

Enter and View Report:

Massingham Chemist

197-199 Roman Rd, Bethnal Green London E2 0QY

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Visit Details	
Service Visited:	Massingham Pharmacy
Address:	197-199 Roman Rd, Bethnal Green, London E2 0QY
Service Manager:	Rakesh Patel
Date & Time of Visit:	25 th September 2024
Status of Visit:	Announced
Authorised Representatives:	Parismita Sonowal and Shreya Mandal
Lead Authorised Representative:	Shreya Mandal

1. Visit Background

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets is your **local, independent health and social care champion**. We help local people to voice their **views and opinions** about the services they use.



We **listen** to people and **collect their feedback** on health and social care services.



We **report on key findings** and **make recommendations** for improvement.



We **present these reports** to those involved in the planning and commissioning of the health and social care services.

What is Enter and View?

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 allows local Healthwatch Authorised Representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, and pharmacies. We also interview management and staff regarding their views of the service provided. The aim is to get an impartial view of how the service is operated and being experienced.

Enter and View visits can be arranged if people tell us there's a problem with a service, but equally, they can also occur when services have a good reputation – so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Following the visits, our official 'Enter and View Report', will be shared with the service provider, local commissioners and regulators outlining what has worked well, and give recommendations on what could have worked better. All reports are available to view on our website.

Disclaimer

Please note, this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets would like to thank Massingham Chemist and the service users for their contribution and hospitality in enabling this Enter and View visit to take place. We would also like to thank our volunteer, Parismita Sonowal, for contributing her time extensively in both the visit and the production of this report.

2. About This Visit

Massingham Chemist

On September 18, 2024, Healthwatch Tower Hamlets visited Massingham Pharmacy, located at Roman Road, Bethnal Green. The pharmacy provides a wide range of services, including vaccinations, travel advice, emergency contraception, free chlamydia screening for individuals under 25, discharge support, and treatment. It is listed on [Healthera](#) (an online platform where users can order NHS prescriptions and check the availability of specific medications) and [Pharmadoctor](#) (a platform connecting patients with local pharmacies offering alternative healthcare and treatment services).

During the visit, the authorised observer engaged with two members of the pharmacy's management team and four patients. However, interactions with the staff were limited due to the pharmacy's busy evening hours. A digital copy of the staff questionnaire was sent to the pharmacy manager; unfortunately, no response was received.



Online Feedback

NHS Website Reviews: The pharmacy has one review, posted in 2023, with a 5-star rating. This feedback highlighted the professionalism of the staff and their assistance in providing emergency medication.

Google Reviews: At the time of the visit in September 2024, the pharmacy had received 76 reviews with an average rating of 4.5 star out of 5.

Summary of feedback: Majority of reviews praised the knowledge, professionalism, and polite demeanour of the pharmacist and staff members. However, there were some complaints about the conduct of one pharmacist and poor management practices by the managers.

Focus of the visit

On 31st January 2024, the government and NHS England launched the [Pharmacy First Scheme](#) to give patients quick and accessible care, and ease pressures on GP services. It allows community pharmacies to independently supply prescription-only medication, including antibiotics and antivirals where clinically appropriate

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets are conducting a meta-analysis style report to explore how community pharmacies are coping with providing these enhanced services.

Most pharmacies that were contacted by Healthwatch Tower Hamlets were unable to accommodate a visit due to increased workload and current pressures on their services.

The rationale for conducting the Enter and View visit to Massingham Pharmacy was based on data gathered from public engagement, surveys, and online feedback (NHS Reviews and Google Reviews). Compared to other pharmacies in the area, Massingham Pharmacy received a substantial amount of feedback, with the majority being highly positive and only a small number of negative remarks.

The primary aim of the visit was to observe how Massingham Pharmacy operates and to understand the factors contributing to the diverse range of feedback from the service users. Additionally, we sought to explore the concerns raised in the reviews, particularly around staff behaviour and management practices. Questions for staff and patients were designed to address these concerns while incorporating the standard Enter and View observations.

Our pharmacy work is making an impact.

In the Healthwatch England [pharmacy report last year](#), it was recommended that pharmacy teams be given greater flexibility to substitute medicines when it is safe to do so and patients agree. This request was reiterated in a [joint letter](#) with other organisations on medicines shortages in November 2024.

