



# Pharmacy First

**healthwatch**  
Sandwell

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# Introduction

Healthwatch Sandwell is the independent voice of the public in health and social care in Sandwell. We gather feedback from the public through engagement and projects and use that feedback to work with health and social care providers and commissioners to improve service delivery.

Healthwatch Sandwell is delivered by Engaging Communities Solutions CIC (ECS) and ECS recently undertook a project across its seven local Healthwatch to gather feedback from people about their knowledge and experience of Pharmacy First and other community pharmacy services.

Pharmacy First was launched by the NHS in January 2024 with the aim of enabling pharmacists to provide advice and treatment such as antibiotics for a range of minor ailments. This service would then be able free up GP appointments for those with more serious or long-term health conditions.

This report outlines the feedback from the people of Sandwell who took part in the project by completing short survey.

# Methodology

The method for gathering feedback from the public for this project was a short survey that was available online and as a printed copy. The survey was shared across the Healthwatch Sandwell network as a weblink and a QR code as well as being put on the Healthwatch Sandwell website. We also undertook face to face surveying with members of the public in Sandwell.

# Who took part

There was a total of 70 people who responded to the survey who said that they were from Sandwell.

The largest group of people (26) were aged between 25 and 49 years old; with the next largest group (21) being those aged between 60 and 64 years old. 16 people were aged over 65 years old and 5 were aged 16 to 24 years old. One person preferred not to say what age group they were in.

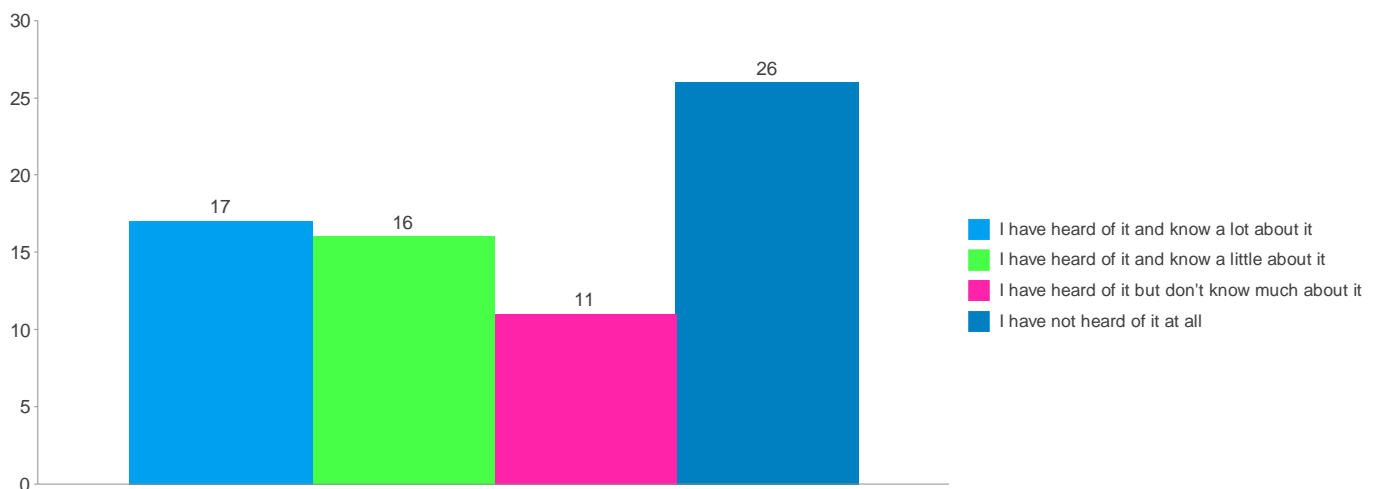
49 people said that they were women and 20 said that they were men. One person preferred to not say what their gender or sex was.

