

Enter & View Follow Up Report:

Synergise Pharmacy Stockton Town Centre

July 2026



Contents

Introduction	4
Purpose of the Follow-up	4
Key Findings	5
Observations	6
Good Practice Highlights by Staff	7
Public Feedback on the Day	8
Conclusion	10
Acknowledgements	11

ENTER & VIEW FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Synergise Pharmacy, Stockton Town Centre



Visit date: March 2026



Purpose: Follow-up visit to review progress and explore changes since the 2024 Enter & View programme.



INTRODUCTION

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees returned to Synergise Pharmacy as part of a follow-up to our 2024 pharmacy engagement work. The original Enter & View programme identified a number of themes across the Borough, including:

- Varied public awareness of Pharmacy First
- Ongoing medication shortages
- Privacy concerns in some settings
- Challenges in communication between pharmacies and GP practices
- Staff under growing pressure amid increasing demand

This follow-up visit aimed to understand what progress Synergise Pharmacy had made, hear directly from staff about any changes since 2024, and observe current practice within the pharmacy environment.

PURPOSE OF THE FOLLOW-UP

The aim of this follow-up was to:

- Gather updates from staff on actions taken since the initial Enter & View
- Observe the environment and interactions within the pharmacy
- Understand whether earlier concerns had been addressed
- Identify ongoing or emerging challenges
- Strengthen our ongoing monitoring as the local system begins to transition to a Neighbourhood Health model

This visit was short and focused, and therefore public feedback captured on the day was limited. Findings in this report reflect a combination of staff-reported information and direct Healthwatch observations.

KEY FINDINGS

Improvements Reported by Staff

Staff described a number of positive changes since our previous visit:

Increased awareness and use of Pharmacy First

Staff reported that more people were now accessing Pharmacy First. They had noticed a rise in both walk-ins and referrals. Staff felt members of the public were increasingly confident approaching the pharmacy for advice and minor conditions.

Proactive focus on supporting older people

Staff told us they had made a conscious effort to support older and more vulnerable patients more proactively. This included taking additional time to explain medication, offering reassurance, and providing quicker assistance to those who may have mobility or communication barriers.

Clearer communication around prescription deliveries

Staff explained that repeated unsuccessful delivery attempts had been placing pressure on their service. They have since introduced clearer messaging to patients about the process, including letting people know that repeated missed deliveries may incur a charge. No charges have been applied, and staff explained this was not their intention; however, the communication itself has improved delivery success.

Stock management adjustments

In response to rising costs and medication shortages, staff have begun bulk-buying certain commonly used medications. They felt this had helped stabilise availability and reduce the impact of supplier price fluctuations.

Managing busy periods

Staff felt that internal processes remained efficient during busy times and that they continued to manage patient flow effectively.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FOLLOW-UP VISIT

Healthwatch staff directly observed the following during the visit:



A welcoming and calm environment

Everyone entering the pharmacy was greeted promptly. Staff were attentive to people with pushchairs, mobility needs or who required additional support.



Approachable and supportive interactions

Interactions between staff and the public were consistently polite and patient. Several staff members used their language skills to support people who faced communication barriers.



Privacy available when required

A clear and accessible consultation space was available for those wishing to discuss more sensitive matters.



Information displayed clearly

Posters and information boards promoting pharmacy services, including Pharmacy First, were clearly visible and up to date.

GOOD PRACTICE HIGHLIGHTED BY STAFF

Staff also shared examples of wider good practice within the service, including:

- Expanding their provision through the acquisition of an online pharmacy, which they reported had been a smooth transition
- Regularly offering support to people facing mental health challenges, including signposting and referral where appropriate
- Their desire to continue supporting the local community and their interest in expanding further

These examples reflect the staff's view of their wider role within the community and their commitment to ongoing service development.



Courtesy: National Pharmacy Network

PUBLIC FEEDBACK ON THE DAY

People we spoke to during the visit expressed the following views:

- Staff were friendly, helpful and respectful
- They felt comfortable asking questions or requesting assistance
- They appreciated being acknowledged and supported immediately upon entering the pharmacy

Due to the nature and timing of this follow-up visit, the volume of public feedback was limited. The comments we did receive reflected positive experiences but should not be interpreted as a comprehensive representation of all service users.

Ongoing Challenges

Despite improvements, staff reported several ongoing system challenges that continue to affect service delivery.

Communication with GP practices

Staff reported that communication with GP practices remained difficult, with delays in reaching surgeries by phone. This continued to affect referral processes and could impact workflow and waiting times.

Medication shortages and costs

Medication shortages remain a significant pressure. Staff raised concerns about rising costs, inconsistent supply and the limited influence pharmacies have over pricing structures.

System-wide pressures

Staff described continued challenges managing patient expectations, especially as the complexity of community pharmacy work increases. They also reported that high volumes of clinical checks, such as blood pressure monitoring, were now prompting audits, despite these checks identifying important health issues.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK ON THE DAY

“**Staff were friendly,
helpful and respectful**”

“**Medication shortages
remain a significant
pressure**”

“**The public felt comfortable
asking questions or
requesting assistance**”

“**Staff reported that
communication with GP
practices remained difficult, with
delays in reaching surgeries by
phone**”

CONCLUSION

This follow-up Enter & View found that Synergise Pharmacy has made several meaningful improvements since our 2024 visit, particularly in communication, proactive support for older people, and stock management. Staff remain committed to providing a supportive, inclusive and community-focused service.

The pharmacy demonstrated strong values, a positive atmosphere, and clear efforts to adapt to increasing demand. However, the wider system challenges we identified in 2024, particularly around medication availability and communication with GP practices, continue to impact service delivery.

As the local health and care landscape begins to transition toward a Neighbourhood Health model, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees will continue to monitor these issues closely. It will be important to understand how new neighbourhood-based structures affect referral pathways, communication, stock pressures, and the wider role of community pharmacies.

We will continue to engage with pharmacies, system partners and members of the public to ensure that people's experiences and insights shape the developing model and that improvements are meaningful, sustainable and centred on local need.



‘Staff remain committed to providing a supportive, inclusive and community-focused service.’

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees would like to thank the staff at Synergise Pharmacy for welcoming us back into the service and for openly sharing their reflections, experiences and updates since our previous visit.

We would also like to thank the members of the public who took the time to speak with us during the follow-up. Your insights continue to play an essential role in shaping our understanding of local pharmacy services and the wider health and care landscape.

We appreciate the ongoing commitment of the Synergise team to supporting their community, especially during a period of significant change across the health and care system. Your engagement enables us to champion local voices and ensure that lived experience informs improvement as neighbourhood-based models of care develop.

“ Thank you ”



Disclaimer:-

All findings in this report are based on the lived experiences shared with Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees. Our aim is to highlight challenges within local health and care services and support meaningful improvements.

Before publication, all feedback was shared with the relevant services to provide an opportunity for response. Any updates included reflect the collaborative work undertaken to improve outcomes for local people.

healthwatch
Stockton-on-Tees

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees
6 – 8 Yarm Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 3NA



t: 0300 180 0660
e: info@healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk

healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk