

Views of pharmacy services in North Tyneside

**Evidence gathering for Pharmaceutical
Needs Assessment – April 2022**

Background

Healthwatch North Tyneside was asked by North Tyneside's Health and Wellbeing board to gather evidence of experiences of pharmacy services in the borough to inform the review of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. This is produced every 3 years based on how local people say they use pharmacy services and how they would like to use them in the future. This was delayed due to Covid and associated difficulties in accessing public opinion.

Method

Feedback was collected primarily using an online survey. A equivalent paper survey was also used, along with a simpler paper version, to facilitate access. These were shared through pharmacies across the borough, voluntary sector networks and community engagements.

Evidence gathering took place between 20 January and 16 March 2022.

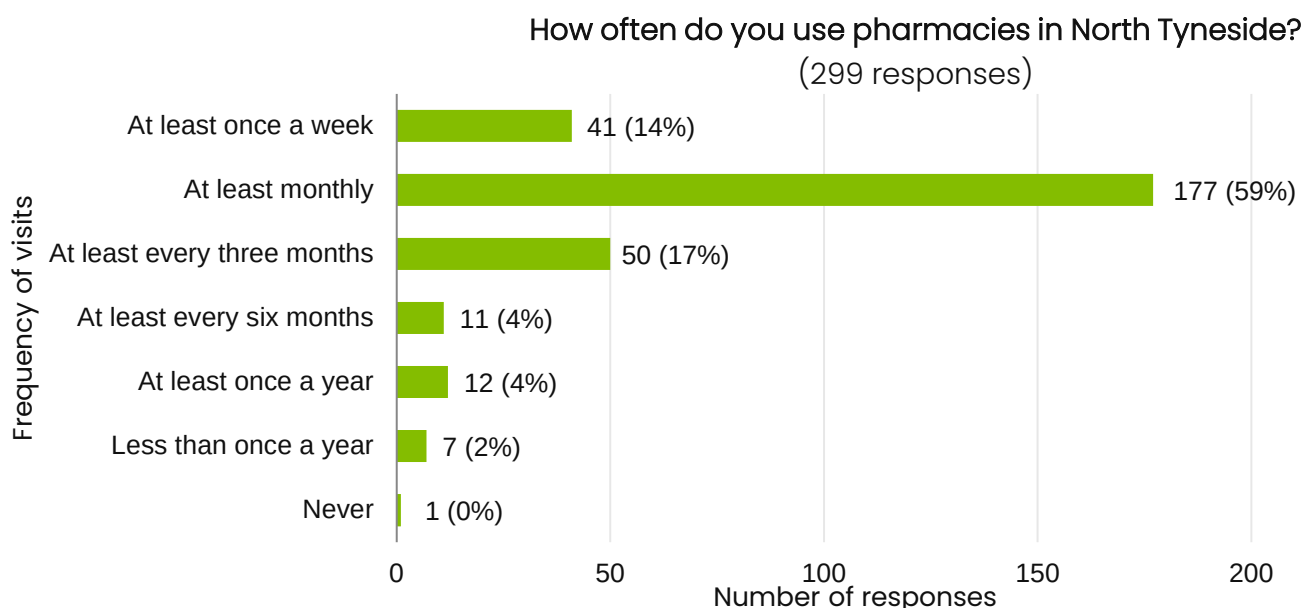
Who we heard from

301 people responded to our survey. People were not required to answer every question so numbers of responses vary throughout. Demographic details of who completed the survey are on pages 20–23 of this report.

In addition, group feedback was obtained from approximately 45 young people attending 5 Helping Hands groups at Phoenix Detached Youth Project. These numbers have not been included in the overall figures as we do not have precise details, however key insights have been assimilated into relevant sections.

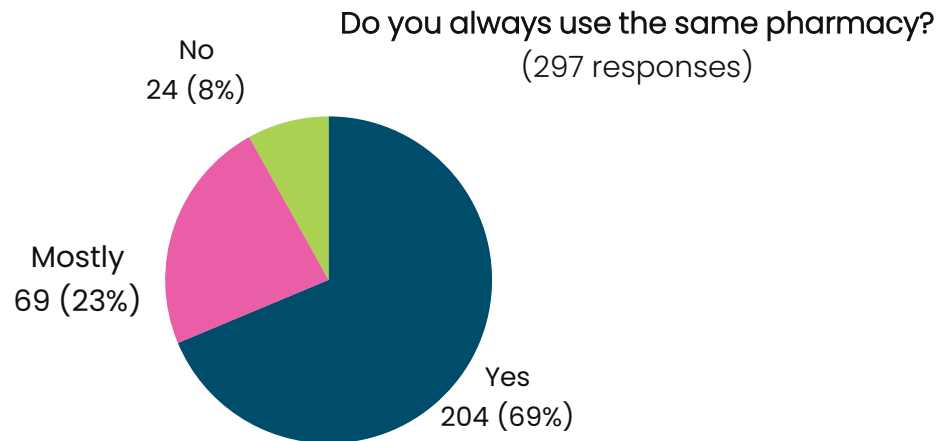
What we heard

How people use pharmacies



90% of respondents use pharmacies every 3 months or more frequently. The most common usage in our sample was at least monthly, 59%.

69% said they always use the same pharmacy.

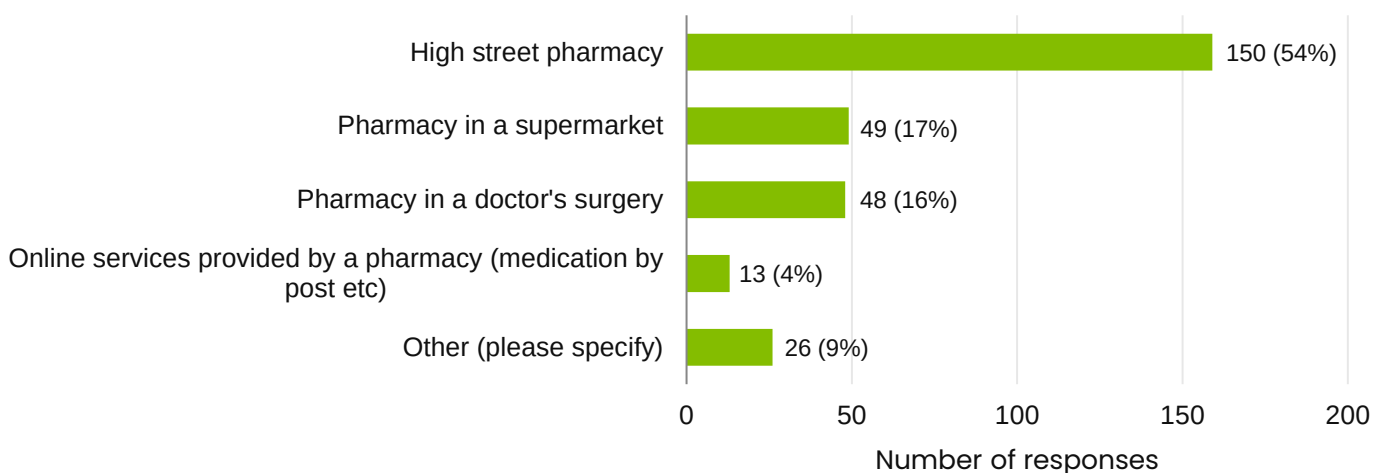


Feedback was similar for those who said they mostly use or do not use the same pharmacy. The nominated pharmacy is used for prescriptions but others are used in addition for convenience.

Factors involved in pharmacy choice include:

- nature of need – medication, advice, toiletries, cheap medication e.g. paracetamol
- convenience of location – close to work or college, on a high street or in a supermarket
- availability of medication
- product pricing
- product range

Type of pharmacy used



People were asked to identify the type of pharmacy they use most often. 295 responses were received which showed high street pharmacies to be by far the most commonly used. Pharmacies in doctor's surgeries and in supermarkets had lower but similar levels of usage.

