

How easy do people in Swindon find it to order prescriptions?

My Voice Matters

A Young Healthwatch Volunteer investigation

Contents

Contents	1
What is this report about?.....	2
What did we do?.....	2
What the people in Swindon told us:.....	3
What are the key findings?.....	11
Conclusion and recommendations:.....	13
Next Steps.....	13
Appendices.....	14

My Voice Matters is ensuring the voice of people with diverse lived experiences and backgrounds are heard.

We are proud to be able to give the opportunity for seldom heard voices to be heard by providers and wider organisations in their own words.

This report has been researched and written by Sweeny Gracias, a Young Healthwatch student placement who is studying Health and Social Care at New College and is in her words.

What is this report about?

Through detailed research and questionnaires conducted in Swindon, we have looked at how efficient various prescription ordering services are to the public. Incorporating a wide range of challenges and barriers that concern the public, we also looked at possibilities to resolve them.

What did we do?

The project, which was carried out between April and July 2023, included research on various prescription ordering services, an online, paper questionnaire, and direct engagement sessions within parts of Swindon.

- Community fridge (Gorse Hill)
- Penhill Community Café
- Online – via X (formally Twitter)/Facebook

The vast amount of data that was collected through our questionnaires, provided feedback on how accessible services are to the members of public, along with barriers and challenges people have come across.

What the people in Swindon told us:

Through an online survey and engagement sessions, we gathered feedback about multiple prescription ordering systems to assess how effective they are for the members of the public.

We have explored many apps and services in regards of their convenience to the public, to draw a conclusion on how we can find a solution to solve the challenges and improve services to order prescriptions.

How do people order their prescriptions?

Email		10.53%
Prescription Ordering Direct (POD)		39.47%
System one (Systmonline)		13.16%
NHS app		26.32%
In practice		6.58%
Calling the GP Surgery		3.95%
Other (please specify):		17.11%

Prescription Ordering Direct (POD):

This online service allows people to order their prescription online via phone calls or an online form, ensuring to have medication ready within 2 weeks to be collected at their local pharmacy.

Despite some people had only positive things to say about how well this service is, many complained about numerous challenges and problems they faced during the process of ordering their prescription to receiving them in person.

“It’s awful. No confirmation. Pharmacist often out of stock, so prescription gets cancelled”

“It takes ages and they get it wrong”

“Make POD more efficient and reduce waiting times”

“Have some way to actually get told whether or not the pharmacy has the message and if it’s in stock – that doesn’t waste both my and the pharmacist’s time by repeatedly phoning or going in trying to check if it had arrived”

“Not so long wait for POD”

“Never had an issue with POD. Always with pharmacist within a week”

“Have used it but lack of staff/continuity. Little communication with POD”

“Email or text reply from pod to confirm the prescription has been sent to the pharmacy because on several occasions when at the pharmacy they say they have not received the prescription from the pod having the confirmation would save hassle at the pharmacy”

“It is very impersonal having to use the pod. Very often I will call and I will be put in a que, hanging for 30 to 40 minutes before being put through to a person to deal with”

According to the feedback we received on Prescription Ordering Direct (POD), besides the lack of communication and the lengthy wait times, the pharmacy appears to be the major issue rather than the service itself among most individuals. Additionally, some have complained that POD needs patients to confirm their repeated prescription through their GP before starting their repeated medicine, which may consume time and make the patient wait longer before receiving their medication.

Others claim to have found no problems with the service or the pharmacy, throughout the process of ordering and receiving their medication. Some have stated that the POD email works more efficiently than having to call the service.

Most people that use the POD service come from ages between 50-59+, who need repeated medication on a regular basis. Therefore, the POD service should reflect on their communication with clients, have more staff available to reduce long waiting times, make sure the service is easily accessible to the public. These are some of the many solutions/ feedbacks we have received from the public which may improve the service.

Furthermore, although the POD service is quite popular in Swindon, on a national scale not many people are aware of it, which means nationally people are not accessing this service as it may not be available to them. Subsequently, POD could be advertised on

a national scale to make people aware of the service, especially those that require repeated prescription on a daily basis.

NHS App:

The NHS app is a multipurpose service that helps book and manage appointments at your GP surgery, get health information and advice and order your repeated prescription along with lots more.

