

Enter & View

Boots Pharmacy

Redruth

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1 Introduction

1.1 Details of visit

Service provider	Boots Pharmacy Redruth
Service Address	84 Fore St, Redruth TR15 2BL
Date and time	19 th May 2025 10am–12pm
Authorised representative	Abi Harding-White

1.2 Purpose of visit

This visit was conducted in response to feedback received about the service. Our goal was to observe the service in action, hear directly from patients, and make recommendations for improvement.

1.3 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Cornwall would like to thank patients and staff for providing a warm welcome and their positive contribution to this Enter and View visit and the subsequent report.

1.4 Disclaimer

This report relates to findings observed on the specific date above and is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time of the visit.

1.5 About Healthwatch Cornwall

Healthwatch Cornwall is an independent organisation committed to amplifying the voices of Cornwall's residents in the planning and delivery of health and social care services. Through public engagement, we gather their views and experiences with these services. We ensure these perspectives are represented in decision-making processes both locally and nationally, driven by the belief that community feedback is vital to improving standards of care.

1.6 What is Enter and View?

As a local Healthwatch we are authorised to “Enter and View” health and social care services through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Local Authorities Regulations 2013 (part 4). These services can include hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists, and pharmacies.

Enter and View visits are an opportunity to see services in action, listen to and understand the experiences of individuals who use them, and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The visits are organised based on feedback received about individual services or in response to themes identified in our research.

2 Visit Summary

Introductory meeting with manager

At the beginning of the visit, Healthwatch Cornwall met with the manager, who manages a different Boots but is temporarily supporting this team, to discuss the service.

Conversations with patients

We were able to speak with four patients about their experiences with the pharmacy, including the consistency of receiving medication in a timely manner and the staff.

Observation of facilities

Observations were made throughout the visit, focussing on the condition of the facilities and patient experience when interacting with staff and waiting for their medication.

3 Observations

Environment

The entrance to the pharmacy throughout was wheelchair accessible with an automatic door and ramp inside the store. The ramp did have some hazard tape indicating it may need servicing or fixing in some way. The store was spacious in the way it was laid out and was clean and tidy on the main store floor. The pharmacy was located at the back with a couple of chairs for patients to wait and a consultation room. It did not appear that there was a hearing loop or sign indicating there was one. Notices were related to pharmacy activities and there was a QR code for patients to use for feedback, although this does not make giving feedback accessible to older patients. There were no signs relating to safeguarding.

It was observed that a large number of crates containing medication deliveries, which had arrived that morning, were stacked within the pharmacy. Staff were required to sort these on the same day while also attending to patients at the tills but certainly during the visit it did not appear that there was time to get started with this. At one point, staff had to search through the unsorted crates to locate an item after a patient identified that part of their order was missing raising concerns about errors being made and delays in patients receiving their medication.

Pharmacy Team

What was very clear was how busy the staff were constantly, and they appeared quite stressed at points. Patients arrived in waves, causing the queue to grow quite long. To manage this, the number of staff at the till increased to three, including the manager. This left only the pharmacist in the back sorting through medication. Another member of staff was elsewhere in the store organising blister packs.

Despite how busy it seemed, one patient mentioned that it was not even as busy as it can get. During these times, staff appeared extremely pushed for time and rushed, to the point of even speaking quickly. They remained professional and helpful. It was obvious from talking to them and seeing the way they interact with patients that the team care about what they do. However, they simply do not seem to have enough time or staff to manage everything which contributed to interactions with patients that were at times impersonal or came across as quite abrupt.

With several local pharmacies having closed and others operating with inconsistent opening hours, more patients are relying on their services. This is in addition to the pressure from commissioning bodies for them to provide increased support to the community. They were short one staff member on the day we visited, and even with just one person on leave, the service was clearly stretched. Although, it was confirmed that it would still have been busy even if that team member had been present.

Patient Experiences

It was noted that some patients could also be quite abrupt, not greeting staff and simply stating their name for collection. This contributed to the lack of personal interaction, though it also seemed there was little time for pleasantries. However, staff knew a number of patients by name, and a few patients appeared to know each other well, indicating a sense of community despite the pressures. Patient feedback also suggests strong support for this pharmacy in particular.

There were delays as staff sorted through medication with patients, with some patients reporting that items were missing despite being listed on the prescription. In one case, this was resolved with a staff member located the missing medication in a crate that had not yet been sorted. In other cases, the prescription was correct, but it was clear that patients did not fully understand what medication they were meant to be receiving.

At one point, a prescription had not been sent to the pharmacy by the GP practice. A staff member sent an urgent request to the practice, reassured the patient, and confirmed that they were not completely out of their medication. When asked about the issue, the staff member explained that it involved Leatside, which they said was unusual. Conversations with both patients and management suggested that delays with prescriptions are more commonly linked to Carn to Coast.