26 'Other' responses indicate a degree of uncertainty regarding the wording of the options and include:

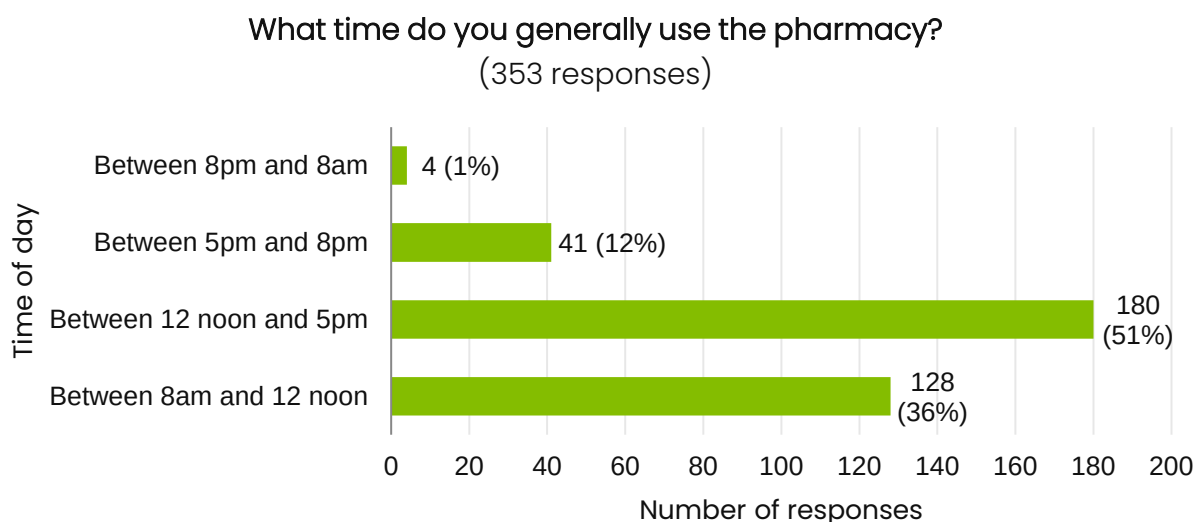
- 12 specified local, village, independent or family run pharmacies
- 5 within a local shopping area or retail park
- 6 near to GP surgery
- 1 hospital pharmacy
- 2 high street pharmacies

Feedback from Phoenix Detached Youth Project groups (45 responses additional to the above) showed that the young people involved primarily use pharmacies for prescriptions and these are generally collected by parents or carers. Of these, about 75% use the pharmacy linked to their GP surgery. Others use supermarket pharmacies, followed by high-street chains.

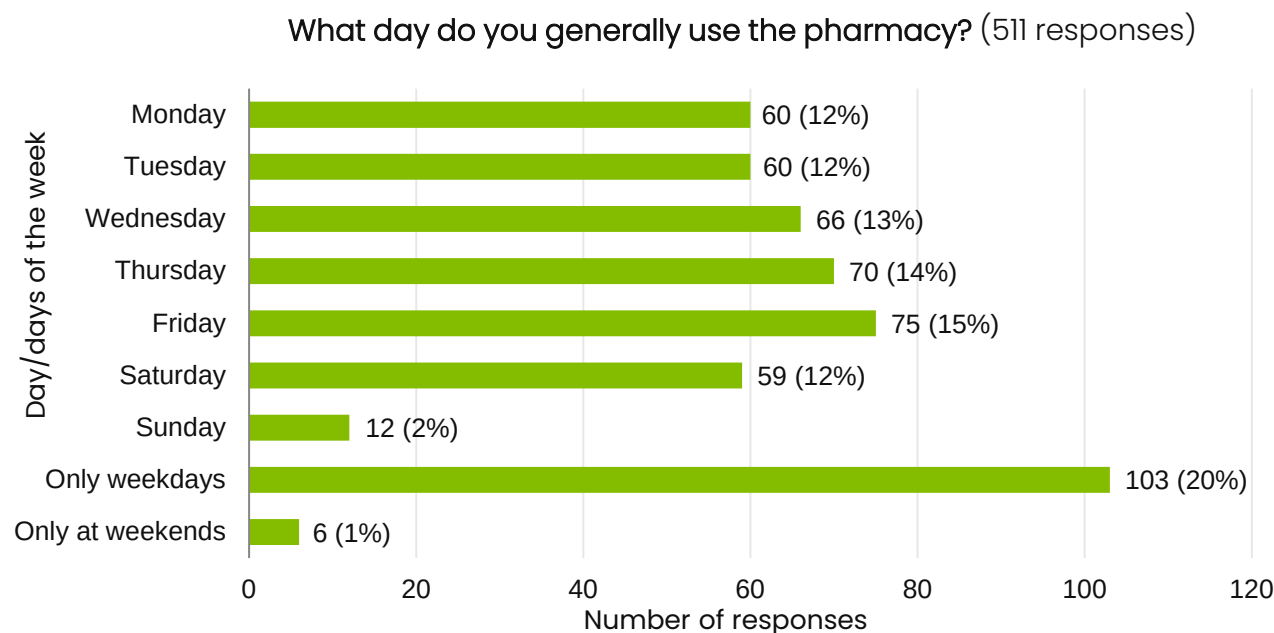
60% said this is the closest pharmacy to them.

Times of use

Most people in our sample prefer to visit the pharmacy in the afternoon (51%), although a significant number like to go in the morning (36%). People were able to select more than one response to this question.

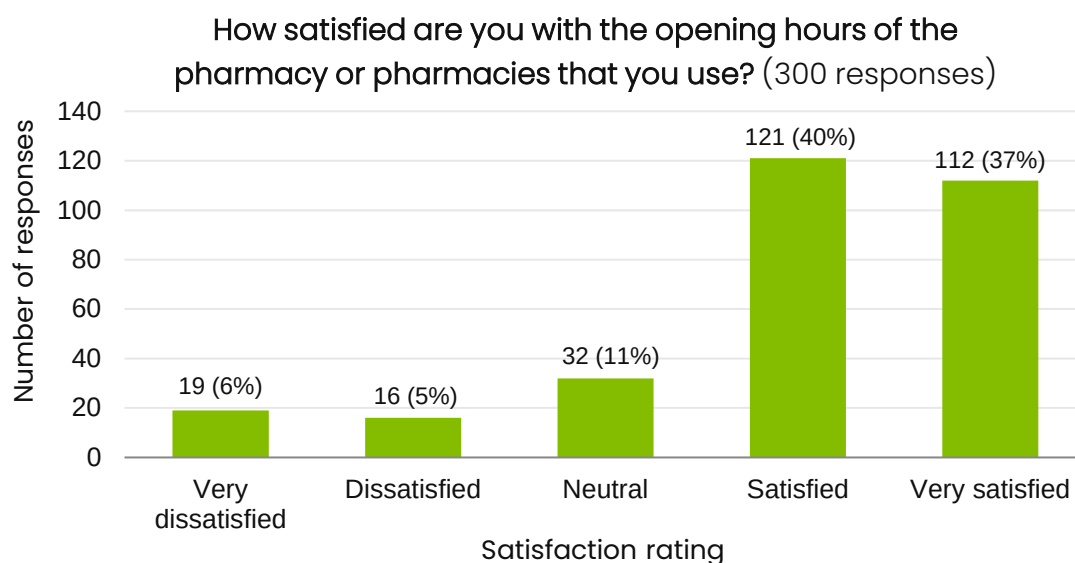


When asked their preferred day to visit the pharmacy, again people could choose multiple options. The low weekend use is likely to reflect restricted access to pharmacies with weekend closing rather than a low level of demand. Free text comments support this possibility.



Satisfaction with opening hours

Results show a very high level of satisfaction with the opening hours of their preferred pharmacy/pharmacies, with 78% of responses being either 'Satisfied' or 'Very satisfied'. Additional comments suggest that most people are happy to use a different pharmacy on occasion if needed at different times.