The NHS app is a well-known app known among people on a national scale to be quite convenient within its various purposes including ordering repeat prescriptions. It is also one that is recommended by most GPs to their patients

•
"Email via NHS website"

"The NHS app ordering is brilliant but sadly anything after lets it all down"

"Clearer NHS app info"

"Only order through NHS app"

"Yes, it's a bit long winded so use the app NHS instead"

"Yes, I'd love to use NHS app but it says I can't order on it"

"Have used the NHS App for approx. 3 years without any problems"

"Ensuring every repeat prescription is available in the NHS App to order via this means rather than having to book an appointment with a GP every time it is needed"

Through feedback from people, it shows that the NHS app is more commonly used alongside POD in Swindon for ordering prescriptions as it is easily accessible to the public and is also the most recommended app by GPs to their patients. Many have reported only positive things to say about this app within our survey although, there were some issues with ordering through the app. One stated that the NHS app within itself is excellent for its use however they could not order through it, while another added that repeated prescriptions aren't always available for ordering through the app hence, they have to book an appointment with their GP to receive their medication.

The NHS app is used within a range of ages from 30 to 60+ which, goes to show how popular this method is to order repeated prescriptions due to its simplicity and it being easily accessible to the public. Additionally, most of the feedback received in regards

to the NHS app appears to have less problems within peoples use, implying that this service is quite efficient for the public to access for ordering their repeated medication.

System one (System online):

System online is a website and app provided by TPP that allows patients to view their electronic medical record and manage appointments or order repeat prescriptions. System one is another beneficial service among people to book their prescriptions online via the app or website and is also one with the least challenges when it comes to ordering repeated medication due to its features to manage medical records electronically.

“Used it once. Slow and cumbersome compared to System online”

“Only order through System online”

“Slow approvals”

“More resources for telephone service might encourage me to use it”

“Continue this service”

“Give 2 months or more of lifelong regular meds at a time”

System one is a well-known service among the community in Swindon, as many praise the service to be better than other initiatives such as POD. System one is quicker through booking prescriptions and is more convenient for repeated medication. This service has overall got positive responses within those that access it, most suggesting to keep the service going as it's a great way to order repeated prescriptions for those who require regular medication.

Though most of its target audience being within the ages of 50–59, there were very few challenges that were reported. One being that the service had ‘slow approvals’, which is a time-consuming factor, and another stating not all medication was initially listed therefore, they had to use a different method.

Overall system online seems to be a rather simple service to operate for people especially those of the ages of 50–59 to order repeated prescriptions as required, which shows that it is yet another efficient way to order repeated prescriptions online.

Email:

Some people prefer to email their GP, doctors, or the service that they use, for their required medication, as some find it more efficient for their use.

“Let me know when medication is ready for collection”

“When items are not available or missed from request prescription, I am not notified”

“The chemist where you pick it up from takes a week to process the order, so that is where the hold-up is”

“There needs to be more alternatives”

“Would rather tick a box rather than having to write an email”

Through our survey we found this method to be helpful for the users most complained about various challenges and problems they came across using this method. As one stated when they emailed their pharmacy regarding a booking for their prescription, the pharmacy never notified them whether their medication was ready or out of stock therefore, the patient would have to re-order their prescription leading to a delay in receiving their medication. Additionally, another blamed the chemist for holding up their prescription for a week, so they receive it late. This may affect people that require repeated medication especially those who are in critical conditions and rely on these medications.

With most of its targeted audience being 60+ people have suggested some solutions such as there to be more alternatives or the chemist notifying their clients when their medication is ready to collect or if it is out of stock to prevent them from having to re-order their prescription due to it being out of stock, as it delays the time one receives their medication.

In practice/ Calling the GP:

According to the questionnaire we conducted, in practice and calling GP's are a less common way for people to request repeated prescriptions. However, some individuals do obtain their medication through this way. This may be because they require a special medication/ drug that is not normally available at their local pharmacy's or that can be ordered through app/ websites.

“Deliver to me - save us going searching”

“Ensuring every repeat prescription is available in the NHS App to order via this means rather than having to book an appointment with a GP every time it is needed”

“Collect and deliver prescription”

“My doctors-pharmacy do not stock bunov patches and other items so have to go search for them and as a carer this is an issue”

“Get appointments to see doctors & nurse diabetics”

“It's easy”

“My GP can simply write me out a repeat when I need it.”

