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10 January 2025

Don Beckett
Director
Healthwatch Worcestershire
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Dear Don,

RE: Pharmacy Survey Report 2024

Thank you for sharing your *Pharmacy Summer Survey Report 2024* and the associated recommendations. The feedback that you have collected is extremely helpful and will be shared with all of the Programme Boards across our Integrated Care System (ICS) for consideration.

The ICB pharmacy leads and Worcestershire Place Communications Cell, which includes representation from health and care partners within Worcestershire, have reviewed the recommendations and the system response is set out below.

Further promote information about pharmacy services to the public.

Since August 2024, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) has been working with healthcare professionals to identify opportunities to further engage with patients and public on the changes to pharmacy-based services.

Together with Community Pharmacy Herefordshire and Worcestershire (CPHW, formerly referred to as the Local Pharmaceutical Committee LPC) the ICB worked to connect with health and social care professionals; the voluntary community sector alliance and all education settings as examples to reach wider audiences.

A variety of communication formats and channels have been used to cascade information about the services available at community pharmacies. This includes for example, through individuals, community groups and partner organisations.

Information has also been cascaded to nurseries, primary and secondary schools, NHS organisations, Council community hubs and Carers Associations.

To support this, a suite of resources in different formats was created and shared to all organisations to promote the pharmacy services available, including posters, video and digital screen advertising, ad copy for local publications, newsletters and social media images and messages.

This initiative and promotional resources have been commended at local and regional NHS level and so far, has been accessed over 5300 times since first publication mid-September. Additional materials will continue to be added to these resources as they develop.

In addition to the links various narratives have been submitted for publication into parish newsletters; Council websites; County wide magazines; press releases; community hubs who have also requested hard copy posters and small business cards which have been printed and sent out.

An easy read leaflet version on Pharmacy Services is also in production. Of course, we recognise there is always more that we can do to promote these services, and we will identify further opportunities during 2025.

Promote the additional services that pharmacies can provide.

The ICS website is continually updated with the information on the range of services available from community pharmacies. This information is available at: hwics.org.uk/our-services/pharmacy.

In addition, working closely with CPHW, community pharmacies themselves have received a Pharmacy First Resource pack to support the promotion of services, including posters; leaflets; information on specific services to put with prescriptions plus business cards with QR codes linking to the national website. This is available at: nhs.uk/nhs-services/pharmacies/how-pharmacies-can-help.

CPHW website also has a list of all of the services available through pharmacy. [Local Services – Herefordshire and Worcestershire LPC](#) [National Services – Herefordshire and Worcestershire LPC](#)

Consider how information about pharmacy opening times, including unplanned closures, can better be promoted to the public.

Unplanned closures are required to follow an NHS standard operating procedure which includes information to the neighbouring practices; information displayed to the public, updating Profile Manager and the NHS DOS team who then can reflect the information to those services which refer digitally into pharmacy.

Opening times during Bank Holiday periods are promoted through local mainstream media via press releases and through social media, primary care, NHS and public health partners, regional NHSE website and the ICS and HWCP websites.

More can be done to improve promotion of pharmacy opening times and throughout 2025 the ICB along with partners through the communications forum, will continue to make use of further opportunities and channels to promote opening times and to continue to seek out areas where people may not be receiving the information through mainstream channels and ensure that the information is cascaded in a way that works for them.

Consider targeting information at: students, younger working age population, carers, people with disabilities and sensory impairments and people who are struggling financially.

Information packs have been cascaded to nurseries, primary and secondary schools through local council channels.

In addition, the ICB Pharmacy Integration team attended a Worcester University Safety Fair in October 2024, engaging with around five hundred students to promote pharmacy services available to them as well as encouraging them to register with a local GP practice. Posters and business cards have been distributed throughout the university.

Worcester Sixth Form College also agreed to have information to support their students and two thousand business cards were provided to distribute to students as well as using the short pharmacy animations in their general studies tutorials.

As part of the work undertaken by the 'Your Health' team across Worcestershire there are community health vans that visit areas where health inequalities are more prevalent, the teams are actively promoting pharmacy services when visiting these communities to ensure understanding and awareness of what services are available.

Work is ongoing and will continue to target these populations to ensure that those who may not be used to regularly accessing a pharmacy can be confident on doing so for a variety of conditions.

Pharmacy First – consider developing targeted information about particular conditions which can be aimed at different target audiences – e.g. earache aimed at parents, UTI-women, Shingles – older people.

Specific local information has been developed for children and for students as shown on the Pharmacy First Resources website. Nationally, the NHSE Pharmacy First campaign launched in autumn 2024, focuses specifically on the individual conditions that can be treated without the need for a GP appointment, and this has been amplified locally through local press releases, social media and promoted by system partners, particularly as part of the Winter messaging programme. There is also a national paid-for media campaign that includes television, outdoor ads and social media advertising.

