



Healthwatch Bexley Pharmacy Review

July 2017

1. Executive summary

Community pharmacies play an integral part of primary care and are the most accessible health professionals to the public. Pharmacies are often situated in the heart of the community and, in addition to their core duties of dispensing prescription medicines, they are ideally placed to help with minor ailments and support the management of long term health conditions, as well as preventing ill health.

This report presents the findings of a small survey undertaken by Healthwatch Bexley during June and July to gather the views of local people on their experiences of using pharmacy services in Bexley. The findings of this report will feed into the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment currently commissioned by London Borough of Bexley. The report will further be communicated to Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group, Healthwatch England, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and additional stakeholders.

2. Introduction

Healthwatch England released a report in 2016 based on a collaborative exercise undertaken in regions across the country to analyse the public's experiences and relationships with their local pharmacy (Healthwatch England, 2016). In towns and suburbs 79.9% of the population have a community pharmacy within a 20-minute walk. Results from surveys and focus groups indicated that the public had confidence in their local pharmacist and could use them more to relieve the pressure on GPs (Healthwatch England, 2016).

Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are promoting self-care management of long term health conditions and minor illnesses, which they anticipate will save the NHS in Bexley £1.4m. To facilitate this, they propose

to de-prescribe certain medicines, including medications for illnesses that will get better over time, and health supplements; lactose-free, soya-based and 'stay-down' (anti-reflux) infant formulas and Gluten-free products (Bexley CCG, 2017).

The success of these proposed local changes is largely dependent on Bexley residents' access to quality pharmacy facilities and this report explores the current situation by examining current experiences and attitudes.

3. Methods

During June and July 2017 a survey was conducted throughout each of the three London Borough of Bexley localities, visiting 15 pharmacies and engaging with a total of 82 residents by means of a questionnaire to assess their experiences both specific to the day and on previous visits.

Demographic details of the sample were collected. The male/female/not stated proportion was 37%, 61% and 2% respectively. The ethnicity breakdown was 82% White, 9% Black, 2% Not Stated, 1% Mixed, 1% Asian and 5% Other Ethnic Groups. 38% of the sample were aged 65 or above, 18% aged 35 to 44, 16% aged 55 to 64, 12% aged 25 to 34, 11% aged 20 to 24, 3% aged 16 to 19 and 2% did not divulge their age. 11% were carers of somebody with a longstanding disability or illness and 21% were parents or guardians of children under 16.

The survey requested the individuals to rate the quality of services provided in terms of prescription delivery and general health advice. Additional questions covered their personal routines around reviewing out of date medicines, disposal of medicines, views on whether the respondents found pharmacy services easily accessible in the borough and feedback mechanisms. The study did not visit national chains but focused on independent pharmacy businesses and small chains shown in the table below.

Frogna			Clocktower			North Bexley		
St Mary's	Osbon	6	Danson Park	Mistvale	4	Erith	Soka Blackmore	4
Sidcup	Roadnight	5	St Michael's	Hayshine	3	Belvedere	Knightons	7
Blacken & Lamorbey	Targett	9	Falcooood & Welling	Bellegrove	5	Crayford	Station Road	3
Longlands	Southcotts	4	Christchurch	Broadway	6	Colyers	Stelling Road	8
			East Wickham	BR Lewis	8	North Heath	Day Lewis	3
			Brampton	Praise	7			
		24			33			25
								82

