



Pharmacy Survey

Findings

September 2024

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Please note that all quotes included in this report are presented verbatim unless otherwise indicated. Only filler words such as 'um' and 'you know' have been omitted for clarity and brevity.

Executive Summary

- Healthwatch Lincolnshire conducted a survey to collect experiences of pharmacy services in Lincolnshire. This report discusses how respondents use pharmacies, quality of accessibility, and service user satisfaction.
- The findings will contribute to the Lincolnshire Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA), ensuring that pharmacy services are aligned with the health needs of the community and support efforts to reduce health inequalities across the county.
- We would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their views and the staff team including our amazing volunteers for helping to distribute the survey.
- We recognise and acknowledge that the experiences shared may not be fully representative of everyone who uses or have used pharmacies in Lincolnshire. A strength of the experiences shared is that many of the same issues were raised.

Who did we hear from?

- **160 people throughout the county shared their views.**
- We heard from individuals with long-term health conditions, a disability, health and/or social care workers, carers, veterans and people who considered themselves to be neurodivergent.

Pharmacy visit patterns:

- 83% (132) of respondents had visited a pharmacy within the past month.
- 37% had visited in the last week.
- The majority (71% [113]) used a local pharmacy (e.g., high street or supermarket), while 25% (33) relied on dispensing GP practices. Only 4% (7) used online pharmacies, often citing convenience, stock availability, and home delivery as reasons for doing so.

Key factors when choosing a pharmacy:

- When deciding which pharmacy to visit, respondents selected these factors as most important:
 - Close to home – 75% (120)
 - The pharmacy having the things I need and opening hours – 60% (96)
 - Friendly staff – 54% (86)

Executive Summary

Accessibility and travel:

- 72% (108) of respondents travelled to their pharmacy by car, and it took 96% (144) 30 minutes or less to get there.
- 85% (129) did not face difficulties accessing their pharmacy but for the 13% (20) who did, the main barriers were location, parking, wheelchair accessibility, and limited opening hours.

Reasons for visiting:

- Most respondents (85% [135]) visited to collect prescriptions, either for themselves or someone else, while 35% (22) made over-the-counter purchases, and 19% (30) sought minor illness treatment or advice.

Challenges with prescriptions:

- 43% (64) had difficulties accessing prescriptions, with stock shortages, processing delays, and long waiting times being the most common issues. These challenges caused stress and anxiety, with some respondents running out of essential medications.

Pharmacy services and satisfaction:

- Overall satisfaction with pharmacy services amongst respondents was high, with the majority rating the pharmacy they visit the most as **GOOD** for:
 - Access in terms of physical location
 - Opening hours
 - Staff listening to you
 - Staff knowledge
- Pharmacy staff were praised for being friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable.
- Services such as online prescription ordering, free delivery, and blood pressure monitoring were valued.

Out of hours access:

- 39% (60) of respondents had needed to access a pharmacy outside of normal working hours. Experiences were mixed some had straightforward access and their experiences were good but others found it difficult to find a service and often had to travel. The latter was difficult for those living in rural areas, who could not drive or had to rely on someone else for transport.

Executive Summary

Pharmacy First scheme:

- 33% (49) of respondents had used the Pharmacy First scheme.
- Overwhelming experiences of the scheme were positive, with **80% (36) rating their experience as GOOD**. Respondents appreciated the advice and support they were given.
- Negative experiences of the scheme appeared to be when the pharmacist could not resolve their issue and thus they were referred to their GP.
- 55% (88) individuals shared that they would be willing to use the scheme in the future. For those that said they would not or were unsure, their reasons related to:
 - Lack of trust in pharmacists expertise
 - Negative experiences of accessing pharmacy services previously
 - Lack of privacy
 - Uncertainty about the services available
 - Habits

What works well about pharmacy services?

- The following was highlighted by some to be working well:
 - Friendly, helpful and knowledgeable staff
 - Convenience and accessibility (pharmacies being close to home or in convenient locations e.g. a supermarket)
 - Services provided
 - Technology (use of text reminders and online reordering)

What could be improved about pharmacy services?

- When asked what could be improved about pharmacy services, comments tended not to relate to specific pharmacies or localities. Responses were more general reminders about issues users found unsatisfactory. This included:
 - Stock availability
 - Processing delays
 - Out of hours access
 - Text notifications
 - Lack of privacy
 - Customer service issues
 - Accessibility for disabled customers

Background

Healthwatch Lincolnshire conducted this survey on pharmacy services to support the health and care system by ensuring that residents' experiences are considered in the ongoing development and delivery of pharmaceutical services in the county. By capturing insights into the accessibility and quality of services, including the Pharmacy First scheme, we aim to highlight what is currently working well in pharmacy services and what could be improved.

The findings from this survey will directly contribute to the Lincolnshire Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA), a statutory document used to assess the health needs of the population and ensure that pharmaceutical services are adequate to meet those needs. The PNA helps inform decisions about pharmacy service provision, ensuring that local communities have access to the appropriate services and support.

This initiative is also part of our broader mission to tackle health inequalities across Lincolnshire. By sharing the voices and experiences of local residents, we aim to ensure that decisions around pharmaceutical care are equitable and reflect the real needs of the community.





Engagement (Methodology)

We launched the survey online. In addition, people were also given the opportunity to share their experience over the phone, email or in whichever format that is easiest for them. Our team, including our amazing volunteers, also distributed paper copies of the survey to those who preferred to engage this way* and to local support and community groups throughout the county.

**The survey could be sent back to us using our Freepost address.*



Engagement (Methodology)

The survey covered the following:

- **Pharmacy use and visit preferences:** frequency of visits, reasons for choosing specific pharmacies, and preferred times to visit.
- **Accessibility of pharmacy services:** travel times, methods of transport, access difficulties (e.g., location, parking, opening hours).
- **Service experience:** interactions with staff, availability of medications, privacy, and overall satisfaction.
- **Experiences of the Pharmacy First scheme:** accessing care for common conditions and receiving treatment without a GP visit.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank:

- Everyone who took the time to share their views. Your experiences are invaluable.
- The HWLinCs staff team including our amazing volunteers, local support groups for their support.



Disclaimer

We recognise and acknowledge that the experiences shared may not be fully representative of:

- All service users who have visited a pharmacy in Lincolnshire.

We do however believe that all individual experiences are important and should where/when possible be reflected on. A strength of this data is that common themes persisted throughout responses from service users.

- According to the data collected, experiences did not appear to differ based on whether the individual was a carer, neurodiverse or geographical location per se. Also, negative experiences did not appear to be linked to a specific pharmacy. Any differences were not statistically significant and could therefore be due to chance.

Findings – Who shared their views?

