

Boots Pharmacy Oxford City Centre Enter and View Report



Contents

1.	Visit details	3
2.	What is Enter and View?	4
3.	Summary of findings	5
4.	Recommendations	8
5.	Service response to recommendations	9
6.	Report	. 13

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Oxfordshire would like to thank all the people we spoke to and heard from, and staff at the Boots Pharmacy in Oxford city centre, for their support and contribution to the Enter and View visit.

1. Visit details

1.1 Details of Visit

Service Address	The Boots Pharmacy at Oxford City		
	Centre, 8-10 Cornmarket Street, OX1 3HL		
Service Provider	Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc.		
Date and Time	29th October 2024, 10am to 2pm		
Authorised Representatives	Amier Alagab, Katharine Howell, Jaz Kundi		
Visit Status	Announced		
Contact details	Healthwatch Oxfordshire,		
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1.2 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, it is merely an account of observations and contributions made at the time of the visit.

2. What is Enter and View?

As the local Healthwatch for Oxfordshire, we have statutory powers under the Health and Care Act 2012, and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to carry out **'Enter and View'** visits to local health and care services.

Under this legislation, Enter and View visits can be made to any premises where health and social care is publicly funded - such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.

Through an Enter and View visit we collect evidence of what is working well and identify how patient experience could be improved. We use what we hear and see on the day of our visit to report to providers and others with recommendations to inform change for health and care services we visit.

2.1 Purpose of the visit

- To observe how the facility operates and provides its services.
- To collect views from patients, volunteers and staff on services.
- To identify 'Best Practice' and highlight any areas of concern.
- To report what we see and hear to improve the quality of health and care services.

2.2 Strategic drivers

- This Healthwatch Oxfordshire Enter and View visit to the Boots
 Pharmacy in Oxford city centre is part of a programme of visits to a range of services within Oxford or Oxfordshire.
- These visits were planned and implemented in 2024 2025.

3. Summary of findings

During our visit to Boots Pharmacy in Oxford city centre we heard from 16 customers/patients and seven staff members on the day.

Please note these findings represent a portrayal of what we observed and heard about the experiences of the service users and staff on the day that we visited.

Signage and information

- While there is clear signage for the pharmacy at the main entrance and near the stairs leading to the upper floor, the internal navigation within the store could be enhanced.
- There was a welcome sign at the main entrance by the Cornmarket Street.
- The premises are wheelchair accessible, with a lift available to get to the upper floor.
- The store opening hours 8am 8pm were on display in a transparent board, which may not be easy to read, and did not clearly mention the pharmacy opening hours.
- In the pharmacy, some information was available including about Pharmacy First and information about other pharmacy services, such as vaccinations, medications advice and free blood pressure checks.
- The pharmacy had a small display board with information including support for cost-of-living.
- There was no translated information or leaflets in other languages on display.
- There was no information about how to access an interpreting service when using the pharmacy.
- The pharmacy has a hearing loop in place but there was no sign on display to notify the customers of this fact.
- There was no suggestion box, but there were posters with QR codes on the pharmacy counter and on the wall of the consultation room for people to give their feedback.
- Most of the customers were students and tourists.

The general environment

- The shop and pharmacy were in good condition, characterised by a clean and shiny environment, which contributed to a positive experience for customers.
- The team members were welcoming and greeted customers with warmth and friendliness which created an inviting atmosphere. This culture of hospitality ensured that customers felt valued and respected from the moment they entered the pharmacy.
- The pharmacy is operated by a dedicated staff team who aim to deliver excellent care through collaborative efforts. This commitment to teamwork and collaboration helps to provide high-quality healthcare services.
- The staff at the pharmacy were all busy, and the overall appearance was that the pharmacy was well-organised and under control, reflecting a positive and efficient work environment.
- While the pharmacy excels in many aspects, some corridor areas looked a bit tired, with scuffed corners and tape on the floor.
- The waiting areas for prescriptions and vaccinations had several chairs, enhancing the customer experience.
- The pharmacy features a designated waiting area for patients needing controlled drugs, which included a chair and a separate window into the pharmacy. This setup is screened off from the main pharmacy queue, providing privacy, comfort and safety.
- Staff wore name badges which enhanced professionalism and facilitated communication.
- There is a TV in the pharmacy which was blocked by staff and not easy for customers to view.
- The privacy of customers at the counter needs attention as others could hear the conversations.
- The consultation rooms felt cramped because they were being used for storage.