Last month, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society highlighted a recent DHSC (Department of Health and Social Care) response to a coroner's Prevention of Future Deaths Report, which notes that the Government intends to proceed to a public consultation on Healthwatch England's call to enable pharmacists to make appropriate substitutions when something is out of stock.

3. Summary of Findings

During the visit to Massingham Chemist, the Authorised Representatives were allowed to independently explore the areas of the premises open to the public, taking photographs where appropriate. Observations were made across seven categories: Accessibility, Signage, Environment, Noticeboard, and Other.

Massingham Pharmacy is located on Roman Road, a main road in London, making it easily accessible by car and bus. The area was moderately busy with pedestrians, but not overly noisy.

What worked well?

- **External Signage:** The pharmacy's name was prominently displayed in large, clear lettering (Appendix A), making it easy for passersby and patients to locate the premises
- **Accessible:** The entrance was easily accessible (fig 1).
- **Environment:** The pharmacy was clean, quiet, and well-organised, creating a welcoming atmosphere for customers. Patients received prompt attention, with waiting times rarely exceeding 10 minutes.
- **Staff:** The team is friendly and professional, taking time to explain dosage instructions thoroughly based on customer needs.
- **Services Information:** Details about the flu jab (Appendix B & C) and other services are visibly displayed in front of the pharmacy windows and near the counter. Additionally, online prescription ordering information for Healthera (Appendix D) is provided for added convenience.



Figure 1: The pharmacy entrance features an automated door, providing easy access for patients with disabilities or using pushchairs.

What could be improved?

- **Accessibility Features:** While the entrance has a ramp, it needs to be well-maintained with non-slip surfaces to prevent accidents, especially in adverse weather. Additionally, the aisle becomes quite narrow (Appendix E), which may pose challenges for individuals using mobility aids, such as wheelchairs or walking frame, to navigate safely.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Although the pharmacy had an NFC (Near Field Communication) card, which can be tapped with a phone to be directed to the Massingham Chemist Google Reviews page, the signage for this was deemed insufficient. The current setup is cluttered (Figure 2 & Appendix F), which can make it difficult for patients to quickly identify where they can share their input.
- **Waiting Area:** The pharmacy has seating near the consulting rooms; however, removing unnecessary items could create a more spacious and safer environment for patients, particularly for those with mobility concerns (Figure 3).
- **Signage:** Covid-19 precautionary information was displayed on the floor throughout the premises; however, they were in need of maintenance (Appendix G).

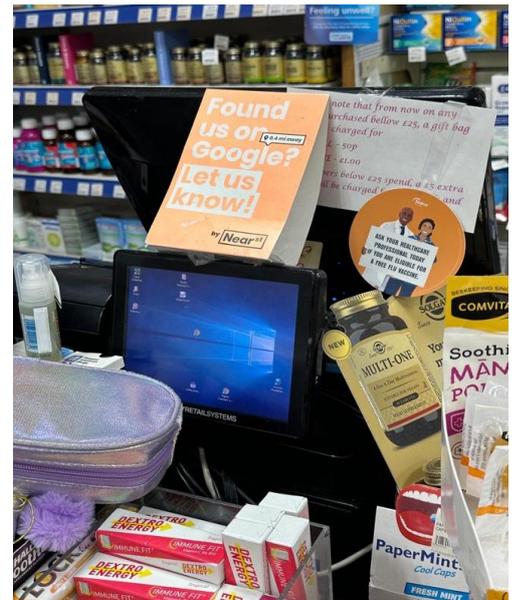


Figure 2: The orange feedback signage was in a cluttered counter.



Figure 3: The seating near the consultation room was surrounded by clutter which was considered unsafe and unsightly.

Summary of recommendations:

1. Rearranging the layout to widen aisles and removing obstructions. Consider creating a designated clear path for wheelchair users to navigate comfortably.
2. Install a feedback box or QR code at eye level near the entrance and another accessible location, ensuring these areas remain uncluttered and free from obstructions.
3. Maximising space by reconfiguring seating arrangements or considering expanding the area, if possible, to accommodate more patients comfortably.
4. Relocating the COVID-19 safety information to a more visible area and lowering the fire exit signage to eye level will improve visibility. Ensuring fire signs are clear and easily accessible for all patients is essential.

4. Interviews

During the visit on 25th September 2024, we had the opportunity to interview a few patients and staff members, along with the Pharmacist at Massingham chemist. Selected comments from patient interviews have been shared.

