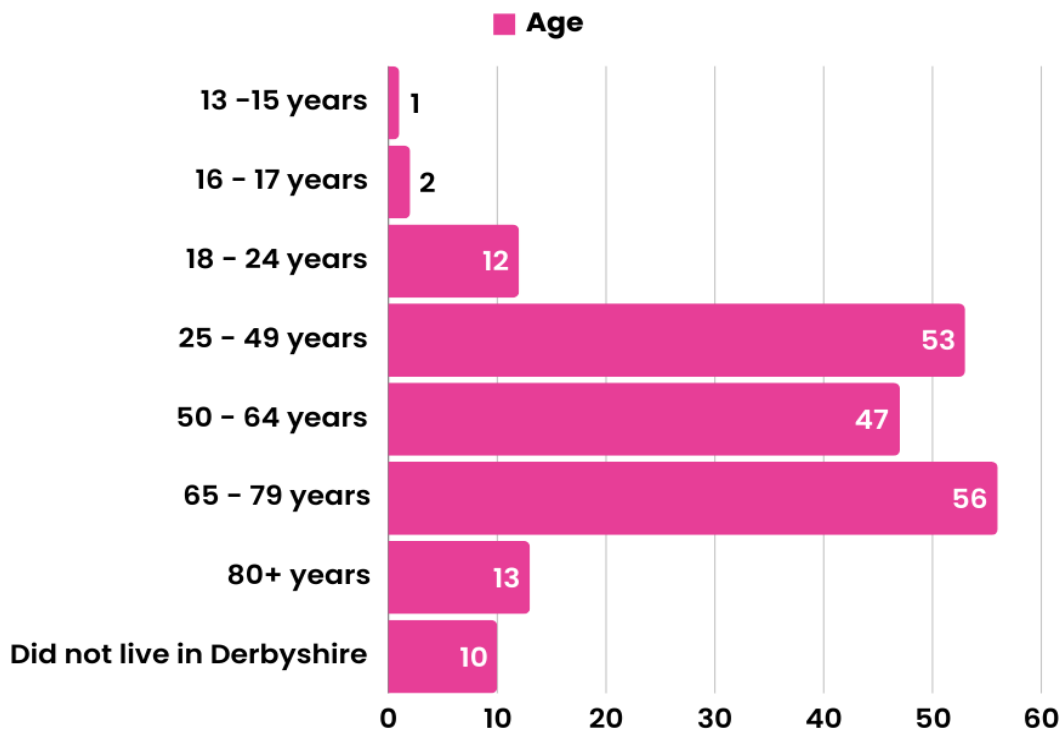
The next seven questions were optional.



## Age

184 people told us their age. 85% of the people were aged between 25-79.

See the chart below:



## Gender

185 people told us their gender. 73% of these people were women and 26% were men. Only 1% of people were non-binary.

## Ethnicity

Most of our responses were from people who are White: British. However, in Derbyshire 94% of the population is White: British. (Derbyshire County Census, 2021).

Of the 184 people that told us their ethnicity, 91% said they were White British.

See the list below:

- Asian/Asian British: Chinese - **1**
- Asian/Asian British: Indian - **3**
- Asian/Asian British: Any other Asian/Asian British background - **1**
- Black/Black British: African - **1**
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Black Caribbean and White - **2**

- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic group background – **1**
- White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh – **169**
- White: Irish – **1**
- White: Any other background – **3**
- Prefer not to say – **1**
- Other – **2**

## Health

84 people told us they had a disability or health condition.

## Dependent Children

42 people told us they had dependent children (under 18) living in their home.

## Carer

34 people told us they were a carer.

# What did people tell us?

## Awareness of Pharmacy First

Of the 220 people who completed the survey, 120 (55%) were aware of Pharmacy First.

Looking at the ages of people who completed the survey awareness was broadly similar. However, younger people were less aware of the service.

There were some differences in awareness according to our demographic data:

- Only 27% (15) of 13-24-year-olds were aware of the Pharmacy First service
- Awareness was lower among men, with only 33% (48) having heard of it
- Just two out of 11 people from Black and Minority ethnic backgrounds were aware of Pharmacy First
- Awareness was higher among people with a disability, health condition, or caring responsibilities, with 62% reporting they had heard of the service

- 50% of parents and guardians were aware of Pharmacy First.