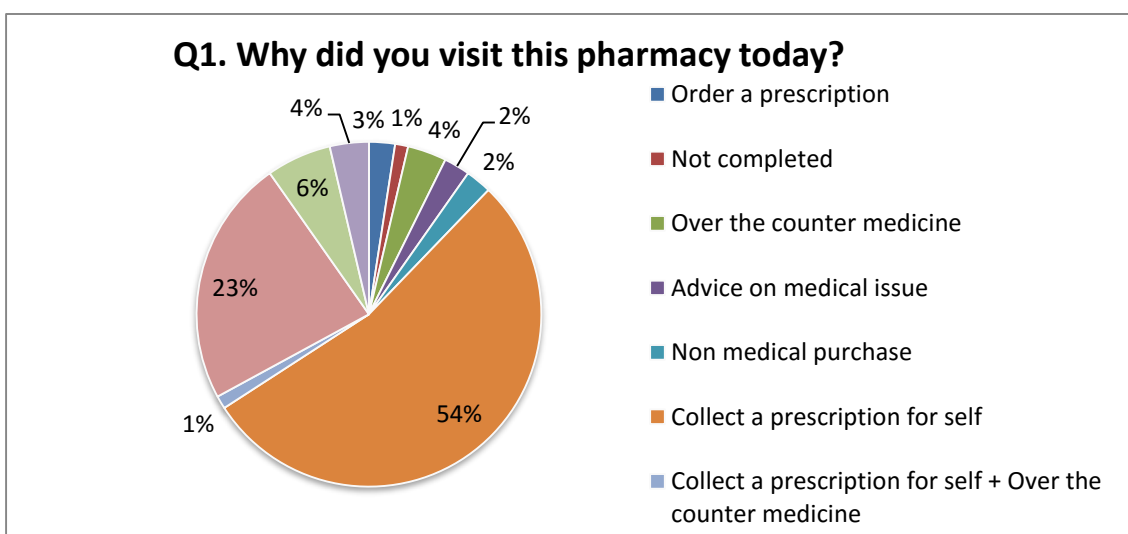
4. Summary of Key Findings

- 78% of those questioned were visiting the pharmacy for prescription related services.
- 78% were either Very Satisfied or Satisfied with the advice received from the pharmacist about their prescription.
- All aspects of customer service were rated highly.
- 99% reported that pharmacy services were easy to access in Bexley.
- Awareness of correct disposal of old and unwanted medication was inconsistent in those questioned.
- Only 11% of those questioned advised that they were likely to consult their pharmacist on a healthcare issue.
- Healthy lifestyle services in pharmacies are under-used.
- Knowledge of feedback mechanisms is inconsistent

5. Results of the survey

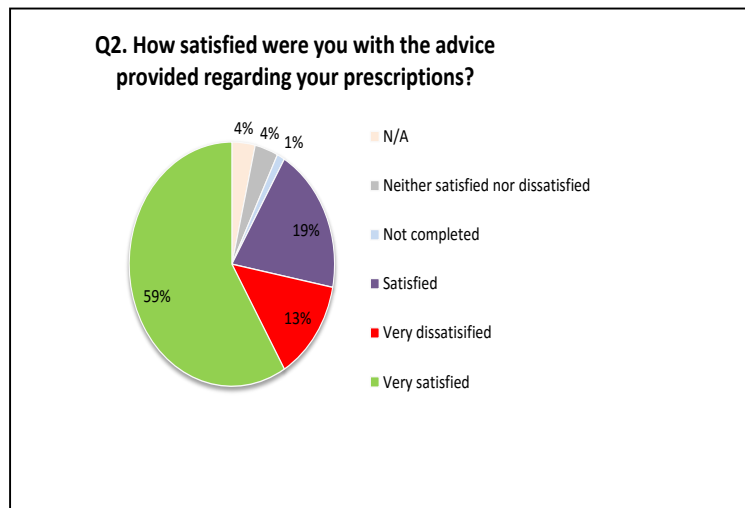
5.1 Purpose of visit

A combined 78% of respondents visited the pharmacy for prescription related services. However this statistic is influenced by a number of individuals who had visited the pharmacy for other reasons and declined to complete the survey due to time constraints. This was not the case for the former, who had the opportunity to complete the survey while the pharmacist prepared their prescription.