160

**service users shared
their views**

A closer look

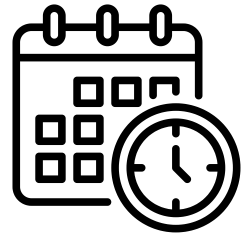
- 69% (97) were aged between 50 – 79.
- We heard from individuals throughout the county with the highest volume of responses coming from West Lindsey (28% [40]) and East Lindsey (23% [32]).
- 44% (60) shared they have MORE THAN enough money for basic necessities and A LITTLE spare that they can save or spend on extras or leisure.
- 45% (71) had a long-term health condition.
- 17% (27) had a disability.
- 13% (20) work in health and or social care.
- 11% (18) were carers.
- 8% (12) were veterans.
- 6% (10) considered themselves to be neurodivergent.

A full breakdown of who shared their views can be seen in the demographics section of this report.

Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns

Pharmacy visit patterns

- When respondents were asked when they had last visited a pharmacy 83% (132) had visited within the last month at least:
 - 37% (59) had visited their pharmacy in the last week.
 - 46% (73) had visited their pharmacy in the last month.



Type of pharmacy used

- The type of pharmacy respondents used varied:
 - 71% (113) of respondents most commonly used a local pharmacy e.g. on the high street or in a local supermarket.
 - 25% (33) use a dispensing GP practice the most.
 - Just 4% (7) use an online pharmacy.*



- **Reasons for using an online pharmacy included:**

- **Convenience during work hours:** "At work and local pharmacy queues often long and therefore difficult to access easily – easy to order online and receive reminders."
- **Stock issues at local pharmacies:** "My local pharmacy regularly did not have the items I required."
- **Stress over stock delays:** "My local pharmacy was always running out of stock... This caused me more stress and anxiety!"
- **Timeliness and reliability:** "I have only just started using an online pharmacy due to getting my prescription filled in time... I feel much more secure in my choice."
- **Home delivery convenience:** "I don't drive and it's hard to get my prescriptions picked up... Online pharmacy allows delivery to my door, which is a lot easier for me."
- **Time-saving and ease of ordering:** "Saves time and ordering is normally simple."

**The relatively low number of respondents using online pharmacies might be explained by the fact that many were older. There may also be issues with internet access and skills/confidence to use such services.*

Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns

More stress and anxiety

“My local pharmacy was always running out of stock, never able to get my repeat medications to me on time. For example, I am on antidepressants for anxiety. I would be down to the last tablet even though the repeat request went in two weeks ago. This caused me more stress and anxiety!”

Much more secure

“I have only just started using an online pharmacy due to getting my prescription filled in time before my medication ran out. I used to put the request in (online) to my doctor surgery in plenty of time who then supply the prescription to my pharmacy. On a number of occasions I got down to one or two tablets left and had heard nothing. On ringing the surgery I was told it was in the queue. I told them of my situation and they said they would bring it to the top of the queue. Just in time I received a text to say it had been filled. I cannot keep having to contact the surgery to make sure I have my much needed medication. On switching to an online pharmacy, they may occasionally be out of stock but I have always received what I need with a least a week’s medication left so I feel much more secure in my choice. Also the response I sometimes had from my local pharmacy made it sound as if I was putting them out. Not nice.”

A lot easier for me

“I don't drive and it's hard to get my prescriptions dropped off and picked up as I have to rely on other people. Online pharmacy allows me to order and have my prescription delivered to my door, which is a lot easier for me.”



Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns

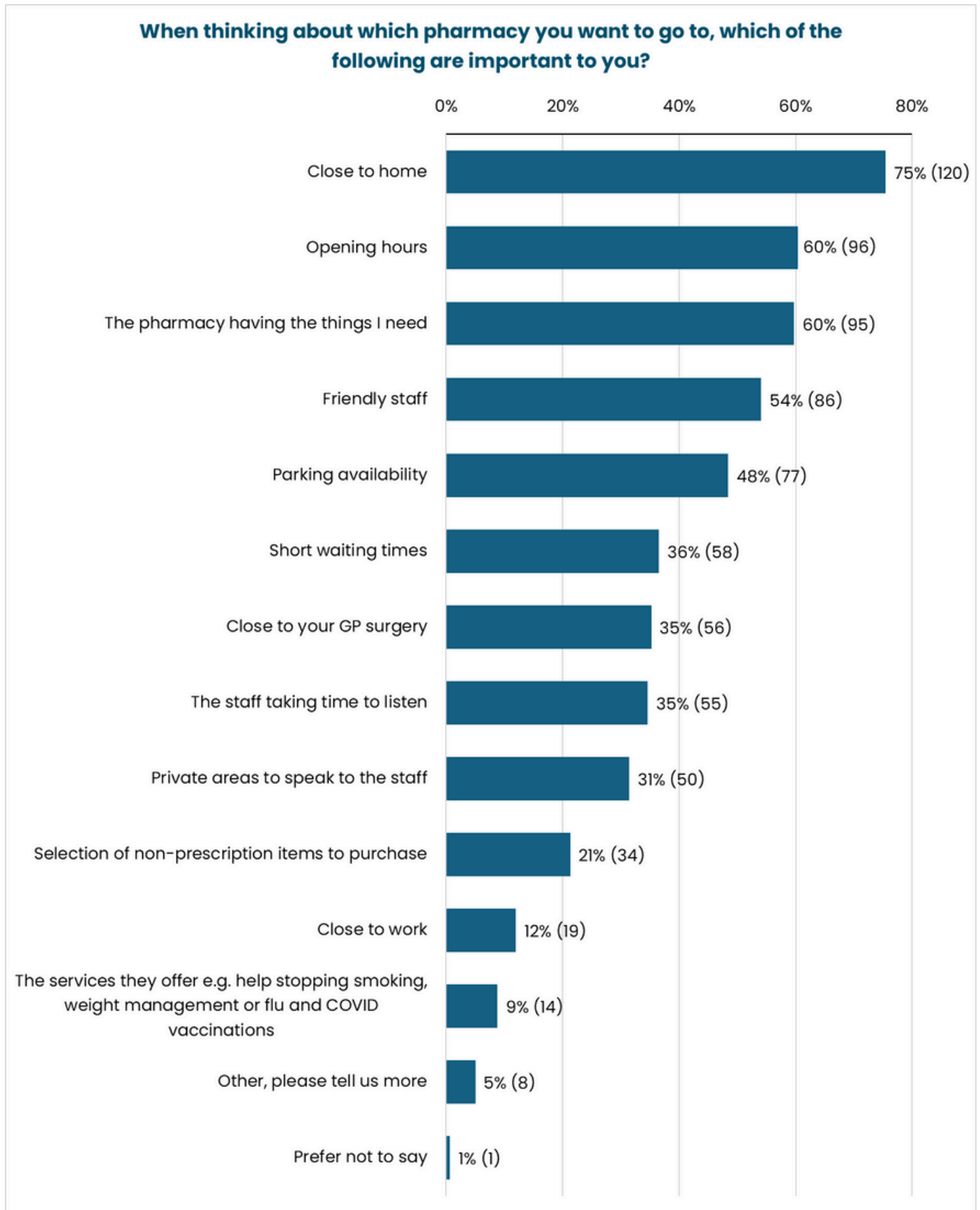
When thinking about which pharmacy you want to go to, which of the following are important to you?

