



Raising Awareness of Pharmacy Consulting Rooms Campaign



From discussions with local people it was clear many were unfamiliar with pharmacies having 'consulting rooms'. We were keen to raise awareness of this facility and to support staff and the people who use community pharmacy services.

We feel this is particularly important - given the new General Pharmaceutical Council's [Guidance](#) and NICE [Guidance NG102](#) on promoting wellbeing.

Our campaign

During the last week of September 2018 Healthwatch staff and volunteers spoke to pharmacy staff across West Sussex - visiting over 160 individual pharmacies.

Our conversations set out to introduce Healthwatch and to share a poster aimed at raising awareness of consulting rooms, and to help local people to feel more confident in speaking to pharmacy staff.

Our poster campaign was endorsed by the Surrey and Sussex Local Pharmaceutical Committee CEO.

We asked pharmacies

- to put up a poster and to take a supply of Healthwatch cards
- to see their consulting room
- and asked how often it gets used and for what?





Thank you

We'd like to thank the pharmacists and staff we met during our visits. We were pleased to have experienced such a positive response from the people we spoke to.

How are consulting rooms used?

From our discussions it's clear consulting rooms are being used but mainly from staff suggesting the room is available. They are facilitated often for medication reviews, health checks and smoking cessation conversations, morning after pills and Viagra consultations, as well as travel and flu vaccinations.

Some people ask to use a room, but not many.

Staff are proactive in using rooms and telling people that the facility is there.

We encourage people to use the services. Talking to the public is a high priority for us. People stop our staff in the street.

It gets used particularly on Saturdays when nothing else is available*

* This usage may start to change as more people become aware of the Improved GP Access programme (the evening and weekend appointments introduced from 1 October 2018).

We had parking issues when attempting to visit a couple of other pharmacies.

Some of the rooms were locked and in the dark, so it was hard to see how people would be encouraged to use these rooms.

We observed a person who asked to speak to a male pharmacist and then to use the room which was to the side of the counter. Staff then had to spend time moving storage boxes out of the way, so it could be used. Space is a challenge for some pharmacies.

We saw one pharmacy that was incredibly small - with a tiny space for staff and visitors (a maximum of 2 to 3 visitors at a time then people would have to wait outside).

We were told that if a private conversation was needed, this would need to take place outside of the pharmacy!

We would suggest that pharmacists' attitude towards the use of consulting rooms varies depending on their resources.

Pharmacist, William, proudly showed off his consulting room and told us he uses it 10-15 times a day. Pharmacist, Laura, says she would like to use it more but is so busy in the dispensing area.

Observations of consulting rooms

We were unable to see about 35 rooms during our visit as they were in use.

We were told that we couldn't look at the room because "it had patient details out", so it was hard to see how this could have been used if someone needed a less public consultation?

There were some very good rooms that were obviously ready for use and had a range of items that would support good conversations with users of the pharmacy.

Some had specific functions such as needle exchanges/drug supervision.



A lot of the rooms were functional but small and not necessarily welcoming. Some were being used as storage and office space (which we observed happening on several occasions, and in other cases it was clear from how the space was set-up).

It felt like a cupboard, with not a lot of space for two people.

There were a few that were, we feel, unfit for purpose either because they simply were non-accessible or inappropriate.

Room is to the side and out the back and it is not possible for someone in a wheelchair to navigate the space. Staff told us they are upfront in telling people this and some are happy for vaccines to happen in the main area.

Door was clear and had no obvious way of screening off - so was very visible.

Poor light - overhead strip broken, so lamps were being used.

Lots of boxes in the space, and confidential waste bags.

The 'room' had a long curtain drawn across it instead of a door and was 'in use' so we were unable to see anything else about the space.

What good looks like?

- Well laid out space that is clear of 'clutter' and looks clean.
- Lights on to create the impression of being 'open for business'
- Use of posters - one pharmacy had children's posters at the seating area in the room that were at lap height
- Having access to specific/sensitive items
- Using limited space well, for example, one pharmacy had a desktop that can be removed to allow for better disabled access
- Having a range of local/corporate and national leaflets on display
- The use of a 'Vacant' or 'In Use' sign on the door
- Clear notice about when the consultation room is available (when staff are on lunch break etc)



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