However, while many people do not want to go so far as to express dissatisfaction, comments suggest an appetite for longer opening and weekend access. 16 of 31

comments from respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied said improved opening would be beneficial.

- 11 mentioned weekend opening
- 4 suggested longer opening
- 1 wanted lunchtime opening

"It would be great if it was open 7 days, however I know it would not be viable for them and have no issue using other pharmacies for the rare times I need a late night or weekend."

Of those who said they were 'Dissatisfied' or 'Very dissatisfied' with the opening hours of the pharmacies they use:

- 8 want weekend opening
- 8 want longer opening hours
- 3 want lunchtime opening

Some people talked about difficulties accessing their pharmacy around their working hours.

Other points raised:

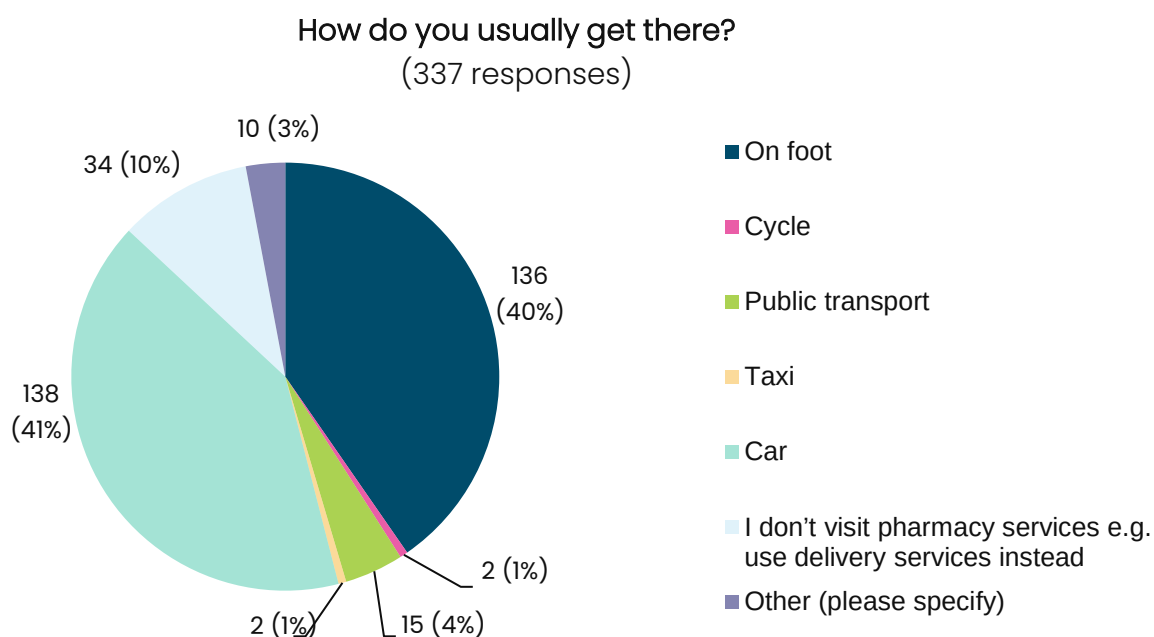
- A pharmacist is not necessarily available at all times when the shop is open.
- There should be a spread of pharmacies across the borough that open at weekends.
- Pharmacies should aim to coordinate opening times with GP surgeries. Patients with prescriptions to collect should be warned when pharmacies are likely to be closed.

Of those who felt 'Neutral' about opening times:

- 4 want weekend opening
- 3 want longer opening
- 1 commented on lunchtime closure

Getting to the pharmacy

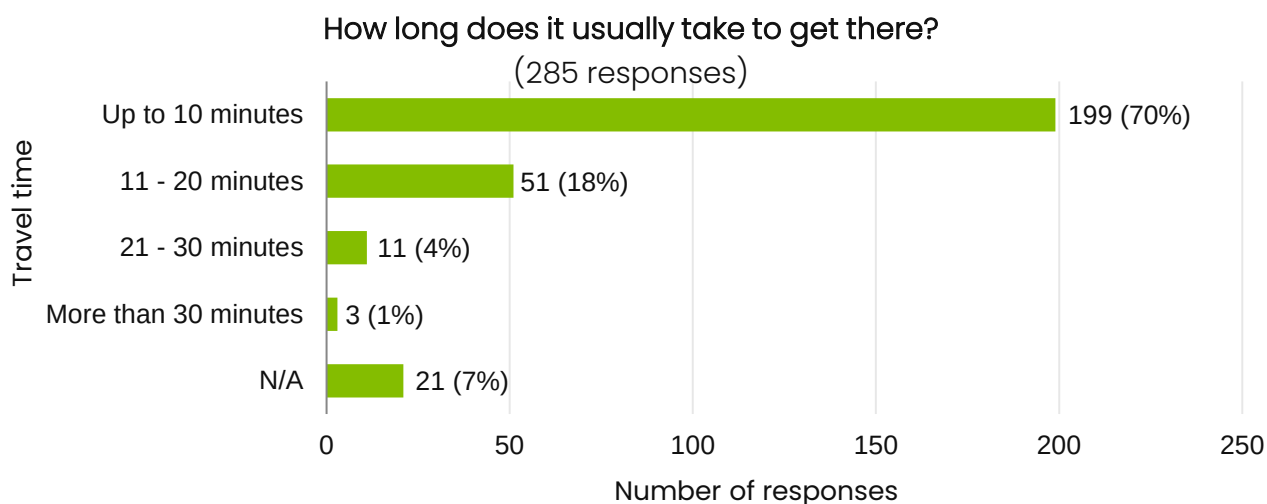
People were asked to tell us their usual method of getting to the pharmacy they use most often. Most people go by car or on foot.



10 people gave 'Other' responses including:

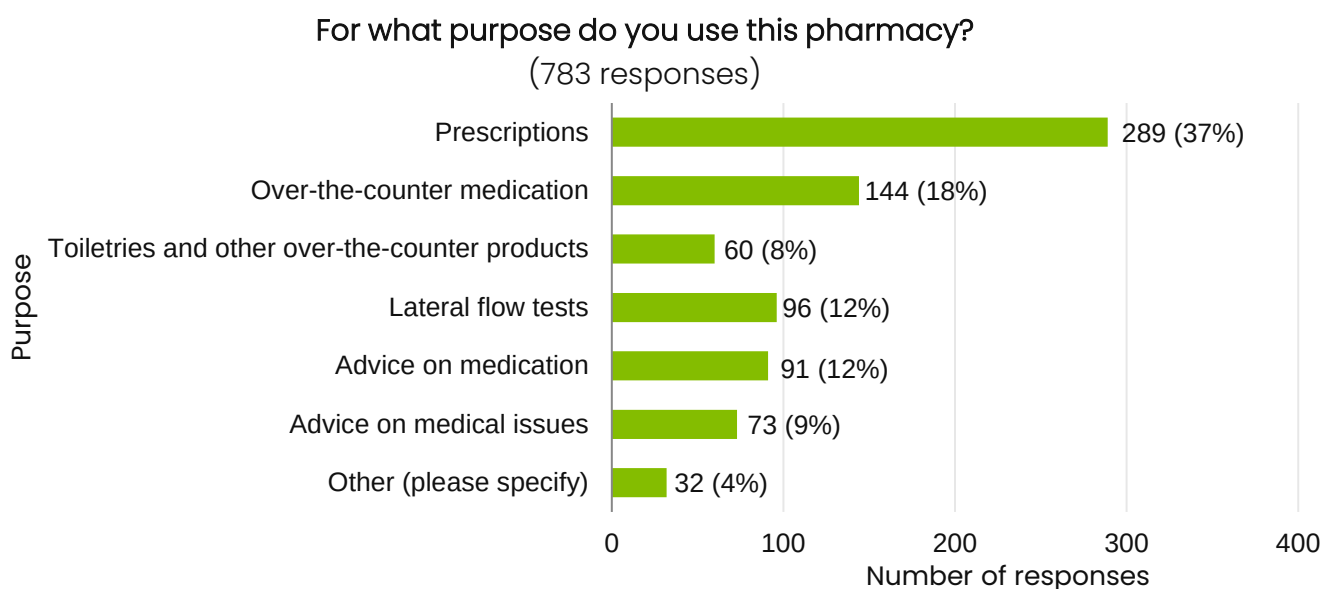
- Mobility scooter
- Mixed methods
- Don't usually visit the pharmacy

70% are able to travel to the pharmacy in 10 minutes or less.