When deciding which pharmacy they were going to go to the following were the most and least important:

Most important	Least important
Close to home - 75% (120)	The services they offer e.g. help stopping smoking, weight management or flu and COVID vaccinations - 9% (14)
The pharmacy having the things I need and opening hours - 60% (96)	Close to work - 12% (19)
Friendly staff - 54% (86)	Selection of non-prescription items to purchase - 21% (34)

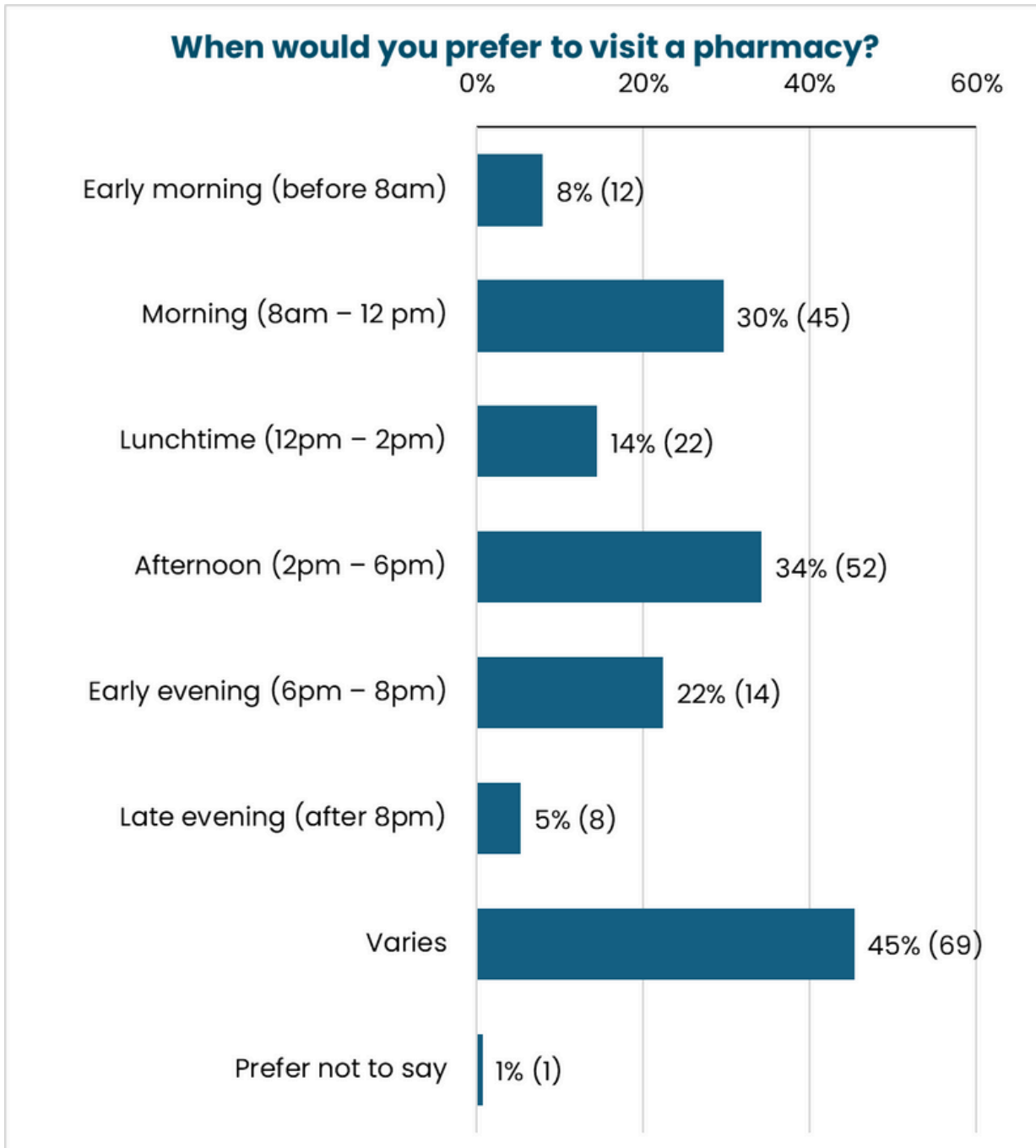


Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns



Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns

When asked what time of day people would prefer to visit a pharmacy answers mixed. 45% (69) shared that when they would prefer to visit a pharmacy varied.



Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns

Travelling to the pharmacy

- Respondents were asked to share all the ways they travel to their local pharmacy and how long it took to get there. Most commonly they travelled by:
 - 72% (108) car
 - 42% (62) foot
 - 3% (5) public transport
 - 4% (6) cycling
- 96% (144) got to their pharmacy within 30 minutes
 - It took 76% (114) of respondents 0 to 15 minutes to get to their pharmacy and 20% (30) 16 to 30 minutes
 - *How long it took to travel to the pharmacy did not appear to be linked to the transport method used.*

Difficulties accessing pharmacy services

- 85% (129) had **not** faced any difficulties accessing their pharmacy.
- 13% (20) had faced difficulties accessing their pharmacy. The remaining 2% (3) chose 'prefer not to say'.
- The most common difficulties faced were:
 - Location of pharmacy and parking difficulties – both 35% (7)
 - Wheelchair or other access problems and opening hours in normal working hours (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm) – both 25% (5)
 - Location of the pharmacy and opening hours outside of normal working hours e.g. on weekends, bank holidays or after 5pm on a weekday – both 20% (4)



CLOSED

Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns

"For the 12 individuals who selected "other," difficulties included limited opening hours, such as the pharmacy closing during lunch or unexpectedly due to a lack of a pharmacist. Access issues were also a concern, including wheelchair accessibility, walking difficulties, and faulty automatic doors.

"Difficult to navigate the store with a pushchair. Automatic door often not working and step access."

"They have lowered counter for wheelchair use but use it as a storage shelf and block access with noticeboards so unable to use."

"Random closing due to a pharmacist not being available, therefore unable to collect prescriptions."

The opening hours are the reason for me getting the medication delivered."

"Shuts for lunch and not open on a Saturday."

"It is at the far end of the supermarket – the walk is tricky sometimes."