This shows a need to increase the general promotion of the service and to target publicity and awareness amongst the groups of people identified above.

This could include but is not limited to, information from health care services, both national and local promotion and texts from GP surgeries.

It could also help to promote Pharmacy First within schools, colleges, workplaces, leisure centres, sports clubs, barbers, and other community settings.





### Would people think about using Pharmacy First?




At the beginning of the survey, we explained the Pharmacy First service. Then we asked people if they would want to use it for each of the seven health conditions.

People were asked to select: 'Yes', 'No', 'Unsure', or 'Not applicable' for each health condition. We included 'Not applicable,' as there are age and gender restrictions for some of the health conditions.

The survey also asked people to explain their responses (this question was optional).

The full details are shown below:

Would you use the Pharmacy First service for the following conditions:		Yes	No	Unsure	Not applicable
	Sinusitis	175	18	19	8
	Infected insect bite	173	21	18	8
	Sore throat	171	28	13	8
	Impetigo	151	22	36	11

	Shingles	126	39	40	15
	Simple Urinary Tract Infection	122	28	16	54
	Earache	97	17	9	97

Overall, there was a lot of positive feedback about the idea of Pharmacy First. Fifty (50) people shared their thoughts on why they might want to use it.



**“Sounds like a fabulous idea to avoid unnecessary GP visits. I have not heard of this.” (no demographic data given)**

**“I think it's the way to go. You can go to the pharmacy without an appointment.” (man, 65-79)**



The main point was that it offers a quick and easy option, especially compared to going to a general practice.



**“Get seen quicker, free doctors up for more important things.” (woman, 50-64, with a disability or health condition)**

**“It is easier than getting a GP appointment and it would also be quicker. I think it is a really good idea, and more people need to be aware of it. I have used the service for insect bites and for my grandson when he developed a skin rash.” (woman, 65-79)**



Many people said they already used pharmacists for health advice and information.



**“Usually go to the pharmacist anyway.” (woman 65-79)**



Some also wanted to help to reduce pressure on GP surgeries and the healthcare system.



**“I always go to the pharmacist first even before this was a thing. I try to self-treat first but then go to the pharmacy. It makes sense to before going to the GP surgery which is overwhelmed.” (woman, 25-49, parent of one dependent child)**



However, 15 people said they would rather see their GP for a diagnosis, particularly those with ongoing health issues or who have dependent children.



**“Not sure as have heart problems so would probably go to GP.” (man, 65-79)**

**“I have lots of other health conditions and I'd feel more confident that the GP would understand my health.” (woman, 65-79)**

**“Things with children would not trust and would go to GP.” (No demographic data given)**



Additionally, two people had a negative experience with a pharmacist, and four mentioned they would need to feel more confident in a pharmacist's expertise before using the service.



**“Not happy with the advice I had.” (woman 25-49)**

**“It would depend on a number of factors - whether I felt the pharmacy could help or whether it was more complex and thought I needed to go to the GP. Whether it was a private matter. In the past I had to speak in front of other people. No privacy. Not sure of the training they have. They might miss something important.” (no demographic data given)**



People had different opinions using the Pharmacy First service for the seven health conditions it covers.

Sinusitis, infected insect bite and a sore throat had high levels of people saying they would use the Pharmacy First service. One person said:



**“Pharmacists are just as aware of medications as doctors – also better waiting times.” (woman, 25–49, one dependent child)**



However, less people wanted to see a pharmacist for impetigo. 16% of people said they were unsure about using Pharmacy First for this condition. This may reflect peoples’ knowledge of impetigo. One person said:



**“Not sure about impetigo as would not know that is what the problem is before going to see the pharmacist. Spots can be serious” (woman, 65–79)**



57% of people said they would think about using Pharmacy First for shingles. However, 36% said ‘No’ or ‘Unsure’.

Ten people shared their views about this:

- There were concerns about getting a correct diagnosis
- For those with health conditions it depended on the seriousness of the condition they were seeing the pharmacist for
- People were worried about going to a public pharmacy with a contagious condition
- Opinion also changed depending on experience of family members having it before and knowing how ill people can get from it.