Main reasons for pharmacy use

People were asked what they mainly use their pharmacy for. They could select as many options as applicable. The most common uses were for prescriptions and buying over-the-counter medication.



There were 32 'Other' responses, of which 23 specified vaccinations, mostly flu. A number of young people at Phoenix Project had also used their pharmacy to get flu vaccinations. Most of the remaining responses included uses covered by the above categories.

Ease of access

93% of people said pharmacy services were easy to access (292 responses).

5% said access was not easy for the following reasons:

- Opening times (6 comments)
- Difficulty travelling (3 comments)
- Poor service (3 comments)

2% said they didn't know.

What works well

246 people gave feedback on what their pharmacy does well.

17 said their pharmacy does 'Everything' well and 2 said "Nothing too much trouble."

"The service is very good at any pharmacy I use. North Tyneside is well covered by a range of pharmacies"

Feedback focused mainly on customer service and aspects of service delivery that support customer choice, access and personalised service.

- **Attitude and manner of staff**

- 72 respondents described staff as 'friendly', 'pleasant' or 'approachable'. 48 said staff were 'helpful'. 42 highlighted good 'customer service'.

"Friendly, local service that knows and understands their customers."

- **Staff knowledge and access to advice**

- 37 commended the quality of advice about medications and medical issues. 12 said staff were 'knowledgeable' and 5 described them as 'professional'. 2 noted that it was easier to access advice at the pharmacy than get a GP appointment.

"Good advice so don't need to use GP services"

- **Speed and efficiency of service**

- 59 praised 'efficiency', 'speed of service' and prescriptions being ready. 11 liked being notified when they could collect prescriptions.

- **Personalised service**

- facilitated by regular visits and building relationships with staff. 12 people said how much they valued being known by staff.

"They know who I am and the medications I take."

"My local pharmacy know their customers and so are best placed to double check for things like wrong meds prescribed together, that sort of thing. I trust them."

- **Customer choice / access**

- in terms of methods of access and range of stock:
 - o 20 people praised access to and/or quality of delivery services; Young people at Phoenix Detached Youth Project also said delivery services were of great benefit.
 - o 11 said access was good, including with regard to location and/or opening times.

- o 3 commented on alternative methods of access e.g. App and phone
- o 8 people noted good stock levels and efficient ordering
- o 3 liked competitive pricing and 'offers'

Other comments related to specific services such as flu vaccinations.

What could be improved

190 responses were received and 38% of these said the service was already very good, there was nothing that could be improved or gave a 'nothing' or 'N/A' response.

The remaining 118 responses covered the following key areas:

Opening times

- Improve weekend opening (18 responses) – several suggested Saturday morning
- Increased/longer opening (18 responses) – a small number suggested coordinating with GP surgeries

Improved dispensing of prescriptions (20 responses)

- Quicker dispensing (8 responses) "Quicker dispensing, the electronic prescription service sometimes takes longer than I would expect."
- Prescriptions not ready for collection (5 responses)
- Not all products available first time (6 responses) – lack of information on when items back in stock "Having a plan if medication isn't available. It's always up to me to sort out of meds can't be sourced but surely the pharmacy could be more proactive"

"Recently I have noticed that the two pharmacies I have used the most cannot fulfil the whole prescription due to having to order something in, leaving me with an owing note. Then I have to keep returning to the pharmacy to see if the medication has come in."

"My pharmacy didn't have the item I needed, so I had to get it from a different borough."

- Closer working with GPs (4 responses) – inconsistent communication about when a prescription will be ready can cause frustration for customers and staff. This can sometimes be met with an abrupt response.
- Problems with prescription or dispensing (4 responses)
- Synchronisation of prescriptions on repeat and for families (2 responses)
- Issues with staff finding the dispensed prescription (group feedback from Phoenix Detached Youth Project)

Notification of prescription ready for collection (4 responses)

Delivery (5 responses)

- Hard to set up home delivery
- Time slot for delivery
- Need simple process to order other items to be delivered with medication
- Collection of empty mediboxes - "would aid as an early alert that the patient is not taking all their medications."

Collaboration with GPs

- Improved collaboration with GPs regarding interactions between medications
- Working together to help the patient get an alternative when medications are unavailable

Space, including storage

- Busy waiting areas, queuing outside, seating (13 responses plus feedback from Phoenix project)
- Limited space for made-up prescriptions and range/quantity of stock (7 responses)

Staffing

- Insufficient or poorly organised staffing (8 responses) – suggested fast track counter and way to alert staff that customers are waiting
- Pharmacist not always available (5 responses)
- Improve customer service (7 responses)
 - Always address customers in a polite manner, and have more professionals on hand to give advice (including group feedback from Phoenix Detached Youth Project) "Several times I have asked for advice but been told the 'right' member of staff isn't working or available."

Cost

- High prices. Need more consistent pricing of over-the-counter medication (3 responses)
- Prescription costs (1 response)

Privacy

- Issues of privacy were raised mainly by young people at Phoenix project "The consultation rooms aren't soundproof" and can be 'claustrophobic'. While some felt they were useful, others didn't know they were an option and would have preferred this to having to explain their sexual health needs in front of other

customers. Having a tick box on the prescription to request a private chat was suggested as a possibility.

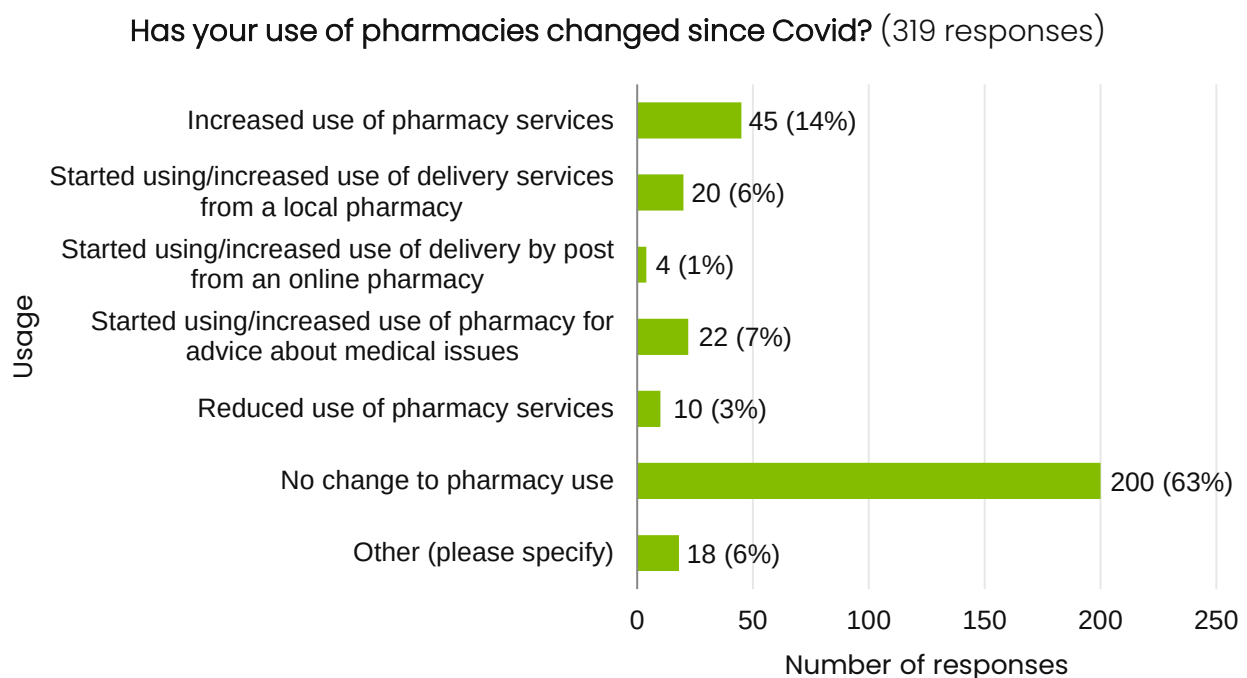
- Others in the main survey also talked about the impact of busy waiting areas on privacy.