We asked a total of 13–15 questions on various topics such as consultations, environment and feedback.

Staff Experience Report on Expanded Services

Overview:

Massingham Pharmacy recently expanded its services to include ongoing management of oral contraception, minor ailments referrals from emergency care, blood pressure checks, and smoking cessation support. This report provides insights from staff feedback, highlighting changes in patient referrals, workflow adjustments, training requirements, and patient perceptions.

1. Increase in Patient Referrals

Most staff noted an increase in patient visits after the service expansion. It was highlighted that while blood pressure checks and oral contraception services were easily accessed by patients, referrals from GP or emergency services remained low, with only 2–3 referrals during weekends.

In support, one staff member observed that most patients were self-referring rather than being directed by healthcare providers.

2. Perception of New Arrangements

- a. Improved Healthcare Access: Staff members agreed that the expanded services significantly enhanced

patient access, providing a convenient alternative to traditional GP appointments.

3. Changes in Work Practices

- a. Workflow Adjustments: It was reported that the addition of new services streamlined certain operations, with tasks like blood pressure checks now being handled by technicians instead of pharmacists.
- b. Time Pressure: One staff noted that while workflows were adjusted, consultations (taking 10–15 minutes per patient) sometimes added pressure to non-pharmaceutical counters during busy periods.

4. Resources, Training, and Staffing

- a. Training Needs: Despite receiving some training, staff expressed the need for additional training on new services. The Pharmacy Manager highlighted challenges in conducting in-house training during peak hours and preferred hiring pre-trained personnel.
- b. Staffing Adjustments: More trained staff were hired to manage the increased workload, but clearer task allocation during busy periods was identified as an area for improvement.

5. Patient Perception and Feedback

- a. Positive Reception: Patients generally expressed satisfaction with the expanded services, appreciating the ease of accessing healthcare directly at the pharmacy.
- b. Feedback Collection: Methods for collecting feedback included the use of NFC cards linked to websites and dedicated online forms. However, the visibility of the complaints procedure was unclear.

6. Handling Complaints and Referrals

- a. Staff encouraged patients to address concerns directly with them. If issues persisted, referrals were made to GPs or, in urgent cases, to A&E to ensure appropriate care.
- b. Patients were unsure of the complaints policy as it is not mentioned often and the visibility of the complaints procedure poster was unclear.

7. Assistance for Diverse Patient Needs

- a. Language Support: Staff fluent in languages such as Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, and English supported patients with language barriers, using tools like Google Translate when necessary.
- b. Special Needs Support: Additional care was provided for patients with hearing, visual, or learning impairments, with multilingual information leaflets available for services like smoking cessation.

8. Additional Operational Considerations

- c. Stock and Reimbursement Challenges: Fluctuating medication prices and delayed government reimbursements were identified as ongoing operational concerns.
- d. Service Privacy: Plans to install a dedicated lowered desk for enhanced privacy were noted as a potential improvement to better support patient communication.

Conclusion:

The service expansion at Massingham Pharmacy has been positively received by both patients and staff, improving healthcare access and convenience.

However, challenges remain regarding patient awareness, staff training, and operational efficiency. Addressing these issues through better resource allocation, enhanced training, and improved GP engagement will be essential for sustaining the success of these services.

Patient Experience:

Overall, patients visiting the pharmacy expressed a high level of satisfaction with their experiences. The pharmacy's accessibility, helpful and knowledgeable staff, and welcoming environment were consistently praised.

Most patients appreciated the clear communication from the staff, especially when it came to explaining medications and the next steps in simple terms.

Patients felt comfortable asking questions and believed they were treated with dignity and respect. In cases where language barriers or other assistance was needed, the pharmacy staff provided extra support to ensure the patients understood everything. The pharmacy consistently resolved issues promptly, with many patients being seen immediately.

Patient Feedback:

The majority of patients lived within a 3 to 5 minute walking distance from the pharmacy, with many visiting to

collect prescriptions or purchase over-the-counter products such as supplements.

Overall, patients appreciated the prompt service, noting there were no long wait times, and their concerns were addressed efficiently.

Some patients mentioned that they had contacted other pharmacies to obtain medications when necessary, indicating the importance of availability and flexibility in service.