The largest ethnic group taking part in the survey identified as White British (38) and one person said that they were from another White background. 15 people were from Asian/British Asian backgrounds with 10 identifying as Indian, 3 as Pakistani and 2 as Bangladeshi. 5 people were from a Black/Black British: Caribbean background and 3 people were from a Black/Black British: African background. 3 people said that they were from an Arab background and 4 people were from a mixed Black Caribbean and White background. 2 people preferred not to say what their ethnic background was. 27 people said that they had a long-term health condition and 14 said that they had a disability.

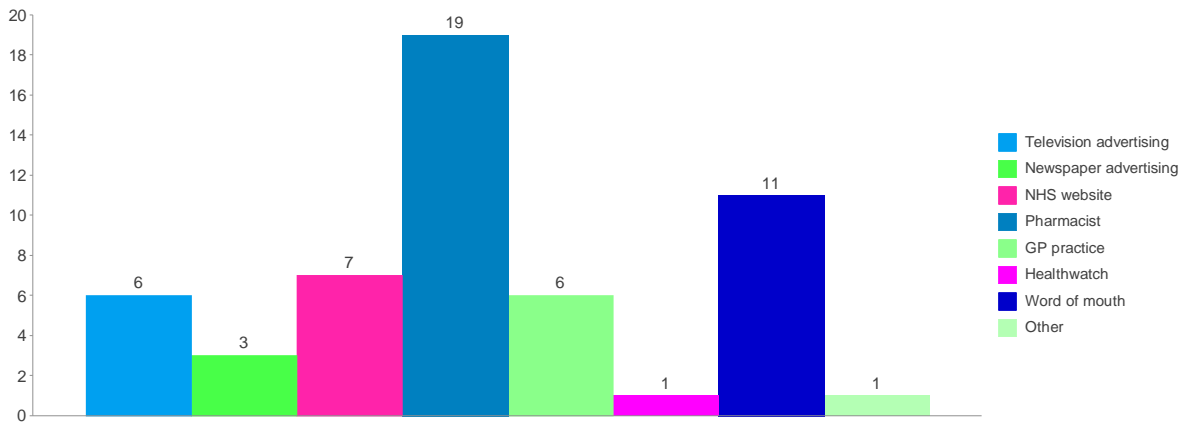
# Findings

26 of the 70 people who took part in the survey said that they had not heard of the Pharmacy First service at all; 17 people said that they had heard of it and knew a lot about it. Of the remaining people who took part, 16 people had heard of it and knew a little about the service and 11 people said that they had heard of the service but did not know much about what it was.

How aware of Pharmacy First are you? Sandwell



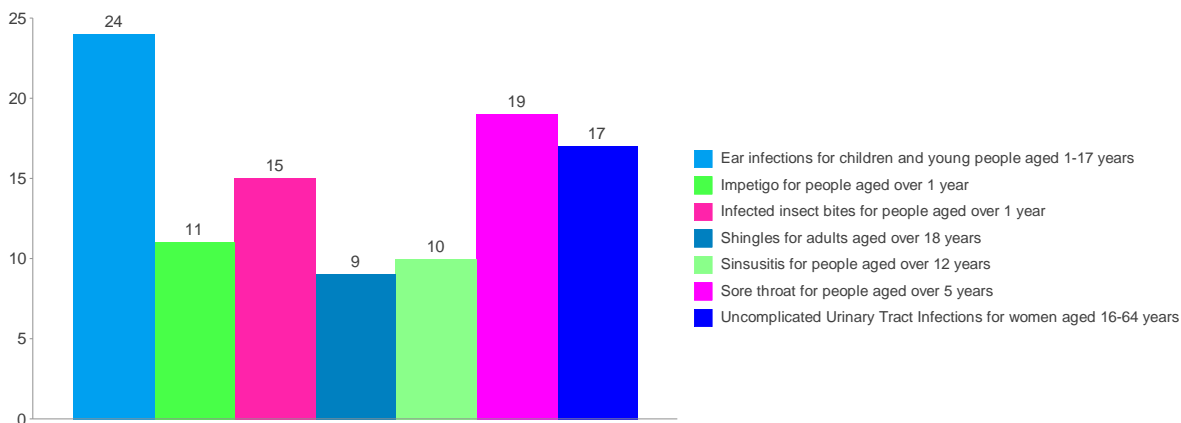
If you have heard of the Pharmacy First service, how did you hear about it? Sandwell



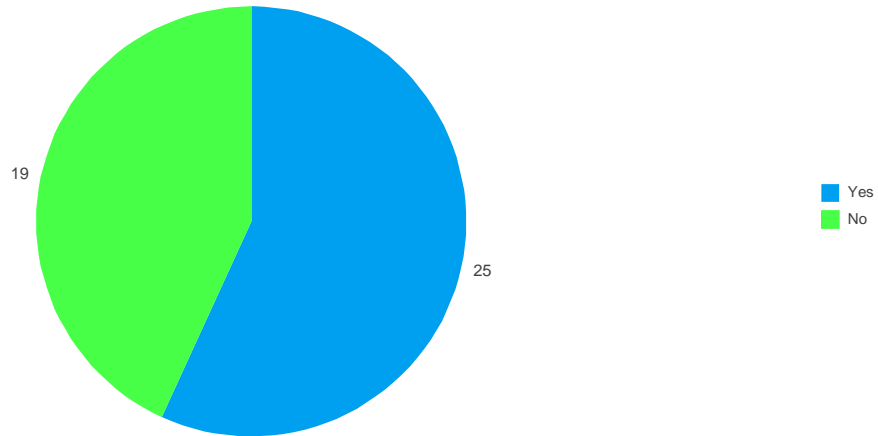
Those who said that they had heard of the service were asked how they had heard about it, they were able to indicate all of the different ways that they had heard about it. The most frequent way that people had heard of the service was through a pharmacist (19) with word of mouth the next most frequent (11). 7 people said that they had heard of it from an NHS website, 6 from television advertising and 6 from a GP practice. 3 people had seen it in a newspaper advert and 1 had learnt of it from Healthwatch. One person said that they had heard of it from another source, which was a political podcast.

When asked about their awareness of the services that were offered through Pharmacy First people were most aware of advice and treatment for ear infections in children and young people (24). 19 people were aware of the service providing advice and treatment for sore throats and 17 people were aware that it could be used for uncomplicated urinary tract infections. The service for impetigo was known about by 11 people and 10 people knew that the service could be used for sinusitis in people over 12 years. 9 people knew that it could be accessed for shingles in adults.

Which of the following services were you aware that Pharmacy First offers? Sandwell



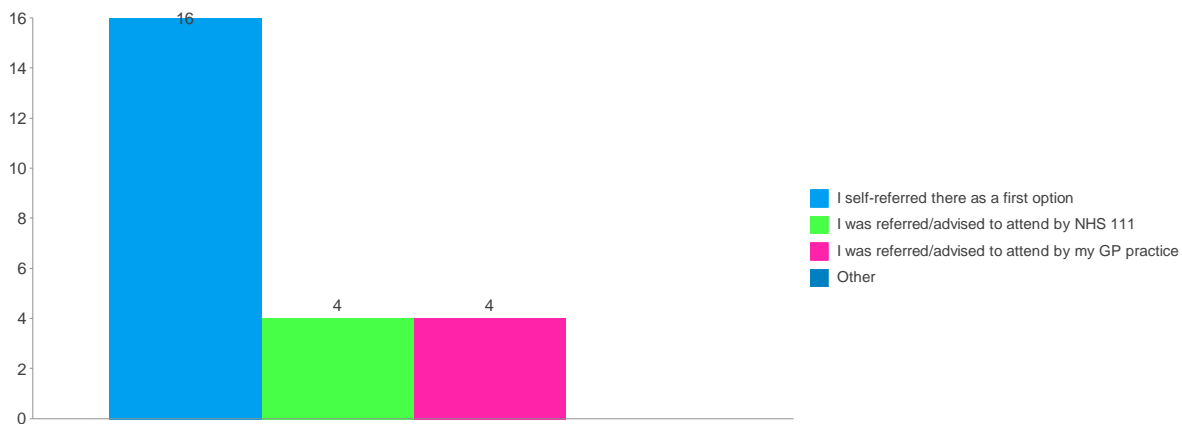
Have you used the Pharmacy First service? Sandwell



25 people said that they had used the Pharmacy First service.

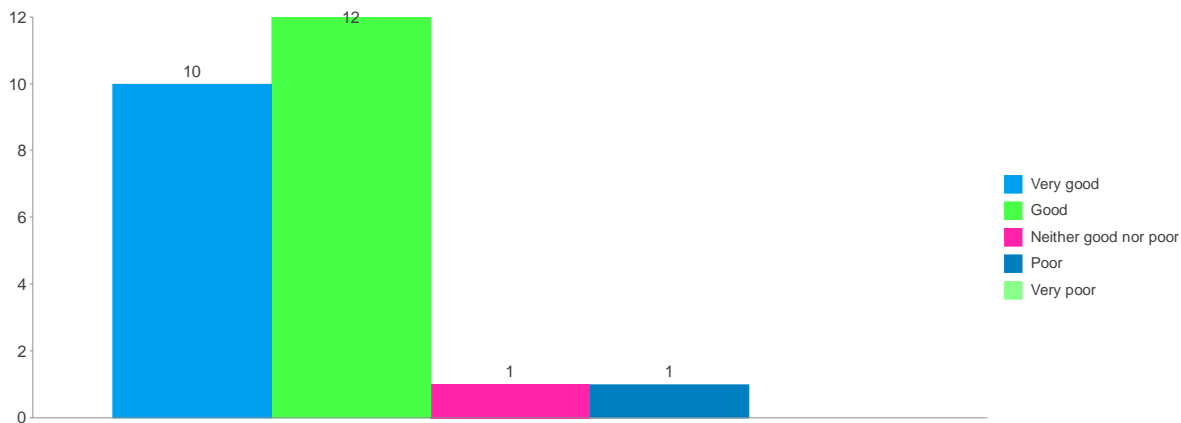
People who had used the service were asked how they chose to use the service. 16 people said that they had self-referred to the service as a first option; 4 people were referred or advised to attend by NHS 111 and 4 people were referred or advised to attend by their GP practice.

If yes, how did you choose to use the service? Sandwell



When asked how they would rate the service that they received from Pharmacy First, 22 people said that it was very good or good and 1 person said that it was poor. One person gave a neutral answer.

How would you rate the service you received from Pharmacy First? Sandwell



People were asked to explain the reasons for their rating. People commented on the speed of the service with people not having to access a GP appointment.

**‘Was able to get some treatment immediately’**

**‘Fast and didn’t need to go to the GP.’**

People spoke about privacy at the pharmacist with different, contrasting experiences. A lack of privacy was raised as an issue but conversely, there was comment about being seen privately too.

**‘I was trying to tell them that I had a UTI but there was no confidentiality in a waiting room full of people.’**

**‘Saw someone really quickly, in a private consulting room.’**

There was also comment about the limitations of the service that meant that people were not always appropriately advised to attend the pharmacist or would have been better to consult a GP rather than attending the pharmacist in the first instance.

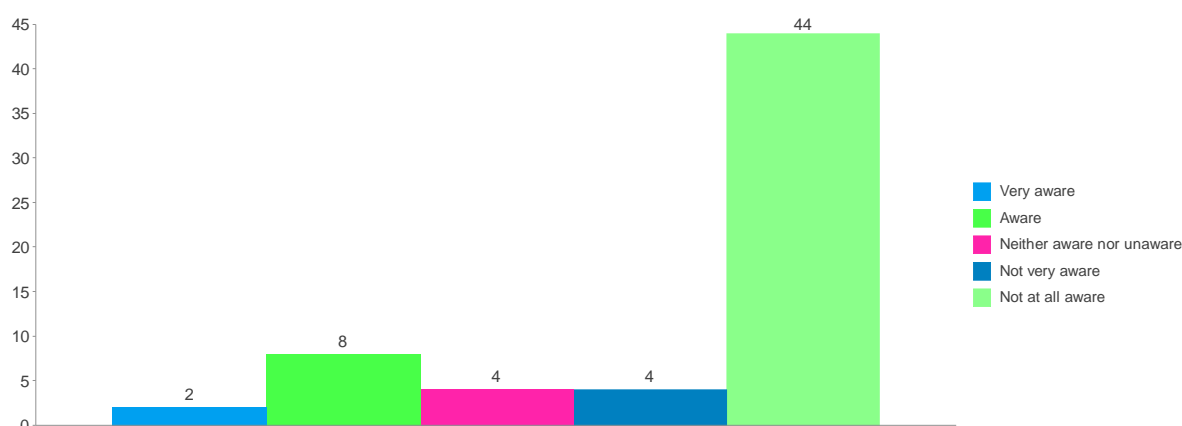
**‘I asked for help with a UTI but then was told that as I had had a UTI in the last 6 months, I have to make an appointment with my GP.’**

'Chemists cannot treat everything. They only have a very limited list. More education is needed regarding the services and limitations (for patients and GP staff- especially receptionists).

All people who completed the survey were asked about their awareness of the other additional services available at community pharmacies.

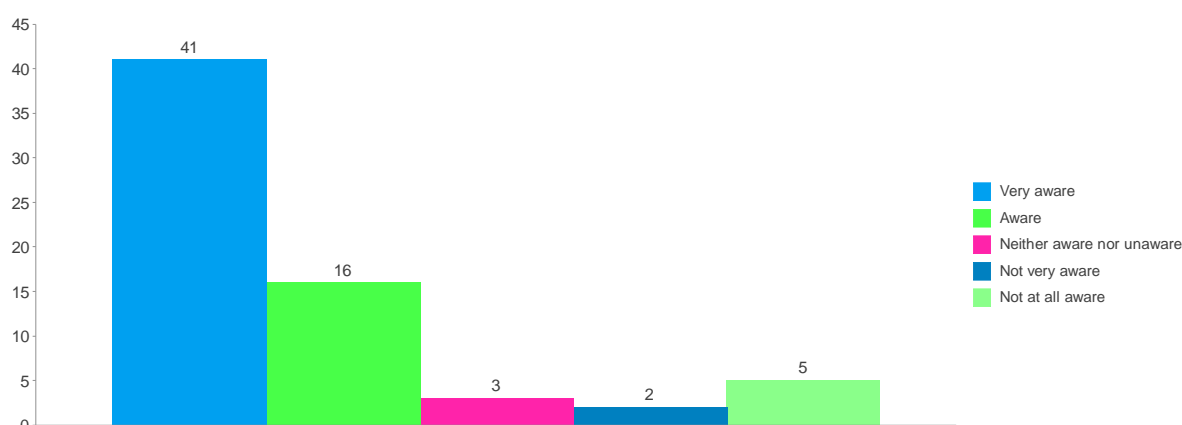
44 people said that they were not aware at all of the appliance review service and 4 people were not very aware. 14 people had some awareness of the service with 2 people saying that they were very aware of the service.

Appliance use review. Sandwell



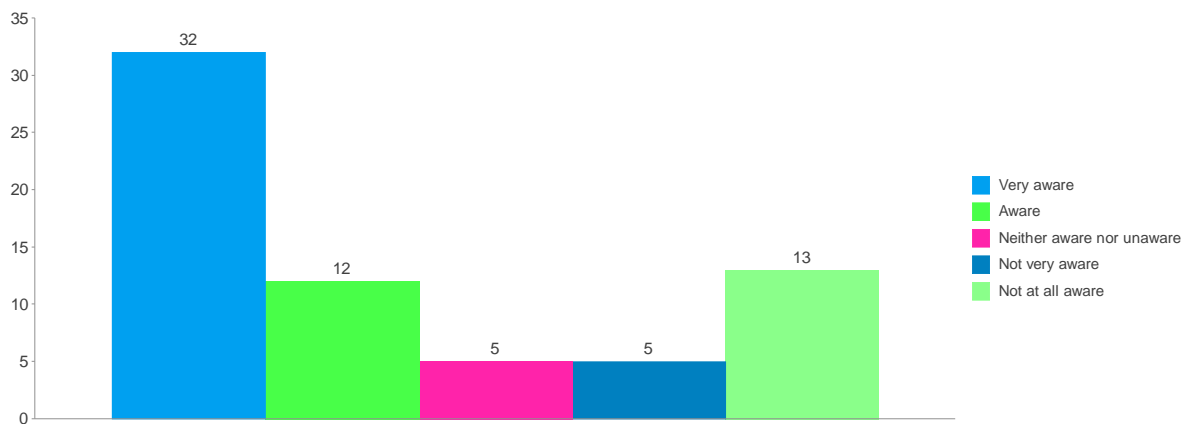
41 people were very aware of the flu vaccination service and 16 people were aware of the service. 7 people said that they were not very aware of it with 5 of them having no awareness at all. 3 people gave a neutral answer.

Flu vaccination service. Sandwell



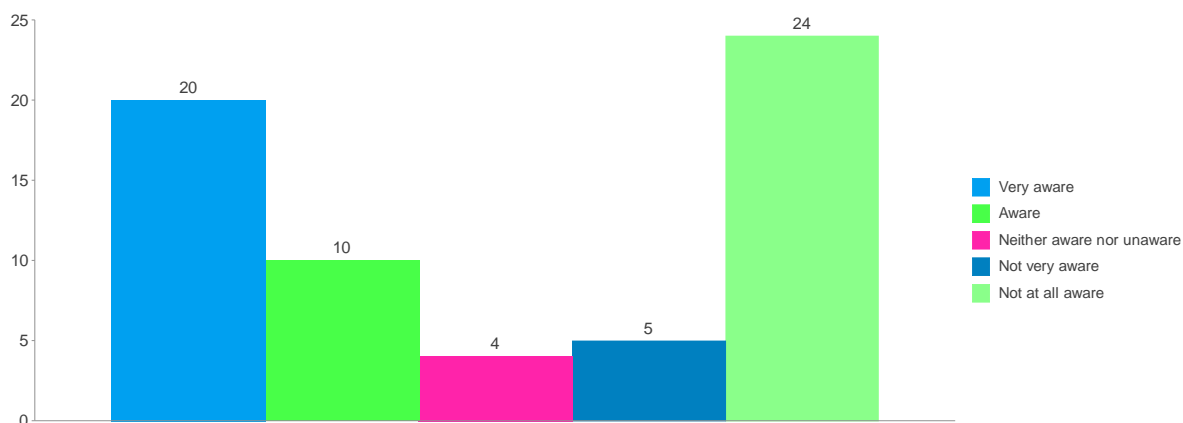


Blood pressure checks. Sandwell



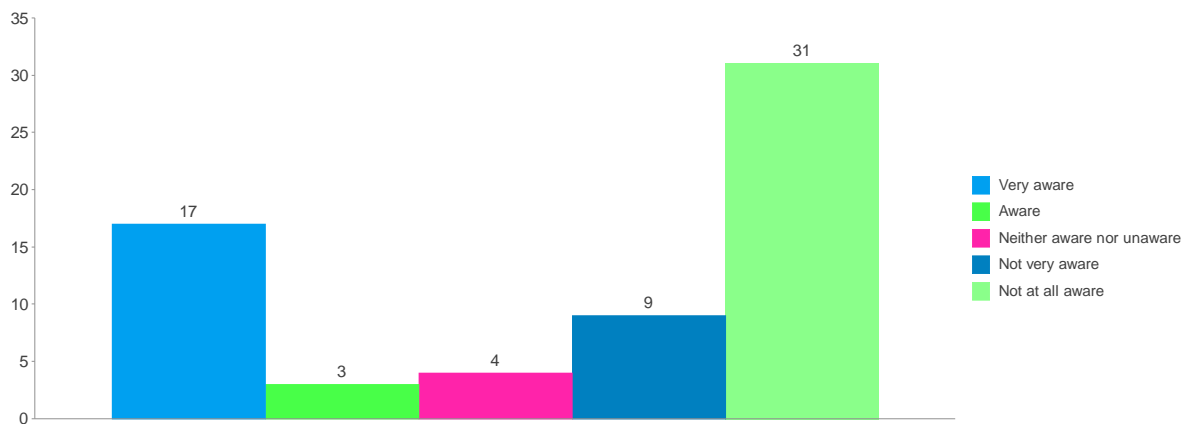
44 people were either very aware or aware of the blood pressure checks service, whilst 18 people were either not very aware or not at all aware of the service.

Lateral flow device service for eligible groups. Sandwell



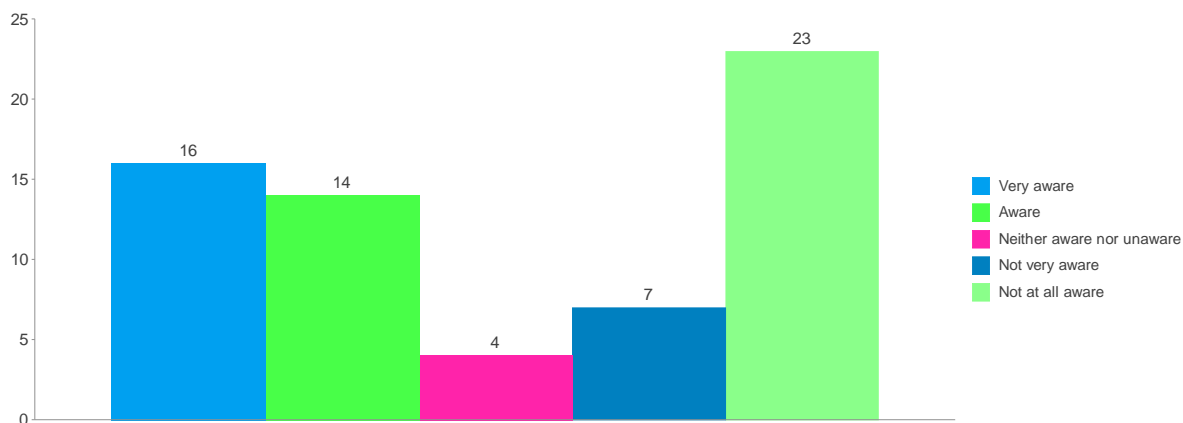
30 people said that they were very aware or aware of the lateral flow device service for eligible groups, but 24 people said that they were not at all aware of it.

New medicine service. Sandwell



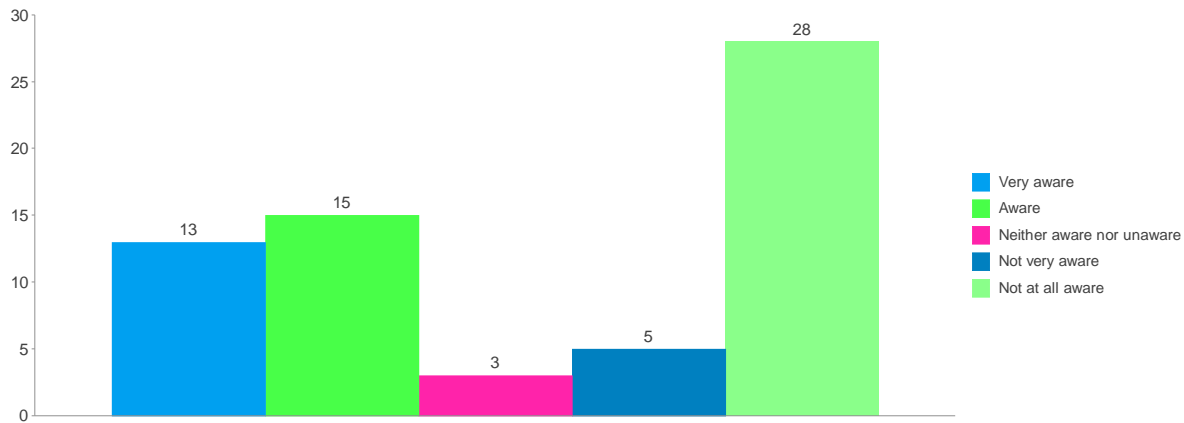
31 people said that they were not at all aware of the new medicine service and 9 people were not very aware of it. 20 people were very aware or aware of the service.

Pharmacy Contraception Service. Sandwell



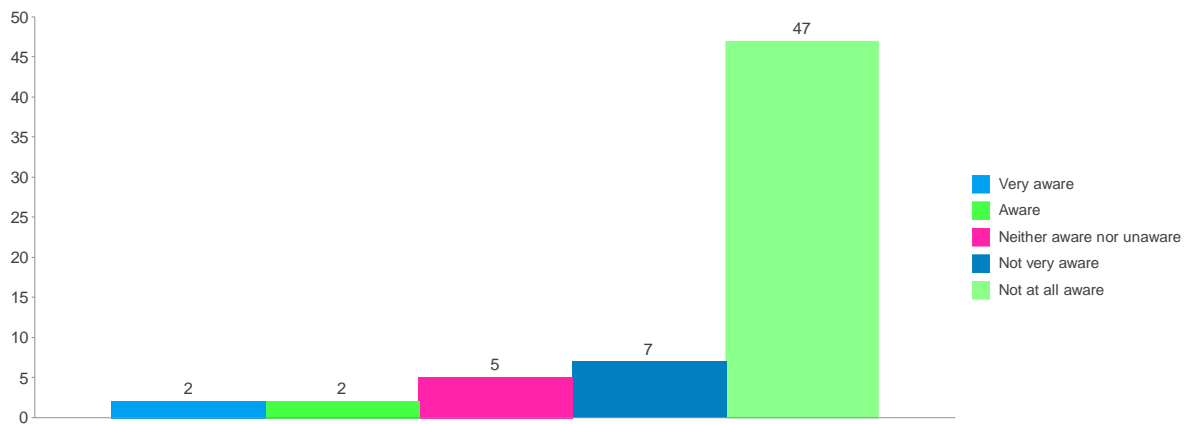
23 people had no awareness at all of the pharmacy contraception service and 7 people said that they were not very aware of it. 16 people said that they were very aware of the service and 14 that they were aware of the service.

Smoking cessation service. Sandwell



28 people said that they had no awareness at all of the smoking cessation service offered at community pharmacies and 5 people were not very aware of the service. 28 people were either very aware or aware of the service.

Stoma appliance customisation. Sandwell



47 people had no awareness of the stoma appliance customisation service and 4 people were either very aware or aware of the service.

# Conclusion

There were a relatively limited number of people who took part in the survey and therefore, it is difficult to generalise from the responses.

However, it is possible to see that there are relatively high numbers of people who have no knowledge of the service at all. In Sandwell this equated to around a third of people who took part in the survey. Likewise, in the wider project 38% of people who took part in the survey had no knowledge of the service offered.

Satisfaction levels with the service for those who had used it were relatively high with 22 of the 24 people who had used the service rating it as very good or good. People were pleased that it saved them time and saved them having to book a GP appointment which is the primary aim of the service. However, there were some issues raised about the limitations of the service and in some cases, poor signposting to the Pharmacy First service when it is unsuitable for some circumstances.

Overall, people who had used it were generally happy with the service, but there is a need for more information and signposting advice that makes people aware of what is available and not available at local pharmacies, including both Pharmacy First and other additional services.

# Recommendations

No.	Recommendation
1.	Find ways of increasing knowledge of the Pharmacy First service using different kinds of media including social media to raise awareness.
2.	Ensure messaging includes information on the limitations of the service both for the public and professionals signposting to the service.
3.	Consider ways to increase knowledge and take up of other additional services available at community pharmacies.

## Next steps box:

### Next steps

Share information with wider stakeholders.



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