

**Enter and View analysis of visits to  
pharmacies**



**March 2023**

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## Introduction

Healthwatch Sandwell (HWS) have the power<sup>1</sup> to visit health and social care services, where health and social care is publicly funded and delivered.

This power to Enter and View services offers a way for HWS to meet some of their statutory functions and to collect evidence of what works well. HWS use this evidence to make recommendations to commissioners and providers of health and social care services and to inform changes both for individual services as well as system wide and to improve people's experiences.

The rationale for a visit is always evidence-based by using:

- Feedback and experience from members of the public and community
- Regulators feedback or reports
- Information from commissioners, providers and/or regulators
- Follow up points raised during a prior CQC inspection to establish whether planned corrective actions are being taken
- Assessment of the impact of change
- Sharing of "best practice" in a specific area and providing support

Enter and View reports are shared with providers, regulators<sup>2</sup>, the local authority, NHS commissioners and quality assurers, the public, Healthwatch England and any other relevant partners based on what was found during the visits. They are published on all our social media platforms and website. <https://www.healthwatchsandwell.co.uk/>

## Aim of report

To give an overview of the findings of Enter and View visits that took place between January 2022 and March 2023.

## Background

The 2022/23 Enter and View programme focused on local community pharmacies.

This was guided by:

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<sup>1</sup> Section 225 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Part 4 of The Local Authorities (Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulation 2013 3 Section 221 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

<sup>2</sup> Care Quality Commission and The General Pharmaceutical Council

- the public experiencing difficulties with prescriptions from GPs, this programme aimed to help to identify what the public's experiences are so that robust evidence can be provided about this issue.
- Covid-19 appropriate restrictions were manageable as pharmacies were open to the public.

## Purpose of Enter and View visits at Pharmacies

The purpose of the visits was to observe the environment and explore first-hand with customers their experiences of the Pharmacy.

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Healthwatch Sandwell wanted to find out:

- patient's experience of the pharmacy service
- why they visit the pharmacy
- what support they get from the pharmacy
- how they are treated
- patients experiences of receiving prescriptions from General Practitioners and them being actioned by this pharmacy.

All of this was achieved by observation and talking to customers and staff.

## What we did

An authorised representative : Anita Andrews facilitated the visit and spoke to customers/patients and observed the environment .

A pre-set of questions were asked that covered:

- the types of services that customers access
- efficiency of obtaining prescription medication
- quality of support from staff including being respected, listened to, privacy, confidentiality
- concerns and complaints
- communication between customers, staff and primary care team
- the environment including accessibility

Prior to the visit a poster was sent to each pharmacy to advertise the visit, it was expected that this was displayed prior and during the visit.

A sample of Pharmacies were visited to ensure that the 6 towns were covered – see appendix 1.



After each visit a report was produced and the provider was given an opportunity to comment on the report before publication. Each report gave an overview of the services at the Pharmacy and provided customer experience feedback. Where appropriate, recommendations were made based on the findings of the visit and it was anticipated that these recommendations will contribute to improving service delivery within the Pharmacy and in turn improve the service experience for customers.

Once the report was published HWS sent each Pharmacy a 360 evaluation/feedback form – see appendix 2. The aim of form is to gain feedback about the visit to ensure that future visits are effective for providers as well as people using the service. The form was returned directly to the Manager of Healthwatch so that a review of our practice could occur.

**Two 360 evaluation/feedback forms were returned**



*The whole process from arranging to visiting was excellent and the support provided was exemplary, the visit gave us another perspective.  
The Officer was very clear in explaining the process and was very approachable and friendly with the staff and customers*



