

## Patient experiences of online pharmacies



# Patient experiences of online pharmacies 2019

Healthwatch received a number of queries in early 2019 about a marketing campaign for an online pharmacy service. Many residents in the city had received letters advertising this service and asking them to sign up for the internet-based service. Residents expressed confusion about these letters. They were unsure about the legitimacy of these companies and how signing up for the service might affect the use of their current pharmacy.

In response to these concerns, Healthwatch decided to conduct a survey of residents who had recently received marketing promoting an online pharmacy. We were interested in hearing about people's experiences receiving this marketing, their experience using this new service and how it compared to their experience using their local pharmacy.

The survey was open for five weeks in January and February 2019 and distributed widely via social media, our mailing list and partner organisations.

91 people completed the survey.

## Executive Summary

### *Source of confusion*

Significant numbers of those who received online pharmacy marketing felt that the advertising was confusing.

Half of the 60 people who received it noticed the use of the NHS logo on the materials (31) and half of this group (15) said the presence of the logo made it more likely they would consider the offer.

### *Low take up*

Only three people (5%) signed up for the online service.

Of the people who did not sign up:

- 66% said they were happy with their existing pharmacy service.
- 27% said they were suspicious of the credentials of the company.
- 7% said they were wary of using an online service.

### ***Satisfaction with local pharmacy service***

Most people were satisfied (82%) with their local pharmacy and most (72%) said its location was convenient for them.

### ***No conclusive feedback about online pharmacy service***

Only three people reported using an online pharmacy service. There were mixed reports from these users but the small number of cases meant we were unable to draw firm conclusions on performance.

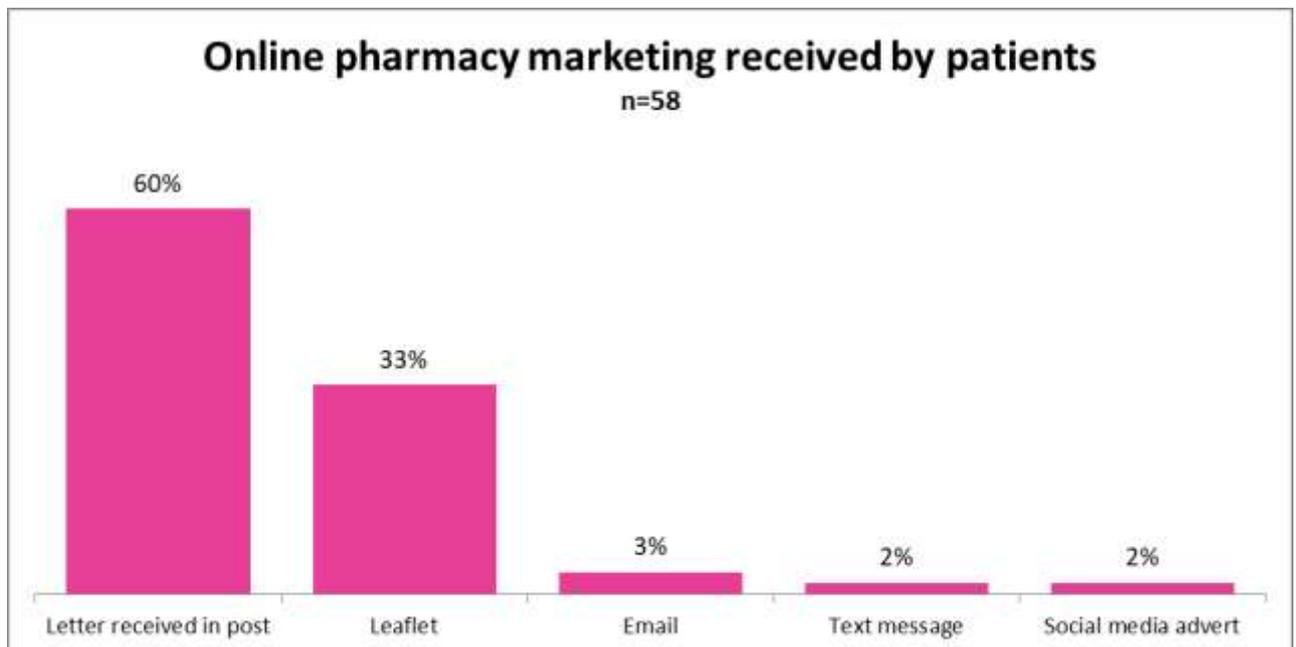
## **Main report**

### ***Online pharmacy marketing***

60 respondents said they had received marketing for an online pharmacy service.

