
Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council

Engagement Report

NHS Common Ailments Scheme

January 2023



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Introduction & background

As a Community Health Council, with a statutory duty to monitor and scrutinise health services, we wanted to hear from people who access the NHS Common Ailments Scheme.

The NHS Common Ailments Scheme offers members of the public the option to visit their local pharmacy to seek advice from a pharmacist if they have a common ailment. If you require medication, you may be asked to register to use the service. Registering for the common ailments service means the pharmacist may supply you with the medicine you may need, free of charge.

Common ailments covered by the scheme: Acne, Athlete's Foot, Backache, Chickenpox, Cold Sores, Colic, Conjunctivitis (Bacterial), Constipation, Diarrhoea, Dry Eyes, Dry Skin, Haemorrhoids, Hay fever, Head Lice, Indigestion, In-growing, Toenail, Intertrigo, Mouth Ulcers, Nappy Rash, Oral Thrush, Ringworm, Scabies, Sore Throat, Teething, Threadworms, Vaginal Thrush, Warts, or Verruca's. ¹

Our Annual Plan shows that we are committed to undertake engagement with the local population, to gain feedback from people who have accessed NHS treatment and care within the Aneurin Bevan Health Board area.

To reach people in the community we created a survey that was available to complete online via our social media platforms and website. We also created business cards with a QR code. The QR code could be scanned by a smart phone, and it would take you to our online survey. The CHC sent a letter and a batch of business cards to pharmacies in the Aneurin Bevan area asking if they would help support our survey by leaving business cards in an area of their pharmacy where people could pick them up and take with them.

The CHC would like to thank Pharmacies in Aneurin Bevan that distributed our business cards to people in the community. The survey was live October – December 2022.



¹ <https://abuhb.nhs.wales/healthcare-services/pharmacies-chemists/>

Feedback we received

25 people filled in our survey and gave their experience of accessing the NHS Common Ailments Scheme.

When reviewing the data for this survey, it was pleasing to read that most of the feedback in relation to the NHS Common Ailments Scheme was positive. The information below gives a more in-depth view of the responses we received.

Most people who filled in our survey were aware that the scheme was available at pharmacies. These people also indicated they knew how to use or access the scheme.

22 people told us that they were aware that the NHS Common Ailments Scheme was available in a pharmacy in their local area. Three people were not sure if this was the case in their pharmacy.

We asked people: *"If you have used the NHS Common Ailments Scheme, was it easy to speak with your pharmacist?"*

We were told the following:

Yes: 17 No: 2

Comments:

"Depends on how busy they are. Sometimes straightaway, sometimes a short wait, occasionally need to return another day."

"Had to wait a while as staff shortage."

"They don't offer things readily or advertise well or make it easy to obtain in a busy environment."

"Very obstructive and although the ailment was in the scheme – conjunctivitis – wouldn't give us the necessary cream (we were going to pay) and sent us back to try and get an even more difficult doctor's appointment which was unnecessary and left me in considerable discomfort."

It's important that people's privacy is respected when accessing NHS Services. Therefore, we asked *"If you have used the NHS Common Ailments Scheme, were you given the option to speak to the pharmacist in a private area?"*

Eight people told us they were not given the option to speak to the pharmacist in a private area.

A person told us that they used to be able to use a private room in their local pharmacy, but this can't happen anymore as *"they got rid of the room"*. Another person told us when they used the scheme, they had to ask to speak with a pharmacist in a private area.

On a more positive note, 14 people told us that they were given the option to speak to the pharmacist in a private area.

In relation to people's privacy, we also asked *"If you have used the NHS Common Ailments Scheme, do you feel that your privacy and dignity were respected during your consultation?"*

18 people told us they did feel that their privacy and dignity had been respected. Although, five people did not feel this way. However, no further comments were given.

We wanted to find out if the scheme was provided to people and completed in good time. When we asked this question, 17 people felt that this happened. One person told us that this *"usually"* was the case and five people felt that this didn't happen.



We then asked people how likely they were to recommend the NHS Common Ailments Scheme to others. It was pleasing to read that 23 people felt that they were either *"very likely"* or *"likely"* to recommend the services to others. However, two people said it was not likely that they would do so.



We wanted people to rate their satisfaction with the NHS Common Ailments Scheme available in pharmacies:

Very satisfied: 11

Satisfied: 10

Dissatisfied: 3

Very dissatisfied: 2



The last question on our survey gave people the opportunity to give any further comments in relation to the scheme. We received the following feedback:

"My concern is that more serious underlying problems could be missed. Thankfully this hasn't happened with me, but my mother was given antacids for indigestion, when in fact she had an aortal aneurysm which wasn't discovered until it became an emergency."