4 Patient Feedback

Pharmacy pressures

Three people mentioned that they can see the pharmacy is under pressure. One noted that it is often crowded and advised coming later in the day. Another referred to the amount the pharmacy is managing in terms of volume of medication, pressure on the service, and 'awkward customers'. There was also a general concern for the pharmacy's continued operation, with one person saying they want it to stay open.

Prescription Issues

All four patients described experiencing problems with prescriptions and related systems. The issues included prescriptions being processed incorrectly, stock shortages, delays in receiving prescriptions from GP practices, and system errors.

Where medication is missing from an order, it could be due to a mistake, which is rectified if identified in store, or because the item is not in stock. Two patients reported having to leave without medication on some occasions. In one case, the medication had been missed from the order, but the patient identified this, and it was later found in a crate that had not yet been sorted. The other patient explained that when they leave without medication, it is usually only for a day if the item is not in stock. If the need is more urgent, such as when they have left it late to request a repeat, they are sometimes sent to a different pharmacy that does have the item available. Based on the first instance, where the medication was in the store but not yet sorted, it is unclear whether these situations are due to stock shortages or whether the team, under pressure, has not yet been able to process and sort through the deliveries.

Two people said that prescriptions sometimes do not arrive from the GP practice. One person expanded on this, reporting ongoing issues with Carn to Coast, which is often delayed in signing off prescriptions. They noted that, a couple of months ago, there was a 12-day delay. If the pharmacy then needed to order the item, the total wait for medication could extend to two weeks. This aligns with information gathered during conversations with management.

Another patient described problems with a new text notification system that failed to alert them when medication was ready, requiring them to return and check in person a few days later. Management acknowledged this was due to a process error at the store, which now has more oversight.

Customer Service

Four people spoke about the staff and, overall, the feedback was positive. Staff were described as helpful, friendly, and committed to getting things right. One person said that staff always do their best, while two others felt the service was very good. A change in staffing was noted, with one person observing that, following the closure of other pharmacies, some of those team members now appeared to be working in this one.

One patient felt that the team could be more personable with customers but acknowledged that they are under significant pressure. A particular staff member was praised for being warm, smiling, and making customers feel at ease, even remembering their names. However, a concern was raised about another staff member who did not speak respectfully to colleagues, creating a noticeably tense atmosphere. The patient did not know the name of this staff member but clarified that the individual was not present during the visit.

5 Manager Feedback

We were able to speak with a manager and deputy manager who have stepped in to support the pharmacy while they advertise for a permanent manager for the store. They explained how the service operates and what it offers, alongside some of the challenges.

The pharmacy supports the community with a range of services: emergency contraception and mini pill, blood pressure checks, Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring (ABPM), Pharmacy First scheme, clinical pathways for the seven conditions, minor ailments consultations through 111, emergency supplies, COVID tests, discharge medication service, NHS flu, supervised consumption, early diagnosis of cancer, Healthy Living Plus and community walk-in service.

This is alongside dispensing medication which patients can order through the NHS app or the pharmacy orders on behalf of patients, and they also organise blister packs. The pharmacy is under pressure with the increasing number of services that commissioning bodies want them to offer. They have received their first bit of funding in 10 years but it does not sound like this adequately correlates with how much they are doing, and taking into consideration that many pharmacies are closing, this further increases the number of people they are supporting. They are encouraging staff to upskill, giving more time to the pharmacist to do other things.

They consider themselves to have good working relationships with the local GP practices, but they can often have issues with delays in receiving prescriptions. This is particularly the case with Carn to Coast. Patients sometimes come in the day after they have seen the doctor but Carn to Coast will take six working days to process prescriptions, sometimes longer. The pharmacy then needs to order the medication in, which could take a few days. Depending on the medication, they can issue an emergency supply to patients. If the GP says they have sent it, but it has not been received, it can take a couple of hours for the prescription to download from the cloud. They do find the electronic system is better, as paper copies of prescriptions can easily get misplaced. The feedback heard during the visit regarding GP practices does not seem to reflect a positive working relationship with clear communication channels.

Another issue is that patients seem to all come in at once and they just have to put more people on the tills. This was thought to be at certain times such as lunchtime and school pick-up. This did not marry up with observations where waves of patients seemed to be regular and at no particular set times. They deal with 300 to 400 patients' medication requests a day. In terms of safeguarding patients, they report to know their patients quite well and talk to them. They also hold regular patient safety reviews where they discuss near misses and any concerns that need to be referred to the safeguarding team.

Towards the end of the visit, we discussed observations around the perceived stress staff are under. When I expressed concern about how stretched they seemed, they did not appear to see it as an issue to the same extent I did and seemed resigned or desensitised to it. It seemed

to be the norm as they explained that such pressure is common in pharmacies and can be even greater elsewhere. While they recognised there are limited options to change this particular aspect, they had considered adjusting how time is balanced between tasks on the floor and other responsibilities to better support staff needs.

