



Enter and View report

Rowlands Pharmacy

New Cross Hospital

23 October 2025

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About Healthwatch Wolverhampton

Healthwatch Wolverhampton is the city's health and social care champion. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure that NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to your feedback and use it to improve standards of care.

We're here to listen to your experiences of using local health and care services and to hear about the issues that really matter to you. We are entirely independent and impartial, and anything you share with us is confidential. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice to help you to get the care and support you need.

Healthwatch Wolverhampton is part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch across the country. We cover the local authority area of Wolverhampton City Council.



What is Enter and View?

One of the ways we can meet our statutory responsibilities is by using our legal powers to Enter and View health and social care services to see them in action.

During these visits we collect evidence of what works well and what could be improved to make people's experiences better. We do this by observing the quality of service, and by talking to people using the service, including patients, residents, carers, and relatives.

Enter and View visits are carried out by our authorised representatives who have received training and been DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked. These visits are not part of a formal inspection process or audit.

This report is an example of how we share people's views, and how we evaluate the evidence we gather and make recommendations to inform positive change, for individual services as well as across the health and care system. We share our reports with those providing the service, regulators, the local authority, NHS commissioners, the public, Healthwatch England and any other relevant partners based on what we find during the visit.

Details of the visit

Service visited:

Rowlands Pharmacy, New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton Road, WV10 0QP

Visit date: 23 October 2025

About the service

Rowlands Pharmacy is a pharmacy based in New Cross Hospital. It is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm. Rowlands offer fully qualified pharmacists on hand to listen, advise and answer any queries or concerns that people have about their medicines. It offers a range of services without the need for an appointment, from quitting smoking to weight management. People can get flu vaccinations in the pharmacy. It has a text messaging service that lets people know when their prescriptions are ready to collect.

Purpose of the visit

We have heard from the public that there are issues around inconvenient opening times, parking charges and people having to make a second journey to collect medications. Healthwatch Wolverhampton works with the local authority to support the pharmaceutical needs assessment for residents, but this does not include hospital pharmacies. Therefore, the visit also provided an opportunity to hear from people not using community pharmacies.

The visit was part of our ongoing partnership working with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Wolverhampton City Council Quality Assurance Team to support quality monitoring of pharmacies in Wolverhampton.

How the visit was conducted

The visit was carried out by five authorised Enter and View representatives. Information was collected from observations and interviews with staff and patients against a series of agreed questions and questionnaires left in the area before our visit.

Authorised Representatives

- Stacey Lewis – Healthwatch Wolverhampton Manager
- Harriane Creswell – Healthwatch Wolverhampton Signposting & Admin
- Andrea Cantrill – Healthwatch Wolverhampton Volunteer Officer
- Yvonne Obidiebube – Healthwatch Wolverhampton Volunteer
- Mafaza Mansoor – Healthwatch Wolverhampton Volunteer

Disclaimer

This report relates to this specific visit to the service, at a particular point in time, and is not representative of all service users, only those who contributed. This report is collated and produced by the staff member and Authorised Representative who carried out the visit on behalf of Healthwatch Wolverhampton.

Visit overview

The visit was part of Healthwatch Wolverhampton's quality monitoring.

Rowlands Pharmacy was told about the visit in advance, so they were expecting us. They worked with us to make the day run smoothly. On the day we spoke to six members of staff and 31 members of the public. A further 21 people left feedback in the comments box that we left at the pharmacy for a week before and after we visited.

Key findings

- **Signposting:** This was overwhelmingly the biggest issue we heard. People felt the Pharmacy was difficult to find, signs had the brand name or the old one and didn't clearly state "pharmacy". Most people had to ask someone at least once for directions (over time this takes many staff hours).
- **Seating:** People felt there wasn't enough seating and it was a long time to stand, or the seating was too far away from the counter where their number was called.
- **Communication:** We heard how people found it hard to listen out for their number to be called and would like a visual prompt alongside it being called out. This also benefits those who are hard of hearing or deaf.
- **Parking charges:** We understand the pharmacy is not responsible for parking charges. However, it became an issue when people were discharged at a time when the pharmacy wasn't open and they had to come back to collect their prescription and incurred further charges.
- **Opening times and phone line:** Patients fed back that the website shows a different time to actual opening times. In trying to confirm this we rang the pharmacy 19 times over different days and times. The line was always busy.
- **Prescriptions:** On collecting their prescriptions, most people had their medication explained to them.
- **Customer service:** Staff were friendly and polite.
- **Waiting times:** Overall, most people were happy with the waiting times and understood that it is a busy pharmacy in a big hospital.

