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## **Healthwatch Together**

Healthwatch was established in April 2013 as part of the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act, 2012. Healthwatch are the independent consumer voice for health and social care, listening to the views of local people with the aim to make services work for those who use them.

When working across Lancashire and South Cumbria, four local Healthwatch come together to form 'Healthwatch Together', working in partnership across the footprint. Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen, Healthwatch Blackpool, Healthwatch Cumberland, Healthwatch Lancashire and Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness each operate in their own geographical area and are their own unique entity, providing a local approach to community engagement.

Healthwatch Cumberland and Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness did not take part in this particular project.

## **Introduction and Context**

Healthwatch Together are working with colleagues from Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board, 'Blackpool Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Lancashire County Council to hear about residents' experiences of accessing community pharmacy services.

Community pharmacies, also known as 'chemists', can be found in a range of settings e.g. on the high street, in supermarkets, local housing estates and also online.

The feedback and experiences will help shape developments and feed directly into the 'Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment' (PNA), which happens every three years. The purpose of the PNA is to review community pharmacy services within an area and identify any areas of unmet need. This will then shape improvements and further developments of pharmacy services going forward.

To find out more see:

Blackpool- <https://bit.ly/3Yw9WVX>

Lancashire- <https://bit.ly/4lwpvqz>

Blackburn with Darwen- <https://bit.ly/3G9Dgvb>

The three areas referred to in this report are the areas covered by the three Health and Wellbeing Boards. The Health and Wellbeing Board are required to consult with stakeholders, such as Healthwatch, when writing the PNA. As a result, Healthwatch Together are ensuring patient experience of community pharmacy services is at the heart of the assessment.

Each local Healthwatch were responsible for engaging with patients within their area. The goal was to gather qualitative and quantitative feedback to influence the PNA, highlighting trends in accessing community pharmacy services.

Healthwatch Together would like to thank all those who took the time to share their experiences of their local pharmacy. We are extremely appreciative to all of the people that chose to take part in and support our survey.



## **Executive Summary**

Healthwatch Together have collected feedback from residents across Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire to understand patient use and preferences relating to community pharmacy services. Through distributing an online survey, Healthwatch Together engaged with 254 people between February and April 2025 who have provided the insight that features in this report.

### **Key Findings**

The most frequent reasons given by residents for visiting a pharmacy were:

–

- To get a prescription for myself
- To get a prescription for someone else
- To buy medicines for myself

This visit usually takes place monthly and the preferred time for visiting was between 5pm and 8pm followed by 'I don't have a preference' and the majority of respondents do not have preference for the day they visit, followed by weekdays in general.

The key factors which influence residents' choice of pharmacy were: –

- Close to home
- Close to GP surgery
- It is easy to get to the pharmacy.
- It is easy to park at the pharmacy.

Most residents travelled to the pharmacy by car, although a high number also walked to the pharmacy and the journey took 5–15 minutes.

There was a good awareness of Pharmacy First amongst residents, however the majority of respondents had not taken up this service.

The majority of respondents rated their pharmacy as 'Excellent' or 'Good' with only eight people rating it as 'Poor' or 'Very poor.'

## Methodology

Healthwatch Together produced a questionnaire, with input from key stakeholders from the local authorities, in order to collect data and insights. This survey was distributed by Healthwatch Together via all social media channels and via face-to-face engagement.

Local Healthwatch	Total number of respondents
Blackburn with Darwen	81 (32%)
Blackpool	64 (25%)
Lancashire	109 (43%)
	<b>254 respondents (100%)</b>

## Postcodes by Locality

Blackburn with Darwen	Number of respondents
BB1	25
BB2	28
BB3	28

Blackpool	Number of respondents
FY1	10
FY2	12
FY3	16
FY4	15
FY5	11

Lancashire	Number of respondents
BB1	3
BB4	9
BB5	2
BB6	1
BB7	14
BB8	1

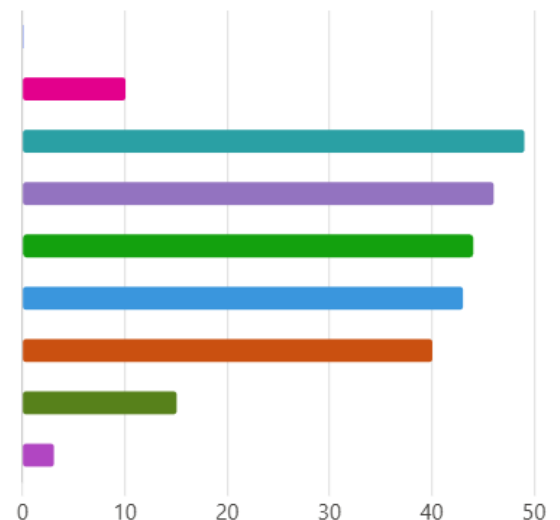
BB9	7
BB10	1
<b>Lancashire (continued)</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
BB12	1
BL3	1
FY3	2
FY5	10
FY6	1
FY7	4
FY8	7
LA1	3
OL13	4
PR1	6
PR2	5
PR3	4
PR4	5
PR5	7
PR6	2
PR25	6
PR26	2
WN5	1

## Demographics of Survey Respondents

The survey was completed by 254 respondents across Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire. The graphs below display the demographic information of those who took part.

