

## Question of the month: September 2015

**When you last visited a chemist/pharmacy, how would you rate your experience?**

### Why did we ask this?

People regularly tell Healthwatch what they think about Pharmacy Services. Both Community and Hospital Pharmacies are often commented on. Locally we know some individuals have experienced delayed hospital discharge and have concerns around prescription processes. We do also hear good things about local Pharmacy, such as the value of using a Pharmacist for advice, rather than going to the GP, how useful it is to have a pharmacy nearby and about really helpful staff. We work closely with our Local Pharmacy Committee (LPC) sharing comments with them, and working on projects such as the launch of Electronic Prescription Service (EPS). We wanted to hear more about people's experiences of using local pharmacies and so our Question of the Month for September asked people to rate their experience of visiting a chemist/pharmacy and tell us a little more about the experience.

### How we collected responses...

We gathered views from local people across Nottingham City and County:

- Through an online survey available on the Healthwatch Nottingham and Healthwatch Nottinghamshire websites.
- At three events: Cornwater Club Pop-up Coffee, Lady Bay Coffee and Chat event and a rural engagement event at Calverton.
- At four Have your Say Points at The Well (Retford), Claborough and Wellham Village Hall, Bassetlaw Community and Voluntary Service and Bassetlaw Mind and at Hyson Green's Talk to Us Point. These are events where Healthwatch staff and volunteers are in the community talking to the public about their experiences of health and social care services.

### Who answered our Question of the Month?

We had 309 responses in total with 113 from residents of Nottinghamshire and 125 responses from Nottingham City residents. 72 responders did not provide us with this information (see Figure 1).

More females (n = 144, 47%) than males (n = 54, 17%) answered our question, but 111 (36%) did not tell us their gender.

The responses were predominantly from white people, but as shown in Table 1, over a third respondents didn't tell us their ethnic background.

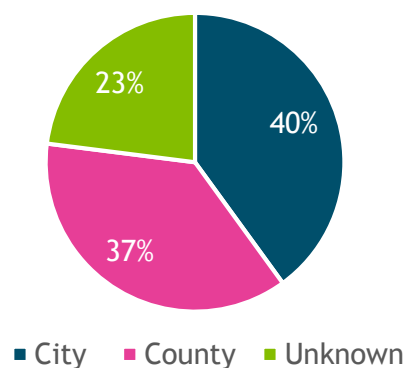
Table 1. Ethnic background of respondents.

Base: all respondents (n = 309)

Ethnic Background of respondents	Count	%
White	168	54%
Did not disclose	117	38.5%
Asian/Asian British	8	2.6%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	7	2%
Other	6	1.9%
Mixed/Multiple	3	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 1. Responses by area.

Base: all respondents (n = 309)



43% (n = 133) did not provide any information about their age. Of those who did provide a response (n = 176), the age of respondents ranged from 21 - 98 years and 53% (n = 94) were over the age of 65.

## What you said...

People access the chemist/pharmacy predominantly for prescriptions. Most people went to the pharmacy to collect prescribed medication (n = 239, 77%). 8% (n = 25) stated that they had attended to buy something (not prescription medication). 7.5% (n = 23) attended to collect prescribed medication and for information and advice. 6% (n = 18) attended for information and advice. Two respondents told us that they had attended the pharmacy/chemist for something else, one of whom told us that they attended for a health check. Four respondents told us that they had used the QMC Pharmacy, however the remainder had accessed local community pharmacies.