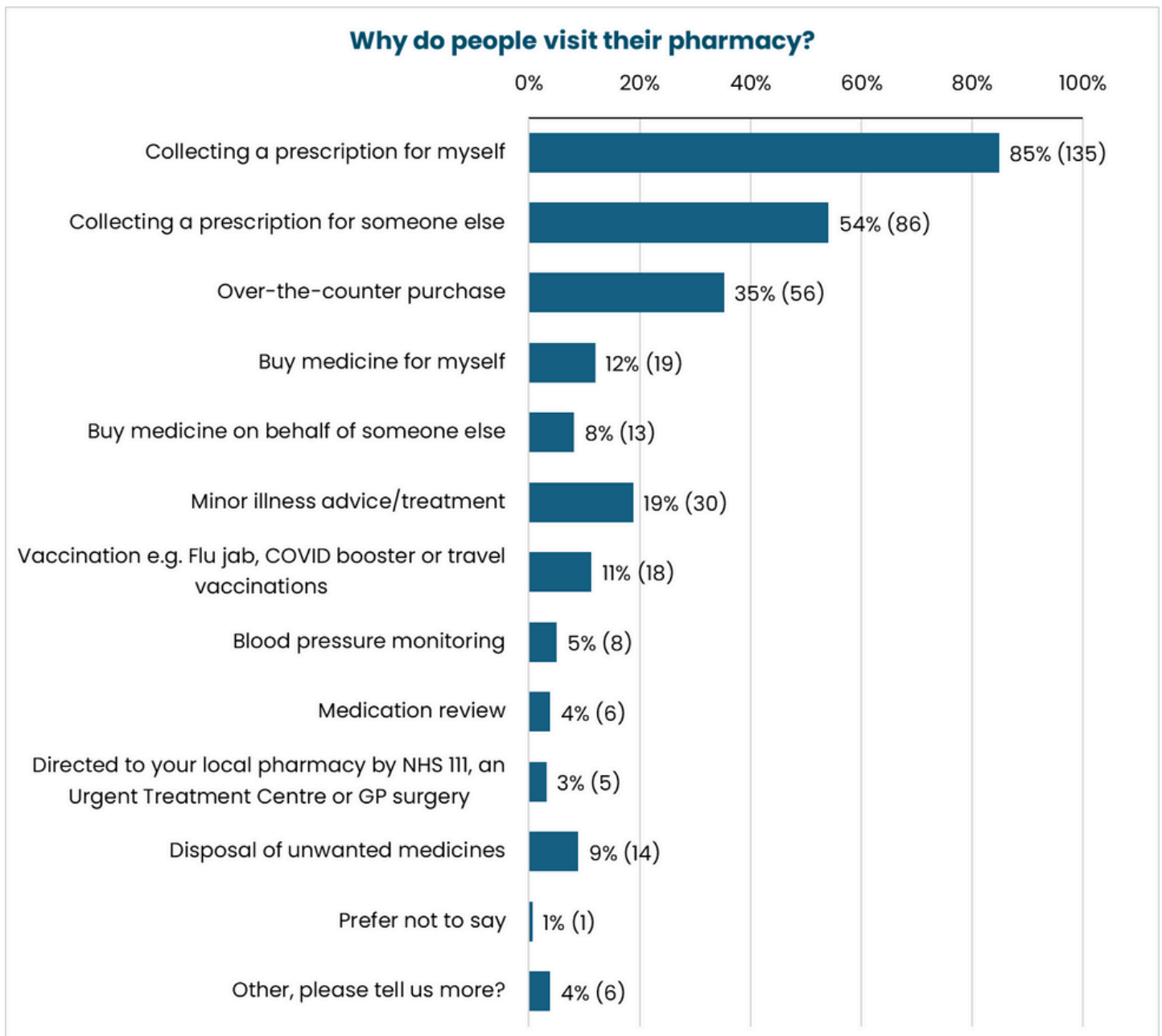
"Automatic doors not working for the last three months."



Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns

Why do people visit their pharmacy?

- Respondents were asked to share their main reasons for visiting the pharmacy.
- Most commonly respondents visited their pharmacy to collect prescriptions for themselves (85% [135]) or for someone else (54% [86]).
- The next most common reason for visiting were for an over-the-counter purchase (35% [22]) and for minor illness advice/treatment (19% [30]).
- Medication review (4% [6]) and blood pressure monitoring (5% [8]) were the least common reasons why respondents visited their pharmacy.



Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns

Accessing prescriptions

- 85% (135) visited their pharmacy to collect prescriptions for themselves (85% [135]) and 54% (86) for someone else.
- 43% (64) had experienced difficulties in accessing prescriptions in the past six months. 60 respondents went on to detail the difficulties they had faced.
- By far the most common difficulties were:
 - **Medications being out of stock:** (as a result people had to travel to multiple pharmacies to try to get their prescriptions fulfilled)
 - **Processing issues:** e.g.
 - Items missing or unavailable upon collection
 - Delays in scripts being sent from GP practices to pharmacies
 - Issues when ordering online or via an app
 - Long waiting times to process requests (despite requests being put in at the earliest available opportunity)
 - **Pharmacies being closed:** during lunch or at the weekend or random closure due to short staffing

“Delay in prescription getting from doctor to pharmacy. This led to being without multiple medications, including anticonvulsants for 72 hours.”

“Incorrect items – differed from prescribed. 28 day renewal when only 25 days of med given. Couldn’t work out how to give me a receipt. All prescription items need reordering on different days – the reception staff put all of my items through the GP request – so I never know if it has been accepted/processed.”

“Travel over 20 miles to try to find medication that is in short supply. No help available by GP.”

“Prescriptions not being ready on time, despite ordering them at the earliest available opportunity. Often takes 2+ weeks for them to be ready and it is getting down to the line on nearly running out of medication. They cannot be ordered any earlier so often have to ring the pharmacy to chase them up.”

“Prescriptions not ready despite following the time scale they provide, items missing, wrong advice given, continually blame the GP.”

Pharmacy Use and Visit Patterns

Accessing prescriptions

- As a result of medications being out of stock or difficult to source and long waiting times to process requests, some individuals ran out of their medication. This was despite some putting in requests at the earliest opportunity.
- Not being able to access their prescriptions impacted respondents' health and treatment in multiple ways.
 - The biggest impact **stress and anxiety** as a result of delays, running out of medications and having to chase prescriptions.
 - For others, shortages and resulting **substitutes** were often felt **less effective** with more side effects.
 - Some shared they had to **visit the pharmacy multiple times** due to incomplete prescriptions, stock shortages, or missing items. This is time-consuming and stressful, especially when pharmacies don't notify them of issues until they arrive to collect.

"Lack of anticonvulsants led to severe sleep disturbance and confusion which took several days to settle down."