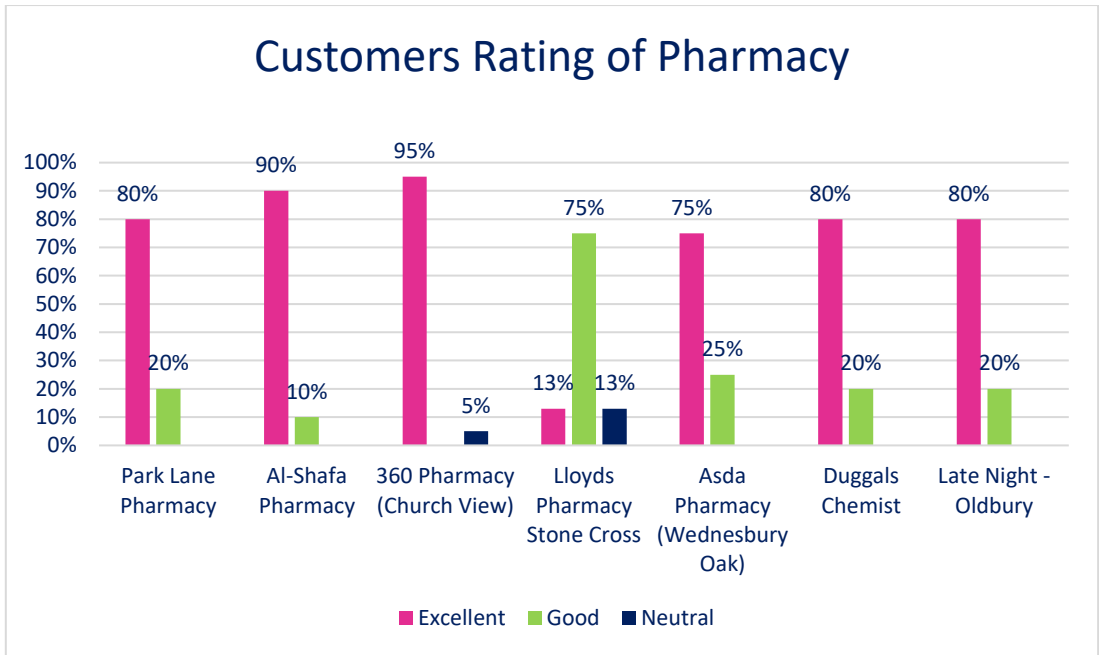
## Findings

During the programme we spoke to 115 customers, both men and women from mixed backgrounds and ages.

This section gives an amalgamation of the findings from all the visits.

## Rating of the Pharmacy

Customers were asked to rate the pharmacy, the majority of customers rated the pharmacy as excellent.



## Reasons for visiting the Pharmacy

Customers visit the Pharmacy for a variety of reasons, which includes collecting prescription medication and purchasing over the counter medication.



## What customers said

The majority of customers said that they get the correct medication to meet their needs in a timely manner. If there was a delay, it was usually due to a computer issue between the GP practice and the pharmacy.

Customers receive the appropriate support and guidance with their medication, there were many comments made that stated that staff are always willing to answer queries.

## Complaints Process

Customers were asked about what they would do if they were not satisfied with the service. The majority knew who to speak to at the pharmacy but did not know who to speak to outside of the pharmacy.

The majority of customers said that their concerns were always listened to. However, if they had experienced difficulties eg: getting the correct medication, staff always tried their best to sort things out and rectify the situations.

### One customer commented:



*I would never complain...they [the staff] are so helpful*



## Customers feedback about staff

Customers gave extremely positive feedback about staff, they were asked about the behaviour of the staff, there was unanimous feedback that all staff were polite, courteous, respectful, treated them with dignity and respect, with their confidentiality always upheld.

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Customers described the behaviour of staff as 'professional' and communication with them and with their colleagues as being effective.

One customer said that staff are:

### Staff were described as...

*'they are my friends....like my family'*



*'as an older person I struggle to understand my medication....but the staff always help me'*



*'This pharmacy is very good and I enjoy coming here for a chat and advice, they are very good to me'*

*'Superb, nothing is too much trouble... keep up the good work!'*

## Customer comments

### Customer commented...

*'I can ask anything...I always get good advice'*



*'a brilliant service...it's marvellous'*

*'This pharmacy is very good and gives me sound advice about my health'*



*'This pharmacy is lovely ...they've always got time for you'*

*'a brilliant service...it's marvellous'*

*'It's brilliant... best one I've been to around here'*

*'I can always ask the staff...they are always helpful'*

Customers appreciated having a local pharmacy that is accessible.

## Communication with GP

The majority of customers stated that there were very few communication difficulties between their GP practice and the pharmacy. If there was, it was usually due to technical difficulties and that pharmacy staff did their best to rectify the matter on their behalf.

However, there was overwhelming feedback about the lack of appointments, especially face to face consultations with a GP and customers expressed frustration with this.

## Suggestions for Improvements by customers

They were asked if the pharmacy could be improved in any way, the majority of customers said that nothing could be improved. The exception was one pharmacy that some customers commented that parking could be an issue and that the Perspex screens surrounding the counter interferes with hearing however the staff always repeat themselves upon request.

## Observation of customer service

Good rapport was observed between the staff and customers and privacy was upheld. At one pharmacy a customer was observed being taken to a private part of the pharmacy, as the issue was of a sensitive nature.

Customers were observed being treated with respect and privacy.

Customers were observed asking for advice about their prescription and about health conditions e.g. cold and flu symptoms, eye drops for a child, insects bites and rashes, as well as over the counter medication. A customer was observed being given advice about anti malaria tablets and this customer was guided to what was required.

Staff were attentive and guided customers appropriately, whether to local GP or to over the counter medication.

Where communication with customers was limited due to a variety of non-English speakers visiting a Pharmacy, lots of effective non-verbal communication and interactions were observed during the visit.

A customer of eastern European origin whose first language was not English, used Google Translate and copied a message onto their mobile phone and showed this to a member of staff, who immediately gave appropriate advice.