Recommendations

We would like the Rowlands Pharmacy to consider the following recommendations for improvement based on our observations and findings from the visit.

1. Signposting: As New Cross is such a big hospital, signposting needs to be from all areas of the hospital and from anywhere prescriptions are given to be collected.

We understand this is a huge undertaking and will take time and money. Recognising the implication of costs and time, we recommend a staged implementation of increased signage be undertaken, starting with sign saying, 'Rowlands Pharmacy' (not just 'Rowlands' as people won't necessarily recognise the brand), along with updating the sign from the previous provider on the ground floor. This is important because when patients are not well, they need to be able to easily access services with as little effort as possible. In addition, staff will be able to make better use of their time delivering care rather than accompanying or directing patients to the pharmacy. An improvement in signage would save time for staff and patients and reduce stress.

Signage needs to be simple and clear to guide people, like the hanging signs already in place. Rowlands also mentioned a system that guides people via lines on the floor. We would encourage working with the Trust to find a solution that benefits everybody. We would also recommend working with the Trust as well as Easy Read organisations and disability groups to update the current 'you are here' maps and find a simpler solution.

2. Seating: Increase the seating available in the pharmacy. Currently seats are well placed in small groups but are limited. Place seating more centrally so people can hear their number being called.

3. Communication: Display calling numbers on the TV screen to allow everybody to see when they are being called as well as hearing.

4. Parking charges: We understand this is the remit of the hospital but there needs to be allowance for people who are discharged at a time when the pharmacy isn't open. Work with the Trust on parking charges to give an allowance for people who are discharged when the pharmacy is closed. Consider a delivery service for those who struggle to return to the hospital site.

Observations and findings

Physical environment

Rowlands pharmacy is located close to the A&E department, fairly centrally within the hospital, it is on the second floor, with access via a lift or stairs. The area is clean and well lit with a small amount of seating around the prescription collection area. Patients take their prescription to one entrance and collect from another. There are two small tables one was empty, one had a leaflet on it. There was no clock. There is a TV screen by the collection area, but this was not switched on when we visited.

Interactions

We spoke to **six pharmacy staff** and **52 people gave us feedback**, by either speaking directly to us or completing a questionnaire that we left in the waiting area for a week before our visit and a week after.

Summary of interactions with staff

Staff told us they were happy working at Rowlands Pharmacy, they could raise any concerns to other staff and management and felt they had good communication. They felt they gave a good service but would like more space. They told us they thought there are just enough staff, but it was noticeably harder when one person was off.

