



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Shropshire

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"The feedback local Healthwatch hear in their communities and share with us at Healthwatch England is invaluable, building a picture of what it's like to use health and care services nationwide. Local people's experiences help us understand where we – and decision makers – must focus and highlight issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. We can then make recommendations that will change care for the better, both locally and across the nation."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our Chair

2024-25 has been a challenging year for Healthwatch Shropshire and the whole health and care system across Shropshire and Telford, with significant turbulence and change in local statutory authorities and organisations. The changes in senior personnel make it even more important for us to keep re-building relationships with all these organisations, to alert them to what the public are telling us about their services.

A good example is our report 'Living Well with Cancer' (see page 8). Our Community Engagement Officer and volunteers attended numerous different events and cancer support group meetings, speaking with over 350 people to hear about their experiences. Many other people responded to our survey. Their voices come through strongly in our reports, which are really valued by the NHS Trusts and care services, since they don't often learn about these personal experiences from their own feedback processes. The report was also timely, in contributing to the development of the Cancer Care strategy by NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. In this context I would also like to pay tribute to our amazing volunteers and in particular to a dear friend of HWS, Fran Robinson, who sadly passed away. We cannot achieve what we do, without the generous commitment of their time and energies.

Vanessa Barrett



"On a personal level, I shall be stepping down after 12 years of having the privilege of being a Trustee of Healthwatch Shropshire. I shall continue to be an active volunteer and look forward to the new phase for the organisation through its joining forces with the Community Resource team in 2025. We are sure this relationship will increase our capacity, strengthen our resilience, and enhance our ability to represent the voices of people across Shropshire."

Vanessa Barrett, Chair of the Board, Healthwatch Shropshire



About us

Healthwatch Shropshire is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



Our mission

To make sure that people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

Equity: We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

Collaboration: We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

Impact: We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

Independence: Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

Truth: We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

Our year in numbers

We've supported more than **1,320** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **five** part-time staff, and our work is supported by **20** volunteers.

Over **20,000** people accessed the information and reports on our website this year.

Reaching out:



1052 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

274 people came to us for clear advice and information in person, over the phone or via email, on topics such as raising a concern about care and treatment and finding a service provider (including carers support, advocacy and independent medical advice).

Championing your voice:



We produced and presented **six** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like pharmacy, living with and beyond cancer and urgent and emergency care.

Our most popular report was '**Living Well with Cancer in Shropshire**', highlighting the importance of personalised care and good communication, and the value of support post-diagnosis, particularly Cancer Support Groups.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by Shropshire Council. In 2024/25 we received **£145,500** to deliver the Healthwatch Shropshire contract, which is the same as last year.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Shropshire. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We continued to support the community engagement for the localised [Joint Strategic Needs Assessments](#) being produced by Shropshire Public Health and joined the first Rural Health Strategy Workshop with community leaders.



We attended a meeting with the NHS and local authority to share your experiences of crisis mental health services for children and young people – reiterating our findings and key recommendations from our [2022 report](#).



Summer

Following the launch of ['Pharmacy First'](#) in February 2024 we followed up conversations with the Local Pharmaceutical Committee to ask for their support to engage with community pharmacists and the public.



To follow up our 2023 [Ambulance report](#) and continue our involvement in the [Hospital Transformation Programme](#), we joined discussions about how services can work together to reduce the need for people to go to A&E.



Autumn

We contacted all 6th Forms and Further Education Colleges in Shropshire and attended welcome events for new students. We spoke to 1,272 young people aged 16+ to ask them [where they go for medical advice](#).



We continued our long-term engagement with health providers and people in [HMP Stoke Heath](#) to find out what progress the new mental health provider is making.



Winter

We went back to [The Redwoods Centre](#) to find out people's current experiences on the acute mental health wards, joining Patient Community ward meetings to hear directly from patients and taking part in the [PLACE](#) visit.



We launched the ['Share for Better Care'](#) campaign to let people know how quick and easy it is to share their experiences of health and social care services with us and how their feedback can make things better for all.



Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.

At the end of the year, we joined the **'Share for Better Care' Campaign** organised by the Care Quality Commission and Healthwatch England, aiming to encourage more people to share their feedback to drive improvements in health and care. This campaign is ongoing so please take a look on our website and get involved: [Share For Better Care | Healthwatch Shropshire](#) or call us on 01743 237884 and speak to a member of the team about your experiences.



Listening to your experiences

Championing what matters to people living with and beyond cancer in Shropshire

Last year we met over 350 people at cancer support groups and events across Shropshire to hear their views and experiences so we could share them with NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin to inform the implementation of the local Cancer Strategy.

40 people who answered our survey had received NHS care and treatment for a total of 17 different types of cancer but less than 40% had accessed other types of support available to help them live well with cancer.

What did we do?

We launched a survey to better understand people's experiences, what is working well and how services/support from pre-diagnosis and beyond can be improved. Then we went out to hear from as many people as possible in their communities to explain the benefits of them sharing their stories and views to improve local services for all.

