8 Community Pharmacies – Access and opening hours

Under the NHS (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2005 (as amended), community pharmacies have specific contracted opening hours. It is a requirement for pharmacies to be open for a minimum of 40 hours a week (known as core hours), but they may also supplement those hours to open for longer. This type of pharmacy is known as a ‘40 hour’ pharmacy. In addition to this there are also ‘100 hour’ pharmacies who are prepared to open for longer hours and extend service provision by agreeing to open for at least 100 hours per week. The PCT currently has 7 pharmacies that are open for 100 hours per week located in Abingdon, Blackbird Leys, Cowley, Didcot, Witney, Kidlington and Faringdon.

8.1 Access during Bank Holidays

In order to ensure pharmaceutical services on bank holidays the PCT surveys pharmacies to ascertain their intended opening hours for each bank holiday. If the survey identifies a gap in provision the PCT can ask pharmacies to open in order to secure adequate provision for the bank holidays, this is done by commissioning a Directed Rota Service.

8.2 100 hour opening times

The service provided by 100 hour pharmacies is important during the ‘out of hours period’, considered to be before 9.00am and after 6.30pm as there is a need for the public to access pharmaceutical services before the other pharmacies open and after they close. The opening hours of 100 hour pharmacies enable the public to access pharmaceutical services outside of normal working hours. 79% of respondents to our patient questionnaire said they would use a pharmacy at such times. Extended hours that the current 100 hour pharmacies provide offer a valuable service to the public that the PCT wishes to maintain.

8.2.1 Population Density and location of 100 hour pharmacies

This map shows the population density across the county. As expected the highest density is around Oxford City and the market towns of Banbury, Bicester, Witney and Abingdon. There are Out of Hours bases for general medical services located in Banbury, Bicester, Oxford, Witney, Abingdon and Henley.

There are 100 hour pharmacies located in Abingdon, Blackbird Leys, Cowley, Didcot, Witney, Kidlington and Faringdon.
The following 3 graphs illustrate that there is good access to Pharmacy services 7 days a week, although fewer remain open on a Sunday. Most pharmacists take half to one hour for lunch but in all areas there is a pharmacy open through the day. It is important to remember that interruption to pharmaceutical services due to lunch breaks is minimal.

8.3 Weekday graph

There is access to pharmaceutical services in all areas from 09.00 – 19.00 hours and provision in all areas during lunch times. The 100 hour pharmacies provide a service in 4 areas from 07.00 – 24.00 hours.
8.4 Saturday graph

There is access to pharmaceutical services in all areas from 08.00 – 18.00 hours and provision in all areas during lunch times. The 100 hour pharmacies provide a service in 4 areas from 07.00 – 22.00 hours.
8.5 Sunday graph

There is access to pharmaceutical services in all areas from 10.00 – 16.00 hours and provision in all areas during lunch times. The 100 hour pharmacies provide a service in 2 areas from 09.00 – 20.00 hours.

8.6 Service user feedback

The majority of respondents were satisfied with the opening hours of their pharmacy. There were no significant differences in problems experienced, or satisfaction with opening hours by locality. However, opening hours were the most significant barrier to access – these were sometimes seen as erratic, especially around lunchtime. Pharmacy lunchtime closing was problematic for working people.

The PCT recognised that lunchtime break interruptions to service may have a greater impact on patients who are trying to access a service during a limited lunch break of their own than interruptions to service at other times. The PCT also recognise that unexpected disruption to service (e.g. closure due to unexpected pharmacist unavailability or when the pharmacy is open but service reduced due to the absence of the pharmacist) has a greater impact than planned closure where the patient can make alternative arrangements to access an alternative pharmacy. The PCT and the Local Pharmaceutical Committee are working with existing pharmacies to highlight this.