"I think it could be a good service within the pharmacist capabilities, but I've used it twice and told to see the doctor, which defeated the object."

"The pharmacist suggestion was useful; I took her advice."

"I wasn't offered a private space, but I was the only person in the pharmacy. I'm sure it would have been offered if needed."

"Very happy with the response and outcome"

"I was referred to the scheme by an optician otherwise never heard of the scheme. It isn't well publicised."

"Pharmacists and staff are overstretched, and more financial support is needed so that pharmacies can be adequately staffed if they are expected to take on extra work that other healthcare professionals seem to want to palm off on them."

"The pharmacist was very calm, approachable and gave clear and good advice. This relieved the pressure of attending a GP surgery."

"The service needs to be advertised and made available better. It is not comfortable to request items at the counter with a queue behind it. It is not clear what can be offered and whether the pharmacy has time/space to promote and provide this service in a confidential way. It needs to feel 'normal' to use the service. There needs to be clearer readily available information displayed in every chemist participating, as to what conditions and medicines fall under the scheme. I think that it is an excellent scheme but needs wider publicity and promotion so that people do not feel afraid to ask and just see it as a normal part of the NHS service. Perhaps pharmacies need more training and funding?"

"As before, I don't know if they feel confident to diagnose but should have said so before going into it and the surgery should say to save an appointment, go to the pharmacy."

"Went for threadworm treatment for my daughter and waited ages to see a pharmacist, I do not have a problem with this as I know they are extremely busy. My main problem was that I felt like I was being interrogated as to why I was using the scheme. I totally understand needing to ask all the medical questions, but I felt like I was being made to justify my reasons for using the service, I was made to feel that awkward and uncomfortable that I have never used it since. Maybe that is the reason why I was made to feel the way I was so that I don't



use it again!! I have to say that in future I would be more likely to book an appointment with the Dr than be interrogated and made to feel embarrassed again. Not a good experience at all."

"Great service and helpful staff."

"Neil and his team in the Pharmacy in Thomas Street, Abertridwr are absolutely amazing. They are always friendly, always willing to help, always have time for you and never make you feel uncomfortable. My 2 sons, especially 1 have had a few serious things happen medically and I'm so glad that I had Neil and all his team. Neil is so knowledgeable and has helped us tremendously for which we will always be grateful :)"

"To find out a medication I have been buying regularly is available for free was disappointing. I feel I should have been offered this or made aware much sooner. There needs to be much more advertising of this service and pharmacists should have to make you aware as opposed to happily taking your money indefinitely and as it turns out unnecessarily."

"Pharmacist was very helpful, informative and took the time to listen."

"I requested antibiotics for a condition from which I regularly suffer. The pharmacist stated that they were not able to prescribe the tablets and I should contact my GP."

"I had to ask in public twice to see a pharmacist about my conjunctivitis and a consultation was ignored both times, and when I was seen it was in public, through the window they give the drug addicts their meds and not in a private room, she was cold and ignorant, and I had to keep repeating myself."

Conclusions

In conclusion, it seems that most people who filled in our survey, had a positive experience when accessing the NHS Common Ailments Scheme and would recommend the service to others. However, the findings highlight an area where improvement is needed such as:

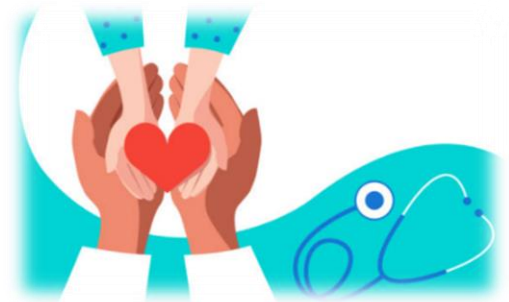
- People not being offered a private area to speak with a pharmacist when accessing the scheme.
- Highlighting one person's comment who said a private area in their pharmacy had been taken away.
- The scheme should be promoted more effectively to raise awareness that it exists for patients.

Recommendations

- 1) The CHC would be pleased if the positive feedback in this report could be shared with pharmacy services.
- 2) The Health Board is asked to ensure people are offered to speak with a pharmacist in a private area when accessing the NHS Common Ailments Scheme.
- 3) Whilst the CHC recognises the public campaign to advertise this scheme, the Health Board is asked to consider checking that all adverts/information about the scheme are in visible areas and actively promoted by pharmacy staff and surgeries.

Thanks

The CHC would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their views with us, we hope the feedback influences healthcare services to recognise and value what they do well and to enable them to act where they need to, as quickly as they can, to make things better.