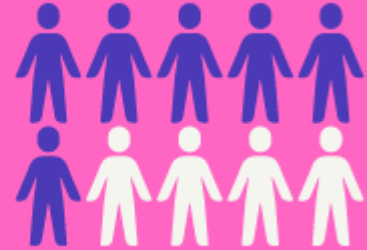
A customer who was unhappy with the situation they were in with regards to repeat prescriptions and at times became quite challenging. A member of staff remained calm and was very helpful. This included making a call to the GP surgery on the customers behalf, so that the customer could hear what the problem was and what needed to be done to rectify it.



One of the pharmacies is part of the Pharmacy First<sup>3</sup> service, during the visit a customer had been signposted from their regular pharmacy who is not participating in the service. The customer registered for the service and was assessed and given a prescription all within 30 minutes.

## WHO WE SPOKE TO...

*115 customers - both men and women from mixed ethnic backgrounds*



## What Staff said

### Teamwork

Most teams were established, with staff being in post for a variety of times including 1 person for over 20 years. Staff were committed to their role and the local community.

During the visits good teamwork was observed at all pharmacies. An example of this was a team member covering a shift at short notice due to sick leave of another team member.

### Training

All pharmacy staff indicated that they have regular continued professional development and participate in relevant training sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Staff had access to a range of training including induction, online training, training by the owners of the company, Buttercups Training<sup>4</sup> or at a local college. Some was self-funded and some was government funded.

### Anti-Social Behaviour

Some staff described their challenges with anti-social behaviour from local residents, including theft, racism and verbal abuse. As a last resort some pharmacies chose to 'exclude' abusive customers to ensure that staff's safety is not jeopardised.

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<sup>3</sup> The Pharmacy First service is available for patients registered with practices in the Black Country and West Birmingham. For patients who are exempt from prescription charges then they can access this service which gives over-the-counter medicines rather than needing to see a GP to receive the medication.

<sup>4</sup> The training provider is Buttercups Training which is a training provider with experience and expertise in the field of Pharmacy. It delivers training programmes and apprenticeships to pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, dispensing assistants and support staff working in hospitals and the community.

Some Pharmacies had not experienced anti-social behaviour and this was attributed to good relationships with the local community. One pharmacy who didn't encounter anti-social behaviour at the pharmacy but stated that there were times when customers were described as 'impolite' to staff.

## Diversity Issues

Staff described their biggest challenge as 'language' as some Pharmacies were situated in diverse communities. Where the population were of south Asian origin, staff with similar backgrounds communicated using their own community language skills to communicate so that their needs could be met.

One pharmacy where this was a challenge, English speaking staff had learnt a few words and endeavoured to communicate effectively despite language differences, this was observed during the visit.

## Observation of Staff

During all the visits, staff were extremely respectful to the customers, in particular to older people. Staff demonstrated kindness, they were supportive and friendly. The staff at the Pharmacies were well respected within the community and this was observed by the interaction between them.

Staff were busy during visits, they were observed responding promptly to phone calls about prescription queries and these were rectified on behalf of the patient.

## Staff Concerns

Staff were asked what their key issues were including communication with GPs:

- customers being irate with them over issues that are beyond their control, for example:
  - Ordering prescriptions from off site, which can be delivered late
  - The need for a prescription from the GP before any medication can be provided
  - Issues with repeat prescriptions for customers who do not order for themselves, staff described the process of having to chase up the GP practice
  - Errors on the prescriptions which sometimes resulted in incorrect medication being requested

These issues are out of the control of the pharmacy but the staff advocate on behalf of the patient to rectify the situation. When these situations arise, some customers vent their frustration and anger on staff who respond professionally but it does cause stress for them.

- Communication/relationships with primary care teams was varied, it was acknowledged that communication can be difficult especially with local GPs. However they endeavour to advocate on behalf of the customers. Where there were examples of good practice, this was attributed to good working relationships.

## Recommendations to improve the service

Five pharmacies were recommended to display a complaints procedure to include who to speak to outside of the pharmacy.

One pharmacy was recommended to consider providing information in languages that suit the local diverse community on the notice board and the health promotion leaflets.

## Conclusion

This report has given an overview of the findings of Enter and View visits that took place between January 2022 and March 2023. The 2022/23 Enter and View programme focused on local community pharmacies, this was guided by the public experiencing difficulties with prescriptions from GPs. A sample of pharmacies were visited to ensure that the 6 towns of Sandwell were covered. During the programme we spoke to 115 customers, both men and women from mixed backgrounds and ages.

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The purpose of the visits was to observe the environment and explore first-hand with customers their experiences of the pharmacy, this was achieved by an Authorised Representative visiting the premises.

Customers visit pharmacies for a variety of reasons, which includes collecting prescription medication and purchasing over the counter medication.