"Incredibly stressful! I am forever phoning the surgery regarding my medication. I get sick with worry before I telephone now. I am aware worried that they have made a mistake. I often have a knot in my tummy now, which I assume is worry. Sometimes I have to go without medication due to their mistake and I am on very important medications. I am an incredibly complex patient with multiple medical conditions, and I am taking over 30 different medications per day. So all the problems I have mentioned regarding the pharmacy is having a big impact on my health. Particularly causing a lot of stress and worry!"

"Recurrent visits due to long waiting times mean [I'm] left without daily medication."

"Run out of medication and then can't get to the pharmacy. If only able to collect on a Saturday and there are items missing you can't collect until the following Monday. I take "preventative" medication, so when my meds are not available, it increases the risk of an episode that could have been avoided."

Overall

Respondents were asked to think about the pharmacy they visit the most and rate them in a range of areas. Overall, the majority rated the following as:

Overall	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	N/A or Prefer not to say	Overall
Access in terms of physical location	55% (85)	35% (55)	5% (8)	4% (6)	1% (1)	GOOD 90% (140)
Parking availability	34% (52)	38% (58)	12% (18)	10% (16)	6% (10)	GOOD 72% (110)
Opening hours	27% (41)	60% (93)	8% (12)	3% (5)	2% (3)	GOOD 87% (134)
Availability of prescription medication	37% (57)	41% (63)	13% (20)	7% (11)	3% (4)	GOOD 78% (120)
Availability of over-the-counter medication	24% (37)	43% (66)	5% (7)	6% (9)	22% (34)	GOOD 67% (103)
Staff listening to you	41% (63)	34% (52)	7% (10)	9% (13)	10% (15)	GOOD 75% (115)
Staff knowledge	37% (57)	42% (65)	7% (11)	4% (7)	10% (16)	GOOD 79% (122)

Overall

Overall	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	N/A or Prefer not to say	Overall
Answering any questions you might have	37% (57)	42% (64)	7% (11)	4% (7)	10% (16)	GOOD 79% (121)
Being able to talk in a private area	25% (39)	27% (41)	14% (21)	8% (12)	26% (40)	GOOD 52% (80)
Waiting times to be seen	22% (33)	39% (59)	16% (24)	11% (17)	13% (19)	POOR 61% (92)



Out of hours access

- 39% (60) had needed to access a pharmacy outside of normal working hours (e.g., after 5pm on weekdays, during weekends, or on bank holidays).
- Experiences of accessing a pharmacy outside of normal working hours were mixed. Some were unable to access a pharmacy. For many, accessing a pharmacy meant traveling to a different location than their usual one, which proved challenging for some especially those who could not drive and had to rely on others to get them there.

“Mostly, yes. The opening times on Google are wrong for weekends, so I have turned up on a Saturday before, and they have been closed when Google says they are open. I sometimes work from home and so go to the pharmacy on my lunch break, but the pharmacy are closed over lunch hour which can be inconvenient.”

“Yes but had to travel 20 plus miles into Lincoln.”

“The open times are short and nothing at weekends.”

“I had to drive to Lincoln or get someone to drive there for me.”

“Had to go to A and E.”

“Yes, had to go to a town eight miles away. The first place did not have the medication so has to find another but as it was a bank holiday hours were restricted and I had a long wait. I needed a car as the buses were not running either.”

“Had to travel quite a way. Having to ask people to take you to different pharmacy due to having no transport.”

“When the GP pharmacy did not fulfil the prescription properly and I needed it – I had to ring around local pharmacies that were open over the weekend, to see if anyone had any. It took me all morning.”



Pharmacy First

Under the Pharmacy First scheme, patients across England can now get prescription-only treatment for seven common conditions at their local high street pharmacy, without needing to see a GP. This can include prescribing and supplying antibiotics and antivirals where clinically appropriate. The seven conditions are:

- Earache
- Impetigo (red sores and blisters on the skin)
- Infected insect bites
- Shingles (a painful and itchy rash on one side of your body only)
- Sinusitis
- Sore throat
- Urinary tract infections (UTIs)

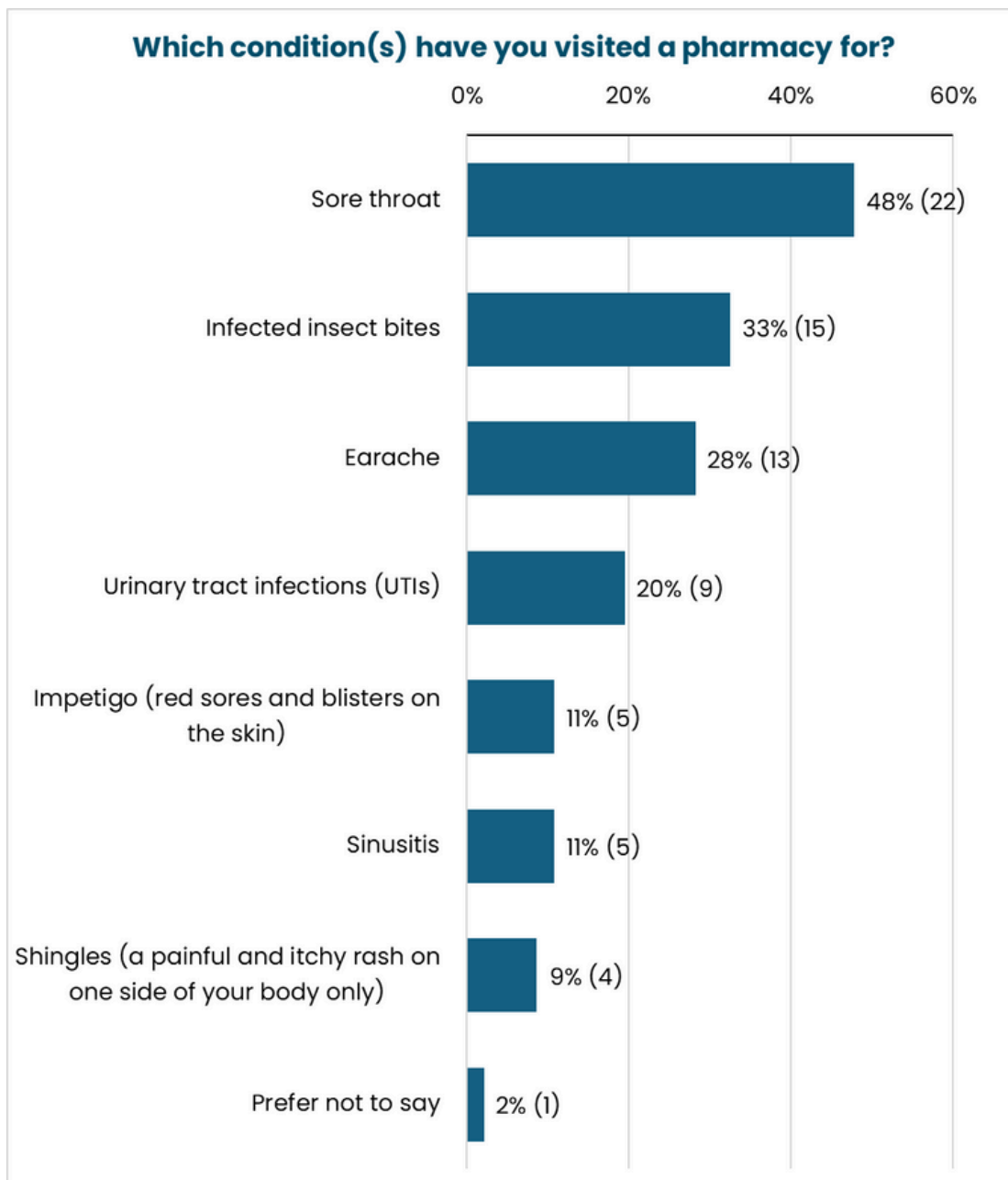
[Click here for more information about the Pharmacy First scheme.](#)