Preference for the pharmacy over the GP

A few patients also expressed a preference for visiting the pharmacy over the GP for minor health concerns, prescriptions, and flu vaccinations, as they found the pharmacy more convenient and accessible in these cases.

While patients were generally happy with the pharmacy's services, there were a few areas for improvement. **Some patients suggested that the pharmacy could improve the timeliness of text message notifications about their prescriptions.** Although most patients were aware of how to provide feedback or make complaints, a few were uncertain about the formal process. Additionally, there was a patient who preferred to visit their GP for certain health concerns rather than relying on the pharmacy.

In conclusion, the feedback reflects a positive patient experience, with the knowledgeable staff, clean environment, and efficient service being key highlights. However, there are minor **suggestions for enhancing communication and accessibility.**

Selected Patient Feedback

 *The staff are excellent and lovely. Room for improvement - Sometimes I do not get text message from the pharmacy about my order medicine. They need to look with the updating message for easy access of the patients.*



Selected Patient Feedback

 *I have experienced excellent support when facing a language barrier during my visits to the pharmacy. The staff were patient and ensured that everything was explained clearly, taking their time to break down any complex information. They maintained a calm and approachable demeanour throughout, which made me feel comfortable asking questions*



5. Conclusion

Overall, our visit to Massingham Pharmacy was positive, though several areas for improvement were identified. We have outlined recommendations based on observations and feedback from both staff and patients.

Summary of recommendations:

1. Widening aisles and removing obstructions to improve wheelchair access.
2. Install a feedback box or QR code in a visible location.
3. Reconfiguring or expanding seating arrangements to accommodate more patients comfortably.
4. Relocating COVID-19 safety information and lowering fire exit signs to eye level for better visibility.

Recommendations

The pharmacist at Massingham Chemist was requested to respond to the following recommendations:

1. Outside and Entrance

Observations:

The current layout of the pharmacy presents accessibility challenges due to narrow aisles and obstructions. These issues hinder smooth movement, particularly for patients with mobility impairments.

The pharmacy has ramps at the entrance to facilitate wheelchair access, but the narrow aisles inside may pose challenges for individuals using frames or wheelchairs, making navigation difficult.

We recommend:

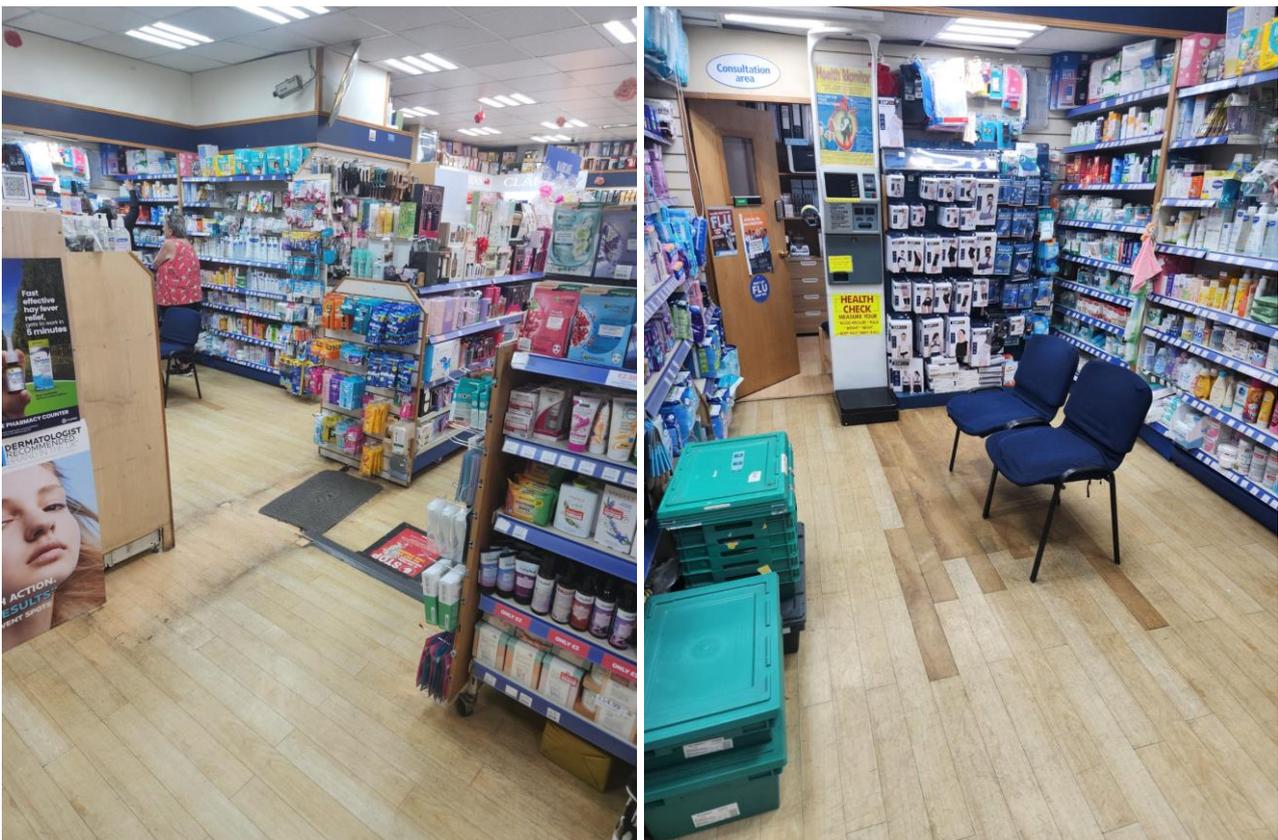
- Widening aisles and removing unnecessary obstructions to improve accessibility.
- Creating a designated clear path for wheelchair users to navigate comfortably, especially during peak hours.

