

NHS HEALTH CHECKS

Your health challenge

- Nationally, uptake of NHS Health Checks is below Public Health England's target of 66%¹ – uptake is reported at around 50% for the eligible target population²
- There is considerable variability in the rate of uptake between provider organisations²



How can community pharmacies help?

Community pharmacies are an ideal partner for local commissioners to increase the uptake of NHS Health Checks in their area and to help raise awareness of the Health Check service.

Community pharmacy teams have always played a role in promoting, maintaining and improving the health of the communities they serve but pharmacy teams are increasingly taking on a larger role in public health as described in the recently published Local Government Association briefing.³

Pharmacies, who are located at the heart of communities, with trusted healthcare professionals on site, reflect the social and ethnic backgrounds of their residents.

Patients and the public trust their pharmacy teams and build a special relationship with them due to frequent contact, so that people are able to be honest with them about their lifestyle choices, for example, the number of cigarettes they smoke.

A survey of over 2,100 adults also showed that 78% are comfortable receiving health checks from their local community pharmacy.⁴

1. Sir Bruce Keogh letter, *Delivering a sustainable future: capitalising on the NHS Health Check programme*, November 2014

2. Robson J et al, *The NHS Health Check in England: an evaluation of the first four years*, January 2016

3. Local Government Association, *The community pharmacy offer for improving the public's health*, March 2016

CHOOSEPHARMACY

What the experts say

"One of the great benefits of the pharmacy is that the opening hours are more flexible. People can have the health checks done in the evenings and at weekends. When we send out the invitation letters we give people the choice. It is about giving people greater access."⁵

Frances Fuller, Lewisham's Cardiovascular Prevention Programme Manager

What the patients say

"I think the service is a brilliant idea and we're lucky to have it."⁵

Patient

"It was the closest place and very convenient as the cholesterol test could be done on site with results available straight away."⁵

Patient

4. Royal Society of Public Health, *Over three quarters of public comfortable with routine health checks in pharmacy*, February 2015

5. Local Government Association, *Checking the health of the nation: Implementing the NHS Health Check Programme*, March 2015

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Potential benefits of a community pharmacy NHS Health Check service

1. Highly accessible for patients

Community pharmacies are highly accessible locations; research has shown that 89.2% of the overall population and 99.8% of people from the most deprived areas live within just a 20 minute walk of a community pharmacy.⁶ This is consistently higher when compared with the population living within a 20 minute walk of a GP surgery.⁷ Many community pharmacies are also open for extended hours in the evenings and weekends, again ensuring accessibility for patients.

2. No appointment needed

Patients do not need to make an appointment for a Health Check in a community pharmacy. Patients can just present, at a time which is convenient for them, and have a Health Check, again making it a convenient option.

3. Opportunistic Health Checks

Health Checks can be offered to patients opportunistically in a community pharmacy setting. Community pharmacies are the ideal place to do this, due to the high footfall, an estimated 95% of people visit a pharmacy at least once a year.⁸

4. Additional public health services

Many community pharmacies offer public health services that are complementary to the Health Check service, for example, stop smoking, alcohol intervention and brief advice and weight management. Following a Health Check, patients can be advised of relevant services for their health needs.

5. Reduces workload for overstretched GP surgeries

GP surgeries are struggling to cope with their workload so a community pharmacy NHS Health Check service helps lessen this by reducing the number of patients visiting their GP surgery for the service.

Case study: London Borough of Lewisham

The London Borough of Lewisham started using community pharmacies from the start of the roll out of the Health Check programme as they saw that there was merit in broadening access beyond GP practices.⁵

A quarter of all Health Checks in Lewisham are now taking place in community pharmacies.⁵

As well as the standard Health Check, four community pharmacies in Lewisham are commissioned to offer spirometry testing to current or recent smokers as part of the service.⁹

Pharmacy teams have access to a secure, web-based recording system to check the patient's eligibility and use this platform to send the results of the NHS Health Check to their GP.

Referrals can also be made to the Lewisham Lifestyle Hub, which is a local programme that links patients to different

6. Todd et al. *The positive pharmacy care law: an area-level analysis of the relationship between community pharmacy distribution, urbanity and social deprivation in England*, August 2014

7. Todd A et al, *Access all areas? An area-level analysis of accessibility to general practice and community pharmacy services in England by urbanity and social deprivation*, May 2015

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services available in their area such as physical activity taster lessons, healthy walks and weight management programmes. Overall, 40% of referrals to the Lewisham Lifestyle Hub come from community pharmacy-based Health Checks.⁵

An evaluation of the community pharmacy service showed that 80% of respondents agreed that a pharmacy was a good place for a Health Check. Many felt that the pharmacy was more convenient than their general practice.⁹

Another recent evaluation of the community pharmacy service has shown that it is a better setting for engaging hard-to-reach groups. Pharmacies see a higher proportion of black African and black Caribbean residents and people from deprived communities – and because of this it identifies a greater proportion of people at risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.⁵

8 Royal Society of Public Health, *Reducing premature mortality: the role of community pharmacists*, February 2015

9. Medway School of Pharmacy, *Evaluation of NHS Health Checks provided by community pharmacists with addition of spirometry*, Exec summary, April 2014