We wanted to explore experiences of using this scheme.

Pharmacy First Scheme

Experiences of the Pharmacy First scheme

- 33% (49) of respondents had visited a pharmacy to access care for one of the seven conditions under the Pharmacy First scheme. Through our survey, we heard from individuals who accessed care for each of the seven common conditions covered under the scheme.
- Most commonly respondents had accessed care for:
 - Sore throat – 48% (22)
 - Infected insect bites – 33% (15)
 - Earache – 28% (13)



Pharmacy First Scheme

Experiences of the Pharmacy First scheme

- For 78% (36) of respondents the pharmacist was able to help them with their issue.
- For the eight (17%) individuals for whom the pharmacist was not able to resolve their issue, six were referred to another healthcare professional. They were all referred to their GP. The remaining two individuals were not referred to anyone and did not disclose what they did as a result of their issue not being resolved.
- Overall, **80% (36) of users rated their experience** with the Pharmacy First service **as good**.
 - Specifically, 38% (17 respondents) indicated it was very good, while an additional 42% (19 respondents) rated it as good. The main key area for improvement was stock of medication and over the counter items.

Positive experiences

“Knowledgeable and helpful, didn't tell me to buy medications that weren't needed and what to look out for. Great service.”

“Showed pharmacist and he recommended cream which worked.”

“Lucky there was no queue and pharmacist was available, knowledgeable and helpful.”

“I was already using pharmacy for these before the changes and always found them helpful and didn't need to visit doctor.”

“Was dealt with efficiently.”

“They have very helpful with good advice.”

“Seen quickly and good advice given.”

“They knew what was the best and not necessarily the dearest explained everything you needed to know.”



Pharmacy First

Positive experiences

“Good product knowledge.”

“I have always received good advice and treatment for anything that does not require a prescription.”

“Pharmacist was really helpful and gave good advice about ongoing care.”

“Good advice, got something to try. Nothing to improve.”

Pharmacy First

Experiences of the Pharmacy First scheme

- 18% rated their experience as poor with 7% (3) selecting poor and 11% (5) choosing very poor. The remaining 2% (1) selected prefer not to say.
 - All except one of these individuals were cases where the pharmacist was unable to help them with their issue.

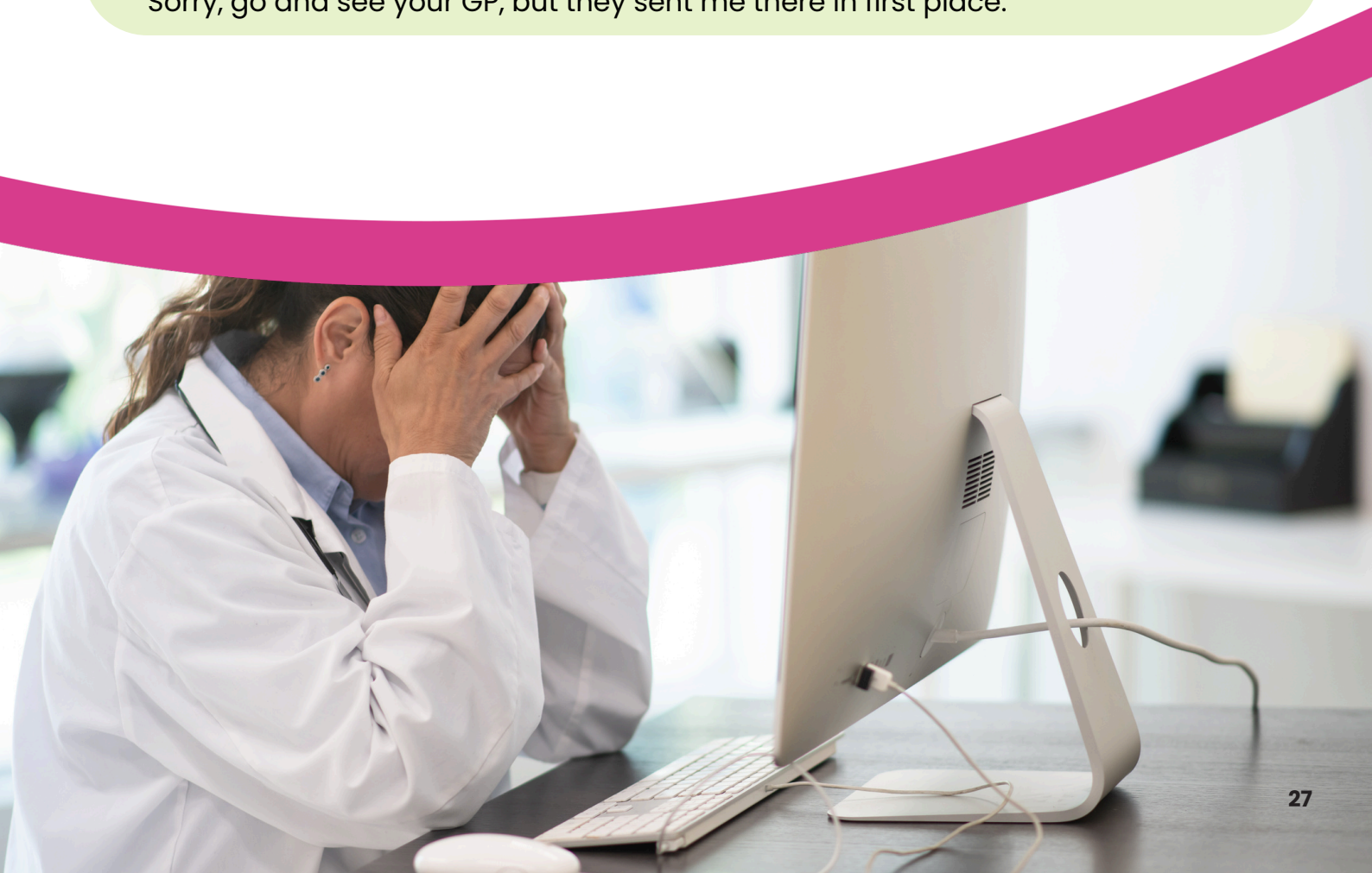
Negative experiences

“Not able to speak to pharmacist face to face. Not able to speak privately to staff. Told they could not help unless I'd had it for 10 days had to go back to GP for prescription.”