The most common forms of marketing received were a letter in the post (60%) and a leaflet picked up (33%).

Most marketing received was from Pharmacy2U (70%) and My Pharmacy (5%).



*First reaction was it looked interesting. Looking more closely I realised it was not as good as the service I already get from the pharmacy next to my GP surgery.*

*I felt it was weird that the NHS should be promoting it.*

*It looked more official than junk mail so I opened and read it.*

*I thought it sounded like a good idea, especially for someone who was housebound.*

*It sounded as though the NHS was suggesting the service.*

Over half said they remembered noticing an NHS logo on the material received. For many seeing the logo made the company seem more credible as if they were NHS endorsed.

48% of those who noticed the logo said it made it more likely that they would consider the offer.

*I thought it was an NHS service.*

*It made it look as though this service was an NHS service.*

*Thought it was an NHS endorsed service.*

*It made it feel more genuine.*

*I believed that it was authorised by the NHS.*

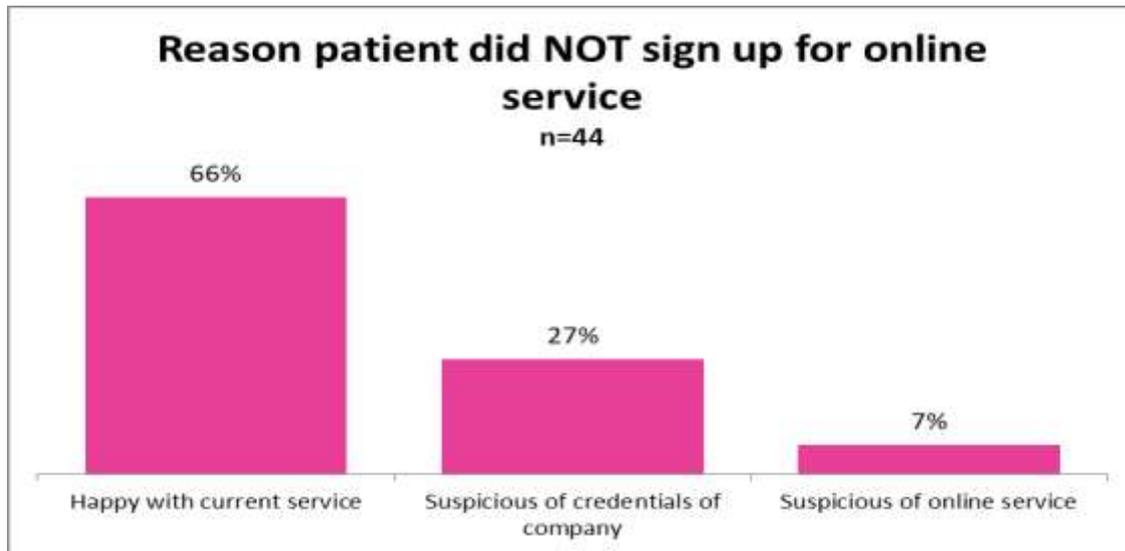
*The NHS logo is a quality kitemark, it means it is an NHS service funded by the taxpayer.*

*I thought it was 'official' and was something I needed to do.*

## ***Signing up for the online pharmacy service***

Only three respondents (5%) signed up for the service.

Most of those who decided not to sign up said it was because they were happy with their current pharmacy service (66%). A quarter (27%) said they had not signed up because they were suspicious of the credentials of the company.