Key things we heard:



The importance of personalised care and treatment, and value of clear and timely communication from all professionals to patients *and* their carers.



How important it is for people to feel they have access to doctors and other specialist staff before and after diagnosis, treatment and discharge for on-going support and reassurance.

The positive impact of community support groups and a wide range of wellbeing and support services on people's quality of life.

Our work showed the need for a **Shropshire Cancer Network** to promote and support local cancer support groups, establish new ones and offer advice, e.g. on funding and partnership working.

What difference did this make?

Our findings were shared at NHS Cancer Engagement Events in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin where members of the public and professionals agreed with our recommendations and [Lingen Davies](#) offered to take a lead on the development of a network. Our Chief Officer went on BBC Radio Shropshire to highlight the need to improve waiting times for diagnostic tests and results.

Listening to your experiences

How people use their local pharmacy is changing as we think 'Pharmacy First'

In early 2024 community pharmacies began to offer a range of enhanced services for an additional 7 medical conditions with the aim of providing quicker and more convenient access to advice and treatment and freeing up GP appointments.

We knew that some pharmacies in Shropshire were closing due to difficulties with recruitment and increasing business costs, so we wanted to understand people's experiences of accessing pharmacy services and the challenges faced by pharmacies themselves to meet increased demand.

We met with the Chief Officer of the Community Pharmacy Committee to design our survey and ask their help to engage with Pharmacy staff. Our volunteers visited their local pharmacies to ask them to put up posters and take part. We spoke to over 1,200 college students aged 16+ and asked them where they go for medical advice.

Key things we heard:



2%

of college students said they would go to their Pharmacy first for medical advice.

30%

of survey respondents were aware of the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin 'Think which service' campaign.

83%

of people who had asked their local pharmacy for advice and help with a medical condition rated it 'good'

"I had no idea I could go to the Pharmacy and get treatment as if it was my GP. I was very impressed with the service and advice... even better, I got an appointment the same day."



What difference did this make?

NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin **committed to:**

- streamline processes and integrate services to 'improve capacity in primary care, including reducing delays in dispensing impacted by the increased number of patient consultations.'
- 'work with community leaders, youth organisations and others... to design promotional materials that resonate with all groups.'
- Work with pharmacies to 'address concerns about consultation privacy and comfort, with investment already being made to improve these spaces.'

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Shropshire. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Supporting Armed Forces Outreach by joining veteran and serving personnel engagement events across the county.
- Joining College Induction events to speak to young people aged 16+ about their knowledge and use of local health and care services.
- Attending cancer support groups in communities across Shropshire to hear people's differing experiences of accessing cancer treatment and support and how informed they feel about what is on offer.



Hearing from all communities

Listening to people living and working in HMP Stoke Heath in Market Drayton

In December 2022 we visited the prison and heard about the challenges faced in getting the right support for people when they were released and the impact on their mental health.

We raised concerns with Public Health and members of the Shropshire Health and Wellbeing Board. Midlands Partnership University Foundation NHS Trust now provide mental health services in the prison with an increased team to provide wider support. We continue to attend Health and Wellbeing Champion (HAWCs) meetings to hear directly from people using services in the prison.

What difference did this make?

Raised the profile of HMP Stoke Heath (the only prison in Shropshire) across the local health and social care system and increased the understanding of the role of providers to meet the needs of those people in the prison and the staff working to support them. As we continue to build a relationship with the HAWCs we have offered to work with them to hear the voices of the wider prison population, so far, they have highlighted concerns about waiting times, diabetes and mental health, and given positive feedback on the Social Prescribing Programme.

Raising the voices of people using acute inpatient mental health services

This is one of the most seldom heard groups in Shropshire, not least due to their fear of stigma.

Autumn 2024, to let them know their voice matters, we started to attend Community Meetings for patients at The Redwoods to hear their experiences on the wards and what issues they raised. We will continue to attend these meetings and maintain a dialogue with users, managers and inspectors.

What difference did this make?

We learned how important food and choice is to these patients in their recovery and how valued they feel. We met with Staff at The Redwoods to understand the challenges and what they can do to make improvements. This led to discussions with NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Care Quality Commission Inspectors on how the quality of food and nutrition across inpatient services and care homes is monitored and reviewed and how they involve the public.

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year **274** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services, including NHS Complaints Advocacy



Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 575 hours to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views at stands and events, e.g. at The Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital
- Carried out Enter and View visits to local health and care services to help them improve
- Brought their skills and experience to support the staff team with project planning, social media and survey development and analysis
- Raised our profile by telling people and other groups they are involved with about their work with us, e.g. veterans and people with disabilities/care and support needs



Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.

"I always believed that the work of Healthwatch can make a difference for us all and so I decided to get involved.

I was warmly welcomed as a Trustee and volunteer. I have enjoyed joining the staff at events and stands to speak to people of all ages and record their experiences of using services, and taking part in Enter & View visits with other volunteers. I have represented Healthwatch on an NHS committee to remind people running services of the need for them to be accessible to all and think this is an important part of the role of Healthwatch.

It's been a whirlwind at times with lots to learn and remember but it's been great to feel part of the team."