We have received mixed comments claiming, in practice/ calling the GP are a suitable way to order repeated prescriptions as most of them get delivered to their homes, which saves time from having to go and pick it up. Although, a few have complained about having to book an appointment with their GP every time they need their prescriptions due to their required medication not being available on apps. Another issue is that medication is not stocked in pharmacy's therefore people are having to visit their practice/ GP to get their required prescriptions. In practice is shown to be the most popular among people aged 60+. While, calling in the GP have a similar age range of 50 – 59. This may indicate potential barriers such as, the lack of information among elderly individuals who may be unaware on how to order medications online and instead visit their GP to pick up their prescriptions.

Other:

Other variations to order repeated prescriptions include:

- memory clinic
- online doctors' website
- pop in pharmacy
- Airmid UK
- Lloyd's pharmacy app
- Hey pharmacy

“Memory clinic: they forget to send prescriptions to pharmacy”

“The pharmacist could phone when prescription ready”

“To have your prescriptions online so you can securely log on and order it that way.

This saves all the wait to get though and we can take ownership of it ourselves”

“Not all medication initially listed which is why I have to use two different methods.”

“Cannot think of anything, as the system I use seems to work for me.”

“It would be helpful if there was a database that could be checked to show which pharmacy had the medication in stock”

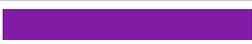
“Make the website a little easier to access.”

“Nothing it works really well” – Lloyd’s pharmacy

“Cannot think of anything, as the system I use seems to work for me”

“Pharmacy staff capable of understanding how it all looks from where I stand”

These other variations are less common among the public when it comes to ordering their prescriptions. Instead we have received positive feedback on the way the other systems operate. However,, the common issue within the feedback, highlights the pharmacy being the problem rather than their chosen method to order their repeated prescriptions. For instance, an individual shared it would be beneficial if they were to be notified when their prescription was in stock. Similarly, another recommended for the pharmacy to call them when their prescription is ready and for the staff answering the call at the pharmacy to be understanding to their clients. Users accessing these other variations for their repeated prescription range between mainly 60+ of age, and some aged around 40 – 49. This goes to show the varied range of individuals in their adulthood and old age (elderly) that order their medication through these ways.

Age			
1	17 or younger		0.00%
2	18-20		0.00%
3	21-29		1.32%
4	30-39		6.58%
5	40-49		9.21%
6	50-59		34.21%
7	60 or older		48.68%

Barriers – with ordering prescriptions:

There were many reoccurring barriers that were reported by people, which was a barrier within communicating or ordering their prescriptions efficiently.

“Have to let her daughter do as couldn't use the service”

“Little communication with POD/GP and pharmacy”

“Yes, no staff answering the phone”

“Yes, I am deaf so using the phone is difficult. Having to call and speak to someone is not easy. Also had issues when requesting medication”

“Hearing-impaired people require a written (e-mail) channel of communication”

Communication was one of the barriers between the patient and the pharmacy, having little staff available to attend calls, meant that people had to wait on long waiting lists before they could communicate their needs.

In addition, hearing impaired people, find it more difficult to communicate to the pharmacy about their meds as they aren't able to hear clearly therefore, pharmacies should have the option to email, so that hearing impaired people have a better way of communicating their needs.

Pharmacy – being the common issue!

Throughout the questionnaire that was conducted on the different apps/ systems and other various ways of ordering repeated prescriptions, pharmacy was a reoccurring issue among nearly all the variations that people objected about.

This is due to the pharmacy:

- Not having medication in stock
- Lack of proper communication
- Not informing patients when their prescriptions ready

These are some of the reasons that have left people unable to receive medication on time due to the pharmacy either not having it in stock or is not notifying people to collect their medication. This is a sever issue as many that require repeated prescription rely on medication on a daily basis, therefore it is the pharmacy's prime duty to ensure people pick up their prescriptions as soon as they're available to prevent any further deterioration of their health.

Things that can be done to improve the service:

Through the questionnaire, we received a lot of feedback on ways to improve the service and make it more convenient for its use.

“Would rather tick a box rather than having to write an email”

“Let me know when medication is ready for collection”

“More resources for telephone service”

“More staff to answer the phones”

“Make POD more efficient and reduce waiting times”

“Email or text reply from pod to confirm the prescription”

“Make all IT solutions user friendly and give patients the knowledge and skills to use them”

“Pharmacy becomes more efficient at handling prescriptions”

“Letting know if there is likely to be a problem or delay with the prescription”

“Lack of communication whether it is the surgery or the local hospital”

“There needs to be more alternatives”

We have identified many ways to improve the service within the various options that were discussed. For example, communication could be made more efficient by having staff available to answer calls and provide people with information. Another could be, making online ordering services user friendly, easier to access and provide patients with the knowledge to access the service. Pharmacies could be more efficient at handling prescriptions – by letting people know when their medication is in stock or notifying them when their prescriptions ready to be collected, for an efficient service.