*I have a satisfactory arrangement for my medications and was not too sure about the validity of the service.*

*Looked into the company online and realised it was not an NHS service.*

*Because it was obviously some private style organisation.*

*I trust a pharmacy with whom I have a long standing relationship and which is community based.*

*I did not feel confident that I'd get my meds.*

*I'm quite happy with my current arrangement.*

### ***Using the online pharmacy service***

Only three respondents signed up for the online service; two chose Pharmcy2U and one My Pharmacy.

They used a range of services offered including delivery of repeat prescriptions and non-prescription pharmacy products.

Satisfaction levels were mixed from these users: two were unsatisfied and one satisfied.

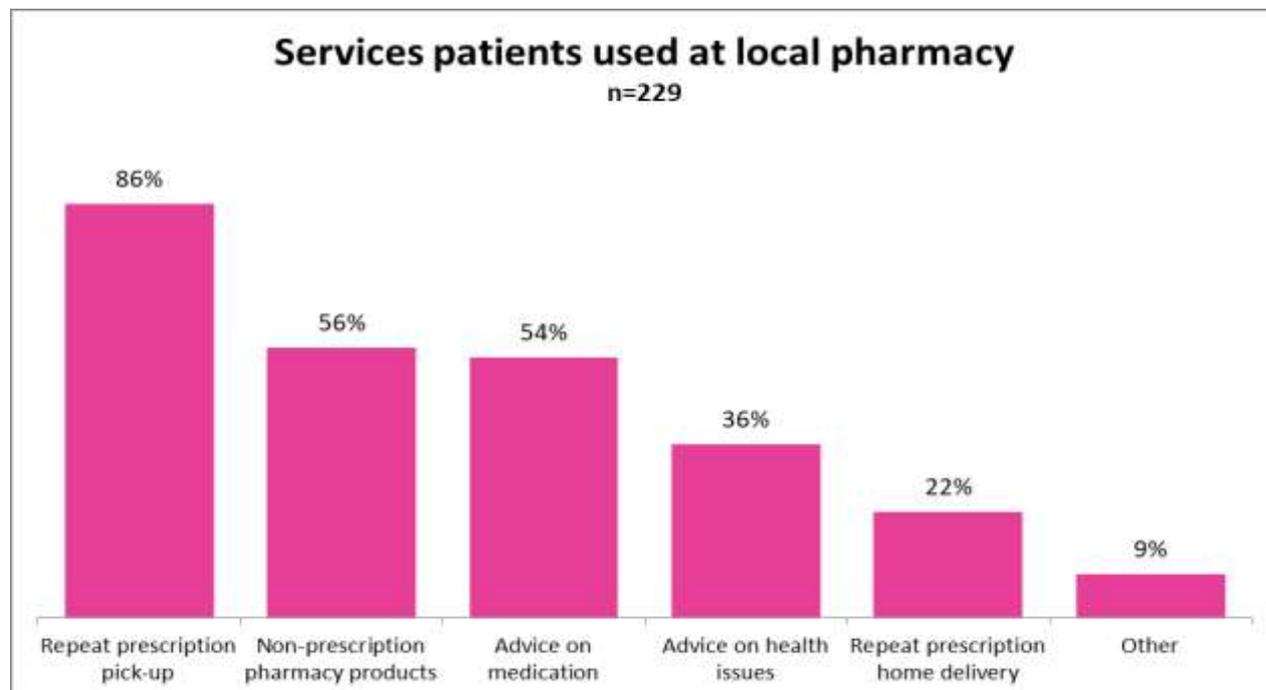
The limited number of users mean we were unable to draw any conclusions from these results.

*Once set up with my details and those of the medication, everything has worked extremely smoothly. In particular, the reminder function is excellent.*