“I was informed that the pharmacy can not give me antibiotics for an ear infection and that they can only do this for children.”

“Unable to find relevant medication for earache. Infected insect bites I ended up seeing my GP as they couldn't give me the medication I needed.”

“Sorry, go and see your GP, but they sent me there in first place.”



Pharmacy First

Willingness/Interest in Using the Pharmacy First Scheme

- 55% (55) respondents shared they would visit their pharmacy in the future if they needed care for one of the seven conditions under the Pharmacy First scheme.
- 13% (13) individuals would not visit their pharmacy for care for one of these seven conditions and an additional 32% (32) were unsure. 29 individuals went on to explain their reluctance and uncertainties around the Pharmacy First scheme and many of the themes were interlinked:
 - **Trust in pharmacist expertise:** several respondents expressed scepticism about pharmacists' ability to diagnose or treat conditions, perceiving GPs as more knowledgeable. Many felt that a pharmacy visit would likely result in a referral to a GP, making it seem like a “wasted step”. Services such as ILL or GP appointments were viewed as more effective for obtaining medical advice.

“The staff seem unsure themselves of so much and I imagine I would still be sent to GP practice.”

“Happy to go to a pharmacist to relieve pressure on GPs, but so often when you go they just end up telling you to go to your GP so seems a bit like a wasted step.”

- **Negative experiences of accessing pharmacy services:** some respondents were hesitant to use the scheme based on previous negative experiences when using their pharmacy. This included limited opening hours, staff being rude, long waiting times and concerns around capacity as pharmacists were busy with other tasks like filling prescriptions or giving flu vaccines.

“Pharmacist is too busy dealing with prescriptions – whenever someone wants to speak to pharmacist they leave all the prescriptions waiting even if a shop full of people waiting, it's very frustrating. They do the same when they are giving flu vaccines too – leaving us waiting in the shop while they see someone for a vaccine.”

“It is always crowded with people waiting to be served, pharmacist is always busy. Would have doubts about ability of staff.”

Pharmacy First

Willingness/Interest in Using the Pharmacy First Scheme

- **Lack of privacy:** a recurring theme was the lack of privacy in pharmacies. Users feel uncomfortable discussing personal health matters in public spaces without confidential consultation areas.

“There isn’t any where private to talk and I don’t want people listening about my business.”

- **Uncertainty about services available:** responses highlighted that some were unsure of the specific services that pharmacies can provide for example what conditions or ailments pharmacists can treat.

“ I do not know specifically what a pharmacy can provide so would appreciate a definitive list of areas they can cover.”

- **Habits:** some respondents suggest that habits or long-held beliefs about the perceived superiority of GPs over pharmacies influence their decisions, even if pharmacies could be helpful in certain cases.

“ Trust GP more.”

“Habit perhaps.”



What did healthcare professionals say?

In response to the survey we received an email from a practice manager who shared why they were not currently using the Pharmacy First scheme:

“We are not using the Pharmacy First scheme at the moment because the software they use requires Multifactorial Authentication (MFA) every time the reception staff log in.

NHSE introduce Multifactorial Authentication (MFA) which means staff have to use their personal mobile phone to authenticate software used by the NHS.

There are two issues with this:

1. Why should staff be expected to use their own personal mobile phones? (Most staff are happy to have the Authenticator App on their personal phone but some are not).
2. We requested NHS IT provide Fido2 machines, which can be used instead of a mobile phone, but they said they do not have the budget for this and practice will have to purchase them at £56 each. Each member of staff will require a Fido2. I have 40 employed staff.

Our practice policy states that staff should not have the mobile phones with them whilst working therefore if they need to refer a patient they need to get their mobile phone from their locker to get the code number to activate MFA. This takes the receptionists away from reception which is not acceptable.

We are trying to work on a solution but this is taking time and the NHS is paying for a service that is not being used.”

What works well about pharmacy services?

- Respondents were asked to share what works well about their pharmacy. The main themes from the comments were:
 - **Staff and customer service:** staff were praised for being friendly, helpful, knowledgeable, and supportive. Quick service and short wait times were appreciated.

“Friendly, helpful staff. Knowledgeable dispensing pharmacist. Nothing seems to be too much trouble for them.”

“Helpful and friendly staff.”

“Lovely staff. So helpful and efficient. Waiting times are not too long even when the pharmacy is busy. Love the effective systems in place.”

“Knowledgeable, patient and efficient. Staff always polite and smiling. A good choice of everything needed.”

“The staff are excellent, very polite and helpful. They are also able to advise for minor issues. I usually ring up in advance to check if my prescription is ready so waiting is not a problem. Queues are very rarely an issue in my experience.”

- **Convenience and accessibility:** respondents valued the convenient locations of pharmacies, particularly when attached to GP surgeries or in supermarkets. Pharmacies close to home or work and easy access after shopping or appointments are significant positives. Good parking availability (especially for disabled customers) and weekend or extended opening hours were highlighted as being beneficial.

“Convenient to access whilst shopping.”

“The location is close to my home. A trip can be quick and easy.”

“Close to my work.”

“Friendly, close to home, parking outside, generally don't have to wait very long for prescriptions when in stock.”

What works well?

- **Services provided:** being able to order prescriptions online or over the phone was appreciated. There was praise for the Pharmacy First scheme. Free delivery services were also valued, as were blood pressure monitoring, advice on medication, and face-to-face consultations for advice.

“They possibly saved my life via the free blood pressure monitoring. It was verbally offered and I took this on a whim and they sent me straight to A and E as it was so high. BP now medicated and under control. I will be forever grateful.”

- **Technology:** text message notifications when prescriptions are ready were seen as a helpful feature, though some have noted recent changes that removed this service. Electronic prescriptions and online ordering were appreciated for their convenience.

“Very rarely have to wait too long. I get a text from them to say my prescription is ready therefore no wasted journeys. Friendly staff.”

“Text service lets me know that prescription is ready to collect. Staff are friendly and helpful.”



prescription

What could be improved?