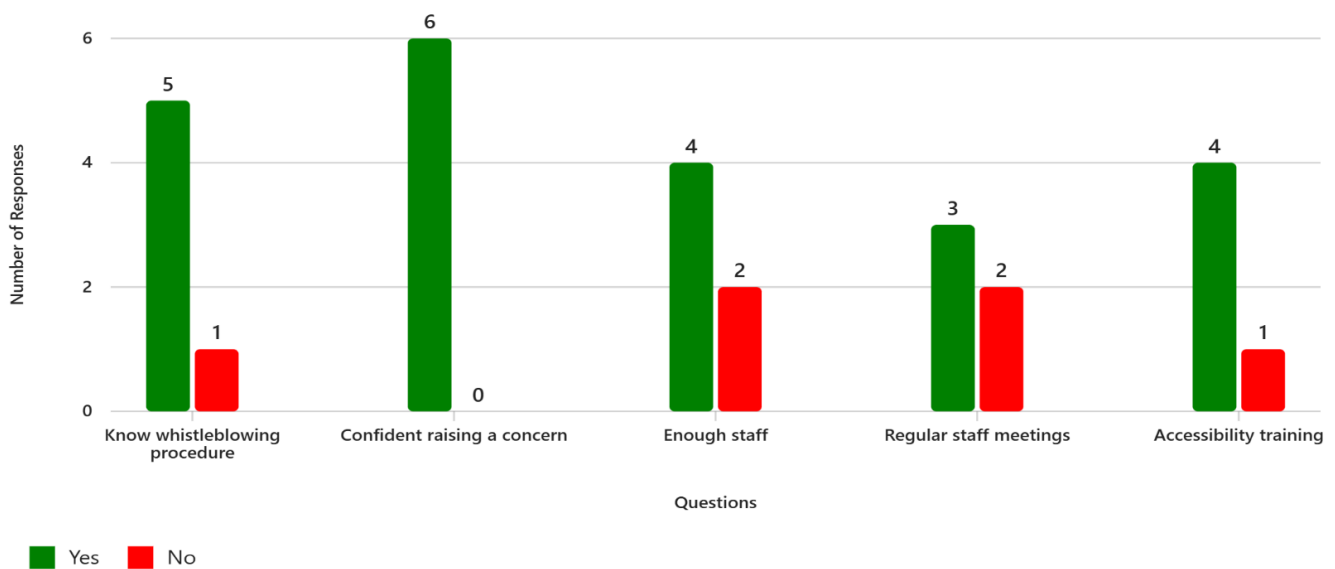
Summary of our interactions with the public

- **Parking:** “You usually can't find parking [and] its very expensive”; the people who didn't have a problem with parking had a blue badge, lived nearby or were dropped off.
- **Signposting / finding the pharmacy:** This was a big issue, most people struggled to find it. One said, “I had to ask; three people helped me find it; big no!”
- **Accessibly:** It was felt it was a very “big hospital” to navigate. The pharmacy was inconvenient for those in wheelchairs and hard for people to hear their number being called. A few mentioned “24-hour opening” to match the hospitals opening times and their discharge time.
- **Overall impressions of the pharmacy:** People were happy with the kind service they got from staff, saying “the staff are friendly and helpful”. They felt waiting times could be better but also understood it is a very big hospital. People felt the signposting was poor and they were fearful of missing being called when their number came up. Some felt they would like “more information on how to take their medication” and would like the television “put on and have numbers for collections”.

Questions to staff

- Do you know your whistleblowing procedure?
- Do you feel confident raising a concern?
- Do you feel there are enough staff?
- Do you have regular staff meetings?
- Have you received training around accessibility, for example, disability care, deaf awareness?

Responses



Comments from staff

"A few extra staff on short days [would help], but otherwise it's efficient and everyone works hard."

"We need double the space."

"No issue with Rowlands, it runs well."