Daphne



Get involved

Our volunteers are out in the community everyday listening to people to find out if health and care is working for them.

We have a duty to involve people in the work we do, from finding out how services are performing to sharing their experiences and views to inform service redesign and development. Whether you want to gain valuable work experience, help improve care in your community, use your skills or learn new ones, there are lots of ways you can join us to make a real difference.

From July 2025 we will be developing our volunteer roles so more people can get involved.

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk



01743 237884



enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk

In Memory of Fran Robinson, Healthwatch Volunteer

Fran volunteered with us in 2018 as an Enter & View Volunteer. She was involved in Enter & View visits to hospital wards, care homes and GP practices but also supported the team by joining them at stands and events.

Fran's spirit and zest for life shone through. She was passionate about giving people a voice while also bringing sincerity and a wonderfully warm sense of humour.

Fran was a retired Palliative Care/End of Life Nurse and worked with us to bring the patient and carer voice to discussions with services about improving their approach.

"It's good to learn new things and use some of the skills I've acquired over a long working life."

A Nurse's Reflections.

"How do you do the job that you do?
Don't you get strung out and stressed?
Surely caring for folk who are critically ill
Must make you so very depressed."

"Oh no!" I reply, "it's a wonderful chance
To make someone's last wishes come true.
If all that's required to make staying at home
A real proposition is YOU!"

To watch someone nursed with genuine love,
To enable a family to care,
To be able to help with hands-on support
Is a privilege only too rare.

Fran Robinson, 2002



Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Shropshire Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£145,500	Expenditure on pay	£109,570
Additional income	£1,109	Non-pay expenditure	£15,487
		Office and management fee	£13,430
Total income	£146,609	Total Expenditure	£138,487

Additional income:

This year we applied for and received Access to Work grant funding to meet the staff teams need for reasonable adjustments due to dyslexia and ADHD diagnoses (e.g. IT software and hardware).

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch Shropshire received no funding from the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work in 2024-25.

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of the community, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. To improve the sustainability and resilience of Healthwatch Shropshire, from the 1st July 2025 Healthwatch and the Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service we provide, will operate as independent services within Community Resource. We hope this relationship will help us to develop our partnership working across the ICS, including with the voluntary and community sector.
2. Continuing to tackle inequalities by highlighting the challenges faced by different communities and groups in Shropshire and championing their voice, including reaching out to farming and rural communities.
3. Promoting and supporting public engagement and involvement in service change and redesign as part of the local Hospital Transformation and Community Transformation Programmes (integral to the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Strategy and Joint Forward Plan).

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Shropshire 4 The Creative Quarter, Shrewsbury Business Park, Shrewsbury SY2 6LG

Healthwatch Shropshire uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the license agreement.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

The Board of Healthwatch Shropshire consists of eight members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2024/25, the Board met three times and made decisions on matters such as reducing the number of Committees of the Board from four to two to align aspects of our work. The Intelligence and Engagement Committee includes volunteer representatives and agrees how will use all our engagement tools to increase public and professional engagement with projects, and priorities in the Forward Plan (including the Enter & View visit programme). The Governance and Assurance Committee focuses on raising our profile, volunteer involvement and managing the budget. The Board have also made decisions to ensure the ongoing sustainability of Healthwatch Shropshire.

We have held Volunteer Meetings throughout the year, open to all Board members and volunteers, to listen to their views, ideas and feedback.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, held regular stands in libraries and hospitals and attended meetings of community groups and forums to speak to people directly.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website and share directly with people signed up to our newsletter.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

All providers responded to our formal requests for information or recommendations this year. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council as a co-optee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin (STW) Integrated Care System through regular provider information sharing meetings and committees/groups. For example, both Healthwatch Shropshire and Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin, attend:

- The Quality and Performance Committee for the local system
- The System Quality Group (also attended by NHS England)
- The Urgent and Emergency Care Delivery Group (also attended by NHSE)

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Shropshire is represented on the Shropshire Health and Wellbeing Board by Lynn Cawley (Chief Officer), deputised by Trustees or staff members as appropriate.

During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by delivering presentations on our engagement reports and providing constructive challenge and sharing feedback from the public about their experiences of local services to inform discussions.

Lynn Cawley (Chief Officer) also represents Healthwatch Shropshire on the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Partnership and Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Board.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Emergency Department (A&E) – The Royal Shrewsbury Hospital	In response to Channel 4 Dispatches Programme ‘Undercover A&E: NHS in Crisis’	Wrote a report which evidenced improvements made following the programme. The Trust provided a detailed action plan in response to the recommendations from the public about what would improve the patient experience.
Ward 28 (Frailty) – The Royal Shrewsbury Hospital	Comments we had heard about discharge and to follow-up a previous visit to the ward.	The Trust responded to our report and recommendations and provided an action plan detailing how they planned to improve communication with patients and visitors and create some social space for patients to support their own ‘Get up, Get dressed, Get moving’ initiative to prevent deconditioning.
Swan Hill House Residential Home	<i>Report in draft</i>	

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