- Conducting an assessment to ensure the space is accessible for all patients, including older people, wheelchair users and those with pushchairs.

Practice Response: *With growing patient footfall and demands for pharmacy services, we have also observed an increase in patients visiting our premises. Where many of our aisles were congested and narrow previously, we considered this obstacle ourselves and have attempted to make more space around our pharmacy to allow easy access for wheelchair users as well as parents with pushchairs.*

After extending our dispensary, we removed two stock gondolas to create this extra space which starts from our waiting/seating area, moves past the dispensary and up to the medicines counter. The space now easily accommodates wheelchair users and patient have reported to us their ease in movement into and out of the pharmacy. At the time of refurbishment (dispensary flooring has already been changed – shop floor to follow within this year) we will aim to further improve this aspect of our pharmacy taking into consideration aisle space.

In our practice we are also aiming not to store medicine delivery totes close to the seating chairs to keep the area clear and free of obstacles. With the added extension to our dispensary, we are now taking in all totes and clearing deliveries quicker to avoid becoming obstacles on the shop floor.



Attached photos showcase the changes made to the aisles and seated waiting area following the Enter and View Visit to Massingham Chemist.

2. Information Displayed

Observation:

COVID-19 safety protocols and fire exit signage were not prominently displayed. Fire exit signage was not positioned at eye level, reducing its visibility and effectiveness, specifically for patient who used wheelchair.

The fire exit signage is positioned above eye level, which may hinder visibility for both wheelchair users and individuals of average height. Additionally, the COVID-19 safety information could be placed in a more prominent and accessible area

We recommend:

- Relocate COVID-19 safety information to a prominent area near the entrance or where it is clearly visible upon arrival.
- Ensure fire exit signage is positioned at eye level and remains unobstructed for better accessibility and visibility.

Practice Response:

The idea behind keeping the fire exit sign higher close to the entrance and exit door was for its ease of visual over our stock shelves on the shop floor. Taking your feedback onboard, we will add an additional notice closer to eye level so it's an easier sight for wheelchair users.

3. Waiting Area

Observation:

The waiting area seating arrangements could be improved, limiting patient comfort and capacity during busy periods

The waiting area has clear seating arrangements, but the space could be optimised to ensure better comfort for patients. While it accommodates the current number of visitors, expanding the area or reconfiguring the seating could provide more room, especially during busy periods.

We recommend:

- Reconfiguring seating arrangements to maximise available space while maintaining comfort for patients.
- Ensuring adequate distance between seats to accommodate social distancing if required.
- Expanding the waiting area by removing non-essential fixtures or considering a space extension if feasible.

Practice Response:

To help address this concern, space extension was considered when we were planning our dispensary extension. In an attempt to maintain the waiting space which we currently have, we decided to extend our dispensary towards our medicines counter rather than into the waiting area and we removed two stock gondolas from the shop floor.