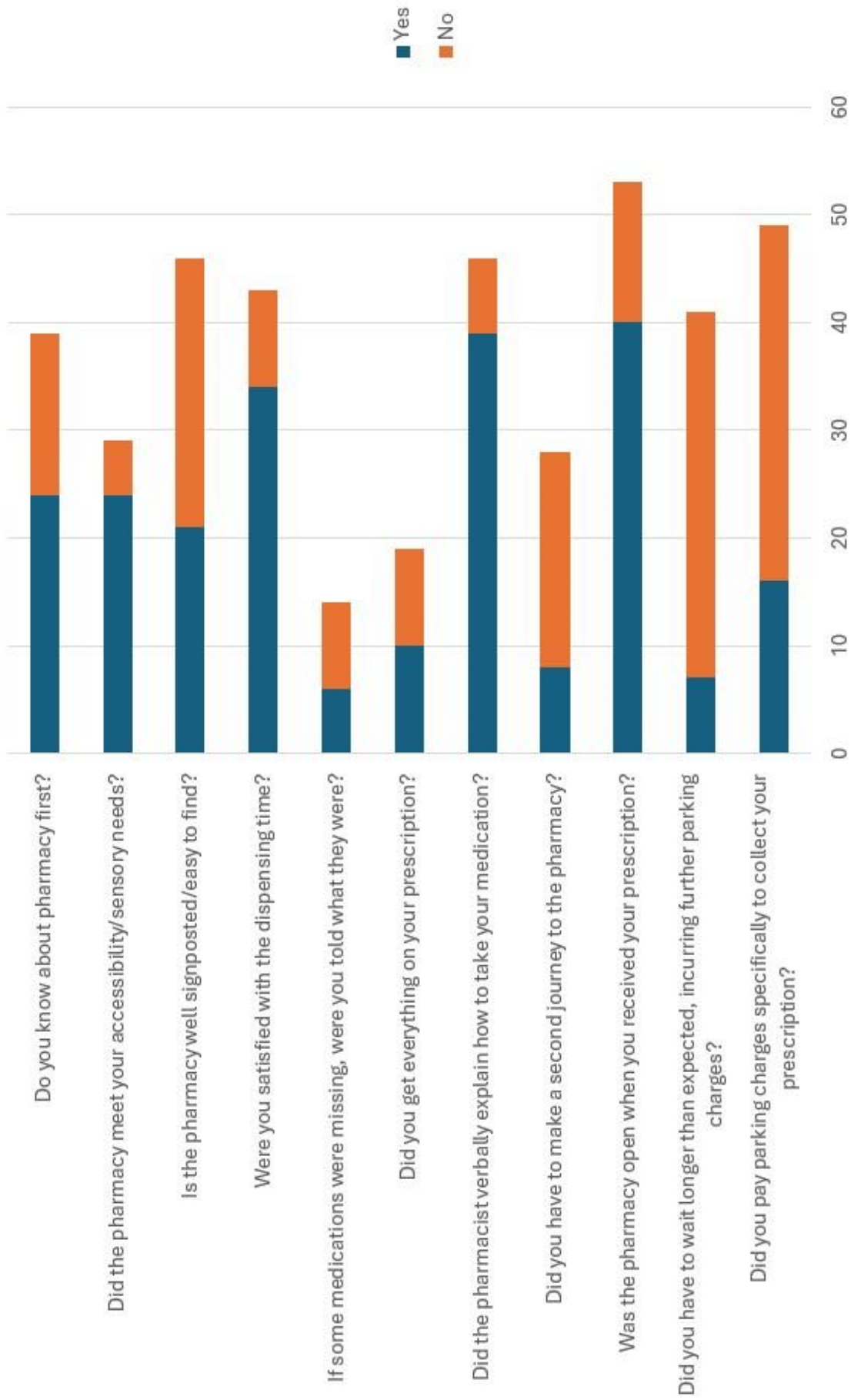
Questions to the public collecting prescriptions with Yes/No answers:

- Did you pay parking charges specifically to collect your prescription?
- Did you have to wait longer than expected when you received your prescription?
- Was the pharmacy open when you received your prescription?
- Did you have to make a second journey to the pharmacy?
- Did the pharmacist verbally explain how to take your medication?
- Did you get everything on your prescription?
- If some medications were missing, were you told what they were?
- Were you satisfied with the dispensing time?
- Is the pharmacy well signposted / easy to find?
- Did the pharmacy meet your accessibility / sensory needs?
- Do you know about pharmacy first?

Questions to the public collecting prescriptions that invite comment:

- If the pharmacy did not meet your accessibility/sensory needs, please give us details.
- What was good about this pharmacy or what could be improved?

Patient responses



What people told us

Patients/ members of the public said:

"My daughter dropped me off, so I didn't need to pay [parking charges]"

"Very expensive parking charges"

"I was admitted in the evening and discharged at night; I had to come back [to the pharmacy] on the bus."

"Bad opening times for patients finishing clinics."

"Some [medication] was missing but I didn't come back for it as its too far and expensive."

"I got everything."

"[I waited] three quarters of an hour but I saw others waiting longer."

"20 minutes [wait] but its busy today."

"No [not easy to find], there are signposts, I asked three different people and was given different directions."

"The sign should say pharmacy."

"I had to ask [directions to the pharmacy] and got lost."

"I've seen people struggling in wheelchairs."

What people said was good and what could be improved:

"Could be quicker. I can't hear and would like an electronic system to show numbers. People wait and stand by the collection point because of fear of not hearing. They need more chairs."

