

Statement from Jhoots Pharmacy in response to Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees
Covid-19 Report

During the peak of COVID-19 the NHS itself was under a lot of strain, pharmacies across the country as you know were also under a heavy workload. With GP surgeries closing their doors for safety reasons pharmacies had their doors left open, we became a go to spot for all patient queries leading all staff to work out of their usual fields.

During this time an audit in the local community was completed and found that compared to pharmacies in the local community the waiting time of Jhoots Billingham to be 10/15 minutes than that of 1 hour. This was due to certain systems and procedures being in place, I invite Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees to come into the branch to look at these systems and see what occurs on a daily basis.

Jhoots Billingham was open to the public 7 days a week 10 - 12, 2- 6pm, the pharmacy team would still be working behind doors daily and allowed under emergency situations patients to still be served after closing time for the public .

During this time three delivery drivers were working around the clock delivering all exempt from payment patient medication. This meant that those at high risk did not have to come into the pharmacy, enabling the reduction of unnecessary patient contact within the pharmacy premises.

A dedicated team of staff answered all telephone calls during the opening hours no matter what and if unreachable emails were able to be sent, which all were responded to in adequate time. Patients were told prior to entry into the pharmacy to ring and see if their medication was ready, this resulted in no one entering the pharmacy and leaving empty handed or having to wait in a zone which could potentially be hazardous to their health due to the current climate at the time. Many of these types of procedures for dealing with COVID-19 can be seen across pharmacies in the UK.

In regards to Blister pack medication, unlike other local pharmacies, at Jhoots all blister packs are made externally to alleviate pressure on branches. It was found that this was something that helped with waiting times and reduced workload for pharmacy staff across the Jhoots group. If required emergency blister packs can be made in branches. Medicines can only be given out if a prescription is given for stated items a wide range of scenarios can be the reason as to why a prescription was not ready.