Work will continue throughout the coming year to ensure that national campaigns are amplified on a local level and that help for specific conditions continue to be promoted to target groups.

Promote Prescription Prepayment Certificates, particularly to the 18-34 age group.

It is recognised that more can be done to promote pre-payment certificates across all platforms and through partners to reach wider audiences.. This will be added to the Community Pharmacy Herefordshire and Worcestershire meeting agenda in January 2025 and discussed through the ICS Communications and Engagement Forum and Worcestershire Place Communications Cell to ensure wider promotion across partners and primary care.

Provide information in a range of formats, in accordance with the Accessible Information standard.

Patient information is offered in a variety of formats including Easy Read and the ICS website has been developed in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.2). In addition, work is ongoing to ensure the ICS website content is also checked against these standards.

The ICS also has dedicated Health Literacy Champions across all partner organisations to review and advise on producing patient facing information, digitally and in print, in accessible formats and this is an ongoing programme of work.

Consider how information can be made available to people whose first language is not English (including British Sign Language) and promote the availability of telephone-based community language interpreting services.

The ICB recognises the need to ensure that information is made available to people whose first language is not English. We continue to work with NHS England to raise the urgent need for community pharmacies to have access to translation and interpreting services which has been identified in the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. This work will continue to be a priority for 2025 to ensure there is equal access for those who use other languages to English (including BSL).

Ensure all staff understand possible communication difficulties experienced by people with a learning disability, and are aware of how to communicate information clearly and effectively, in a way that meets individual needs, including checking that people understand the information given before they leave the pharmacy.

As part of their consultation training, Pharmacists are skilled in how to counsel all patients on how to use their medicines safely and to ensure they have understood the information. This includes ensuring pharmacy teams can support the health needs of people with learning disabilities and optimise their use of medicines. The ICS website has dedicated areas for people with learning disabilities to understand how to use their medicines along with information for carers.

In addition to their professional training, community pharmacies across Herefordshire and Worcestershire are included in the ICS offer to attend Oliver McGowan Training, to further strengthen the skills of pharmacy teams to support patients with a learning disability and their carers.

Consider how pharmacies can increase the use of private consultation space, and reduce the discussion of personal information in front of other customers.

Community pharmacies across Herefordshire and Worcestershire have consultation rooms where patients can be seen to be treated and confidentially discuss any medical or medication concerns. Although it is up to individuals when, and if, they wish to have conversations in a private consulting room, we will encourage pharmacies to promote the use of these spaces, whilst ensuring a private space to discuss concerns away from the rest of the public when requested.

Consider how additional services such as text messaging, delivery and collection services which are valued by patients can be expanded – noting that they are not currently part of the pharmacy contract.

Although this is not part of the NHS commissioned service, and that collection and delivery of medications is not funded through the national Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework, we recognise this is something that is raised by patients and public. Pharmacies are awaiting the outcomes of national negotiations on the core NHS contract to inform the additional services they may be able to offer.

The ICB is aware that many patients value these alternatives and additional services and access to medicines is extremely important in our commissioning considerations.

HW Integrated Care Board to ensure that pharmacies are adequately resourced to deliver existing and additional services.

Community pharmacies are funded nationally for the majority of their NHS activity (which forms around 95% of their funding) through the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework. The 2024-2025 settlement is yet to be agreed. The outcome of these negotiations will be key for this year and beyond to support the viability of the network.

As with all NHS services, we recognise the increasing role of pharmacy-based services to relieve pressures in the other parts of the system and importance in prevention. Like other services across the NHS resources are stretched and there is ongoing work to ensure the Herefordshire and Worcestershire workforce is fit for the future to support our population.

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS Academy was developed in order to build a sustainable workforce for the future across all NHS professions including Pharmacy. Within the Academy there is a Pharmacy Faculty which aims to support and develop the pharmacy workforce to ensure adequate resources are available to deliver services across the two counties.

All sectors of pharmacy are included in faculty membership, including Hospital, GP Practice, Prison and Community (high Street) Pharmacies.

The faculty works with local universities and colleges to offer further training and provide virtual courses. It also links in with regional and national pharmacy colleagues to make the most of learning opportunities and help Herefordshire and Worcestershire be at the forefront of service development, while promoting a collaborative approach.

I hope the responses to your recommendations demonstrate our collective commitment to acting upon the feedback provided within your report. In addition, we will also review the outcome of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment currently being undertaken by Public Health at Worcestershire County Council and ensure that any further recommendations are incorporated into our plans.

May I take this opportunity to thank you again for the work undertaken, and for your ongoing support in this area.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Trickett', written in a cursive style.

Simon Trickett
Chief Executive Officer
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Cc Lisa McNally, Director of Public Health
Fiona Lowe, Worcestershire Local Pharmaceutical Committee