- After reviewing the comments left throughout the survey, several areas for potential improvement were highlighted. Improvements did not relate to specific pharmacies or localities, they were more general reminders about issues users found unsatisfactory. Negative experiences tended to be isolated incidents, they did not relate to one specific pharmacy or area except out of hours access.
 - **Stock availability:** this was by far the most common issue highlighted, by both those who had otherwise positive experiences of their pharmacy and those whose experience was negative. This included both the availability of prescription and over-the-counter medications. Stock shortages resulting in having to visit multiple pharmacies, causing stress and delays in treatment.

“My local pharmacy was always running out of stock, never able to get my repeat medications to me on time. For example, I am on antidepressants for anxiety. I would be down to the last tablet even though the repeat request went in two weeks ago. This caused me more stress and anxiety!”

“I’m on tamoxifen.. a specific brand – Wockhardt – suits me best. Other brands have caused other side effects.. I regularly phone round up to 10 local pharmacies trying to find stock.”

- **Processing delays:** several respondents noted delays in prescriptions being processed and made available for collection. For some this was despite putting their requests in at the earliest opportunity. In some cases, the delays resulted in people being left without medication.

“Prescriptions not being ready on time, despite ordering them at the earliest available opportunity. Often takes 2+ weeks for them to be ready and it is getting down to the line on nearly running out of medication. They cannot be ordered any earlier so often have to ring the pharmacy to chase them up.”

“Issues with communication between the GP surgery and chemist.”

What could be improved?

- **Out of hours access:** was raised as an issue for those living in rural areas of our county and by those who couldn't drive or had to rely on someone else to take them. Furthermore, there were incidences where pharmacies were closed during lunch or at unannounced times. The latter was particularly frustrating for some users who had travelled to pick up their prescriptions meaning a wasted journey and repeat visit was needed.

“Yes but had to travel 20 plus miles into Lincoln.”

“Had to travel quite a way. Having to ask people to take you to different pharmacy due to having no transport.”

“When the GP pharmacy did not fulfil the prescription properly and I needed it – I had to ring around local pharmacies that were open over the weekend, to see if anyone had any. It took me all morning.”

- **Text notifications:** being notified by text that your prescription was ready was highlighted as beneficial but for some this service had stopped.

“What did work was it is all done electronically– NHS app request, pharmacy to a text when meds were ready, but have a new system where you don't get the text but there are notices and verbal that med will be ready within five working days. No more text reminder.”

- **Privacy:** the importance of privacy was highlighted, with some respondents sharing their pharmacy lacked this which made them uncomfortable discussing personal matters. For some it was also a barrier to using the Pharmacy First scheme.

“There isn't any where private to talk and I don't want people listening about my business.”

“Would have liked a bit more privacy when asked questions.”

What could be improved?

- **Customer service issues:** although most staff were praised, there were a few reports of rude or unhelpful staff interactions, causing distress to some customers.

“Quite stressful, worrying if they are going to run out. Staff at the pharmacy are not very helpful and are often rude unprovoked so dread having to speak to them. As a result of the delays and the staff, for another family member I've tried an online service which works well so considering swapping to that.”

- **Accessibility for disabled customers:** some respondents noted that pharmacies need to improve physical access, including ensuring functional automatic doors, better wheelchair access, and less cluttered spaces for ease of movement. These were also issues for those with pushchairs.

“Wheelchair access to the counter is blocked as a storage shelf and with signposts/boards so therefore it may as well not exist.”

“It would be helpful to not block wheelchair access.”

“Difficult to navigate the store with a pushchair. Automatic door often not working and step access.”

Final Thoughts

We conducted a survey to assess user experiences with pharmacy services, focusing on accessibility, satisfaction, and usage patterns in Lincolnshire. We would again like to thank everyone who shared their views.

The report, based on feedback from 160 participants, highlights that 83% (132) visited a pharmacy in the last month. The following appeared to be the key considerations when deciding which pharmacy respondents were going to visit: location, product availability, and staff friendliness. Respondents most commonly visited their pharmacy to collect prescriptions for themselves or someone else.

While 85% (129) reported no difficulties accessing pharmacies, some faced challenges such as location and limited opening hours. Prescription-related issues, such as stock shortages and processing delays, appeared to be issued for some which caused stress.

Overall satisfaction with pharmacy services amongst respondents was high with the majority rating the following as GOOD about the pharmacy they visit the most:

- Access in terms of physical location
- Opening hours
- Staff listening to you
- Staff knowledge

Pharmacy staff were generally praised for being friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable. Services like online prescription ordering, free delivery, and blood pressure monitoring were valued.

The Pharmacy First scheme received positive feedback, with 80% (36) rating their experience as good. Reluctancy or hesitancy to use the scheme seems to relate to a lack of trust in pharmacists' expertise, lack of privacy, uncertainties about the services available and previous negative experiences.

Recommendations for improvement included better stock availability, improved processing and increased accessibility for disabled customers. These findings will support the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) to align services with community health needs and reduce health inequalities in Lincolnshire.

Demographics

Demographic	Percentage (number)
Age	
18 – 24	0.7% (1)
25 – 49	21.3% (30)
50 – 64	34.8% (49)
65 – 79	34.0% (48)
80+	7.1% (10)
Prefer not to say	2.1% (3)
Gender	
Male	26% (37)
Female	72% (101)
Prefer not to say	2% (3)
Ethnicity	
White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh	93% (123)
White: Irish	1% (1)
White: Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	1% (1)
White: Any other White background	2% (3)
Any other ethnic group	1% (1)
Prefer not to say	2% (3)
Location	
Boston	4% (5)
City of Lincolnshire	8% (11)
East Lindsey	23% (32)
North Kesteven	19% (27)
South Holland	7% (10)
South Kesteven	9% (12)
West Lindsey	28% (40)
Other	3% (4)

Demographics

Demographic	Percentage (number)
I have MORE THAN enough for basic necessities and A LOT spare	8% (11)
I have MORE THAN enough for basic necessities and A LITTLE spare	44% (62)
I have JUST ENOUGH money for basic necessities and little else	25% (35)
I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH money for basic necessities and sometimes or often run out of money	3% (4)
Prefer not to say	20% (28)

Demographics

Demographic	Percentage (number)
I am a veteran	8% (12)
I work in health and/or social care	13% (20)
I am a carer	11% (18)
I belong to the LGBTQ+ community	4% (9)
I have a long-term health condition	45% (71)
I consider myself to be neurodiverse	6% (10)
I have a disability	17% (27)

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If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us at the address above.

We know that you want local services that work for you, your friends and your family.

That's why we want you to share your experiences of using health and care services with us – both good and bad. We use your voice to encourage those who run services to act on what matters to you.