One person said:



**“I think shingles cannot be fully diagnosed by the pharmacy. I had shingles and the pharmacy said it was not shingles, but I saw a doctor a few days later and the doctor said it was ...”**



55% of people who completed the survey would think about using Pharmacy First for simple urinary tract infections in women aged 16–64. However, 25% of people said this condition was not applicable to them or a family member.





**“I can't identify what a 'simple' UTI actually is as I have only had a complicated UTI and barely noticed.” (woman, 50-64)**



If you exclude the 54 people who said this didn't apply to them, 73% (122 out of 166) said they would consider using Pharmacy First for simple urinary tract infections.

Some people would have liked to have used the Pharmacy first service but were outside the age criteria.



**“Would be most likely to use Pharmacy First for UTIs but older than 64 so wouldn't be able to.” (woman, 80+)**



Overall, 44% of respondents said 'Yes' to using the service for earache in children and young people (aged 1-17), while another 44% said it was not applicable to them.

Among respondents with dependent children under 18, the percentage was much higher, with 81% (34 out of 42 people) saying 'Yes'.

## **The use of Pharmacy First**

Of the 220 people who completed the survey, 27% (59) told us they used the Pharmacy First service.

Use of Pharmacy First was higher amongst people who told us they were a carer with 44% (15) reporting this.

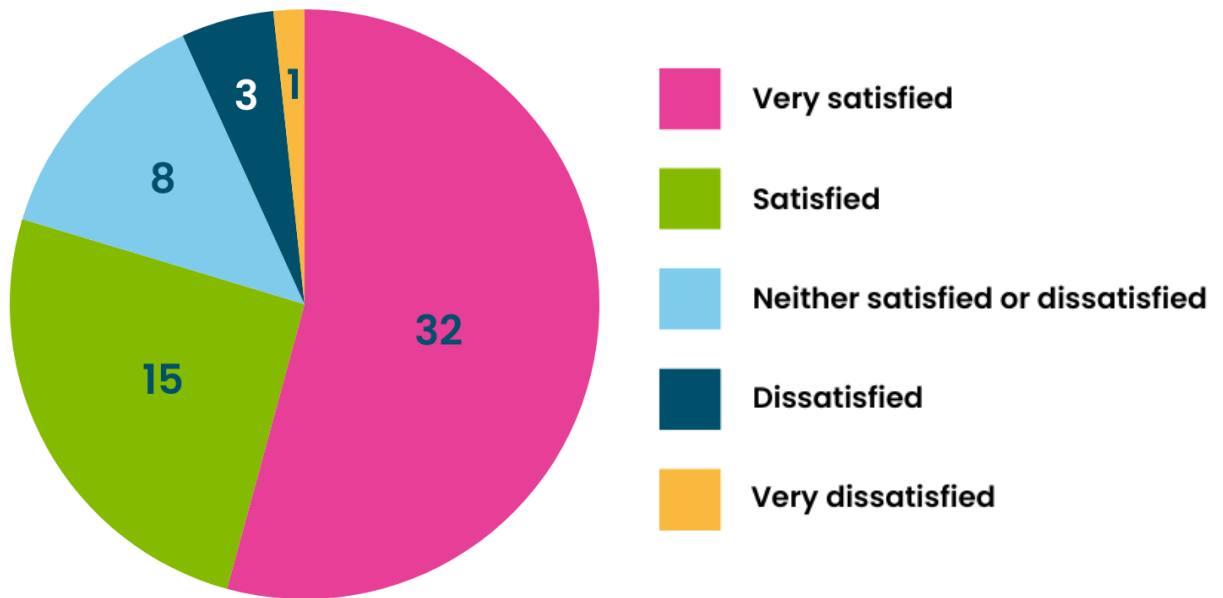
The use of Pharmacy First was lower (21%) among people who told us they did not have a disability or health condition, accounting for 18 people.

Of the men who filled in our survey only 15% (seven) people had used Pharmacy First.

## **Satisfaction of using Pharmacy First**

Of the 59 people who had used Pharmacy First, 80% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

See the chart below:



32 people said they were 'Very satisfied' with the service:



**“Simple confidential consultation. Walk-in service. Knowledgeable prescribing.” (woman, 65-79, with a disability or long-term health condition)**

**“The service was as good as going to a GP appointment. Very thorough and prescribed antibiotics.” (woman, 50-64)**

**“Well impressed with the service given.” (man, 50-64, with a disability/long term health condition)**



Three people were 'Dissatisfied' with the Pharmacy First service.