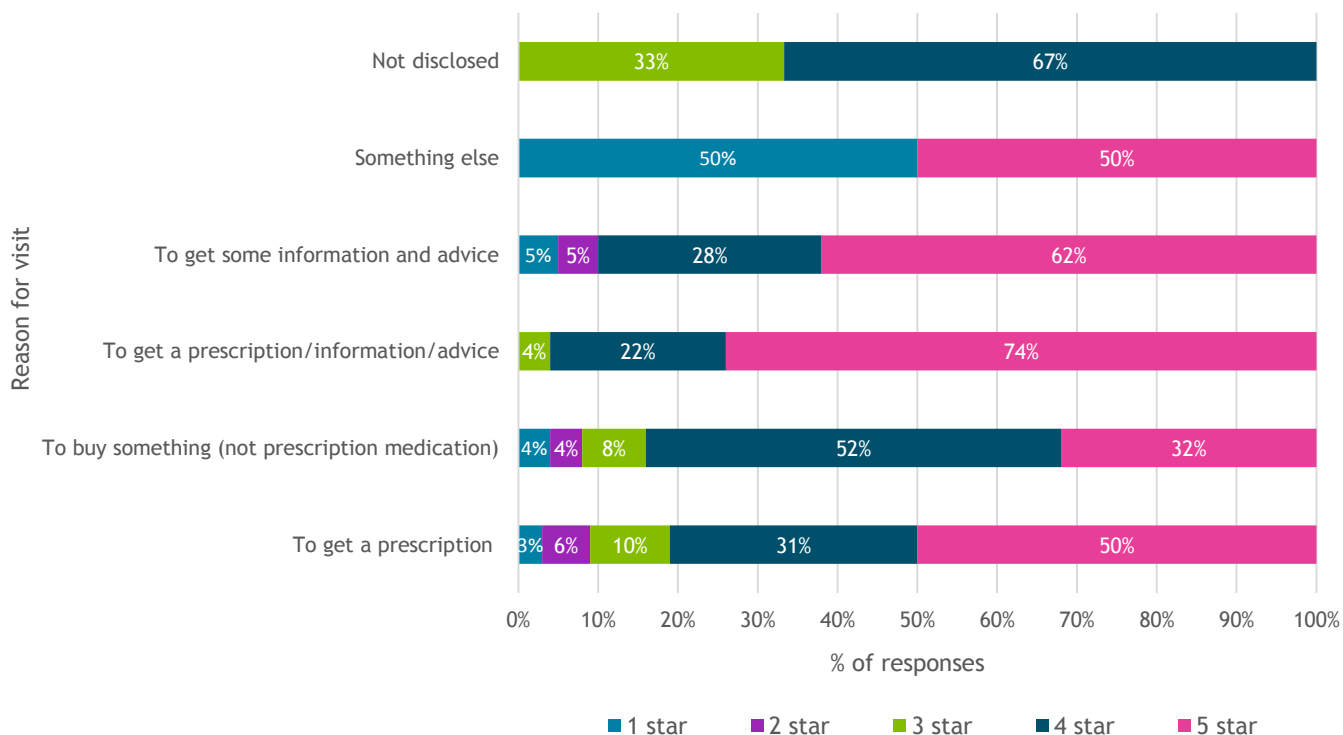
Experiences of chemists/pharmacists were good. We asked people to rate their experience using a five-star quality rating where one is poor and five is excellent. The average rating was 4.2.



Average rating provided (Base=309)

82% of people (n = 252) rated their experiences as 4 or 5, with 15% (n = 46) scoring two or less.

Figure 2. Reason for visit and rating given. Base: all respondents (n = 309) though overall number of responses is dependent on reason for visit: Not disclosed (n = 3), Something else (n = 2), To get some information and advice (n = 18), To get a prescription/information/advice (n = 23), To buy something (not prescription medication) (n = 25) and To get a prescription (n = 239).



Of the people who attended for a prescription (n = 239), 81% (n = 193) rated 4 or 5 stars and 9% (n = 22) rated 2 or less. Of the people who stated that they had attended to buy something (n = 25), 84% (n = 21) rated their experience with 4 or 5 stars and 8% (n = 2) gave a rating of 2 or less. Of those who attended to collect prescribed medication and for information and advice (n = 23), 96% (n = 22) gave a rating of 4 or 5 stars.

There were no notable differences in the experiences of City and County residents.

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Positive experiences are dominated by the staff working in the chemist/pharmacy and short waiting times were mentioned by a minority. The majority of positive experiences are made so because of staff. Out of 309, 53% (n = 165) commented on the attitude, ability and communication of staff. For example:

"They are always very helpful and pleasant to talk to."