Other points raised:

- Can be difficult to get through on the phone – also mentioned by Phoenix project
- Better parking
- No longer able to take sharps for disposal
- “Increase overall use of dosette box provision.”
- Inconsistent service quality for vaccinations – better in a “supermarket pharmacy who had a well rehearsed booking system.”
- “Stop sending me pill “confetti”!!! Cut up strips of medication. Difficult to keep track of and easy to discard by accident.”

Changes in pharmacy use since Covid

People were asked to select all options that applied.



18 people made 'Other' comments which included:

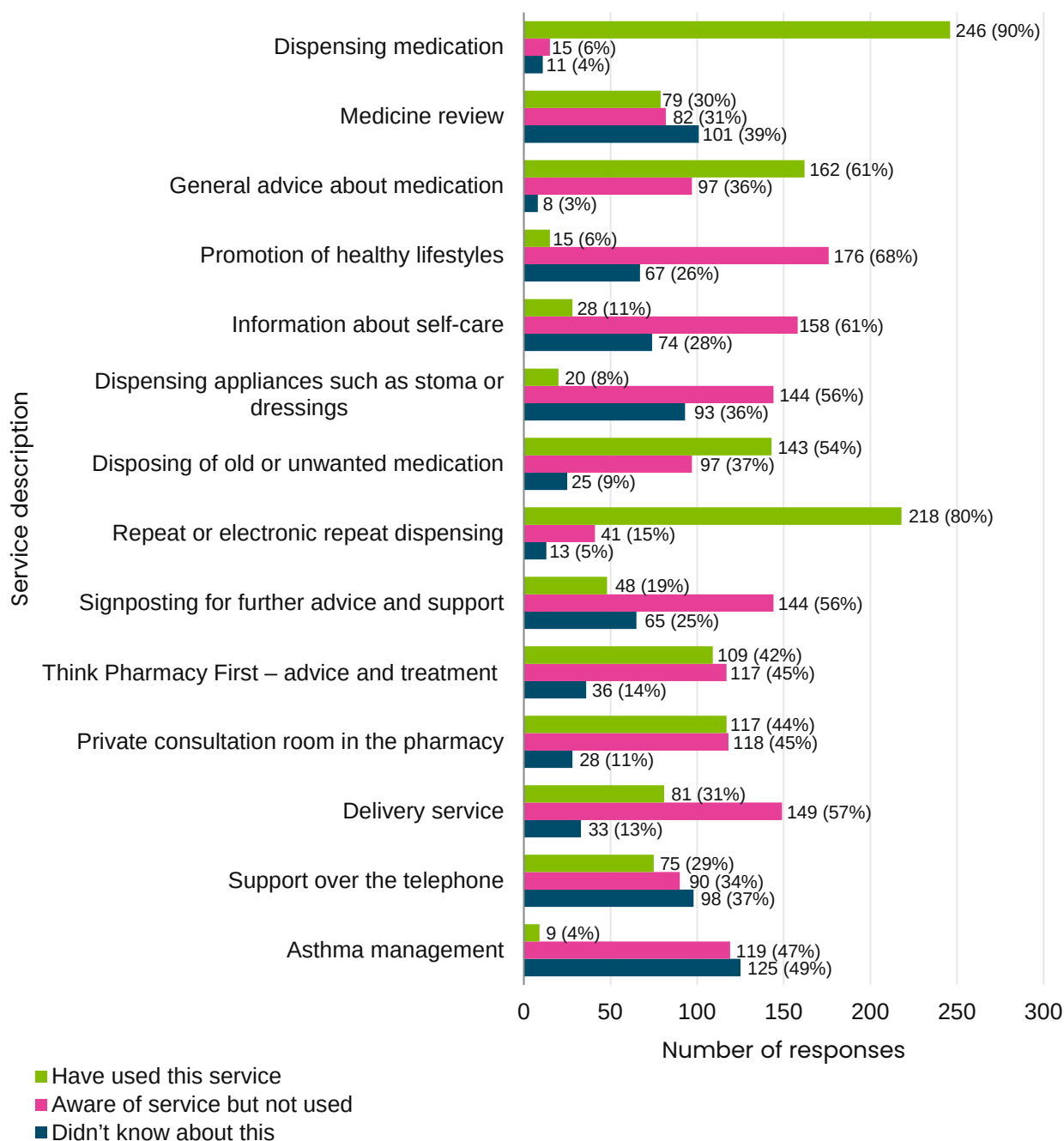
- Increased use of pharmacy to get sanitiser and lateral flow tests (3 responses)

- Increased use of pharmacy for advice about medical issues when unable to see GP (1 response)

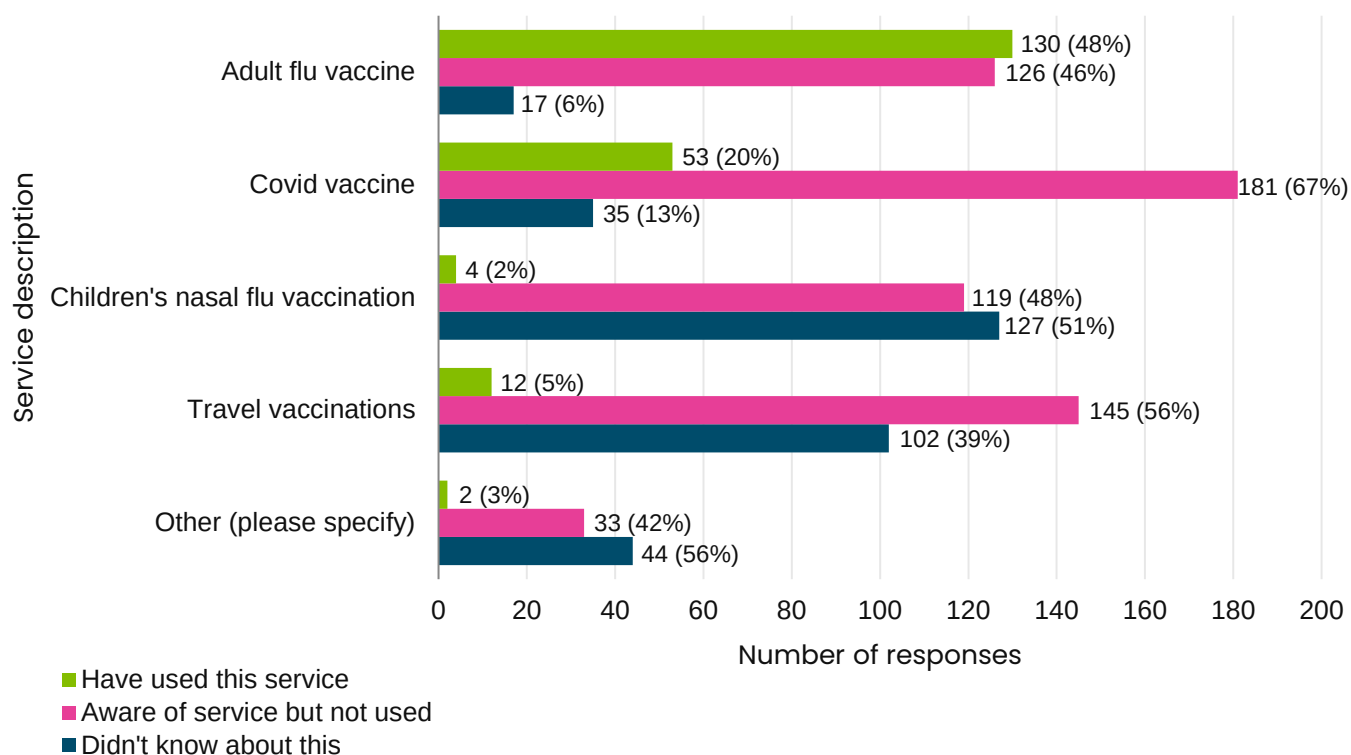
Feedback from Phoenix project indicated that many young people started to get prescriptions delivered during the pandemic and do not plan to return to collecting in person. Others mentioned the negative impact on privacy of having to wait outside the pharmacy when limited numbers were allowed in.