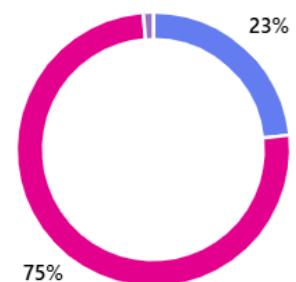
### What is your age?

Under 18	0
18-24	10
25-34	49
35-44	46
45-54	44
55-64	43
65-74	40
75+	15
Prefer not to say	3



### What is your gender?

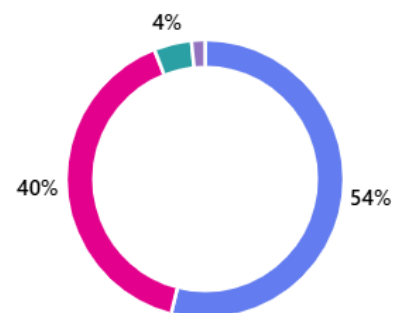
Male	59
Female	191
Non-binary	0
Prefer not to say	3
Other	0



### Do you have a long-term health condition or disability?

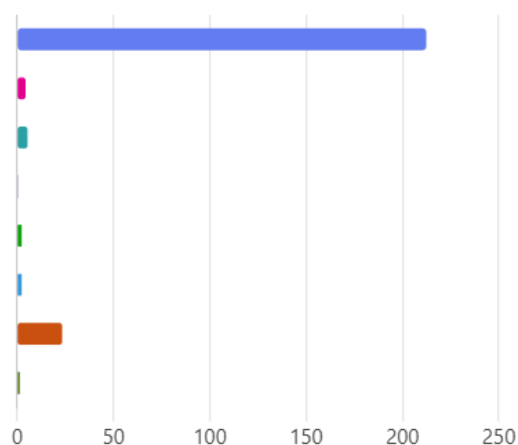


● Yes	136
● No	101
● Prefer not to say	11
● Other	4



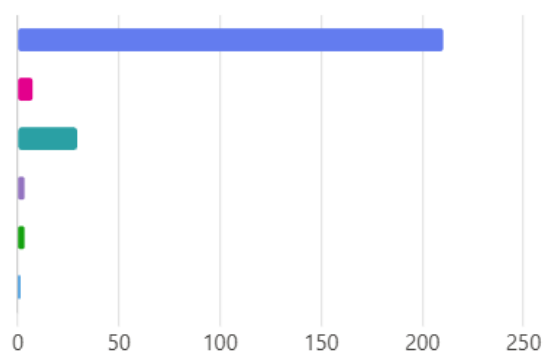
## What is your sexual orientation?

● Heterosexual or straight	212
● Bisexual	4
● Gay or lesbian	5
● Pansexual	0
● Asexual	2
● Not sure	2
● Prefer not to say	23
● Other	1



## What is your ethnicity?

● White/White British (English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish, Irish, any other White British)	210
● Black/Black British (African, Caribbean, any other Black background)	7
● Asian/Asian British (Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, any other Asian background)	29
● Mixed/Multiple Ethnic groups	3
● Rather not say	3
● Other	1



## Variation in demographics across the localities

The age category that participants most frequently belonged to differed within each area:

Blackburn with Darwen – 35–44 age group

Blackpool – 25 to 34 age group

Lancashire – 55 to 64 age group

34% of respondents from Blackpool were under the age of 35, compared with 19% in Blackburn with Darwen and 20% in Lancashire.

Each area had more female respondents than male, although particularly higher in Blackburn with Darwen at 83% compared with 73% in Blackpool and three respondents preferred not to state their gender.

The sexual orientation of participants was fairly consistent within each area. 60% of the participants who responded gay, or lesbian resided in Blackpool, and 75% of bisexual respondents live in Lancashire.

Each area had predominantly White/White British respondents. Blackburn with Darwen had the highest proportion of Asian/Asian British participants at 36%.

51% of respondents in both Blackpool and Lancashire had a long-term health condition or disability, whilst Blackburn with Darwen was higher at 62%.



