

Title of Report	Emergency Hormonal Contraception
For Consideration By	Health and Wellbeing Board
Meeting Date	21 Sep 2023
Classification	Open
<u>Ward(s) Affected</u>	
Report Author	Kanariya Yuseinova, <i>Enter and View and Volunteer Manager Healthwatch Hackney</i>

Is this report for:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Information
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Discussion
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decision

Why is the report being brought to the board?

To raise awareness of findings and issues picked up through the report and consider implications around commissioning and monitoring of community pharmacies contracts. The aim of the review is to improve delivery of services and prevent the potential negative impact on patients in need if they are unable to access the service appropriately.

We are bringing this to the Health and Wellbeing Board to encourage any organisation that commissions services in community pharmacies to consider their monitoring processes to ensure timely and appropriate access to services and patient safety.

Has the report been considered at any other committee meeting of the Council or other stakeholders?

Local Pharmaceutical Committee, C&H Public Health (responses from both can be seen in the original report)

1. Background

Each year, pharmacies are invited to enter into a contract with the London Borough of Hackney to provide free access to Emergency Hormonal Contraception together with Chlamydia Testing and Treatment and access to condoms. The individual contracts with pharmacies are for one year, and are renewed each new financial year, upon signature. The overall duration of the pharmacy agreement is until 2025.

According to Public Health Hackney, between March and November 2022, 38 pharmacies signed up to provide free access to Emergency Hormonal Contraception.

Between May 2022 and September 2022, a team from Healthwatch Hackney, including volunteers, ran a 'mystery shopping' activity to gain an overall snapshot of the access to Emergency Hormonal Contraception in Hackney by phoning and visiting the local pharmacies.

Telephone mystery shop findings:

23 pharmacies offered the service for free. Of these:

- 2 pharmacies were unable to offer the free service on the day due to the locum pharmacist not being trained to deliver the service
- 1 pharmacy had run out of stock, but the mystery shopper was signposted to another pharmacy
- 2 pharmacists offered the mystery shopper to either pay for the service or have it for free under the NHS
- 3 pharmacists gave conflicting information to both mystery shoppers about the charge of the service, so more than one call was needed to be made to clarify.

15 out of 38 pharmacies said they are charging for the service. Of these:

- 1 pharmacist said that they had run out of stock
- 5 pharmacists did not signpost the mystery shopper to another service for free Emergency Contraception
- 6 pharmacists voluntarily signposted the mystery shopper to other services including another pharmacy, GP practice or the local sexual health clinic
- 4 pharmacists signposted the mystery shopper to another free service only when asked
- 2 pharmacists invited the mystery shoppers to a consultation.
- 1 pharmacy gave conflicting information about the charge of the service "The first person said that I can have it for free with a prescription but wasn't able to

tell me where to get the prescription from. Another person took over and said that they don't provide the service for free but I can try other pharmacies.”

Physical visit mystery shop findings:

15 of the 16 visited pharmacies confirmed the findings from the telephone mystery shopping.

- Only 7 out of the 16 visited pharmacies said they were offering free Emergency Hormonal Contraception.
- One pharmacy offered free service over the phone, however, requested payment for the same service during the physical visit.
- Some mystery shoppers were not offered a consultation, especially when there was no access to free EHC at the pharmacy
- All pharmacies were accessible to young people by public transport
- During some of the visits, the mystery shopper was assisted by their friend. Their wish to attend the consultation accompanied by their friend was granted in all instances

2. **Recommendations**

Local Authorities and commissioners of NHS and public health services have an important role to play in providing accessible, safe, and confidential services to all service users and particularly young people.

Public Health Hackney and the Local Pharmaceutical Committee should ensure regular follow-up and monitoring of local pharmacies commissioned to deliver certain services free of charge to eligible residents.

Based on the findings from both the telephone calls and visits made to pharmacies, we identified the following areas for improvement to ensure these services are accessible and inclusive to all young people, and to other residents.

Patient's views and experience - monitoring and evaluation of the patient's experience. These recommendations address the importance of capturing young people's experience of access and delivery of the service as part of service development.

Environment - physical environment, staff training, skills and attitude. These recommendations address the importance of the physical environment as well as the training, skills and attitude that the pharmacy staff need to deliver young people-friendly services.

Publicity These recommendations address the importance of the content and design of the information available promoting a range of sexual health issues, including contraception, STIs, relationships, use of condoms and sexuality.

We recommend that Public Health Hackney, Local Pharmaceutical Committee and pharmacy leads convene a working group including young people to discuss the recommendations below and their implementation.

Support to create and facilitate this group is available through the Local Communications and Engagement Team which works with 16+ network, young System Influencers and public representatives.