Services available at pharmacies

General pharmacy services

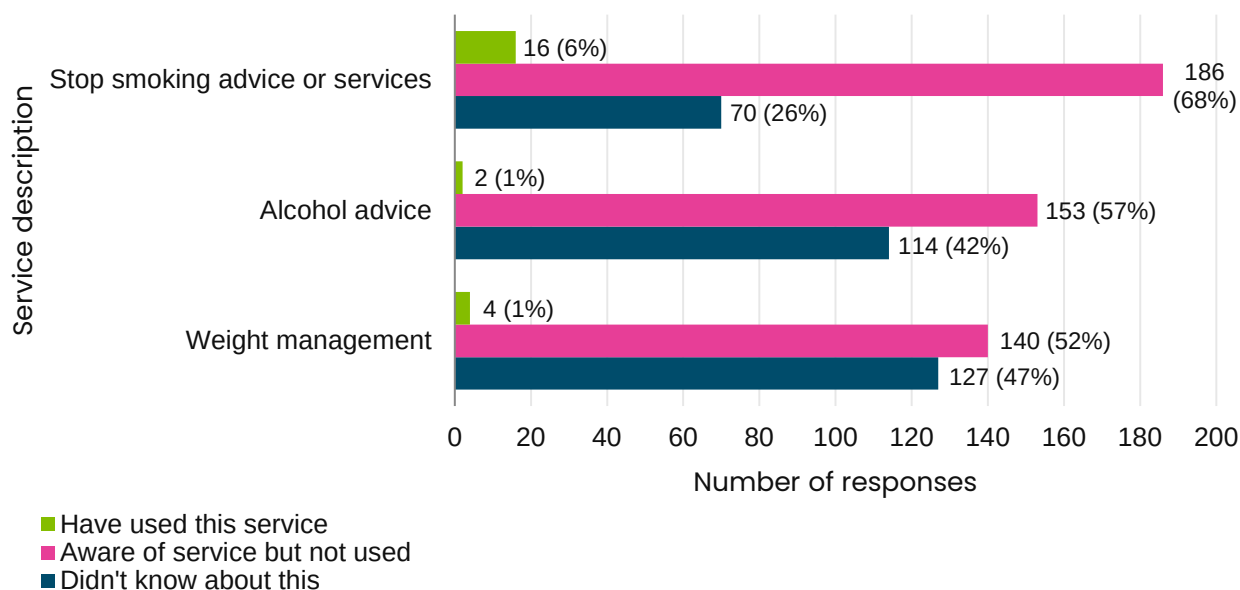


Vaccination services

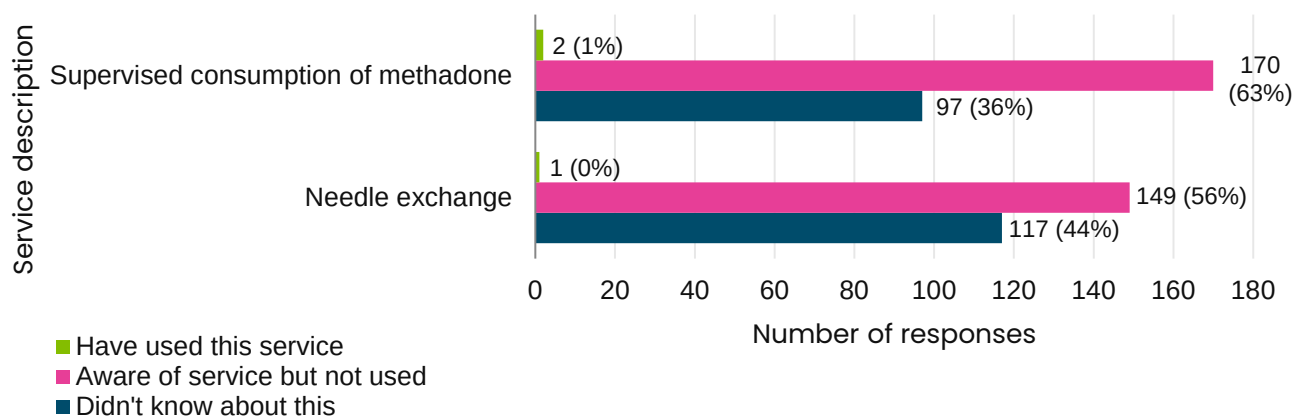


In the 'Other' category, only one person specified the service, noting they were aware that other vaccinations were being offered at their pharmacy but they had not used them. The remaining 78 entries gave no details about the 'other' service referred to and may have been given in error.

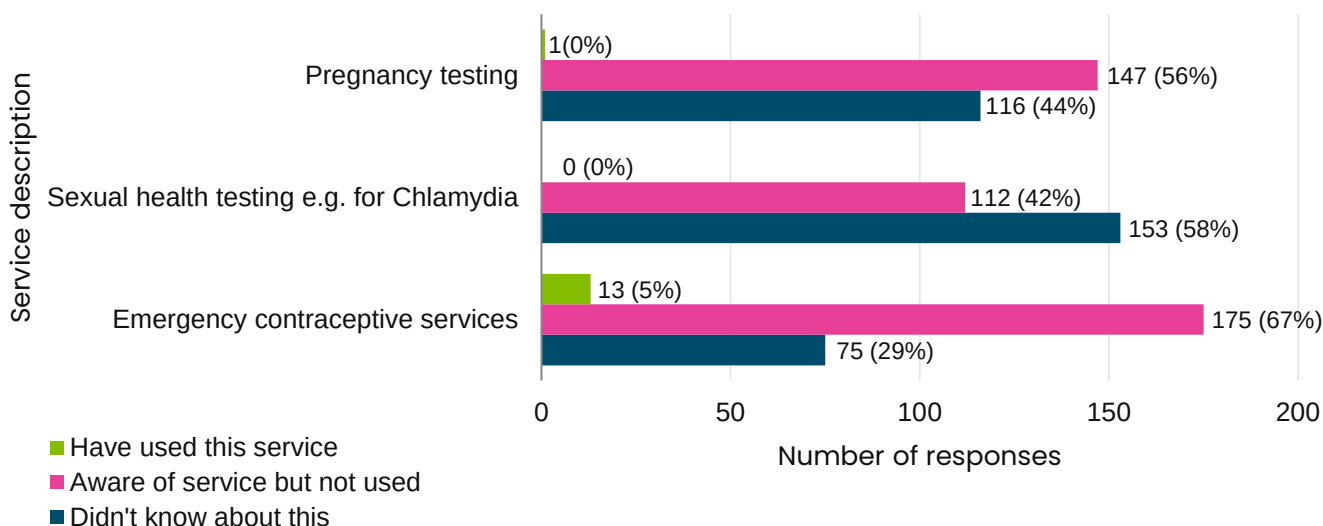
Smoking, alcohol and weight management services