6 Recommendations

Healthwatch Cornwall have offered some recommendations based on observations and feedback from patients to improve experiences at the pharmacy.

1. Accessibility

- Assess and repair the internal ramp currently marked with hazard tape, if required, to ensure safe and accessible entry for all patients.
- Confirm the availability and functionality of a hearing loop, and ensure clear signage is in place to inform patients with hearing impairments.

2. Patient Communication

- Provide accessible, non-digital options for patient feedback, ensuring inclusion for older patients and those without access to smartphones.
- Improve signage and digital communications to clearly explain prescription turnaround times, common delays, and the best times to visit based on observed footfall patterns.
- Review and improve the reliability of the notification system to ensure patients are accurately and consistently informed when their medication is ready.
- Display safeguarding information in a prominent public area, so patients are aware of how to raise concerns if needed.

3. Prescription Handling and GP Coordination

- Establish a structured communication channel with local GP practices, particularly Carn to Coast, to proactively address recurring delays in prescription processing.

4. Staffing, Workflow and Wellbeing

- Implement staff wellbeing measures, such as protected regular and staggered break times, and regular team check-ins, to help manage workload-related stress.
- Introduce protected times for staff to process incoming deliveries and prescriptions, minimising interruptions to reduce errors, delays and improve workflow.
- Review the time and staffing allocated to blister pack preparation to ensure adequate support is available during peak periods.
- Review current overall staffing levels, workflow management and training to ensure that staff are supported to engage with patients in a manner that promotes dignity, respect, and person-centred care.

7 Provider Response

Dear Healthwatch Cornwall,

RE: Healthwatch Cornwall Enter and View Visit on Monday 09.05.2025

Thank you for choosing to visit our Redruth Fore Street branch and for providing us with such invaluable feedback.

It was great to hear that our patients expressed their support for the pharmacy and described our colleagues helpful, friendly and committed to getting things right. We were also pleased to hear that our colleagues remained professional and helpful despite the busy nature of the pharmacy, following the closure of other pharmacies in the area.

With regard to the recommendations you have made, please see our responses below;

1. Accessibility

- Assess and repair the internal ramp currently marked with hazard tape, if required, to ensure safe and accessible entry for all patients.

Thank you for bringing this to our attention, this has now been repaired.

- Confirm the availability and functionality of a hearing loop, and ensure clear signage is in place to inform patients with hearing impairments.

There is a hearing loop available and we will look to make the signage more prominent to ensure this is clear to patients.

2. Patient Communication

- Provide accessible, non-digital options for patient feedback, ensuring inclusion for older patients and those without access to smartphones.

Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Patient feedback is extremely important to us, and we offer several ways for it to be shared, including directly with our team members or through our customer services department by phone. We will review our signage to ensure these options are clearly communicated.

- Improve signage and digital communications to clearly explain prescription turnaround times, common delays, and the best times to visit based on observed footfall patterns.

Noted, we will review signage and communications to patients and will continue to work with local GP practices to improve patient experience.

- Review and improve the reliability of the notification system to ensure patients are accurately and consistently informed when their medication is ready.

We will investigate where there has been any breakdown in communication with the notification system and implement improvements where needed.

- Display safeguarding information in a prominent public area, so patients are aware of how to raise concerns if needed.

We have a practice leaflet and chaperone poster on display to support with safeguarding awareness but we will review our displayed materials to ensure any relevant information is displayed prominently.

3. Prescription Handling and GP Coordination

- Establish a structured communication channel with local GP practices, particularly Carn to Coast, to proactively address recurring delays in prescription processing.

We will continue to work alongside our local GP practices to improve the prescription process for our patients and proactively address any concerns.

4. Staffing, Workflow and Wellbeing

- Implement staff wellbeing measures, such as protected regular and staggered break times, and regular team check-ins, to help manage workload-related stress.

The wellbeing of our team is incredibly important to us. We're pleased to share that the vacant Store Manager position has now been filled. The new manager will play a key role in ensuring the right support and measures are in place to foster a positive and supportive working environment.

- Introduce protected times for staff to process incoming deliveries and prescriptions, minimising interruptions to reduce errors, delays and improve workflow.

We will review the dispensary workflow to ensure it remains as safe, efficient, and effective as possible.

- Review the time and staffing allocated to blister pack preparation to ensure adequate support is available during peak periods.

We will take this into account during our review of the dispensary workflow to ensure these tasks are carried out at the most appropriate time.

- Review current overall staffing levels, workflow management and training to ensure that staff are supported to engage with patients in a manner that promotes dignity, respect, and personcentred care.

As mentioned above, we have appointed a new Store Manager who will lead a comprehensive review of staffing levels, workflow management, and training. This will help ensure our team is fully supported and equipped to deliver the best possible care to our patients.

Thank you again for spending time at our pharmacy, we are always seeking ways to improve the service we provide to our patients.

Kind regards,

Jenni

Area Manager

Boots Pharmacy

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