*Lack of communication and non-arrival in time of medicines.*

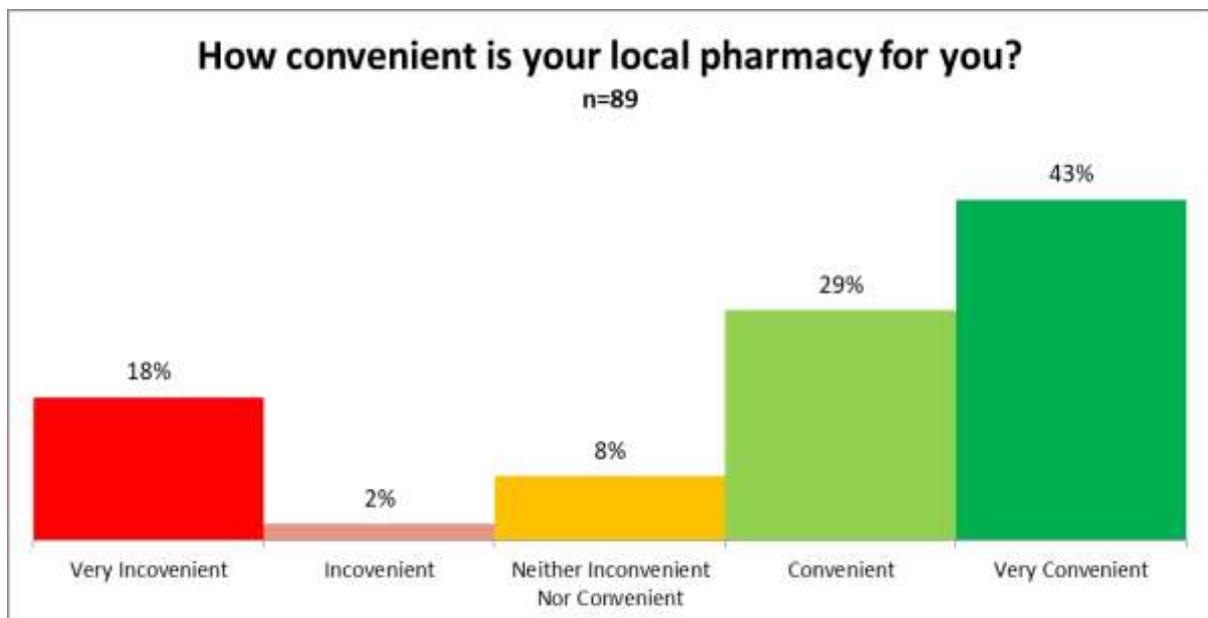
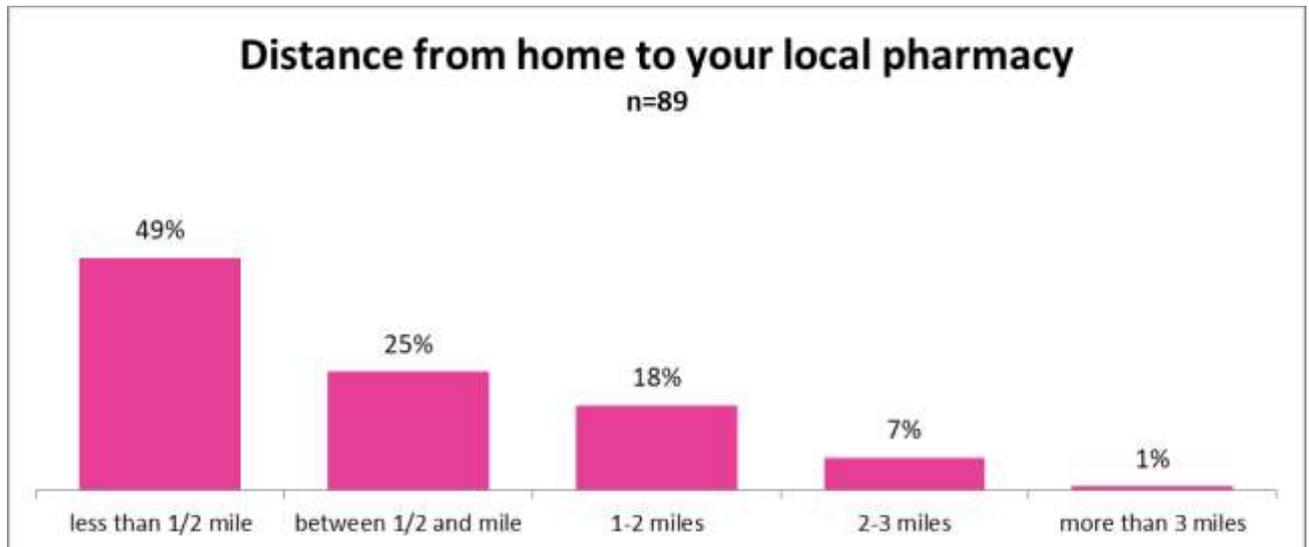
### ***Experience with local pharmacy service***

Respondents reported using their local pharmacy for a range of different services including repeat prescription pickup (86%) and purchasing non-prescription products (56%) as well as advice on medication and health issues.