The removal of two stock gondolas has resulted in more space generally around the waiting seats and directly in front of our dispensary as well as counter stand. The attached photos in the email will reflect this change. The space will also allow us to accommodate social distancing if required between the seats. Additionally, the dispensary extension allows us to unpack medicine deliveries in the dispensary further reducing the use of shop-floor space.

Further extensions will be considered at a later point when looking at a full shop refurbishment however that will be when the task is feasible.



Photo provided by Massingham Chemist showing that stock gondolas are now stored away from the seated waiting area for patients.

4. Patient Feedback

Observations:

A QR code for submitting patient feedback was present but not highly visible. Some patients may not notice it upon entering or while waiting.

"The staff are excellent and lovely. However, Sometimes I do not get text message from the pharmacy about my order medicine. They need to look with the updating message for easy access of the patients."

"They should provide guidance and information how to do complaint and provide feedback."

We recommend:

- Enhancing the visibility of the QR code by placing it in a more prominent location near the entrance or waiting area may encourage greater use.

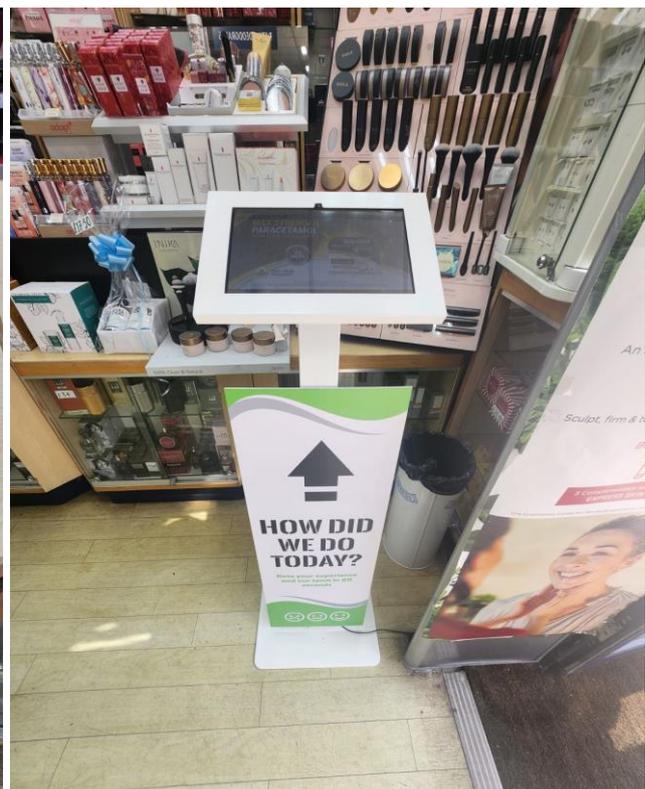
- Accompanying the QR code with clear, attention-grabbing signage explaining its purpose can further promote engagement.
- Ensuring the code is accessible at multiple points within the pharmacy can make it easier for patients to provide feedback.

Practice Response:

We de-cluttered our desk space around the payment till to make it more visible. Additionally, we installed a new feedback unit at the pharmacy's entrance/exit for patients to leave feedback. See attached images in the email. The visible signage prompts patients to press one of 5 different face emoji to indicate their level of satisfaction. There is also space to allow for more descriptive feedback with the option to add it to the pharmacy's google page should the patient wish to do so.

Our hope is that this will help to promote engagement whilst allowing anonymous feedback from patients to remove any pressure and promote honest and genuine feedback.

To further improve, I plan to have a professional re-design the feedback QR-code to make it even more attention-grabbing.



Massingham Chemist decluttered the area surrounding the QR code leading patients to the Google Reviews page for feedback collection. They have also installed a new feedback collection machine located near the entrance.

We would like to extend a thank you to Massingham Chemist for their contributions and our volunteer, Parismitha Sonowal, for producing this Enter and View Report.

5. Appendix

This section displays additional photos taken during the Enter and View Visit to Massingham Chemist on 25th September 2024.