Customers/patient and staff feedback

 Some customers mentioned the current state of signage in the pharmacy poses some challenges for customers, particularly due to the need to navigate through the shop.

- A customer who regularly collects medication from the pharmacy has noted that understanding the usual waiting time between ordering a prescription and it being ready has significantly improved their experience.
- Customers commented on the long waiting time for picking up their medication, once the GP had sent the prescription to the pharmacy on the same day.
- One customer also told us about missing items from their prescription, though they did not know whether the problem was with the pharmacy or with the prescription from the GP.
- Customers expressed their appreciation of the customer service, medical care and support provided by the staff at the pharmacy.
- Staff feel supported in their career development and professional training.
- The staff expressed considerable appreciation for the open and accessible new management style, which enhances trust and effective communication between management and employees.
- We heard about challenges that staff face, including arrival of patients immediately after their GP appointment before their prescription had arrived at the pharmacy.
- The pharmacy staff have been actively addressing the shortage of some medications, which has understandably led to frustration among patients when they learn about delays in supplies.
- There is a lack of awareness among the staff team regarding the procedures for handling complaints and the use of interpreters.
- The staff raised the need for more consultation rooms.

4. Recommendations

- Ensure that all patients receive information in a way that meets their needs - ensure translated information and leaflets are available along with posters to promote the pharmacy's interpreting services.
- Provide signage for the hearing loop. This will significantly improve accessibility and ensure that all customers are aware of the resources available to them.
- Relocate the TV in a location where it is easily visible to customers, even when staff are present.
- Ensure that confidentiality is maintained during conversations and sharing of personal information with customers at the counters.
- Improve staff awareness of both complaints and interpreting services.
- Communicate clearly with patients around waiting times. This could include posters advising patients of the procedure/process followed when the pharmacy receives prescriptions from the GP practice. Better communication to help people understand the timeline may help alleviate some of the frustration both staff and patients raised around waiting times during collection of prescriptions.
- To improve the worn condition of certain corridor areas, including scuffed corners and taped flooring, to uphold a professional appearance and ensure a safe environment within the pharmacy.
- To improve the environment, the pharmacy could benefit from visible signage. Review existing signage from a customer/patient's perspective and ensure that it's as clear as it can be.
- To improve the functionality of the present consultation room, consider assessing the organisation of equipment. Optimising storage solutions or relocating non-essential items could help create a more spacious and organised environment and a better patient experience.
- It could be an advantage to have a welcome pack for students about the pharmacy and other health information.

5. Service response to recommendations

Response received by email.



Boots Pharmacy 8-10 Cornmarket Street, Oxford OX1 3HL 13 Jan 2025

Dear Healthwatch Oxfordshire,

RE: Healthwatch Oxfordshire Enter and View Visit on Tuesday 29.10.2024

Thank you for choosing to visit our Oxford Cornmarket Street branch and for providing us with such invaluable feedback.

It was great to hear that you felt we had created an inviting atmosphere and greeted our customers with warmth and friendliness, ensuring that they felt valued and respected. We were also pleased to note that our customers expressed their appreciation of the customer service and care provided to them by the team.

With regard to the recommendations you have made, please see our responses below;

Ensure that all patients receive information in a way that meets their needs
 ensure translated information and leaflets are available along with
 posters to promote the pharmacy's interpreting services.

Thanks for raising, we'll work to address this through scheduled works and refresh of our signage and posters.

 Provide signage for the hearing loop. This will significantly improve accessibility and ensure that all customers are aware of the resources available to them.

We'll look to make our hearing loop signage more prominent, especially on the ground floor as people enter, as part of our scheduled works.

 Relocate the TV in a location where it is easily visible to customers, even when staff are present.

We are unsure which screen you are referring to? Could you please confirm and we can review its position.

 Ensure that confidentiality is maintained during conversations and sharing of personal information with customers at the counters.

Noted, we will ensure colleagues are sensitive to this.

• Improve staff awareness of both complaints and interpreting services.

Noted, this will be actioned with the team to raise awareness of translation services, alongside materials to help direct patients to provide feedback or make a complaint.

Communicate clearly with patients around waiting times. This could include
posters advising patients of the procedure/process followed when the
pharmacy receives prescriptions from the GP practice. Better
communication to help people understand the timeline may help alleviate
some of the frustration both staff and patients raised around waiting times
during collection of prescriptions.