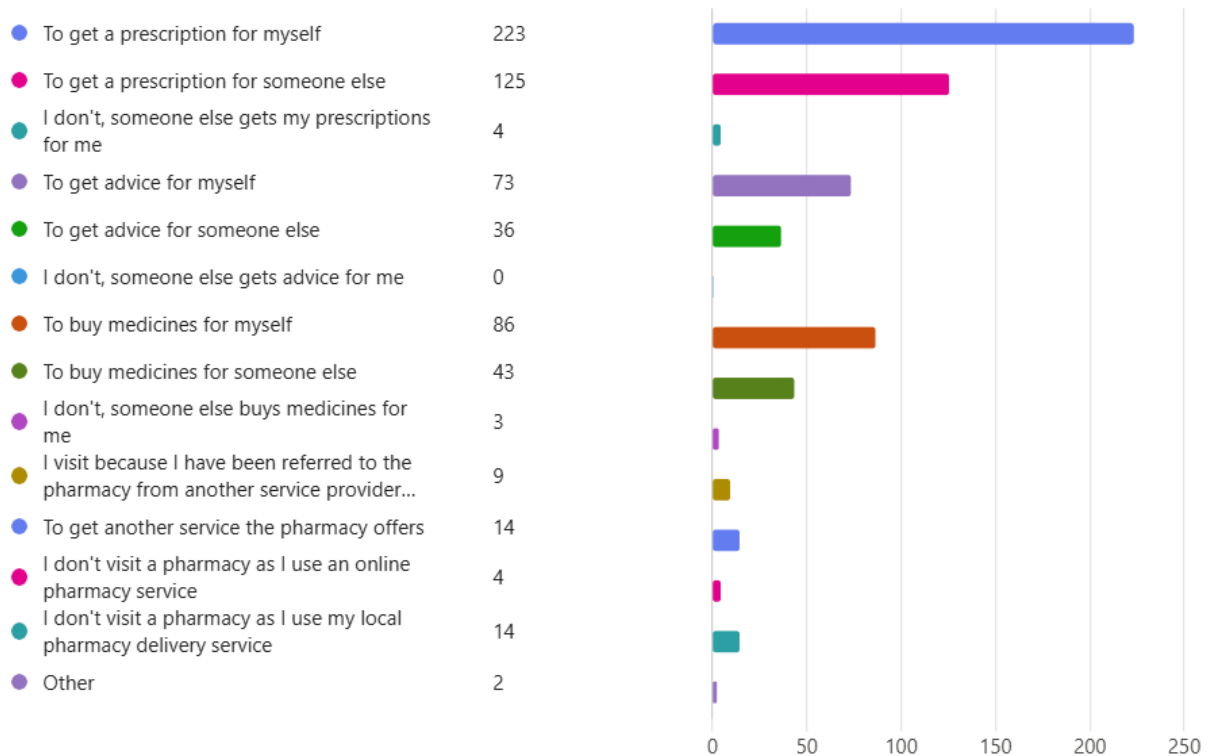
# Survey Insights



# Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

**The total number of responses are presented below together with the split of responses by each area.**

1. Why do you usually visit a pharmacy? Please tick any or all that apply.



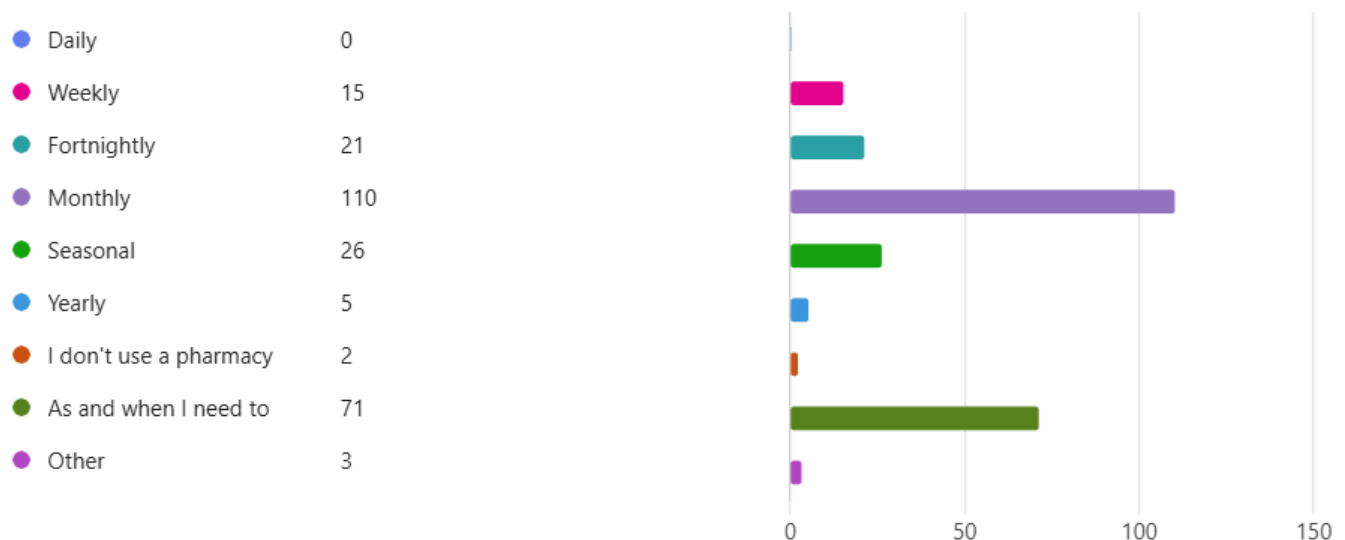
## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