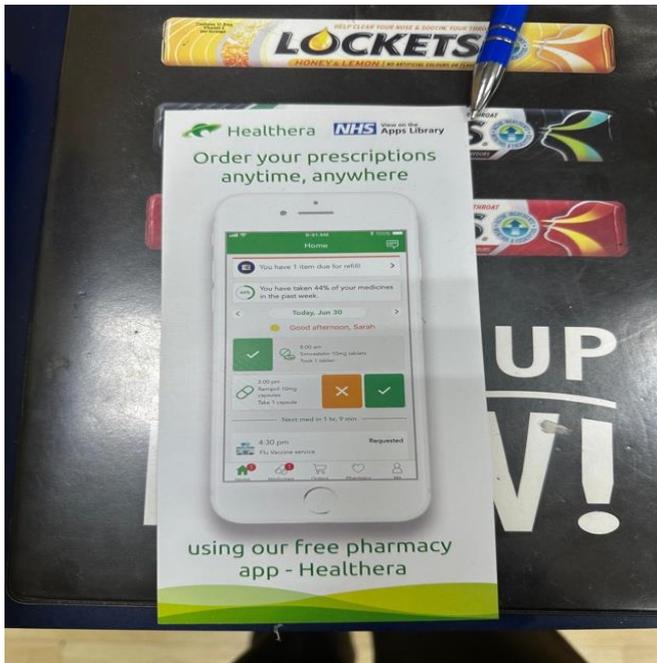


Appendix A: The name of the Pharmacy is clear and is easily visible to onlookers.

Appendix B: The pharmacy's exterior signage displays available services like NHS prescriptions, smoking cessation and allergy testing. Some areas need maintenance to improve visibility.



Appendix C: The Healthwatch Tower Hamlets team observed information about the flu jab and other details about local pharmacies and services.



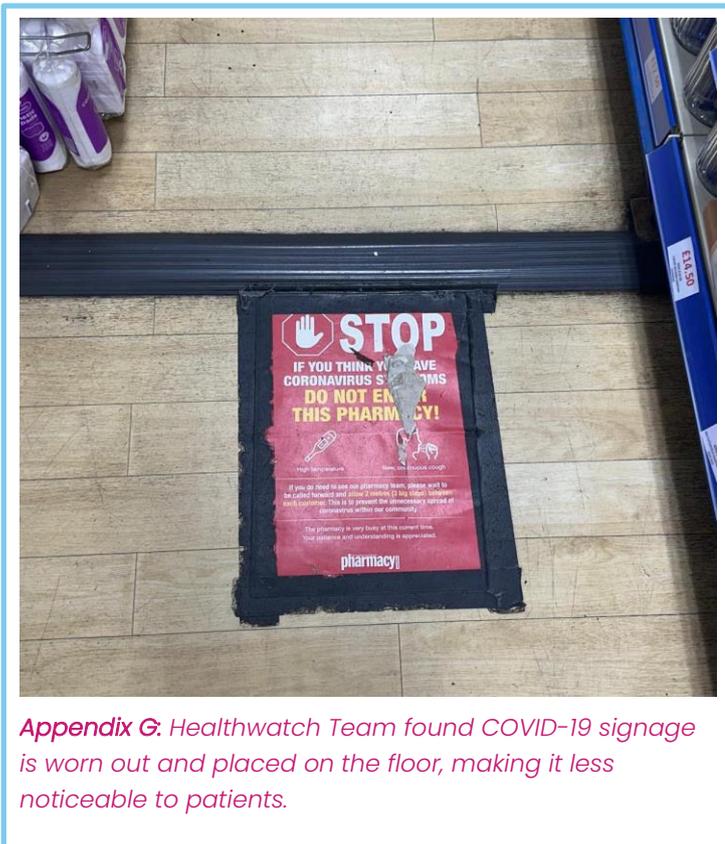
Appendix D: Online prescription order information for Healthera is provided for patient convenience.



Appendix E: The aisle tends to get narrower near to the pharmacy area making it difficult for those using a wheelchair, walking frame or a pushchair.



Appendix F: NFC card located prominently in the perfume sales counter. Tapping the card directs patients to the Massingham Pharmacy Google Review page.



Appendix G: Healthwatch Team found COVID-19 signage is worn out and placed on the floor, making it less noticeable to patients.



healthwatch
Tower Hamlets

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets
Pill Box
115 Coventry Road
Unit 104
London
E2 6GG

www.Healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk
t: 0800 145 5343
e: info@Healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk
🐦 [@HWTowerHamlets](https://twitter.com/HWTowerHamlets)
📘 Facebook.com/HealthwatchTowerHamlets