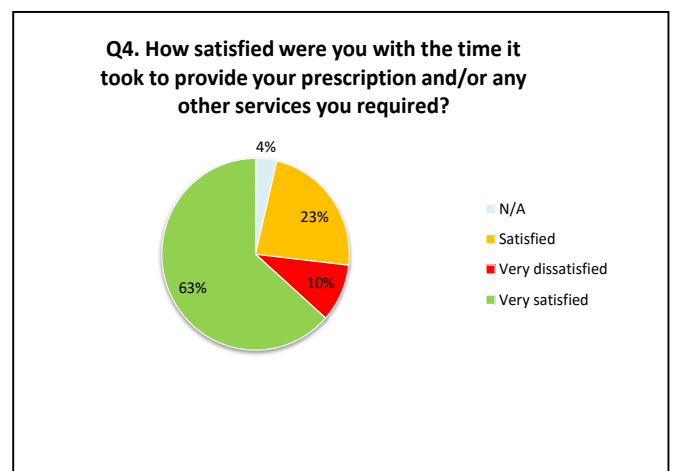
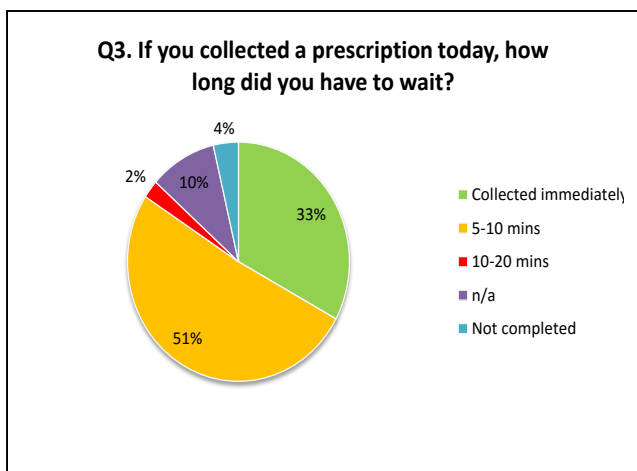


5.2 Satisfaction with prescription delivery

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the advice provided by the pharmacy regarding their prescription. Overall, the majority of respondents stated they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’. However, 13% stated they were very dissatisfied with the advice provided and this may need to be explored further.