Why do you usually visit a pharmacy? Tick all that apply	Blackburn with Darwen %	Blackpool %	Lancashire %
To get a prescription for myself	85	87	86
To get a prescription for someone else	56	45	46
I don't, someone else gets my prescriptions for me	2	2	2
To get advice for myself	37	14	17
To get advice for someone else	19	8	14
I don't, someone else gets advice for me	-	-	-
To buy medicines for myself	38	30	20
To buy medicines for someone else	20	14	12
I don't, someone else buys medicines for me	4	-	-
I visit because I have been referred to the pharmacy from another service provider	4	2	5
To get another service the pharmacy offers	6	-	6
I don't visit a pharmacy as I use an online pharmacy service	1	3	2
I don't visit a pharmacy as I use my local pharmacy delivery service	9	6	2
Other	-	-	2

"Other" included "To ask about delivery options" and "I don't really go."

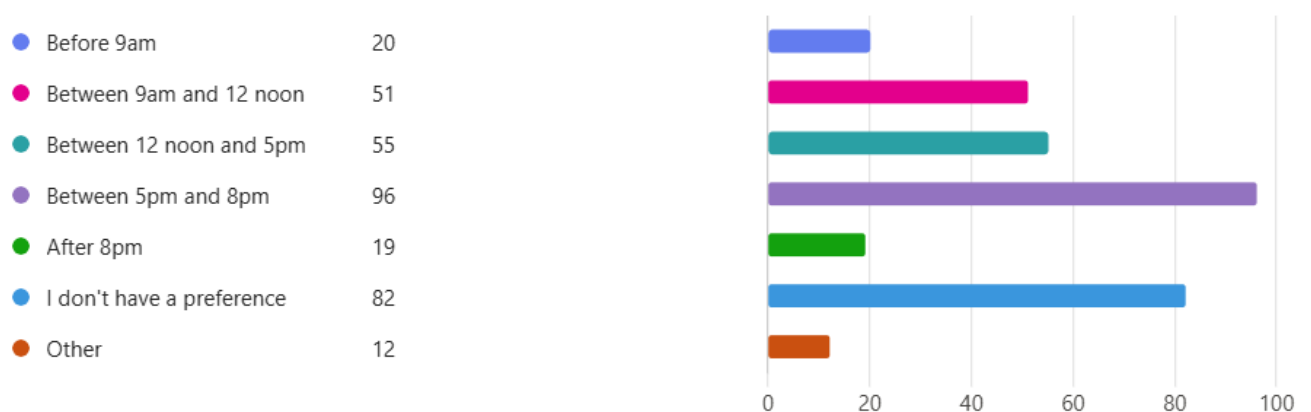
## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

### How often do you use a pharmacy?



Responses to "other" included "Bi-monthly," "Every 8 weeks" and "Never".

### What time is most convenient for you to use a pharmacy? Tick any and all that apply.



Responses in "other" category included "Would prefer weekends"; "Weekends"; "At the weekend"; "When I am on lunch or after work"; "When I am not at work and can get there"; "Depends on the day, weekdays mainly after 5pm, weekends anytime"; "When I have been to the doctor"; "When they can get it"; "When it's quiet"; "Outside work hours"; "When mum needs it" and "Whenever we need."

## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

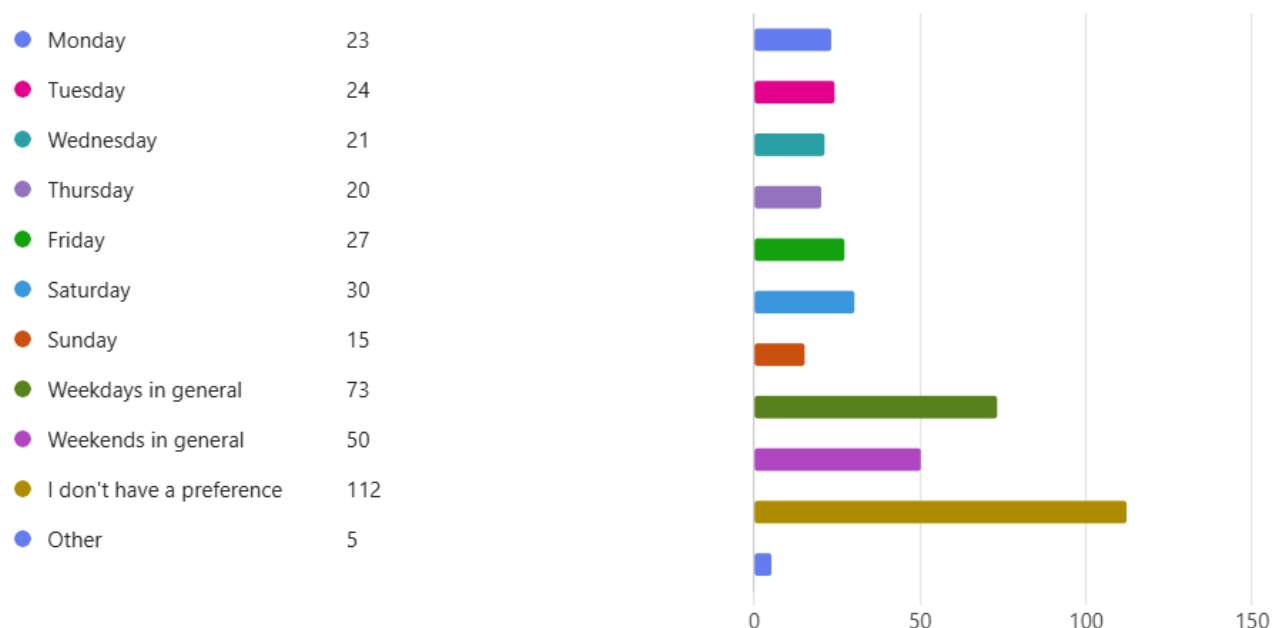
The most convenient time to use a pharmacy varied depending on the area:

Blackburn with Darwen –Between 12 noon and 5pm (although there were similar numbers of responses for between 9am and 12pm and between 5pm and 8pm)

Blackpool –Over half of respondents stated between 5pm and 8pm

Lancashire – “I don’t have a preference” was the highest response but a similar number was received for between 5pm and 8pm.

**What day is the most convenient for you to use the pharmacy? Tick any and all that apply.**



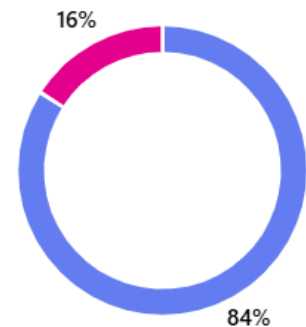
Responses to “Other” included “Usually after I go to the doctor;” “Around work;” “I go when I need to;” “Weekends sometimes” and “When they can get.”

The majority of respondents from each area stated, “I don’t have a preference,” with 43% of responses from Blackburn with Darwen, 47% of responses from Blackpool and 40% of responses from Lancashire.

## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

**Have you heard that you can now access your pharmacy for 7 common conditions instead of going to your doctor? (Sore throats, insect bites, shingles, UTIs, sinusitis, impetigo and ear infections)**

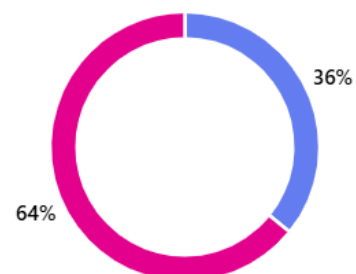
● Yes 211  
● No 40



The "no" responses were split as 17% Blackburn with Darwen, 35% Blackpool and 48% Lancashire.

**If you replied yes, have you accessed pharmacy support for these conditions?**

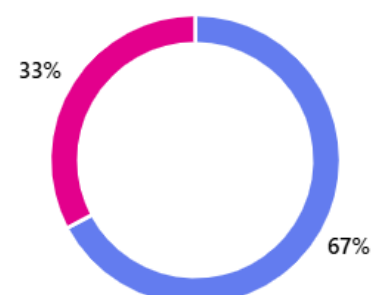
● Yes 91  
● No 163



The "no" responses were split as 26% Blackburn with Darwen, 32% Blackpool and 42% Lancashire.

**Did you find the support helpful for these conditions from the pharmacy?**

● Yes 113  
● No 55





## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

The “no” responses were split as 22% Blackburn with Darwen, 20% Blackpool and 58% Lancashire.

### **If no, please tell us what barriers/ issues you faced**

25 people stated that they had not had to use this service and two people stated that they did not know about it. Other feedback included: –



“I’ll send people there when it is clearly inappropriate and not one of the 7 conditions. For example, an asthmatic with a bad chest infection. I think I’ll is using the pharmacist as another dumping ground for inappropriate care. There’s nothing wrong with the pharmacy itself.”

“Busy waiting area, and uncomfortable in very small room in 1-2-1 basis.”

“I am in my eighties, and I have quite a lot of medications that I need to take. They make them up in blister packs which helps me remember what to take. I recently got put on some new painkillers which are pretty strong, and I asked them to add them to the blister packs but they wouldn’t but they didn’t explain it very well to be honest. I have mobility issues, and I asked about them delivering the medicines to my home. They were not helpful at all and wouldn’t let me arrange deliveries because I was not “eligible” so I went back with my daughter and suddenly they could do deliveries it’s a bit rubbish really.”