What are the key findings?

Key finding across Swindon:

- A common problem reported–was having long waiting lists (on call), this was mainly criticised by those using the POD service.
- Some people complained that the main problem was with pharmacies not having medication in stock rather than accessing services.

- Few reported having problems receiving the right prescriptions which affected their daily life.
- Some (especially the elderly) find it hard to operate services online, to order their prescriptions.
- Many suggest its easier for them to consult the GP for their prescription as it allows any mistakes to be picked up at an early stage.
- People that have complicated heath issues and rely on medication find it challenging when services online get the prescriptions wrong or don't have any on hand

Conclusion and recommendations:

Through our feedback that was collected, it evidently shows that most services available to the public are suitable for their purpose, however the main source of problem most encountered is with the pharmacy having issues such as been out of stock or having poor communication.

Recommendation – there should be better alternatives but in place within individual services to make sure people are able to access services efficiently.

Next Steps

- This report will be shared widely across the NHS and local council network and Healthwatch England, in particular the Swindon Borough Council Public Health Team and the Bath Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) Integrated Care Board
- We will share the report on our social media channels and webpage
- We will share the report at the community groups we attended to ensure they can see what has happened to their feedback.
- We will be speaking to community pharmacists to gather their feedback on the issues they face.
- We will visit two pharmacies where the most issues were highlighted to gather user feedback to suggest what changes need to be made.

Appendices

Questionnaire: With multiple ways of ordering prescriptions how well are they working for you?

1. How do you order your prescription? *

- Email
- Prescription Ordering Direct (POD)
- System one (Systmonline)
- NHS app
- In practice
- Calling the GP Surgery
- Other (please specify):

Comments:

2. Is your selected method of ordering prescription efficient to your use? *

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify):

Comments:

3. Were there any challenges? *

- Yes

How easy do people in Swindon find it to order prescriptions?

No

Comments:

4. What is the one thing that can be done to help serve you? *

5. How happy are you with your ordering service?

*

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all likely	<input type="checkbox"/>	Extremely likely										

6. If you have used POD (Prescription Ordering Direct) have you found any barriers preventing you from accessing the service?

7. Does your GP recommend you to use online prescription? *

Yes

No

Other (please specify):

Comments:

8. Do you have repeat prescriptions? *

Yes

No

9. Where are you based? *

Swindon area

Bath and North East Somerset

Other (please specify):

Comments:

10. Do you identify as

Male

Female

Other (please specify):

11. What age range are you?

17 or younger

18-20

21-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60 or older

How easy do people in Swindon find it to order prescriptions?

12. What ethnicity do you identify as?

White

- British
- Irish
- Other

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background

Mixed

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed background

Black or Black British

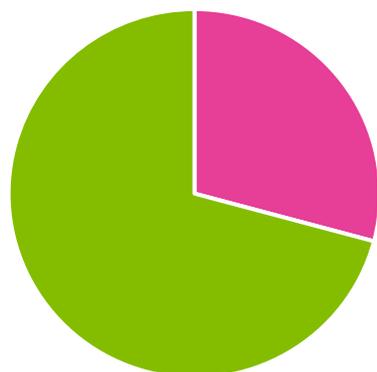
- Caribbean
- African
- Any other black background

Other Ethnic Group

- Chinese
- Any other Ethnic Group
- I do not wish to disclose my ethnic origin
- Other (please specify):

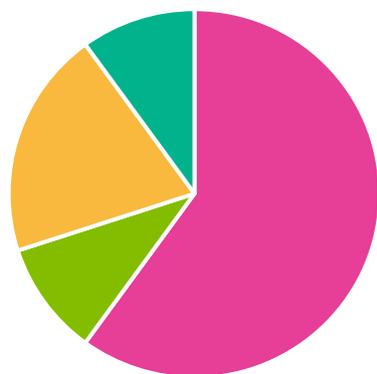
Demographics of Responses

Gender of Respondees



■ Male ■ Female

Ethnicity of Respondees



■ White British ■ Other ■ Indian ■ Pakistani



healthwatch
Swindon

Healthwatch Swindon
Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon
SN1 1HE

www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk
t: 01793 497777
e: info@healthwatchswindon.org.uk
@HealthwatchSwin
Facebook.com/HealthwatchSwindon