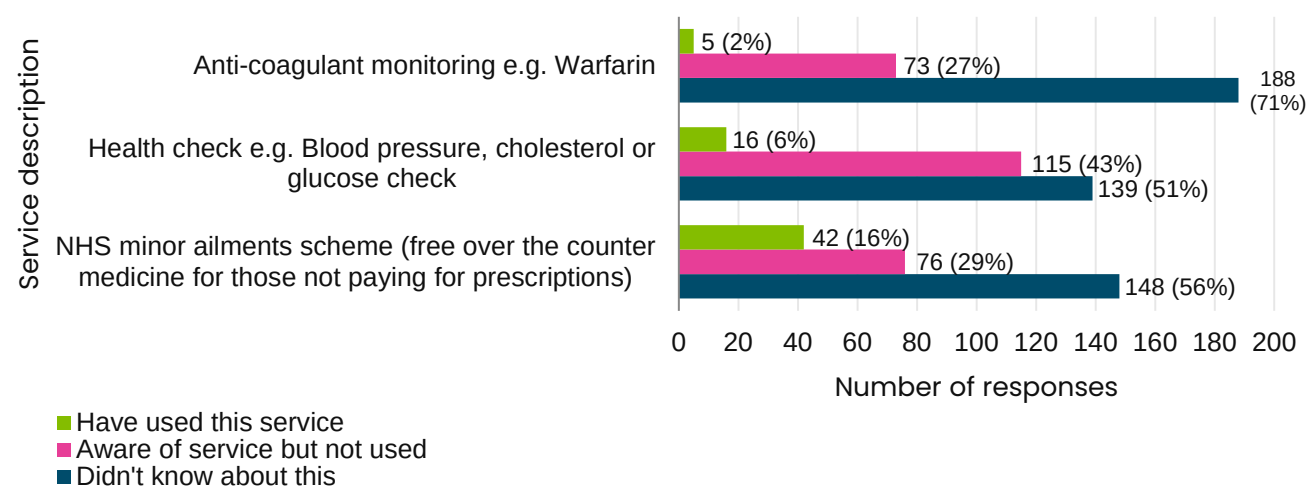
Substance misuse services



Sexual health services



Checks/screening/ monitoring services



Other pharmacy services

5 people told us about additional services they had used or heard about:

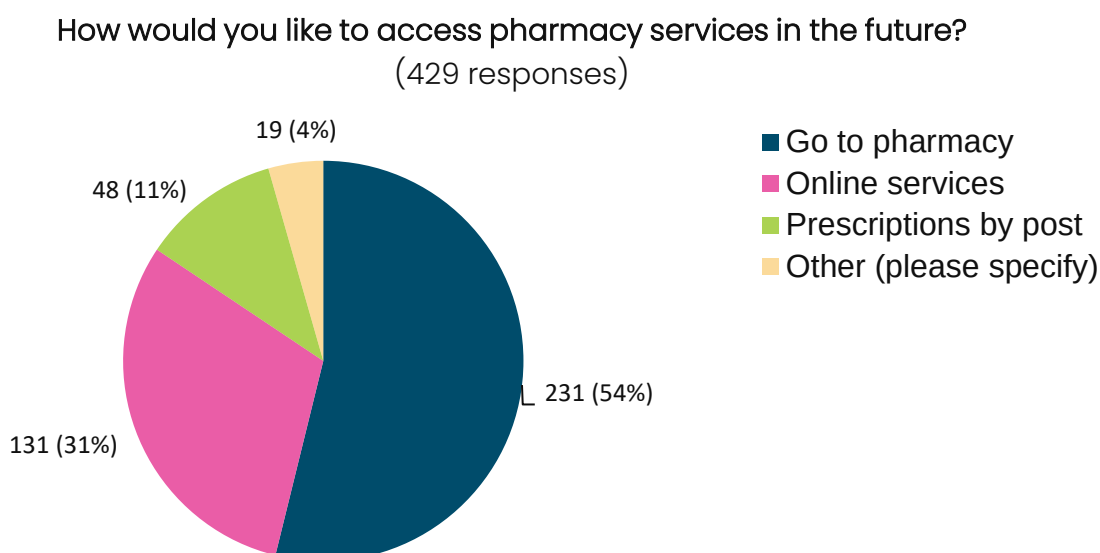
- Catheter supplies
- Mole checks
- Automatic repeat prescribing for HRT patches for a year
- Support with opening child-proof medication
- Phone follow-up after medication change with risk of severe side-effects

Young people in Helping Hands groups at Phoenix Detached Youth Project were unaware of medicine reviews, information about self care, disposing of unwanted medication or private consultation rooms in pharmacies.

They felt all pharmacies should offer C card (free condoms for young people) and Plan B (emergency contraception), particularly since outreach sexual health clinics are not taking place at the moment. There should also be access to sexual health information and condoms.

Developing pharmacy services in the future

People were asked about their preferred way to access pharmacy services in the future and were able to select more than one option. More than half want to be able to visit the pharmacy in person while almost a third would like access to online services.



Responses in the 'Other' category included:

- Delivery (10 responses) – one person specified letter-box sized packages
- Choice/all the above (2 responses)
- Online services provided by **local** pharmacy (1 response)
- Over the phone (1 response)
- Video conversation – (1 response)
- Query box in pharmacy – post form to receive next day answer (1 response)

Suggestions for future services

"I think pharmacies are probably an under-used resource. I was unaware of many of the potential services on offer."

Suggestions for other services that pharmacies could provide in the future:

- Dressing changes
- Routine blood tests
- Urine testing for infections
- Administering anti-biotics

- B12 injections
- Specialised mental health support
- Wellman/Wellwoman service
- “Annual health checks for seniors”
- Visits to clubs for older people to talk about medication and collect expired or unused medication
- Cancer testing e.g. prostate
- Minor surgery e.g. mole removal
- Free try before you buy for health monitoring devices (with returnable deposit) e.g. blood pressure, oxygen levels, glucose levels, Fitbit
- Try before you buy for disability equipment (on site)
- Improved access to dosette/medipack service, free if possible – particularly at the coast
- “Fast track counter service for collection”
- “Minor ailment treatment as can't always get gp appointments at the time required”
- Ability to make appointment with GP

Acknowledgements

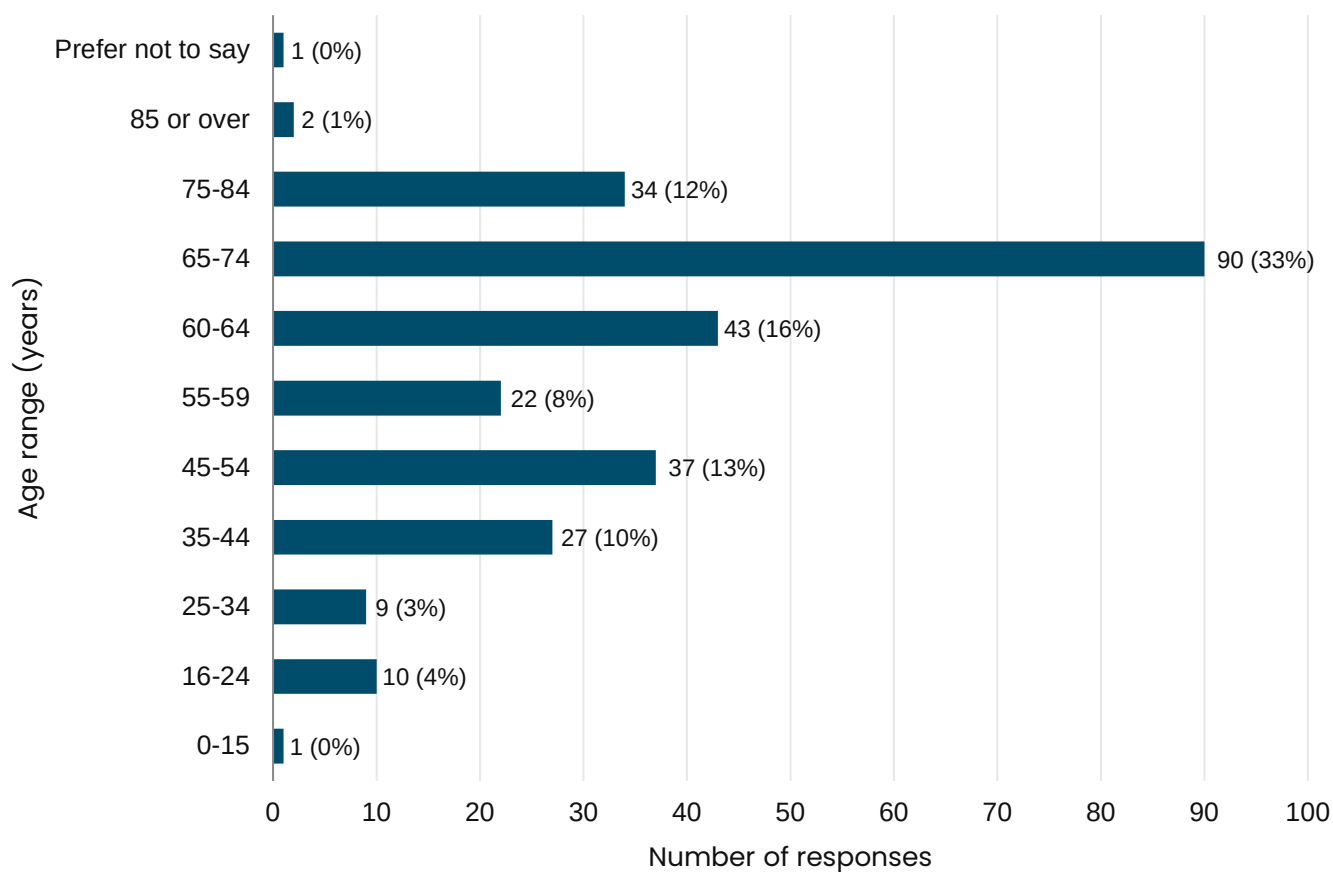
We would like to thank pharmacies and all our associates for helping to gather feedback, and members of the public who took the time to share their experiences and suggestions.

