

Healthwatch Bucks update

September 2023

This paper summarises recent project work we have undertaken in relation to health and social care services, as aligned with the priorities of the Joint Health & Wellbeing strategy.

Live Well

What are pharmacies for?' Our report on the role of community pharmacies in primary care.

In 2017, we asked:

- What people knew about the services offered by their community pharmacy
- What services they used – and, just as importantly, why they might not use them.

In 2023 and beyond, there are plans to expand the services that pharmacies can offer as part of a plan to improve access to primary care.

We wanted to find out if people were more aware of the services that are available five years after our original investigation and following the Covid-19 pandemic.

What we did

Healthwatch Bucks developed a survey which was online from 5 April to 13 June 2023. We also collected responses directly from the public at four libraries and by visiting seven other community spaces, groups and events.

We looked at data across several different demographics. We considered whether respondents live in what are often referred to as 'levelling up' wards. In Buckinghamshire, there are 10 levelling up wards, defined as areas "where residents experience a combination of inequalities".

Key findings

In 2017, the number of people aware that some pharmacies could offer services also provided by a GP surgery was just over half of those we talked to. In 2023, just over three quarters of respondents were aware of these services.

We found that those under 56 years of age, and those who identified as an ethnicity other than White British, were less aware of the range of services that could be offered at a pharmacy (as well as at a GP surgery) than their counterparts.

We looked at awareness of services including:

- Dispensing and disposing of medicines
- Treatment of minor conditions and healthy living services
- Advice on medicines prescribed
- Flu vaccination
- Blood pressure checks
- Sexual health services and Ask ANI.

Key recommendations

We recommend that the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) should work with Community Pharmacy Thames Valley (representing local pharmacy contractors) and community pharmacies to:

- **Increase publicity to improve awareness of services in line with the NHS delivery plan for recovering access to primary care.**

We recommend that Buckinghamshire Council works with service providers to:

- **Encourage more people to use healthy living services at pharmacies.**

We recommend that Community Pharmacy Thames Valley:

- **Enables patients to feed back their experiences of visiting community pharmacies so that these can be used to help improve services.**

Download and read the report [here](#).