Customers were observed receiving appropriate support, guidance, advice, being treated with dignity and respect at all pharmacies. Customers said they appreciated having a local pharmacy that is accessible.

Customers knew who to speak to at the pharmacy if they were unhappy but did not know who to speak to outside of the pharmacy if issues needed to be escalated.

The majority of customers stated that there were very few communication difficulties between their GP practice and the pharmacy but if there was, staff did their best to rectify the matter on their behalf.

Staff described their biggest challenge as 'language' as some pharmacies were situated in diverse communities. In these circumstances lots of effective non-verbal communication and interactions were observed during the visits and some staff had learnt short phrases to be able to engage. Also staff with similar backgrounds communicated using their own community language skills to communicate so that needs could be met.

Most staff teams were established and were committed to their role and the local community. During the visits good teamwork was observed at all pharmacies. Staff were described as polite, courteous, respectful and upheld confidentiality. During all the visits, staff were extremely respectful to the customers, in particular to older people, they demonstrated kindness and were supportive and friendly. The staff at the pharmacies

were well respected within the community and this observed by the interaction between them.

All pharmacy staff indicated that they have regular continued professional development and participate in relevant training sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Some staff described their challenges with anti-social behaviour from local residents, including theft, racism and verbal abuse. Where there were no experiences of anti-social behaviour this was attributed to good relationships with the local community.

Some customers got irate with staff over issues that are beyond their control, but the staff advocate on behalf of the patient to rectify the situation. When these situations arise, some customers vent their frustration and anger on staff who respond professionally but it does cause stress for them.

Staff were asked about communication /relationships with GPs and the primary care teams, this was varied. However they endeavour to advocate on behalf of the customers. Where there were examples of good practice, this was attributed to good working relationships.

After each visit a report was produced which gave an overview of the services at the pharmacy, provided customer experience feedback, where appropriate, recommendations were made based on the findings of the visit and it was anticipated that these recommendations will contribute to improving service delivery within the pharmacy and in turn improve the service experience for customers.

This programme of Enter and visits to community pharmacy have found that this service is invaluable to local people and provides an excellent service.

**For more information:**

Anita Andrews: Engagement and volunteer Lead

Mobile: 07885 214421

E mail: [anita.andrews@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk](mailto:anita.andrews@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk)

## Overview of visits

Date	Name of Pharmacy
26th January 2022	Park Lane Pharmacy 3 Park Lane Wednesbury West Midlands WS10 9PR
8th March 2022	Al-Shafa Pharmacy 93 Shireland Road Smethwick B66 4QJ
24th May 2022 – visit refused by Pharmacy	Sidhu's Pharmacy 369 High Street West Bromwich B70 9QL
24th May 2022	Pharmacy 365 (Church View) 249 Halesowen Road Cradley Heath B64 6JD
19th July 2022	Lloyds Pharmacy Stone Cross 150-152 Walsall Road Stone Cross West Bromwich B71 3HP
20th September 2022	Asda Pharmacy Wednesbury Oak Road Tipton DY4 0BP
30th November 2022	Duggals Chemist 75 Park Lane East Tipton DY4 8RP
24th January 2023	Late Night -196 Causeway Green Road Oldbury B68 8LS

### Enter and View Visit Feedback Form

<b>Provider</b>					
<b>Address</b>					
<b>Date of Visit</b>					
<p>Thank you for accommodating our Authorised Representative (s) during the Enter and View visit to your premises. We value your feedback which will help us to ensure that future visits are effective for providers as well as people using your service.</p> <p>Rating:            5 = Very Satisfied 4 = Satisfied 3 = Neutral 2 = Dissatisfied 1 = Very Dissatisfied            Using x in the relevant box</p>					
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Rating</b>				
	5	4	3	2	1
How satisfied were you that the Authorised Representative explained the purpose of the visit prior to the visit to your premises					
How satisfied were you that the Authorised Representative explained the purpose of the visit prior to the visit to your premises					
How satisfied were you with the behaviour of the Authorised Representative during the visit?					
How satisfied were you that the Authorised Representative encouraged you to contribute during the visit?					
Could you tell us what worked well about the way our Authorised Representatives carried out this recent enter and view visit?					
Were there any aspects of the visit which you felt did not work well or could be improved?					
As a provider of a service did the Enter and View visit help to identify areas for improvement?					
If so, in what way?					
Any other comments					

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.  
 Any queries contact Alexia Farmer (Manager) 07885 214389  
 Please email this form back to : [alexia.farmer@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk](mailto:alexia.farmer@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk) or post to  
 Healthwatch Sandwell, Walker Grange, Central Avenue, Tipton DY4 9RZ



# healthwatch Sandwell

## **Healthwatch Sandwell**

Walker Grange  
Central Avenue  
Tipton DY4 9RZ

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

**t: 0121 569 7211**

**e: [info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk)**

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