“I don’t go much, the family sort it.”

“I have said no but only because when I went to the pharmacy with a throat and ear infection, I was referred to the doctor as my chest had a slight rash. I spoke to a staff member on the pharmacy counter who then spoke to the pharmacist, the pharmacist didn’t actually come and look at me or speak to me in person. All communication was via the member of staff at the counter. I got a doctor’s appointment, and I was prescribed the same medication I could’ve received at the pharmacy that morning if the pharmacist has physically seen me.”

“I found the staff were far too busy in the first instance and they need better funding of services as they looked stretched.”



## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

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"I needed a follow up visit with a doctor as the initial pharmacy consultation did not fully address the issue."

"I needed antibiotics for a long term condition I have but as it wasn't officially one of the 5 technically I couldn't get help so had to still go GP and then back to my pharmacy, so took a GP appointment which really wasn't needed just for red tape issues as both GP and Pharmacy thought it was a bit silly as they both knew about my condition but red tape is red tape, though without it would have saved time and appointment for others."

"I once needed the morning-after pill, and the man would not give it to me because of his religion. He didn't tell me this, but the lady at the next pharmacy told me he wouldn't because of his beliefs, and that he should have told me where I could get help."

"I still have to go to the drs because of my medications for review."

"I typically just buy the medication needed, and/or visit a GP if it's an infection."

"It wasn't for me it was for my husband - we were aware he had an ear infection and was advised Otomize spray from the pharmacy but they couldn't give it under the scheme as he was over 16 so had to go to the GP/111 so had to waste time getting an appointment that could have been used by someone else to get a product we knew was needed but could have been given hours before by the pharmacy."

"It felt like the pharmacist wasn't interested and was annoyed that I had brought my child to the pharmacy."

"It's hard getting deliveries arranged I care for my mum and pick things up for her. But they won't arrange delivery because of where we live it's "too far"."

"It was good because we got what we needed but it was a struggle."

"They're usually very busy."

"Not private enough just a box with a curtains."

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## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback



"It was appalling I went to them to get something checked out whilst I was on holiday in York, and they couldn't do anything for me. The pain I was in was unbelievable so I ended up coming home to A and E at Preston they were brilliant with me, but it shouldn't have come to that."

"I used to go to Bacup pharmacy, but they never stocked the right brand for what I needed so I have chosen to go to Stacksteads because I can actually get what I need from them."

"My daughter was referred to the local pharmacy from the GP practice after requesting an appointment for a UTI. The pharmacist referred her back to the GP. A waste of everybody's time really. When you are in pain, you just want help, not to be passed back and forth. The patient should remain everyone's priority, not 'who is responsible for the problem' being presented."

"Support from pharmacist helpful but conditions for interview not very conducive to privacy or comfort."

"The only issue I've found is not being able to use the service for my mother's UTI as she is over 65."

"The main issue is it's never open at weekends I always need to leave early to get to it."

"Our local pharmacy shut."

"It's hard getting the right tablets they're never in stock."

"They just told me to go to walk In Centre so was a waste of time."

"Not enough info about pharmacy first."

"Out of hours – had trouble getting back to pharmacy with only part of my prescription being available."

"Just hard to fit around my work patterns."

"They don't advise on holistic remedies."

One person shared a compliment,

"The guy at Bacup Pharmacy was brilliant. He took the time to listen to me and treated me sensitively."



## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

Please select one of the following that best applies to you:	Total number of responses
I use the same pharmacy all of the time	166
I use different pharmacies but visit one most often	64
I use different pharmacies all of the time	13
I access online pharmacy services	2
I never use a pharmacy	2
Other	4

Responses to "Other" included,

"I use the same pharmacy to collect my regular prescription as that is the closest to my GP, however when I have been ill and needed general medication, I have gone to a pharmacy closer to home."