Only one person provided a reason, stating that their shingles had been misdiagnosed by the pharmacist.

## Peoples' experiences of Pharmacy First

34 people who had used the service told us more about their experience. The most common health issue people visited Pharmacy First for was a sore throat, followed by infected insect bites and simple urinary tract infections.



**“I had a viral throat given a spray and painkillers with additional advice to contact the GP if it did not settle in 2-3 days or feeling unwell.” (woman, 50-64 with a disability or long-term health condition)**

**“I had a bad insect bite. Went to get some advice. Very helpful and informative. They had a look and said if it got worse and infected, they would be able to prescribe antibiotics but luckily it settled down. (woman, 65–79, carer)**

**“I was directed to see my GP ... and they explained clearly the reason why as I am nearly 65 and this type of infection (urinary) was something I have not had before. Very pleased. Would recommend.” (woman, 50–64)**



Overall, the key areas of satisfaction related to people having a good experience, including knowledgeable and helpful staff. Another factor was the quick and easy to access.

One person also shared experience showing the importance of pharmacies:



**“I went with a rash I thought was impetigo. The pharmacist was worried about this and suggested I go to the GP. It turned out to be skin cancer. Brilliant. Would recommend.”**



## What has happened so far?

All the anonymous feedback from the survey has been shared with the local pharmacy committee and the pharmacy commissioner. We will work to make sure they take peoples' comments into account to enhance awareness and experiences of the Pharmacy First service for everyone in Derbyshire.

We continue to share and distribute the leaflet promoting Pharmacy First at events. Which has been well received among community groups and colleges.

## Recommendations

### Promotion of the Pharmacy First service

Boost awareness of the Pharmacy First service. Encourage people to use the service through trusted sources like GP surgeries. Use targeted promotion where awareness is low. This includes, men, young people and those from diverse communities.

Suggestions include but not limited to:

- Sports clubs, leisure centres, gymnasiums
- Link to existing successful programs like: [Homepage | Derby County Community Trust](#) and [Welcome to Chesterfield FC Community Trust](#)
- Barber shops can also help spread the word
- Build relationships and identify promotion opportunities in schools, colleges and universities
- Engage with local communities and faith groups
- Offer information in different languages if needed
- Work with local communities and the voluntary sector to raise awareness and encourage usage
- Work with local groups to create Pharmacy First publicity that meets the needs of the local community, including translations if necessary.

## **Promoting the benefits of the Pharmacy First service**

Help raise awareness about how Pharmacy First can benefit individuals and improve the healthcare system by providing quicker access to the right care.

Share personal stories and success experiences from people who have used the service to inspire others to take advantage of it.

## **Promote how people can feedback on the Pharmacy First service**

We recommend that Derby and Derbyshire ICB commit to promoting and supporting the Community Pharmacy England survey on people's experiences with Pharmacy First, which launched in November 2024: [Survey Link](#).

This survey from Community Pharmacy England and Healthwatch England, allows pharmacy owners to encourage patients to share their feedback after using the service.

The aim is to gather insights to improve the service and demonstrate its value to the community. The survey will remain open until at least the end of 2025.

## Increasing awareness of private spaces

Some people said they wouldn't go to their pharmacy due to not feeling comfortable as it isn't a private space.

It may be important to increase awareness of the private consultation areas where sensitive conversations and medical discussions can take place without being overheard. This could include clear signage and posters.

We recommend that pharmacy staff communicate with patients about their right to privacy and encourage patients to ask for private spaces if needed.

# Thank you

We would like to thank our Healthwatch Derbyshire volunteers for co-producing the survey and locating Pharmacy First publicity across the county.

The 220 people for taking the time to complete the survey.

The community and voluntary sector groups for allowing us to attend events, promote Healthwatch and gather feedback.

Also, thank you to stakeholders and partners for promoting the survey.

# Disclaimer

The comments outlined in this report should be taken in the context that they are not representative of all people within Derbyshire but nevertheless offer useful insight.

It is important to note that the engagement was carried out within a specific time frame and therefore only provides a snapshot of people's views as shared with Healthwatch.

They are the genuine thoughts, feelings, and issues people shared with Healthwatch Derbyshire. The data should be used in conjunction with, and to complement, other sources of data that are available.



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