We are aware of the issues raised in the report and there are two drivers. The first is national medicine shortages, where we will proactively work with prescribers, patients and carers to make them aware of supply issues as they occur. Due to the nature of shortages, they can be unexpected, so we're not always able to manage the situation ahead of the prescription being written and sent to our pharmacy. The second is managing expectation in the time it takes, both for GP surgeries to prepare and send prescriptions alongside our processes to dispense these. We'll review and refresh communications in collaboration with our local GP surgeries to ensure patients are given accurate timings for when their prescriptions will be ready to be collected.

 Improve the worn condition of certain corridor areas, including scuffed corners and taped flooring, to uphold a professional appearance and ensure a safe environment within the pharmacy

We are aware of these issues and remedial work has been scheduled in the next few months as part of our national store enhancement programme.

 To improve the environment, the pharmacy could benefit from visible signage. Review existing signage from a customer/patient's perspective and ensure that it's as clear as it can be.

We are currently rolling out new signage that will support customers to know where to drop off/ collect their prescription and where to go for an appointment/ query.

 To improve the functionality of the present consultation room, consider assessing the organisation of equipment. Optimising storage solutions or relocating non-essential items could help create a more spacious and organised environment and a better patient experience.

Since the visit the team have worked to reorganise the consultation room and have assigned space in the back shop to support with additional storage for non-essential items.

 It could be an advantage to have a welcome pack for students about the pharmacy and other health information.

We have been in discussion with Brookes University to attend their Freshers Week events to inform them about our pharmacy and services that we offer, we have a stand booked for 31 January 2025.

Thank you again for spending time at our pharmacy, we are always seeking ways to improve the service we provide to our patients.

Kind regards,

Kimberly Clark (Gamal)

Store Manager

Boots Pharmacy 8-10 Cornmarket Street, Oxford OX1 3HL

Further clarification on TV access received by email as below:

Hi Amier,

All TV screens behind the dispensary contain confidential information and cannot be viewed by the public for data protection purposes and our confidentially policy.

We have a large screen behind the healthcare counters that displays advertisements. The till points are positioned so that the colleague is standing alongside this screen, and the screen is directly positioned in front of where the customer would typically stand when at the counter.

The only other TV screen around the pharmacy area we have is a screen that displays live footage from one of our CCTV cameras and acts as deterrent for shoplifters. The screen is also situated so that the dispensary team can see if any customers require help in the healthcare area.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this.

Kind regards,

Mia

6. Report:

Methodology

We follow Healthwatch England guidelines for Enter and View visits. The steps below summarise the process:

• Plan:

Appoint an Enter and View lead for the visit.

• Communicate:

- Inform the provider of the visit, and relevant details including the purpose, date, time, estimation of how long it will take, how many people will be carrying out the visit, and the name of the lead person.
- Prepare visit posters including the purpose of the visit, time and date, and dispatch these to the provider for display, so that people using the service are clear why the visit is taking place.
- Include information about how members of the public can contact Healthwatch Oxfordshire if they are not able to when the visit is taking place.

Prepare:

- o Prepare resources such as surveys and questionnaires.
- Identify any requirements for special support necessary to facilitate the visit such as access or security. This must be done before the visit, as you may be refused entry.
- o Meet with the service provider before the visit.

Report:

 On completion of the visit a draft report is shared with the service provider requesting comments on factual accuracy and responses to any recommendations within 7 - 20 working days.

• Follow up:

The final report is published on Healthwatch Oxfordshire's website and shared with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and service provider.

The visit took place from 10am to 1pm on 29th October 2024, with three trained Enter and View representatives.

During the visit, the team were able to spend time observing the daily work of the Boots Pharmacy, noting the general environment, such as cleanliness, comfort, and information displays, and to speak to both customers/patients and staff.

Additional question sheets, with FREEPOST envelopes for return, were left with the staff and patients for comment and feedback.

Service background

Boots Pharmacy is one of the UK's leading pharmacy-led health and beauty retailers. With over 2,500 stores in the UK, their stated purpose is 'to help the customers look and feel better than they ever thought possible'.

Stores are in prominent high street and city centre locations as well as in local communities. Most branches include a pharmacy and focus on healthcare, personal care and cosmetic products, with most stores selling over-the-counter medicines. Larger stores offer a variety of health services in addition to dispensing prescriptions. Optician services are also offered in many larger stores.

