



## Engagement: Manor Pharmacy



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## Introduction

Healthwatch Hertfordshire was approached by Graham Phillips from Manor Pharmacy, in his capacity as a member of the Healthwatch Hertfordshire Stakeholder Panel, regarding the changes in funding to local pharmacies. He told us about growing local concern about issues surrounding proposed funding cuts, the possible consequences locally, and implications that this would have to the viability of maintaining the pharmacy's presence in the area. To understand the situation more fully, it was decided to do a simple piece of engagement work which would allow Healthwatch Hertfordshire to have a 'snap shot' of the opinions of the people who use Manor Pharmacy.

## Background

In October 2016 the government imposed a two-year funding package on community pharmacy, with a £113 million reduction in funding in 2016/17. This brought the total funding to £2.687 billion for the financial year. This is a reduction of 4% compared with the previous year, and overall will mean that contractors will see their funding for December 2016 to March 2017 fall by an average of 12% compared with current levels<sup>1</sup>.

This will be followed by a reduction in 2017/18 to £2.592 billion for the financial year, which will see funding levels from April 2017 drop by around 7.5% compared with current levels.

## Aims

The aim of this engagement exercise was to find out:

- If Manor Pharmacy were to close, how people felt it would impact on their health
- Why people felt it would have this impact

## Proposed Outcomes

The results would guide any further work done by Healthwatch Hertfordshire regarding Pharmacy cuts, after taking into account any applicable local and national issues.

## What we did

- A branded 'questions box' was provided for placement in the pharmacy. The box was an opaque white acrylic and sealed, thus allowing anonymity, secrecy, and ensuring independence.
- The box also had an A4 poster attached (appendix i) explaining the piece of work.

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<sup>1</sup> Community pharmacy reforms <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-pharmacy-reforms>



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- With permission, Graham Philips also replicated a much larger version of the poster and placed it in the pharmacy window.
- We supplied 250 engagement cards that could be used to find out how the pharmacy service users felt about any potential closure.
  - The questions on the cards (appendix ii) were:
    - ‘If this pharmacy were to close, how concerned would you be about its effect on your health care?’ This was a multiple choice question with the following answers, with the respondents ticking one:
      - Extremely Concerned
      - Very Concerned
      - Moderately Concerned
      - Slightly Concerned
      - Not at all Concerned
    - ‘If this pharmacy were to close, how would this affect you?’ This was an open text box question, allowing the respondents to give multiple answers if they chose to.
- All materials were left with pharmacy staff to display, promote, and administer.
- After a month the box containing all completed cards was retrieved by Healthwatch Hertfordshire.

### Limitations

- Because the method involved leaving the box and engagement cards at the pharmacy, this led to:
  - Uncertainty of the way the work was presented by staff to respondents.
  - Healthwatch Hertfordshire having little control over the exact position of the box
- The engagement took place in one pharmacy only, which limits the usefulness in extrapolating data gained outside of this specific piece of work and therefore to other pharmacies in the county

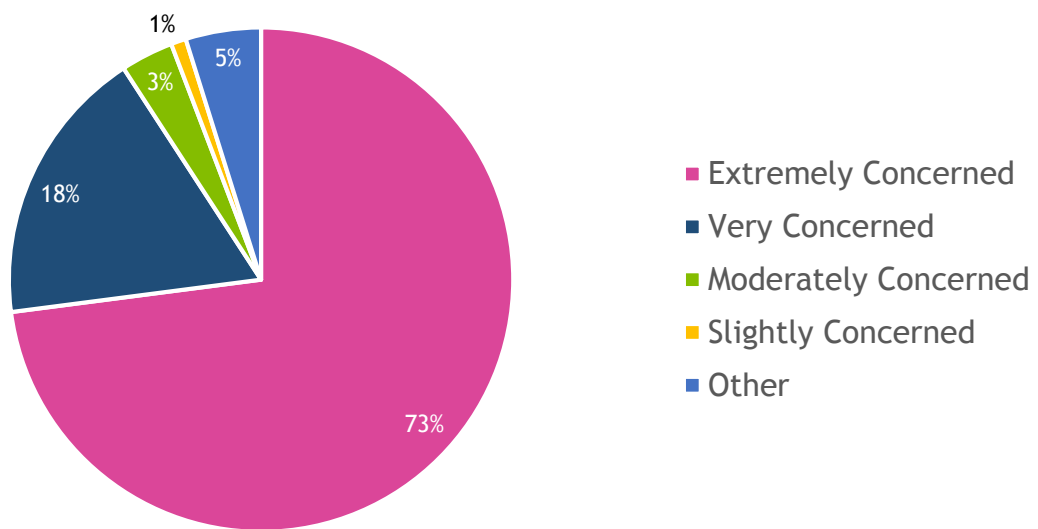


### Summary of Findings

Out of a potential **250** we received **208** responses.

#### Question 1

'If this pharmacy were to close, how concerned would you be about its effect on your health care.'