See full report [HERE](#)

3. August 2023 review

In August 2023 we revisited the 9 pharmacies which were found to be charging in the original mystery shopping exercise. Disappointingly, all pharmacies visited were still charging for this service. Findings and comments from Public Health are shown below.

Neighbourhood	Telephone MS results	Physical MS results	Notes from Public Health
Woodberry Wetlands Neighbourhood	11/08/2023 Free only for under 25s.	21/08/2023 Paid. Suggested there are other pharmacies to offer EHC for free but unable to give details.	Actively providing the service
Woodberry Wetlands Neighbourhood	11/08/2023 Free after 4 pm as the pharmacist will be there. No age restriction.	22/08/2023 – 1st visit Paid. Only the pill for up to 3 days is free but the mystery shopper was not eligible for that as she said she had unprotected sex 4 days ago. 30/08/2023 – 2nd visit Free service – kind and helpful staff. Necessary information provided. The pharmacist said they just come back from leave. He also said that he is giving me the last box and they wouldn't have any more until the next day.	Actively providing the service
London Fields Neighbourhood	11/08/2023 Paid. £25. The call handler informed about the cost immediately. When I asked where can	18/08/2023 Paid. “I struggled to see the staff welcoming me. He was behind of a screen between pharmacy area and counter. He shouted me from there and then approached later.”; “The pharmacist didn't ask when I had an unprotected sex. He immediately grabbed a box and	Current work ongoing in the consultation room so it temporarily paused.

	EHC be accessed for free the call handler said "We don't do that."	said that it is £25. I was treated like I am worthless to explain more or spend time."	
Clissold Park Neighbourhood	11/08/2023 Paid. "We charge for it but I can give you the number of another branch where you can get it for free. Signposted to Safedale in Green Lanes. Even gave directions to the pharmacy.	30/08/2023 Paid. The pharmacist said they can't access the database therefore they can't provide it for free but they can sell it instead. Signposted to the Safedale in Green Lanes	Regular pharmacist on leave until the second week of August
Hackney Downs Neighbourhood	11/08/2023 Paid - £25 or £35. Voluntarily Signposted to F.A Strange	18/08/2023 Paid. Voluntarily Signposted to a pharmacy in Clapton at the corner.	Awaiting feedback
Hackney Marshes Neighbourhood	11/08/2023 Paid. Informed about the price of the pills immediately - £10 for the one up to 3 days and £30 for the one up to 5 days. The call handler did not know where the service can	18/08/2023 Paid. Voluntarily signposted to Safedale and another Clockwork pharmacy where the pills are provided for free.	Umar - The new manager and pharmacist for the past month – would like some further support

	be accessed for free.		
Well Street Common Neighbourhood	<p>11/08/2023</p> <p>Paid. Informed about the price of the pills immediately - £15.</p> <p>“The only reason we can’t do it for free is that we don’t have a functional consultation room, it is being renovated.”</p> <p>Wasn’t able to tell me where I can get the service for free.</p>	<p>18/08/2023</p> <p>Paid. Explained that the consultation room’s being inaccessible. The pharmacist followed a questionnaire and didn’t look like someone expert in contraception. It wasn’t really informative.</p>	Actively providing the service

Whilst in many cases the reasons why the free service was not available are understandable, there are ongoing issues with the availability of the service. Healthwatch Hackney feels these findings raise questions around the commissioning process, as inflexible contracts mean that pharmacies are restricted when delivering the free service, which includes a private consultation offering support and advice. This leaves them with the option of charging patients for a service that offers less support.

Include report content in this section along with any asks/recommendations for HWB to consider

4. **Policy Context:**

Please detail which, if any, of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy priorities this report relates to?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Improving mental health
<input type="checkbox"/>	Increasing social connection
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting greater financial security

<input type="checkbox"/>	All of the above
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Please detail which, if any, of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy 'Ways of Working' this report relates to?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strengthening our communities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creating, supporting and working with volunteer and peer roles
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Collaborations and partnerships: including at a neighbourhood level
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Making the best of community resources
<input type="checkbox"/>	All of the above

4.1. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Has an EIA been conducted for this work?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No

4.2. Consultation

Has public, service user, patient feedback/consultation informed the recommendations of this report?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Have the relevant members/ organisations and officers been consulted on the recommendations in this report?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

4.3. Risk Assessment

N/A

4.4. Sustainability

The initial report was published the report in February 2023. During the original review we visited 16 pharmacies (2 per Neighbourhood). Of these pharmacies 9 were inappropriately charging for this free service. In August we revisited 7 out of those 9 pharmacies to review their performance following the implication of the recommendations.

We aim to repeat this exercise in 2024 to achieve sustained change.

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Contact details	
Appendices	