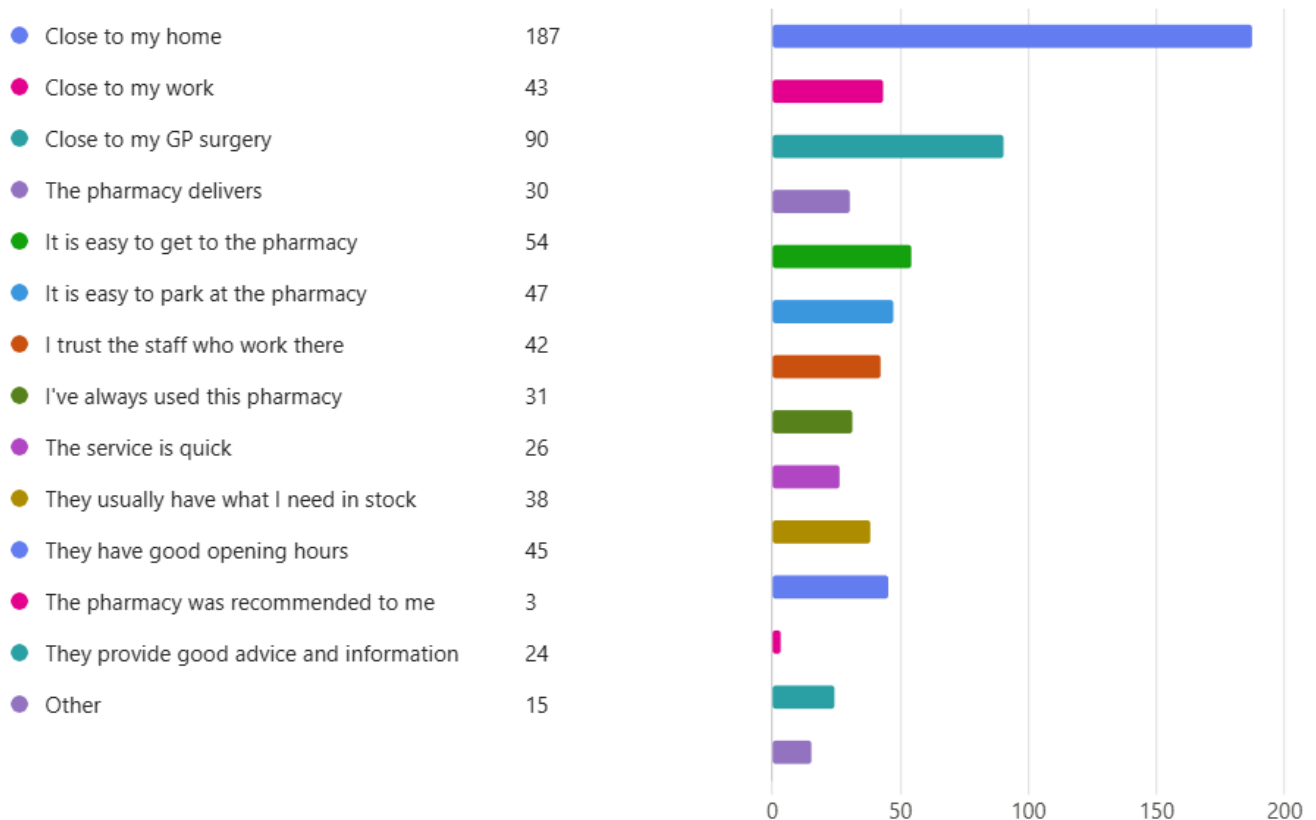
"Just use for delivery service."

"Any around Burnley and Colne it depends where I am as to which I go it."

"I go where I need."

## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

**We would like to know what influences your choice of pharmacy. Please tick all the statements that apply to you.**



Responses in "Other" included: –

"My local pharmacy staff are always polite and helpful. Some pharmacies staff too busy looking at phone or chatting to each other."

"Sometimes the queues are massive."

"Sometimes I have to travel across town."

"The pharmacy was recommended to me."

"They provide a 24hour machine to collect your prescription from."

"GP automatically connects as it is a joined to the surgery."

"GP automatically sends to this particular one."

"I order repeat prescriptions through NHS online and collect from pharmacy."

"I work there."

## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback



"It is the one I gave to my GP when I registered there."

"Parking available, convenience to my route, fast service."

"The closest one there."

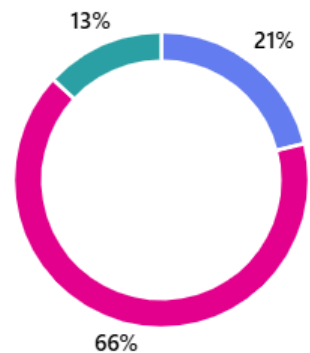
"Supposedly delivers."

"I get mine and my family's prescriptions delivered there."

"I don't use the pharmacy."

### Is there a more convenient and/or closer pharmacy that you don't use?

● Yes	53
● No	166
● Not sure	33



### If yes, can you provide more information about why you do not use this pharmacy?

The following themes were identified from the responses: -

#### ***Reputation and reliability***



"Unsatisfactory service"

"It doesn't provide what I want."

"It's crap."

"Poor reputation."

#### **Issues with prescriptions and stock levels**

"Prescription was never ready even after leaving at least 3 days."

"They don't always have a repeat prescription item in."

"Too slow ... prescriptions take 5 days to be ready."



## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback



"They always have to order medication in."

"Very small shop. Not much to choose from."

"They never have anything in stock."

"Can't always get the medicine I want from the closest one."

### **Parking**

"The road is unsafe and too many crossings."

"Nowhere to park."

"I have one closer to home (Devonshire Road) but hard to get parking nearby sometimes."

"No parking that is close."

### **Opening Hours**

"Closed when I get home from work and doesn't open weekends."

