

Press Release

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Shropshire Health Champion Celebrates its First Birthday

Healthwatch Shropshire has celebrated its first year as the people's champion for health and social care in the county. The year has seen a whirlwind of activity as Healthwatch has engaged with communities across Shropshire, discovering the issues of greatest concern to people, including the reconfiguration of local hospitals.

Following the AGM, Healthwatch published its Annual Report, highlighting many of the charity's achievements - the development of an information and signposting service; involvement in the Maternity Services Review and the NHS Future Fit Programme; and the launch of the Enter and View programme, which monitors local care services. A large band of volunteers has been recruited and grants awarded for research into the experiences of 'hard to reach' groups in Shropshire.

Hundreds of comments have been received from members of the public and delivered to the appropriate bodies for action: the Care Quality Commission, commissioners, and numerous providers (www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk/documents).

Jane Randall Smith, Chief Officer of Healthwatch Shropshire said:

"We have made great strides in our first year and built strong relationships with the health and care bodies whose decisions affect all our lives. An important part of our work is listening to people's experiences and opinions and then taking those comments forward to influence the delivery of services.

"We have built firm foundations from which to develop even greater influence on behalf of local people in the coming year when key decisions are being made. We are completely independent and will always ensure that local voices are heard."

Healthwatch Shropshire wants to hear the views and experiences of patients, service users, carers, and the general public about services including hospitals, GPs, mental health services, community health services, pharmacists, opticians, residential care and children's services. It has statutory powers that it can use in order to influence service provision by encouraging improvements.

For further information contact: enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk / 01743 237884

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Notes for Editors:

Healthwatch Shropshire is one of a network of 148 Local Healthwatch in England. It is supported by a national organisation, Healthwatch England.

It has a team working in community engagement, plus a volunteer programme, a visit programme to health and social care premises and an associate membership scheme to involve the public in its work. It also has a signposting service to help people access health and social care services and support.

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