Response	Number
Extremely Concerned	151
Very Concerned	37
Moderately Concerned	7
Slightly Concerned	2
Not at all Concerned	0
No Response	1
Other	10

The vast majority of people, **188 (91%)**, said that they were either 'extremely' or 'very concerned'. Not a single person responded that they were 'Not at all concerned', and only **2** people (less than **1 %**) responded that they were 'slightly concerned'.



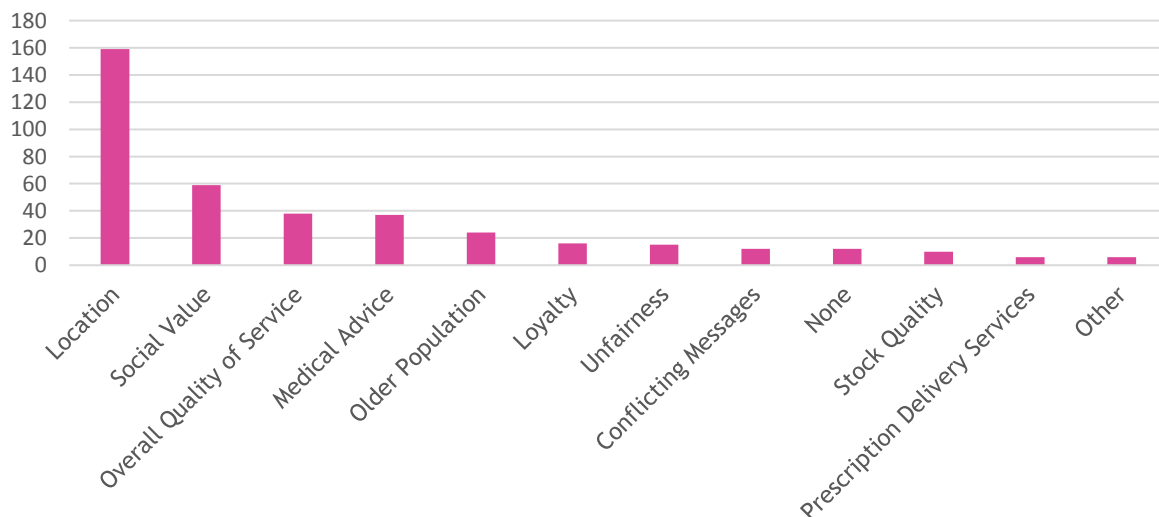
### Question 2

We then asked respondents what the reason for their level of concern was. These could be categorised as follows:

### Reasons for Level of Concern

Category	Meaning
Location	Ability to get to facilities elsewhere, whether due to distance, parking upon arrival, infirmity, or other reasons.
Social Value	Sentiments about the pharmacy 'belonging' to the area. This includes concerns of local impact if the pharmacy should close (i.e. Job loss, damage to high street)
Overall Quality of Service	Sentiments regarding the general level of service found within the pharmacy
Medical Advice	Use of the pharmacy for medical advice. <b>NOTE:</b> There is no GP locally.
Older Population	This specifically reflects concerns for the population of the area being old and needing a local pharmacy.
Loyalty	Habitually use this pharmacy.
Unfairness	Comments about the balance of pharmacy distribution.
Conflicting Messages	Aligning advice from the government to visit their pharmacist instead of the GP for certain conditions with cuts to pharmacy funding.
None	No comments left
Stock Quality	Sentiments about the range of goods available at the pharmacy.
Prescription Delivery Service	The delivery service of the pharmacy. <b>NOTE:</b> This is not a service unique to this pharmacy.
Other	Unable to categorise comment left

'If this pharmacy were to close, how would this affect you?'





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Category	Number
Location	159
Social Value	59
Overall Quality of Service	38
Medical Advice	37
Older Population	24
Loyalty	16
Unfairness	15
Conflicting Messages	12
None	12
Stock Quality	10
Prescription Delivery Services	6
Other	6

### Location

By far the highest reason for concern was around travel and accessing alternative pharmacies. Respondents were concerned about the lack of parking in Harpenden, a lack of reliable public transport, and the distance they would have to travel. These were issues that were often compounded because of age/disability. Of those citing distance, a small number complained that they were currently able to manage the walk to Manor Pharmacy, but the walk into Harpenden would be too much, and this would cut down on the amount of exercise they get.

### Social Value

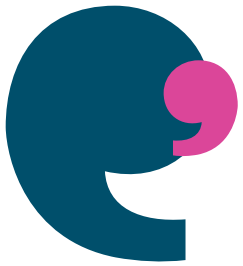
In addition to the difficulties of travel, the loss of the pharmacy was felt to be in a bad thing in and of itself. This response showed us that many respondents recognise some 'value' that a pharmacy brings to the area. Loss of jobs and the possibility of other shops closing were amongst the concerns listed. Many believed that it is an integral part of either their lives in the area, or the community in general, providing jobs, vital services, a community focus, and increasing the 'value' of the local high street.