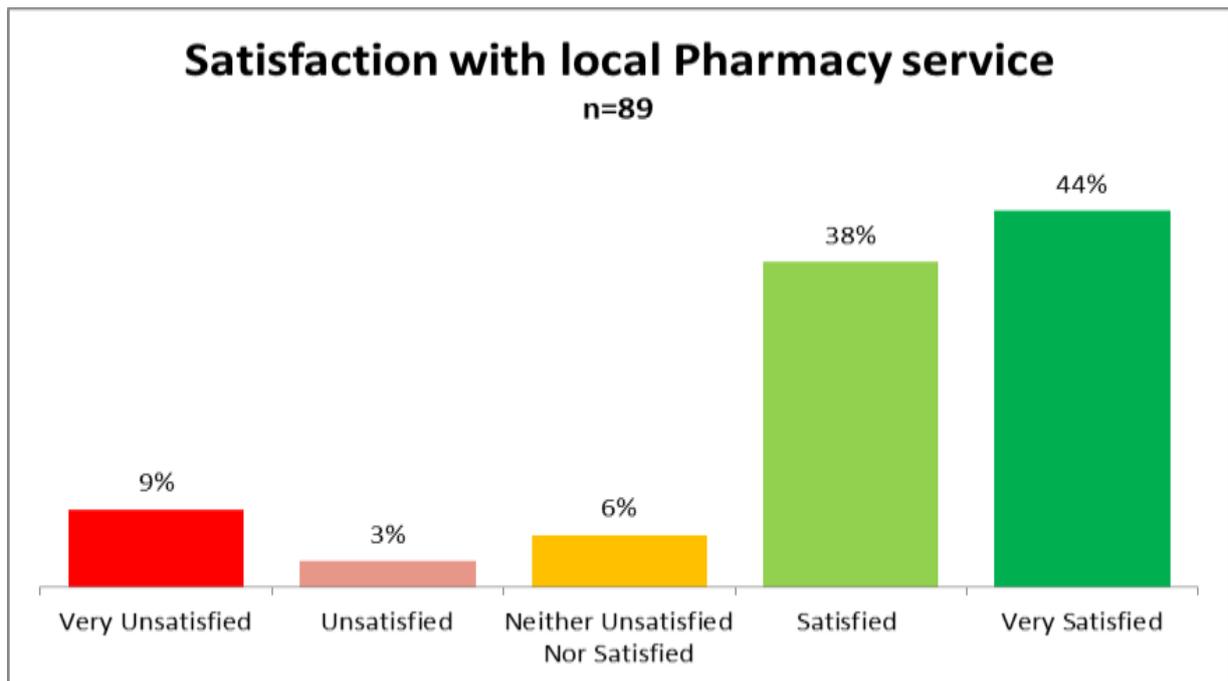


Patients generally used a local pharmacy fairly close to where they lived. Three quarters (74%) used a pharmacy within a mile of their home.

72% said that their pharmacy was convenient for them.



A large majority (82%) were satisfied with their local pharmacy service.



*They are always telling me to ring them if I need any help or advice. The pharmacist and the staff are lovely and make me feel valued as a customer.*

*Fine, friendly, professional, helpful!*

*Often have to wait to be served but otherwise good.*

*Variable service, and although co-located with my GP practice, communication between them sometimes appeared to be difficult!*

*Often queues and sometimes my repeat prescription I have ordered days before is not ready.*

*Pharmacy is unable to keep up with demand from the two adjacent surgeries so often long waiting times or shortages of items.*