"Better signposting. The staff are nice."

"Nothing, everything has been spot on."

"They've been fantastic, helpful, polite, always had my medication in stock."

"There are long queues sometimes, and sometimes they have not got everything, so I have to come again. This has happened twice and I am pregnant."

"There are no clocks in the pharmacy... There are not enough chairs."

"I visit a lot as I have leukemia, the pharmacy is always open and has my medication. I have a blue badge, so parking isn't a problem. No bad experience."

"Good experience morning and afternoon, needs to open 24 hours or late night."

"Punjab translation was unavailable. Sorted out the error on prescription via a phone call (Dr put wrong directions)."

The staff are all very friendly and very thorough with explaining how to take my medication."

"Opening time needs to be changed online."

Acknowledgements

The Healthwatch Wolverhampton Enter and View team would like to thank Rowlands Pharmacy, all staff, and patients for a friendly welcome and unlimited access to the premises and activities.

Provider response

Thank you for providing us with your report from your visit on 23

We have been through this as a business and would like to address some of the points raised to assure you that we take quality monitoring visits seriously.

As a business we value feedback from all sources and have been actioning changes in the background because of your report.

To address your key findings:

Signposting

We agree that the current signage is not ideal. Both you and patients have pointed this out and we take onboard your suggestions to improve it. We have engaged with our internal team who deal with all signage and with the trust facilities team who approve all signage in the hospital. You will appreciate we are restricted to the amount and the size of signs we can use but we will increase both the numbers of signs, update the current signage and the size of the signs where possible to make it much easier for patients to locate the out-patient pharmacy.

This should be done in the next few weeks once we have approval.

Seating

There has already been an increase in seating provided by the trust in the area around the pharmacy. This is quite a high traffic area within the hospital and, we need to keep walkways clear. In recent visits there has been plenty of seating available in the vicinity of the pharmacy.

Communication

We appreciate hearing the numbers being called from the handout hatch is difficult to hear. There is already a screen in site but unfortunately this has not worked for a period due to an update on the prescription tracking software. We have contacted the team within the trust who deal with this system, and they are endeavouring to update the screen so this will work again. This will mean patients have a visual check of the items being processed and the ones which are already complete.

Parking charges

As you mention we have no influence over the parking charges in the hospitals. We provide seven day a week cover in New Cross for the hospital, and this is enough for most of the prescription generated in the out-patient and emergency departments. The emergency department also has the option of providing some medication direct to patients where available and can provide a prescription that is collectable at a community pharmacy. Unfortunately, due to the speciality of some of the medication we dispense there is a need for patients to return to us when we are open, but this is minimal.



Opening times and phone line

We have checked the opening times, and they are correct on the company website for both the main New Cross dispensary and our smaller satellite pharmacy in the eye hospital. We noted however that when type in a search engine the times for the eye hospital are the ones displayed first so suspect this is the issue as this is not open on a weekend. It does clearly state Rowlands Pharmacy New Cross Eye Hospital however at the top, but we suspect patients have not realised this is different. I will speak to our online team and see if there is anything we can do about this.

The phone line was being switched over to a new provided at the end of last year, but this has been completed now. The line is working fine and test calls made to the phone have been answered by the team.

Prescriptions

We train our teams to provide and expect all patients to have their medication thoroughly explained to them whenever necessary. It is good to confirm this happening, and patients are appreciating having support with their prescriptions.

Waiting times

Whilst we obviously want to provide a safe service, we know patients expect a prompt dispensing of their medication. We constantly monitor and provide feedback at monthly review meeting to the trust on all our KPIs. It is wonderful to hear that your survey found that most people are happy with the waiting times.

We do appreciate the space in general at the outpatient pharmacy on New Cross is not ideal. This is due to the increase in prescriptions volume over the multiple years this site has operated. We are working with the trust to develop a longer-term plan to expand the pharmacy and improve the experience for both patients, trust staff and the team working at the site. This is a costly exercise and will take time to develop but we always are looking to improve our service offering in partnership with our NHS colleagues.

Any further feedback you have is most welcome.

Andrew Noble, Regional Manager

Contact us

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