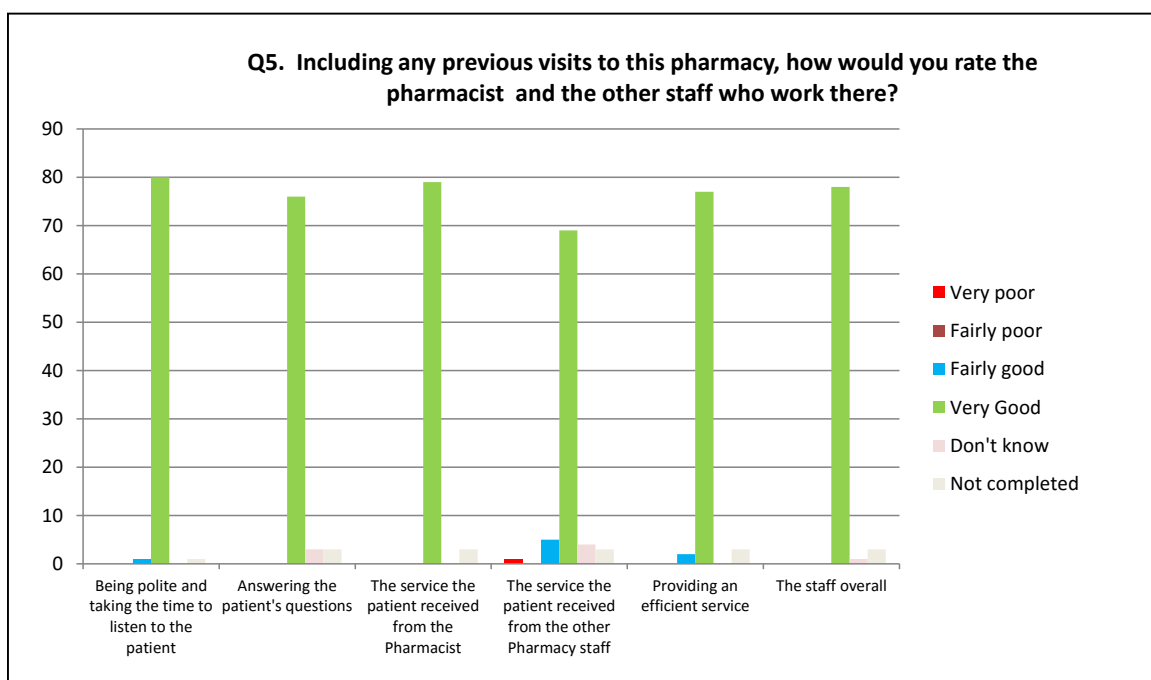


Respondents were further asked to reflect on the waiting times for prescriptions and their satisfaction with this and other services. The majority of respondents stated they had waited less than 10 minutes for their prescription, with one third collecting the prescription immediately. The minority, who stated that they were dissatisfied, had waited no longer than the majority who were satisfied. Overall, 86% stated they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the time they waited for services, with 1 in 10 stating they were ‘very dissatisfied’.



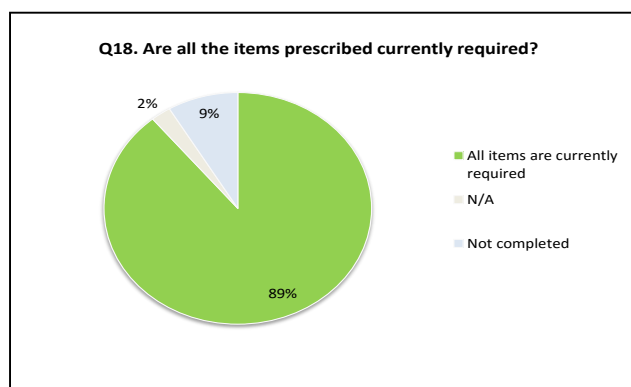
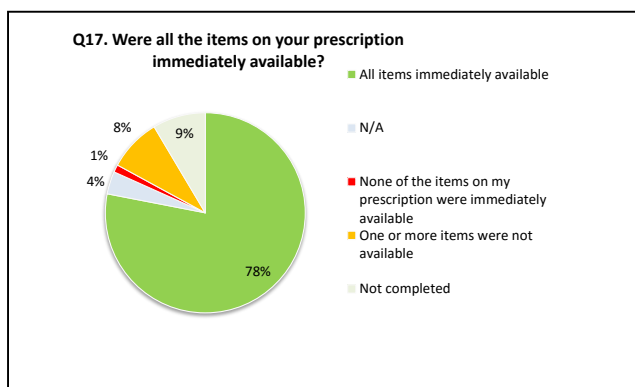
5.3 Customer Service

The survey prompted the respondents to rate their experiences for a number of customer service related questions, including politeness and attentiveness of staff. Overall, all statements attracted a majority of positive responses and most, respondents felt staff were polite and took the time to listen to patients. The majority of respondents had a very positive experience when dealing directly with the pharmacists and staff overall. A small number of respondents were less satisfied with the service received from the pharmacy staff.