More details about Boots Pharmacy at Oxford Cornmarket Street can be found at the link below:

https://www.boots.com/stores/330-oxford-cornmarket-street-oxl-3hl?utm_source=bing&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=LPM_bing_330

Access and signage

While the external signage for the store is clear, improving the internal signage leading to the pharmacy can significantly enhance the customer experience.

There was a sign on the right-hand side by the Cornmarket entrance to the store indicating the pharmacy at the first floor, but not at the Market Street entrance.

This could be confusing for customers/patients while passing through the store.

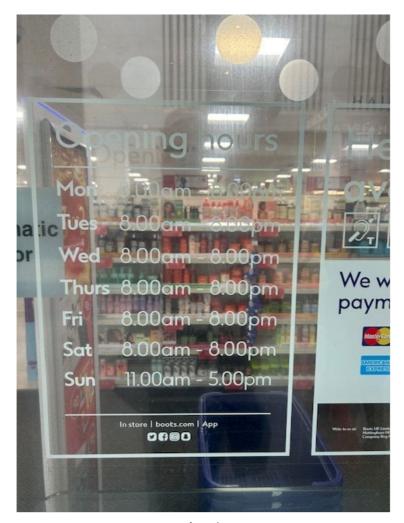
There was wheelchair access and lift service also available.

During the visit to Boots Pharmacy, we observed a welcoming sign at the main (Cornmarket) entrance including a list of services provided in store.



The store opening hours are on a display which is very transparent and might not be clear for most people, and no specific opening hours for the pharmacy are given (this is because pharmacy and store opening hours are the same).

The internal signage in the pharmacy was well maintained helping customers navigate the pharmacy easily, providing clear directions and information about where to find products.

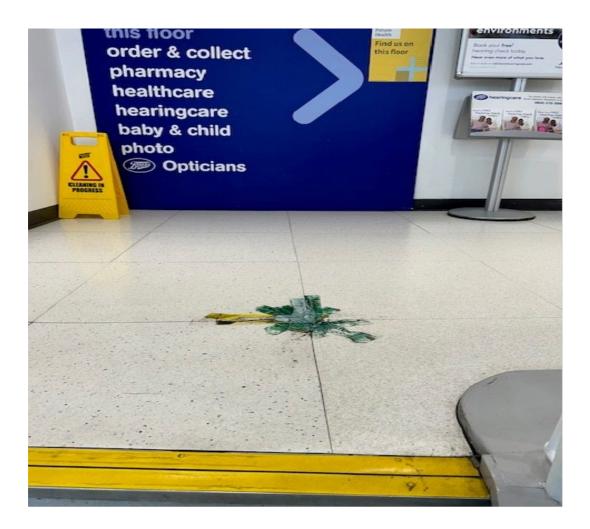


Store opening hours

The pharmacy environment

The atmosphere of the pharmacy was very busy. Staff were welcoming and interactions between staff and customers/patients seemed friendly.

The overall condition of the pharmacy is commendable, with a clean and shiny environment. Some corridor sections appear a bit tired, with noticeable scuffed corners and tape on the floor.



Tape on the floor

The consultation and vaccination room in the pharmacy had some positive attributes, as well as areas that may require consideration for improvement. These rooms feel private, which is essential for providing patients with a comfortable environment where they can discuss their health concerns or receive vaccinations without feeling exposed. At present the rooms looked cramped.

The presence of several chairs in the waiting area is a significant advantage. This ensures that patients have a place to sit while waiting for their prescriptions or vaccinations, which is particularly important during busy times.





Waiting areas

The presence of a designated waiting area specifically for patients requiring controlled drugs is a commendable practice. This separation helps to create a more supportive environment for individuals who may feel vulnerable or stigmatised while accessing treatment.



Controlled drugs waiting area

The pharmacy was well-equipped and maintained, with all necessary facilities in good order.

The pharmacy offers range of vaccinations by a professional nurse as well as the pharmacist who was providing flu vaccines.



Vaccination room

Pharmacy First services are also offered in the pharmacy, and there were several signs on display about the services available. The Pharmacy First¹ service builds on the NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service which has run since October 2019. This service enables patients to be referred into community pharmacy for a minor illness or an urgent repeat medicine supply.

¹ https://www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care/pharmacy/pharmacy-services/pharmacy-first/



Pharmacy First Service

Pharmacy staff said that they had 'hit their target' for Pharmacy First last week with approximately 24 cases. This achievement reflects the hard work and dedication of the team members in providing essential pharmacy services to the community.