About the Community Health Councils (CHCs)

CHCs are the independent watchdog of the National Health Service (NHS) within Wales. CHCs encourage and support people to have a voice in the design and delivery of NHS services.

CHCs work with the NHS, inspection, and regulatory bodies. CHCs provide an important link between those who plan and deliver NHS services, those who inspect and regulate it and those who use it.

CHCs receive feedback from the public in many ways. Before the coronavirus pandemic, CHCs regularly visited NHS services to hear from people while they were receiving care and treatment. CHCs also heard from people at local community events, and through community representatives and groups.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, CHCs have focused on engaging with people in different ways.

This includes surveys, apps, videoconferencing, and social media to hear from people directly about their views and experiences of NHS services as well as through community groups.

There are 7 CHCs in Wales. Each one represents the “patient and public” voice in a different part of Wales.



Contact details



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CIC Aneurin Bevan CHC

Equality and Diversity Survey Results

Preferred Language								
English			Other			Not answered		
15			1			9		
Gender								
Woman/ Girl	Man/Boy	Non- binary	Prefer not to say	Other	Not answered			
12	5	1	0	0	5			
Do you consider yourself to be a trans person?								
Yes		No		Prefer not to say		Not answered		
0		18		0		7		
Sexual Orientation								
Asexu al	Bisex ual	Gay	Le sb ia n	Heterose xual/ Straight	Pans exua l	Prefer not to say	Oth er	Not answ ered
0	0	2	0	15	0	1	0	7
Month and Year of birth								
Jan 1976- 05	Feb 1960- 62	Mar 1960- 94	Apr 1940- 70	May	Jun 1950- 60	Jul 1950 -60	Aug 1960 -70	
2	1	2	2	0	1	1	1	
Sept 1980- 95	Oct 1950- 60	Nov 1960- 90	Dec	1950- 55	Not answ ered			

1	1	2	0	1	10		
Ethnicity							
Asian or Asian British:							
Bangla deshi	Chine se	Indian	Pakistani		Other		
0	0	0	0		0		
Black or Black British:							
African		Caribbean		Other			
0		0		1			
White:							
Welsh/English /Scottish/Nort hern Irish/British		Gypsy of Irish Traveller		Irish		Other	
17		0		0		0	
Other Ethnic group:							
Arab		Prefer not to say			Other		
0		0			0		
Religion or belief							
Buddhism	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam	Judaism			
0	11	0	0	0			
Sikhism	Atheism	No Religion	Prefer not to say	Other religion or belief			
0	0	4	0	1			
Not answered	10						

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?			
Yes	No	Prefer not to say	Not answered
3	13	1	8

Do you look after, or give any help or support to a family member, friend, or neighbour because of a long-term physical disability, learning difficulty, mental ill-health or problems related to old age?			
Yes	No	Prefer not to say	Not answered
8	11	0	6

Are you currently pregnant or have you been pregnant in the last year?			
Yes	No	Not answered	Prefer not to say
0	18	7	0

Equality Impact Assessment

Please complete the following table to state whether the following groups will be adversely, positively, differentially affected by the policy/activity or that it will have no affect at all

Impact	None	Negative	Positive	Comments
Protected Characteristics				
Age	x			
Disability	x			All CHC surveys are available in a different format upon request.
Sex	X			
Race	X			
Religion/Beliefs	X			
Sexual Orientation	X			
Gender reassignment	X			
Marriage and civil partnership	X			
Pregnancy and maternity	x			

Other characteristics to consider				
Welsh Language			x	Reports & Surveys published bilingually
Other Languages		x		Reports & Surveys can be published in required language on request
Human Rights	x			
Poverty level	x			
Persons with dependents	x			
Rural residence	x			
Gypsy and traveller communities	x			
Digitally vulnerable		x		Survey was only available online. However, if a person contacted the CHC office, printed copies would be sent without delay.

Risk Assessment

<p>Are there any risks arising from the implementation of this policy?</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>What measures are in place to manage or remove these risks?</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Welsh Language</p> <p>This document/policy has been assessed in line with our Welsh language requirements for standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) 37,38 ii) 69,70,71

In coming to our impact determination, we sought advice/reviewed the evidence of/considered:

All CHC public facing documents are available in Welsh & English. The CHC undertakes an Equality Impact Assessment for all public documents and identify them as positive for Welsh translations.

Outcome

Positive impact –

Standards 37, 38 – All public documents are produced and published bilingually in Welsh and English.

Standards 69-71 - We undertake Equality Impact Assessments for all public documents and identify them as positive for Welsh translations

Negative Impact – None

Accessible formats

This report is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download it from our website or ask for a copy by contacting our office.