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Healthwatch Birmingham's response to the NHS England engagement exercise on the NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to share feedback on the *NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service*. Our key role is to make sure that patients, the public, service users, and carers (PPSuC) are at the heart of service improvement in health and social care. In line with our role, we have focused our comments on:

- The involvement of PPSuCs in evaluating and improving the service offered through this engagement exercise
- Feedback and insight we have heard from PPSuC regarding the service offered

Due to our remit of covering services in Birmingham our comments are from residents of Birmingham and those that use services in Birmingham.

We recognise that at this difficult time for the NHS that you may not be able to act on the feedback received immediately, but hope it is still used to develop the Community Pharmacist Consultation Service in the future.

Patient and Public Involvement

Healthwatch Birmingham would like to commend NHS England on engaging with the public and gathering their views for several months as the new service has been launched and used.

Methods for engaging and involving the public

Healthwatch Birmingham are pleased that the feedback form uses clear language and jargon has been explained, and that NHS England have given contact details for the public in addition to the online form, allowing the public and service users to contact you with any questions or concerns.

It is not clear from this whether the public have been able to feedback in any other formats or access the form in other languages.

Due to the diverse background of the population of Birmingham, this may have been a barrier to the public and service users sharing their experiences, specifically those without English as a first language, and the digitally excluded.

We would suggest that NHS England analyse the demographics of those that have responded to the engagement exercise, and compare this to the demographics of the service users in each area, to determine those that may not have had their voice heard. We would like to see this highlighted in the report of this engagement, and the actions outlined of any further engagement work required to capture these experiences.

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Healthwatch Birmingham would like to see specific reference to carers, and the work that has been undertaken to understand their needs in developing and improving this service.

Results of engagement

Healthwatch Birmingham are pleased that it has been made clear to the public that their experiences will be used to monitor and evaluate the service, however sharing further details of this with the public may have encouraged more people to respond.

Healthwatch Birmingham would like to urge NHS England to ensure that findings of this survey are made public and clearly demonstrates how the views of the public have influenced and improved the service offered, both nationally and locally. This will ensure that people feel ownership of the service and their positive experience of this will prompt them to encourage others to access it.

It is not clear whether the results of this engagement will be shared with individual services to allow them to address any issues highlighted, or whether the feedback will be shared with local NHS teams on a regional basis to allow them to identify any specific issues facing their populations that need to be addressed.

Patient, Public and Service User Experience

The feedback that Healthwatch Birmingham has received has highlighted that it is important that the perception of community pharmacies is changed or improved such that people are aware and are confident of the skills and knowledge of the staff. Some people have told Healthwatch Birmingham about their concerns with the skills and experience of pharmacists as these views indicate

“they don’t give you appointments with GP, to my surprise they send you to healthcare assistant or community pharmacist for minor health issues. Which is rubbish they don’t know anything and its waste of time & effort”.

“I think the pharmacist:

- * Has no knowledge of the medicines*
- * Is incompetent in medicine preparation for children*
- * Demonstrates zero customer service.”*

We have also heard positive experiences from people who trust in the skills of pharmacists:

“Staff are very friendly pharmacy are very knowledgeable I always talk to pharmacist before GP. Staff do seem stressed at times due to poor management on rota I think as there needs to be more staff on pharmacy”.

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“I have used this Pharmacy for a number of years. I have regular reviews of my medication with the Pharmacists. I can always ask questions about my medication and get advice easily”.

“The pharmacist is professional and is interactive with customers which stood out”.

Feedback also highlighted that Carers may choose to utilise community pharmacists over other primary care services, as this feedback from a focus group with Carers demonstrates:

“All carers said that they put their own health issues as a lower priority to the people they care for and may seek alternative support (pharmacy, etc)”

It is important that NHS England considers the potential impact of an increase in service users and the effect on the quality of the service delivered, and how to best monitor this, as uptake of the service increases.

Key to the Healthwatch Birmingham's role is ensuring that patient feedback, experience and insights are central in the provision of care. Therefore if pharmacies are to provide some of the services that are provided by GPs it is important that they offer people recourse to complaints as well as sharing their experience. People need to be made aware that they can also share their experiences of accessing pharmacy services with other independent services such as local Healthwatch. This is a key requirement of the [NHS Standard Contract](#) (SC16 16.2.1) which asks for health providers to display clear information about how to make a complaint, share feedback or **how to contact local Healthwatch** for service users and members of the public. This should be an important aspect of service specifications for pharmacies as they take on this new role.

Conclusion

We are pleased that NHS England have engaged with the public to collect feedback on this new service. We look forward to seeing how the service is improved to further meet the needs of the public as a result of this engagement.

Yours Sincerely,



Sarah Walmsley

Data & Insight Officer



Andy Cave

Chief Executive Officer