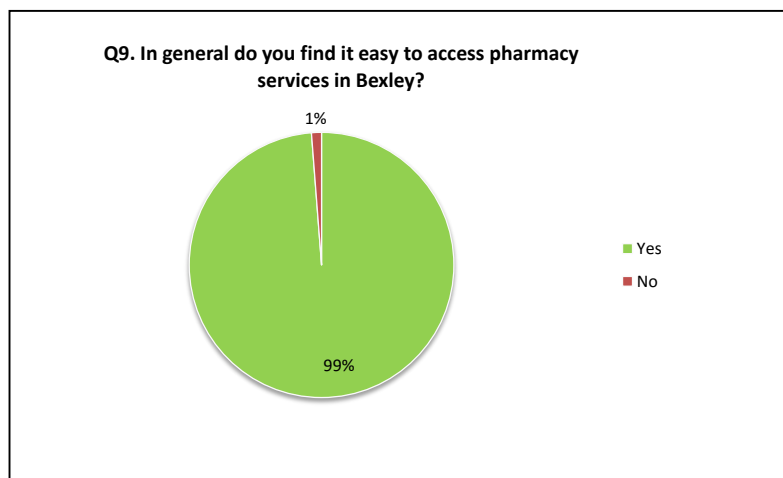
5.4 Availability and relevance of items prescribed

The survey explored the availability and relevance of prescribed medications and 78% of respondents reported that all items on their prescriptions were immediately available with 89% stating that all items were currently required. No individuals responded negatively to these questions.

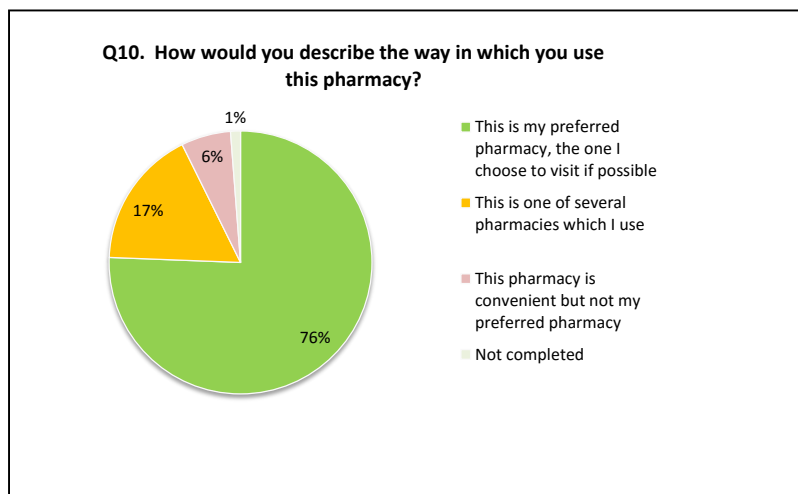


5.5 Accessibility

Respondents were asked about how easy it is to access pharmacy services in Bexley. 99% of the respondents stated that they found it easy to access pharmacy services in Bexley. The single respondent who replied negatively did not take the opportunity to state how access could be improved. However, there are areas within the borough where independent pharmacies are not represented (Lessness Abbey and Thamesmead East). Given that pharmacies in neighbouring areas (Barnehurst and Northend) did not participate in the study this may have led to a more positive response than otherwise.

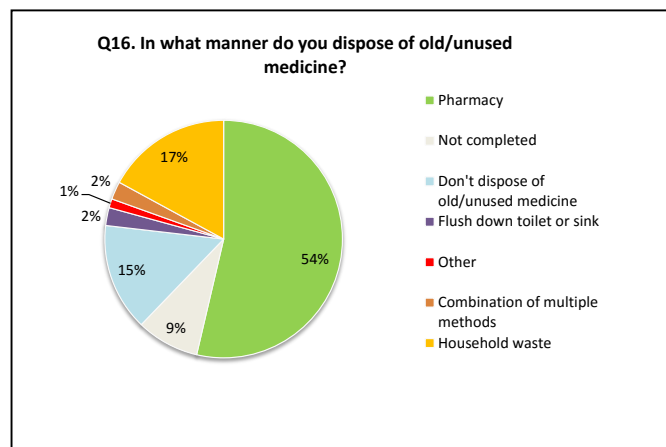
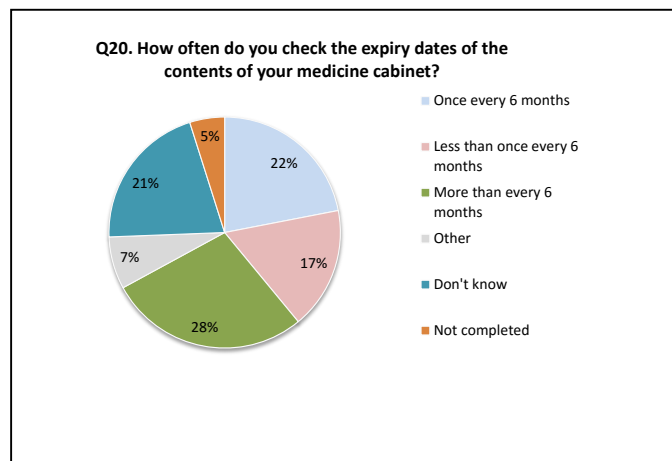