"There a more local chemist but the opening hours don't fit with my working hours so prefer to go where I know it will be open, and they deliver excellent service."

"It doesn't deliver, and the others close too early."

"Poor opening hours."

### **Staff Attitudes**

"They weren't helpful."

"Not approachable staff."

"They are really quite rude towards me. Either ignoring me or grunting at me. Everybody else gets greeted and smiles."

"I used them to have a prescription sent from the doctor and when I rang them to check if it was there the person on the phone was very rude. I now no longer get prescriptions sent there."

"I used to use it, but the service was extremely slow and staff not very helpful."



## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

### Pharmacy Closures

“The more convenient pharmacy for me has actually closed, leaving me with no choice but to use the local one. It was more convenient because it remained open until late, therefore I was able to collect my prescriptions after work.”

“Our local pharmacy shut.”

### Positive features of the pharmacy used.

“During covid could not deliver meds unless you paid was recommended Blackpool Pharmacy by covid help line excellent Pharmacy.”

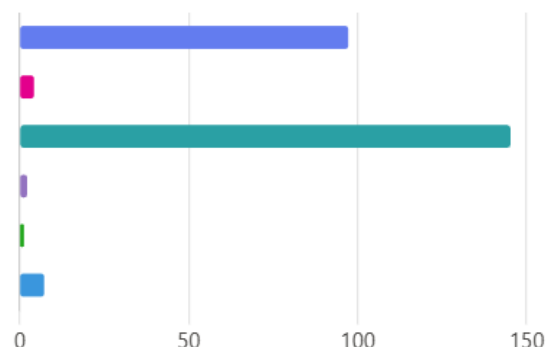
“I’ve been using the same pharmacy for ages, they’re good and always have my meds when I need them.”

“The pharmacy I continue to use is one I have used for 5 years, and I have continued to use it even though I have moved house, the staff know me, and I have a good relationship with them.”

“The other pharmacy has a wider range of products, more services, and is overall bigger so everything is usually in stock.”

### How do you usually travel to a pharmacy?

● Walk	97
● Bus	4
● Car	145
● Taxi	2
● Bicycle	1
● Other	7



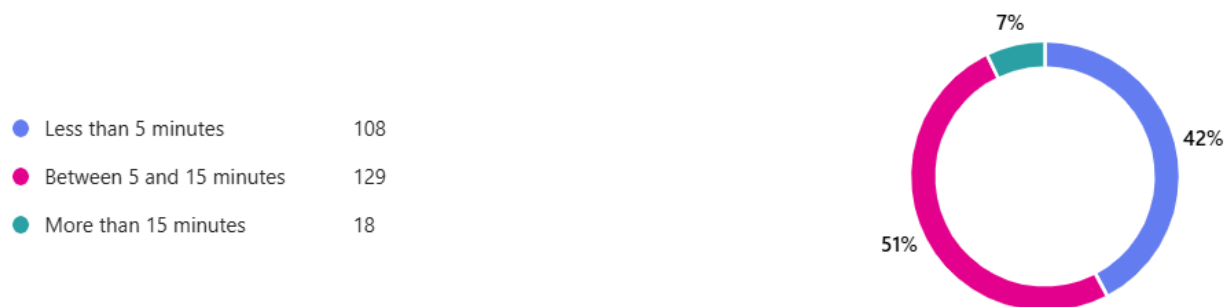
Answers within “Other” included “Son,” “Housebound,” “Depends,” “Someone else goes for me,” “Family,” “I don’t go to the pharmacy” and “They deliver.”



## Community Pharmacy Survey Feedback

The most common responses for each area were to travel by car followed by 'walk.' None of the respondents from Blackpool stated that they caught the bus to the pharmacy.

### How long does it usually take you to travel to a pharmacy?



The highest number of responses for 'Less than 5 minutes' were from Blackburn with Darwen residents, however the responses from Lancashire and Blackpool were also high. The highest proportion of responses for 'Between 5 and 15 minutes' were from Lancashire residents. The majority of responses for 'More than 15 minutes' were from Lancashire residents.

### How would you rate your overall experience accessing pharmacy services?



**44%** of Blackburn with Darwen responses were 'Excellent', **42%** were 'Good' and **11%** were 'Satisfactory'. **36%** of Blackpool responses were 'Excellent', **44%** were 'Good' and **19%** were 'Satisfactory'. **23%** of Lancashire responses were 'Excellent', **46%** were 'Good' and **21%** were 'Satisfactory'.

The three responses for Very Poor were all from Lancashire residents whilst the five poor responses were split across all three areas.

# Conclusions and Next Steps

Healthwatch Together has gathered patient experiences and preferences relating to community pharmacy services, in order to inform the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire.

Of the feedback collected, it appears that overall, patients are satisfied with the service that their pharmacy provides. We are extremely grateful to those who chose to share their feedback that features in the report.

Healthwatch Together will continue to give local people the opportunity to share their experiences of health and care.