83 year old female

"I always found them friendly and willing to help. I find you build a rapport with the people serving you."

78 year old female

"Pharmacy staff are accessible and helpful. The sector of local medical services that is easiest to deal with."

80 year old female

"Professionalism of staff, friendly greeting, give advice and know you when you go to the shop."

51 year old female

"They are very helpful and knowledgeable and are always willing to give advice on appropriate medication/treatments."

No details given.

"Always quick and friendly, with a personal touch."

No details given.

9% of respondents (n = 27) stated that short waiting times contributed to their overall positive experience.

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Poor experiences included long waiting times and incorrect prescribing. Written comments of negative experiences talked about how there were long waiting times (n = 15, 5%). This related to queuing in the chemist/pharmacy to be seen in the first instance, waiting for prescriptions and also for medications to be delivered at home. For example:

"The previous three deliveries failed to show up and I was left without vital medication."

No details given.

"Spent a long time standing in line with no seating."

No details given.

"Often when I go to pick up my prescription, even having allowed more than the recommended time between ordering it and going to collect it, it is not ready and I have to wait."

No details given.

Poor experiences also included incorrect prescribing, where medication was missing or provided in excess (n = 10, 3.2%). For example:

"My prescription has been wrong a number of times...on this occasion a controlled drug that I had to sign for was missing from the pack."

No details given.

"Always wrong. Given double order unnecessarily."

No details given.

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The facilities and surroundings at the chemist/pharmacists may prevent people from accessing these services. We received two comments about the facilities and surroundings of the pharmacy/chemist, specifically to do with poor accessibility and a lack of a private consulting room.

“I have a physical disability and found the chemist too small and was unable to get inside.”  
58 year old female.

“I needed advice on a sensitive medical problem but as there was nowhere in the pharmacy that was private, I didn’t feel comfortable and left.”  
No details given.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

We wanted to find out how people rated their experience of visiting a chemist/pharmacy. We found that overall, experiences were rated highly and that staff and speed of service were key to good experiences.

Short waiting times featured in positive experiences and long waiting times were identified in negative experiences. Negative experiences also included incorrect prescribing and in few cases, problems with the facilities and surroundings of the chemist/pharmacy.

From this feedback we make the following recommendations:

### Recommendation 1:

**Chemists/Pharmacists should work to ensure that prescriptions are prepared for collection/delivered on time.** Where customers are left waiting or not provided with the correct prescriptions, this may cause unnecessary worry and stress. If there is a delay in providing medication, it would be ideal if chemist/pharmacists could provide a dedicated area for customers to sit and wait for their prescription. This may improve the overall experience for the customer when waiting is unavoidable.

### Recommendation 2:

**Chemist/Pharmacy staff should check that customers need all of the medications that they have ordered.** In September 2015, a campaign was launched aimed at reducing unnecessary medicines waste by asking patients to think about their prescriptions and only order what they need. Chemist/Pharmacists can take a proactive role by asking patients if they have stopped taking any of their medication, checking if customers have any medications at home and generally talking to customers about their medication on a regular basis. This will ensure that customers are provided with the correct medication and may reduce prescribing errors.

### Recommendation 3:

**Chemist/Pharmacy staff should advertise their ability to advise on medical conditions and medications more widely.** Of our respondents who had attended for information and advice, their experience was mostly positive. If more members of the public are aware of the advice and information services that chemists/pharmacies can provide, this may reduce pressure on other medical services. In light of this, we make one additional recommendation:

### Recommendation 4:

**The opportunity to speak in a private space with a chemist/pharmacist should be clearly advertised in the chemist/pharmacy.** To encourage members of the public to attend their local chemist/pharmacist for advice and information, it would be beneficial if the opportunity to speak privately with staff could be clearly displayed. This would let customers know that there are facilities out of sight (for example a private room) or that it is possible to talk to someone away from the main desk and away from other customers/staff members. This has been highlighted through the experience of one respondent who left the chemist/pharmacy dissatisfied because this was not available.