The survey explored the reasons behind residents presenting at the pharmacy on the day of the survey and the majority of respondents, 76%, stated that the pharmacy was their preferred choice. Just over one quarter of respondents said it was one of several pharmacies they regularly use, whilst a small number stated that convenience was the decisive factor.



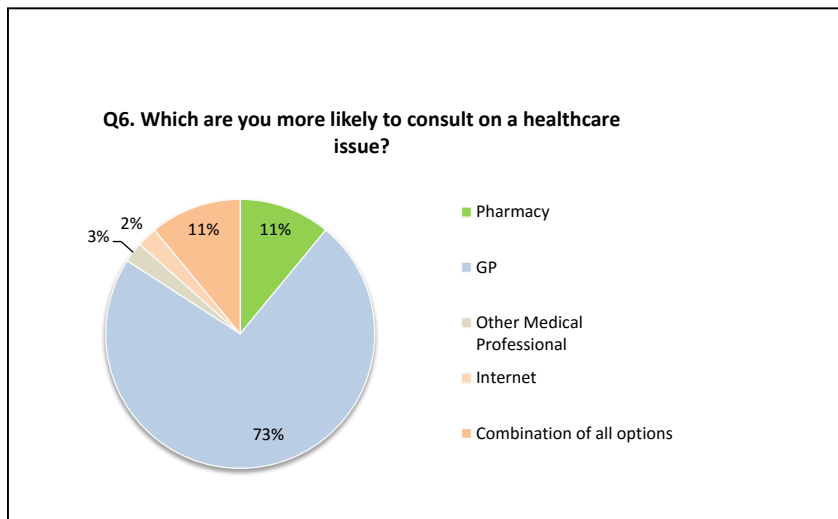
5.6 Check of expiry date and disposal of old and unused medicines

Respondents were asked about how frequently they check the expiry dates of medicines and how they dispose of old or unused medication. The responses to checking the expiry dates were mixed, with just over one quarter checking the dates more than every 6 months. Moreover, just over half of the respondents, 54%, adhered to the correct procedure of returning old or unused medicine to the pharmacy whilst a combined 18% either placed in the household waste or flushed down the toilet or sink.