### Quality of Service/Medical Advice

Both the high level of service and the medical advice on offer were also cited as concerns by numerous respondents. There is no local GP in the area, and some respondents felt that Manor Pharmacy fulfils an important role that is otherwise missing. The staff were also listed as being kind and considerate. Finally, it was felt that the pharmacy provides a good level of service

### Conflicting Messages

Some people have expressed frustration at being told they should visit their local pharmacist at a time when there are proposed cuts to services. As recently as the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, NHS Choices have disseminated a paid twitter advert encouraging people to go to their pharmacist rather than their local GP, the area local to Manor Pharmacy has no GP.



### Conclusions

Those who responded were concerned about the possible closure of the pharmacy.

A lot of that concern is based on the distance they will need to travel to get to the next nearest pharmacy. The distance was a generally concern due to the following reasons:

- Lack of parking in Harpenden
- Irregular busses
- Impossible to walk that far
  - Important to note that several people said that walking to the pharmacy was one of the ways they 'stayed mobile'. If forced to drive to the next nearest they would lose this exercise

Though the government guidelines state that any pharmacy within a mile of another would not count as protected, it is important to remember that that distance can be considerable for some members of society. Many respondents listed their age or physical capabilities as reasons why the journey was impossible. In addition, other respondents voiced concerns on behalf of an elderly population that is set to grow substantially with the addition of new elderly residences being built.

People feel a deep sense of connection to a pharmacy. Because of loyalty and a reliance that has built up over many years of use, the added value a pharmacy bring to a high street (e.g. community hub, reason to come to the area etc), or a mixture of both, any chance of closure will provoke a strong reaction. There should be work done with the local community to explain what is happening, why, and what will be done to if the closure goes ahead to help alleviate at least some of this anxiety.

Through the proposed cuts process it has not been made clear whose responsibility it is to inform local residents of the possible impacts on their lives. Is it up to the pharmacy that may be closing, the other pharmacies in the area, NHS England, Public Health, local or national government, or another professional body? Communication is key to ensuring trust, and it seems that this process has not been communicated well.

### Other notes

The responses did show some level of confusion by some in the way that local pharmacies are funded and how this decision is being made. Some respondents appeared to think that Heathwatch Hertfordshire had final decision on funding, whilst others argued that instead of closing Manor Pharmacies in Harpenden could be closed to make the necessary savings.



### Next Steps

When deciding on next steps it was important to note Healthwatch England's decision on this topic: They have given the evidence to the government on the outcome of possible cuts, and the plan is going ahead. Unless there is a substantive amount of feedback from many local Healthwatch, it is unlikely that there will be action taken at a national level.

Because of this, it has been decided that these findings should be shared with key stakeholders, and made available for the general public.

### Key Stakeholder:

We will circulate these findings to the following stakeholders:

**Healthwatch England**

**Public Health England**

**Manor Pharmacy**

**NHS England Area Team**

**Local Pharmacy Committee**

**Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group**

**East & North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group**

Additionally, this report will be shared with the Healthwatch Hertfordshire stakeholder panel and any other groups felt appropriate, as well as being made publically available through the website.

### Recommendations

Following the announcement by the Department of Health of the changes to the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework for 2016-18, the responsibility for implementation belongs to NHS England. Part of that responsibility must be communicating the impact of these changes and how to deal with them. However, so far there does not seem to be any kind of communication or engagement strategy with the public as to what these changes might mean.

Some of the anxiety expressed by respondents could be addressed in a variety of ways:

- NHS England to provide more information about alternative provisions if a pharmacy were to close (e.g. delivery services could continue from alternative pharmacies).
- In addition to the concerns over a loss of the medical support a pharmacy represents, it is important to recognise and do something to alleviate the worries over the loss of the Social Value. This could be coordinated by NHS England with other stakeholder organisations (e.g. Public Health, local government etc).
- Conflicting messages undermine public confidence in government messaging. Informing the public that to save money they should visit their pharmacist whilst



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simultaneously cutting funding for local pharmacies frustrates and confuses people. This kind of 'mixed messaging' should be avoided, especially at a time when there is already much confusion and worry about the future of health and social care services throughout the country.

### Thanks

Healthwatch Hertfordshire would like to thank the staff and customers of Manor Pharmacy for assisting us in carrying out this project.

With you  
we can  
make things  
better

## If this pharmacy were to close...

How would it affect you?

We want to know your views on  
what the closure of this  
pharmacy would mean.

Healthwatch Hertfordshire is your  
local health and social care  
consumer champion, representing  
your views at a decision maker level.  
We are here for you.

Good  
or bad,  
we want  
to know

**01707 275 978**

**SPEAK OUT**

**VOLUNTEER**

**FIND OUT**

# Appendix ii

If this pharmacy were to close, how concerned would you be about its effect on your health care? (Please tick one)

- Not at all concerned     Slightly concerned     Moderately concerned:  
 Very concerned:     Extremely concerned:

If this pharmacy were to close, how would this affect you?

If you would like to talk to us about this, or anything else related to health and social care, please get in touch with us.

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[www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk)

Healthwatch Hertfordshire is an independent, statutory organisation. This survey is completely anonymous.