There were a number of fire exits available at the pharmacy for evacuation in case of emergency use.



Fire exit sign

There was no suggestion box for customers to use, as well as no clear information on how to make a complaint. There was a small "tell us how we did today" sign with QR codes placed on the prescriptions counter and on the wall in the consultation rooms.



QR for feedback

Information on display

There were many leaflets and information on display about Boots pharmacy services, information about Pharmacy First and prompts of what people can ask the pharmacist about, such as 'menopause friendly' signs near products that people might get to relieve symptoms related to menopause. However, these could be tricky to read or take in because there is also so much advertising and information about price deals and promoted products.

A Responsible Pharmacist Notice was on display. This notice indicates the name of the responsible pharmacist who is overseeing the pharmacy's operations at a given time. It ensures accountability and compliance with legal requirements. We did not see any translated materials or information about access to interpreting services.



Leaflets and information on display

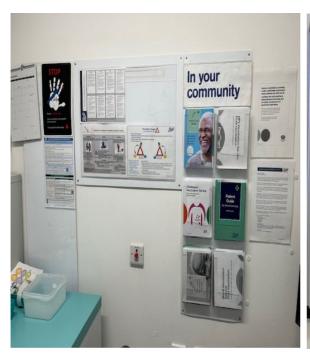
There was a small information board on display by the prescriptions counter, including a poster about support for people struggling with the cost of living.

Posters on display provide information about various pharmacy services offered, such as advice on health-related topics, flu vaccinations and free blood checks.





Pharmacy services on display





Information on display

Customers/patients feedback

During our visit to Boots Pharmacy, we spoke to 16 customers/patients, of which six were men and ten were women. The age range of the customers/patients we spoke to was between 18 and 79 years old. Additionally, nine of them identified as white British, four had a white background, one Irish, one Asian and one African American.

Customers/patients expressed appreciation for the support and advice received at the Boots Pharmacy, reflecting the excellent support provided, as well as the positive impact of effective communication and collaboration on patient experiences and the quality of care.

The customers praised and thanked the staff team. They said:

'Very friendly - attitudes are very nice.'

'People are friendly, but it is just a busy place.'

'Staff have been lovely.'

'Fine - obviously very busy, not much chit chat.'

We asked the customers about the signage, and how easy to get directed - they said:

'Signage is easy, I use the store frequently, so I know where to find things.'

'Pharmacy and prescriptions are well signed - get lost in the rest of the shop.'

'Signage is fine - I could see the big sign saying 'vaccinations.'

When we asked customers about other services available at the pharmacy, most were aware of the different general services available. However, some customers were not aware of Pharmacy First. Comments included:

'Didn't know about other services.'

'I've never used the other services.'

'I came here for my vaccinations. I've heard of Pharmacy First and I would use it, but they're so busy - do they have time to do it? I'm sure they would but it puts pressure on people who are already under pressure. If they want to implement Pharmacy First, they should employ more pharmacists. It's like when I was a child, for my generation my mam would take me to the chemist.'

When we asked the customers if they knew about how to give feedback and complaints. We heard:

'I don't know how to give feedback.'

'I'd look online or use the QR code.'

'Never had reason to complain - would probably just talk to staff and ask to speak to a manager.'

'Would Google it.'

'Wouldn't know how to complain off the top of my head.'

'Wouldn't know how to make a complaint - there's nothing on the information board.'

When we asked the customers about using the pharmacy - we heard:

'I'm a tourist - I just came in for some (over the counter) medication. It's a big shop, everything's spread out, but I found what I needed.'

'Prescription was sent here from my GP. It's a bit hit and miss. Sometimes waiting is an hour, so you have to be prepared. They're great when you get to the desk. I don't get a text to say the medication has arrived – you just have to come and try. I'm grateful to get my prescription but it's not efficient – yesterday I came, and it wasn't here. It's HRT – they don't always have it, and they don't have it all today, I have to come back tomorrow for another box. I chose this pharmacy because it was big – I thought they'd be more likely to have my medications in stock.'

'Prescription sent over from GP - it was just sent over last night; I was told it would be ready in the morning. I've only been here a week. I've been waiting about 10 minutes; they said it would be 10-15 minutes.'

'Came for a flu jab, really easy and quick, booked online two weeks ago the first appointment that was convenient to me.'