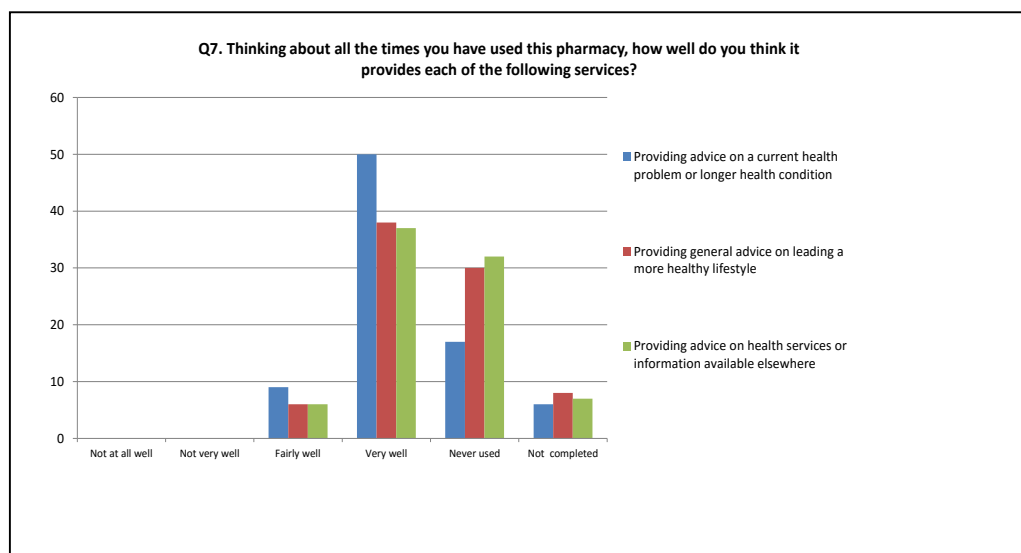


5.7 Non-prescription services

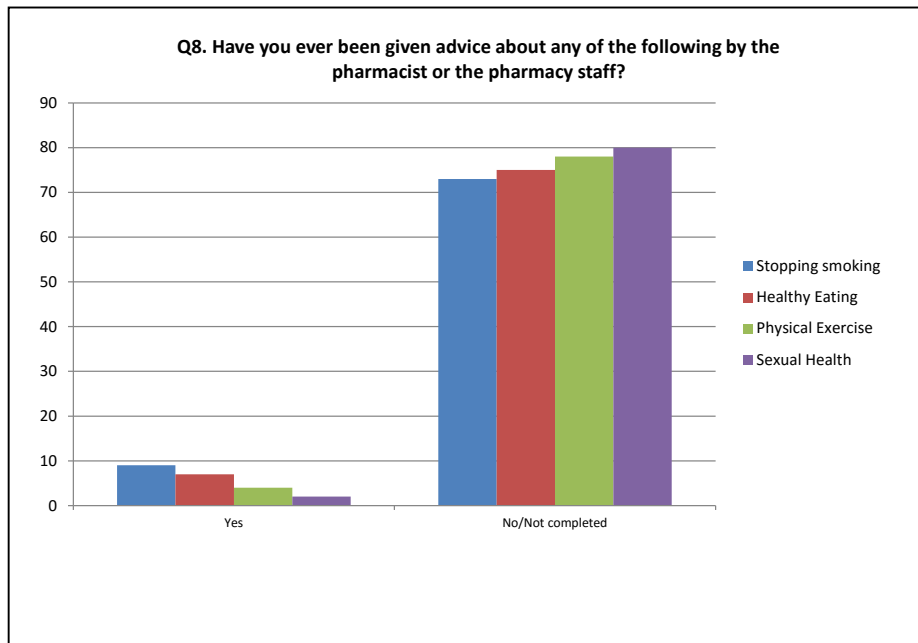
A Healthwatch England study in 2015 identified that three quarters of people nationally would prefer to consult a pharmacist rather than their GP on a minor healthcare issue. However, the survey in Bexley does not reflect this, as 73% of those questioned prefers to consult their GP. This is in spite of the high levels of satisfaction and ease of accessibility of pharmacy services and awareness of the availability of private consultation rooms.