Demographics

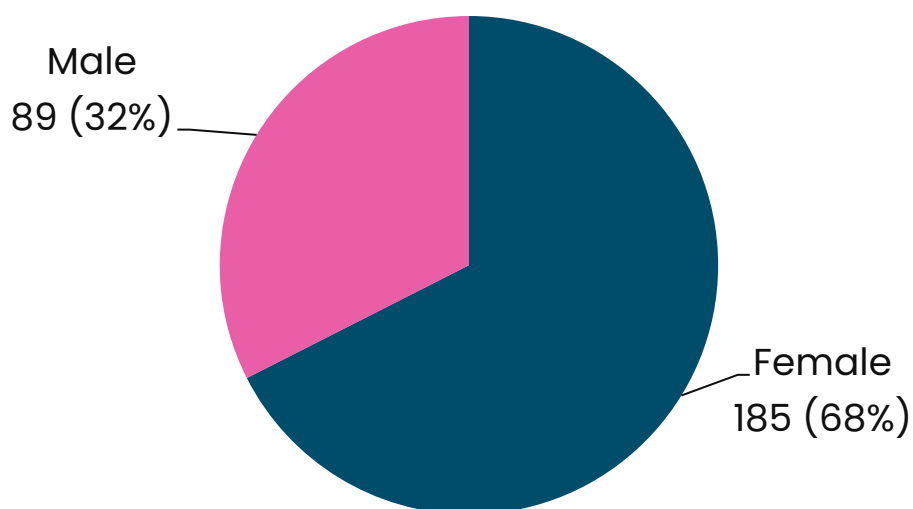
Postcode (272 responses)

First part of postcode	Number of responses		First part of postcode	Number of responses	
NE12	41	15%	NE27	20	7%
NE13	4	1%	NE28	54	20%
NE15	2	1%	NE29	44	16%
NE22	1	0%	NE30	39	14%
NE23	7	3%	NE37	1	0%
NE25	27	10%	NE42	1	0%
NE26	28	10%	NE61	3	1%

Age (276 responses)



Sex (274 responses)

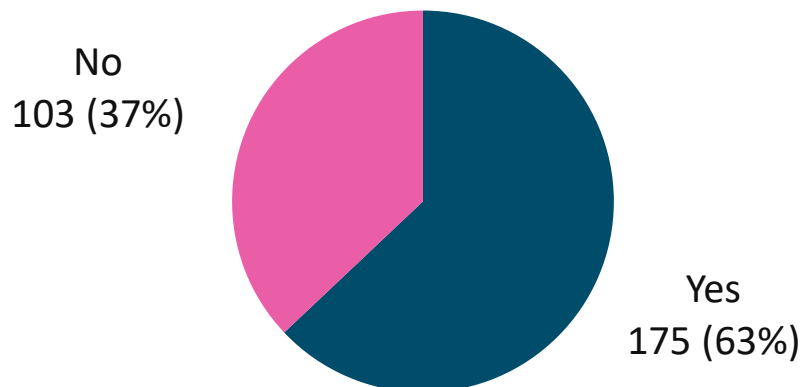


Ethnic group (275 responses)

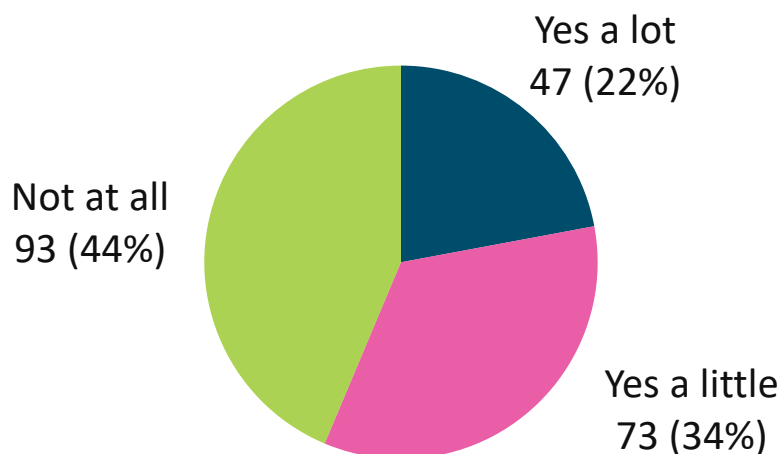
What is your ethnic group? Please choose an option that best describes your ethnic group or background	Number of responses	
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	3	1%
Asian or Asian British: Any other Asian background	1	0%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	1	0%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	1	0%
White: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	260	95%
White: Irish	2	1%
White: Any other White background	4	1%
Prefer not to say	3	1%

Long term physical or mental health conditions

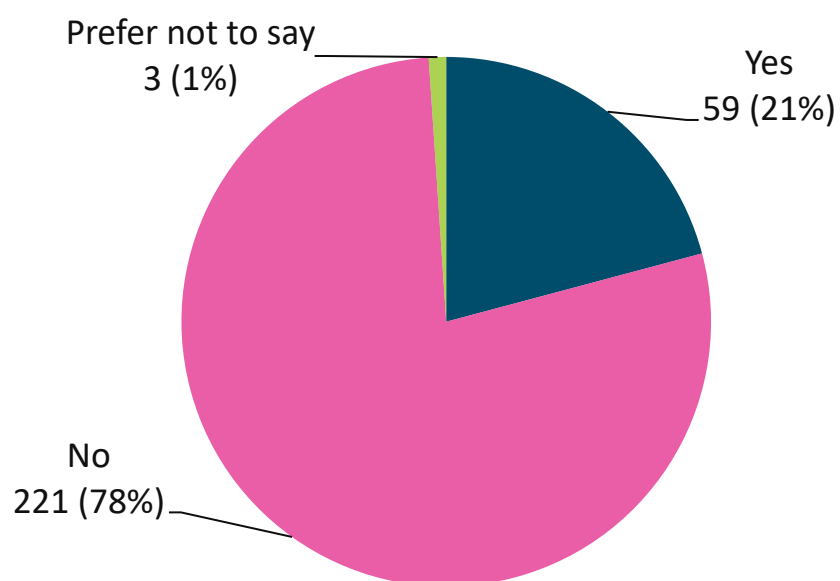
Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?
(278 responses)



If yes, do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities? (213 responses)



Caring responsibilities (283 responses)





healthwatch

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