'Prescription came direct from GP - immediate - I've come straight from my GP appointment. It's a common medicine so I knew I could rock up, but it's a busy city centre pharmacy so I knew I would have to wait. It's not my usual pharmacy but it's convenient.'

'I don't know if the problem is with the GP or the pharmacy, but I only ever get half of my prescription. I get a text to say it's ready and I come in and it's not, so I have to come back in. I've had two asthma attacks in the last month because I'd run out of medications - it's never happened before. I've told my GP about it, but I'm still having problems.'

We also received feedback about the service via email on comments made about the experiences of more vulnerable service users. This included,

• Patients texted to advise prescription is ready, and on arrival it is not.

- Being kept waiting for long periods of time without any information, can be challenging for some.
- We also heard that staff can sometimes be experienced as 'abrupt' and are not always seen to adjust for individual customer needs, for example, hearing, visual and IT literacy needs.

When we asked the customers about any improvement required in the pharmacy we heard:

'Having the medicines all the time - it's not their fault they don't arrive, but they're essential medicines, if I don't get them, I can't breathe, I can't go to the gym, it gets worse - it's a cumulative effect.'

'It's quite noisy - when they shout your name you might not hear straight away, could have a bell or dinger.'

'Making sure they text you when your prescription is ready, quicker wait times.'

'The queueing system could be clearer, also, more tills would be good this is quite empty but, on a Saturday, it gets really busy.'

We also received feedback about the service via email on comments made about the experiences of more vulnerable service users. This included, 'concerns around being texted to advise prescription is ready, and on arrival it is not. Being kept waiting for long periods of time without any information.' We also heard that staff can sometimes be 'abrupt' and do not always make adjustments for individual customer needs, for example, hearing, visual and IT literacy needs

'Suggest a numbering system, so patients can go and come back to avoid waiting long times in queue'

Staff feedback

We received feedback and comments from seven members of staff on the day, representing a cross section of roles, pharmacist, regional pharmacy manager, pharmacy advisors, healthcare advisor, pharmacy technician.

The positive attitude expressed by staff members towards their work, interactions with customers/patients, and the care they provide, created a supportive environment in such a busy pharmacy.

Staff appreciated the support given by the new manager.

We heard from all the staff that they had all the essential and required training, but most of the team were not sure about the complaint's procedure and not aware of interpreters' procedure.

What is the best thing staff said about the job?

Staff indicated that they are satisfied with their jobs.

We heard that:

'Being able to make a difference when patients are not feeling well.'

'Helping people to remain as healthy as possible through vaccination and screening.'

'Working with a multidisciplinary team, we support each other's to provide the best patient care. I enjoy regularly providing services that help patients.'

What are the challenges staff raised?

We asked about any frustrations or challenges that staff might experience in their work and the service they provide.

Comments included:

'Manufacturing issues are frustrating for our patients and ourselves because they change constantly and can cause a delay in therapy for the patients.'

'Patients that were expect their prescription is ready the moment they leave the GP.'

'Doctors not respecting the time we need to supply the prescription by telling people it is going to be ready immediately.'

'Not being able to help some patients due to shortage.'

'Occasional communication barriers.'

We asked staff if they would raise concerns? They said:

'Yes, I feel comfortable if I need to make any suggestions or have a concern I need to raise. I feel the new manager respects 'staff work' and listen to our suggestions.'

'Yes, we have a great open relationship with our managers, we comfortably raise concerns, and we supported when there are issues.'

We asked how staff thought the Boots Pharmacy and service they provide could be improved? We heard:

'Large consultation areas.' (currently approved by management to locate another room)

'It would be beneficial if doctors send patients phone number with prescription so we can contact them if the prescription is ready.'

'Management team could all be trained in pharmacy and health care to ensure queues are kept to a minimum and help can be provided when required.'

'More staff.'

What suggestions did staff make?

Staff suggestions included:

- More staff needed.
- Large or other consultation room required.
- Doctors should not inform the patients that their medication will be ready at the pharmacy immediately after consultation.



Healthwatch Oxfordshire - our friendly staff are here for you to help answer questions or give you information on health and care services in Oxfordshire. If you need more information or advice, call us on **01865 520520** from 9am-4pm Monday to Friday

To find out more about Healthwatch Oxfordshire please see www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

If you would like a paper copy of this report or would like it in a different format or language, please get in touch with us:



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