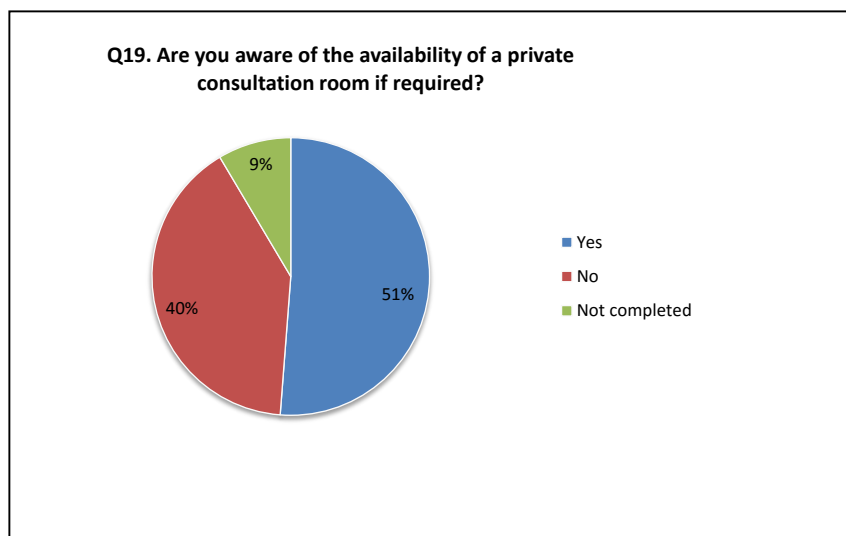
The survey asked respondents to reflect on how well they felt the pharmacy provides advice on current health issues or LTC; healthy life choices and services available elsewhere. Half of the respondents said that the pharmacy provided advice on a current health issue or LTC very well compared to just over a third for advice on healthy life style choices and services elsewhere. However, one third of respondents stated they had not utilised the advice service provided by the pharmacy.



Despite overall positive responses to questions regarding advice on current and long-term health conditions, leading a more healthy lifestyle and services and information available elsewhere, relatively few respondents (just over a quarter in total) went on to state that they had been given advice on any one of smoking cessation, healthy eating, physical exercise or sexual health. This could be attributed to lack of knowledge that these services were available as only 44%, when questioned, were aware of a practice leaflet advertising these services.



The questionnaire asked respondents if they were aware of the availability of a private consultation room. Just over half the respondents said ‘yes’ to this questions, with 40% saying ‘no’. Promotion of private consultation rooms may encourage more people to consult with their pharmacists and should be advertised more widely to residents.



5.8 Feedback mechanisms

Respondents were asked to consider how the pharmacy invited and obtained customer feedback. There were multiple combinations of the various feedback options which were given on the questionnaire this included; Comment Box, Questionnaire, Personal enquiry, Email, Postal letter and Telephone. 40% of respondents stated that the pharmacy conducted patient satisfaction surveys. Of those who did not respond positively 41% would be interested in this service.

6. Conclusion

Local Pharmacists provide a vital role in Bexley communities which is due to expand further as self-care proposals are implemented. Customer satisfaction ratings were high, but of those questioned the majority still preferred to consult their GP on healthcare issues. Pharmacists have the skills and facilities to promote healthy lifestyles but relatively few customers take advantage of this.

7. Recommendations

- Use space in Bexley magazine and other channels to promote healthy lifestyle facilities offered by Pharmacists.
- Promote disposal of unwanted medicine procedures via Bexley magazine and posters in GP surgeries and pharmacies.
- Encourage patients to make a pharmacy their first port of call by way of a recorded message whilst they wait for the GP receptionist to answer calls.
- A collaborative and generic practice leaflet to be issued across all independent Bexley pharmacies together with a consistent feedback and complaints approach.

8. References

Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group (2017), *Proposed changes to prescribing in Bexley*. Available at: <http://www.bexleyccg.nhs.uk/Default.aspx?LocID-031new01x.RefLocID-01b005001.Lang-EN.htm> (Accessed 24 July 2017)

Healthwatch (2016), *Pharmacy Services, Findings from the Healthwatch Network*. Available at: http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/healthwatch.co.uk/files/pharmacy_services_-_findings_from_the_healthwatch_network.pdf (Accessed 24 July 2017)