



## Details of Visit

Service Name and Address	Accident and Emergency Department (A&E) - Minor Emergencies Royal Shrewsbury Hospital Mytton Oak Road Shrewsbury SY3 8XQ
Service Provider	Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust
Date and Time	Monday 31 <sup>st</sup> October 9am - 12am
Enter & View Visit Team	Three Healthwatch Shropshire Authorised Representatives (ARs)

## Purpose of the Visit

To explore why people have come to this Accident and Emergency Department and understand their experience of the service

## Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experience of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

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## Context of Visit

Over the last two years there has been considerable local public debate about how health services can best meet the needs for urgent and emergency care in a rural county like Shropshire. People are being encouraged to think about whether A&E - Minor Emergencies is always the right place to go to for urgent care and to think about other urgent care services available to them in their community.

Minor Injury Units (MIU) are provided across the county in the Community Hospitals in Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Whitchurch, and at Oswestry Health Centre.

Healthwatch Shropshire has already published reports about the Minor Injury Units and the Urgent Care Centre at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital:

<http://www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk/enter-view-reports-0>

The Enter and View visit to the Walk-In section of the Accident and Emergency Department (A&E) was semi-announced. Healthwatch Shropshire's Enter & View Officer gave the hospital trust and the department manager and matron a window of two weeks when the visit would take place.

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## What we were looking at

We wanted to find out why people were attending the Accident and Emergency Minor Emergencies Department (A&E) and their experience whilst they were there. We developed a questionnaire (Appendix 1), and also made observations on the environment within the waiting area.

The questionnaire asked:

- Where people had come from on the day of our visit
- Their reason for attending A&E
- Their awareness of other sources of urgent care and whether any of these sources could have provided the service they required on this occasion
- Their view of their experience of using A&E, including waiting time, comfort and communication with staff

We chose the busiest day of the week (Monday) and time of day (9am - 12pm) for this visit, in order to talk to as many people using the service as possible.

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## What we did

We spoke to people in the waiting area after they had been registered by Reception staff. When people agreed to take part, we filled in Part 1 of the questionnaire with them, or they completed it on their own if they preferred, before they were seen by medical staff. We asked them to complete Part 2 of the questionnaire on their whole experience before they left.

We also observed the facilities within the waiting area, including the waiting area for children, and visited the waiting area for the fracture clinic.

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## What we found out

The public entrance to A&E is next to the ambulance entrance for major emergencies, with a sign saying ‘Minor Emergencies and Urgent Care Centre (Walk-in Centre)’. The Reception and waiting area serve both the Urgent Care Centre (UCC) and the Minor Emergencies section of A&E; we spoke to patients waiting for both of these urgent care services.

Staff at Reception take basic personal details from people who wish to be seen, and they are asked to wait in the waiting area. They are also told the likely waiting time. Most patients are interviewed by a Triage Nurse who assesses their priority for treatment.

## Findings from the questionnaire

28 questionnaires were completed:

- 17 of these included Part 1 and Part 2, the patient experience before and after treatment
- 11 included Part 1 only, before treatment

The questionnaire did not enable us to distinguish between those waiting for triage, those waiting for the UCC and those waiting for A&E -Minor Emergencies.

## Part One of the questionnaire

### Who comes to Shrewsbury A&E/UCC?

- 70% (19 people) of those who completed the questionnaire came from Shrewsbury
- 20% from 10-15 miles away
- 10% from more than 20 miles away (including one person who lived in Powys) and there was one person who was visiting Shropshire

### What were the main reasons for attending Shrewsbury A&E/UCC?

- 50% (14 people) had come because of an accident or injury
- 30% (9 people) because of a sudden onset of illness - 2 of whom were young babies
- 1 person had experienced a change in a long term condition
- 1 person had been referred by a pharmacist to a local Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) where she was seen very quickly and referred to Shrewsbury A&E
- 1 person was a victim of crime.

Two people had been told to go to A&E - Minor Emergencies by their GP practice and four others had been unable to get an urgent GP appointment that day. Another patient said it was easier to come to the Walk-in Centre than get an appointment with their GP. A visitor to the Whitchurch area had been referred by a Whitchurch GP practice receptionist, after being unable to get an appointment on the day at any of the other local practices.

### Awareness and previous use of other services for urgent health care or advice

- All the people who completed the questionnaire knew that they could use a GP for urgent medical care,
- Over 90% knew they could use Shropdoc or a pharmacist for this
- 60% were aware of the NHS Choices website, with a couple of patients using it before attending A&E today
- 35% were aware of MIUs
- 50% were aware of the Urgent Care Centre
- 60% were aware of the 111 phone line
- 10% of people were aware of the Shropshire Choices website

## Part Two of the questionnaire

### Waiting times

Patients were told the likely waiting times at Reception.

Of the 17 patients who completed part two of the questionnaire, the time taken between arriving and leaving having received treatment varied from 40 minutes to 4 hours 30 minutes, with

- 5 patients spending less than 1 hour in the area
- 5 patients spending 1 to 2 hours in the area
- 5 patients spending 2 to 3 hours in the area
- 2 patients spending 3 hours or more in the area

40% (7 of 17) waited more than two hours before being treated. They all said the waiting time was ‘unacceptable’.

One person wrote the comment ‘I had to wait three hours to see a doctor with a head and neck injury. I have been in A&E for 4½ hours in total.’

### Feedback on the whole experience

People were asked to rate their experience of attending the A&E - Minor Emergencies from 1 - 4 with 4 being the most positive.

Number of people, how long they waited and their rating of the whole experience of A&E:

	Less than 1 hr	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3 hours plus
Time waited	5	5	5	2
Rated 1 Poor	2			1
Rated 2			1	
Rated 3	2		4	1
Rated 4 Very good	1	5		

A shorter waiting time did not result in higher levels of overall satisfaction, with two patients who waited less than an hour rating the service as 1 (poor). No one who waited more than two hours gave a top rating of 4 (very good).

The questionnaire also asked patients whether they felt comfortable, listened to and understood, and whether staff communicated well with them.

- 55% gave a positive response - very or quite comfortable - for 'comfort'
- 55% gave a positive response for 'listened to and understood'
- 50% gave a positive response for 'the staff communicated with you well'

There were two comments about the uncomfortable chairs in the waiting area.

**Comments from people using the waiting room:**

'Lovely doctor'

'10/10 for the doctor'

'Excellent Service when I couldn't get an appointment with my GP'

'It would have been better to wait for 3 hours in the head and neck department'

**Whether other services for urgent health care or advice could have been used to provide the service received in A & E today**

13 of 17 patients completed this question. Of these 50% said their GP or Shropdoc could have provided an appropriate service for them today. No patient said the advice of a pharmacist could have been used.

## Facilities in A&E waiting area

- There is a separate, clearly signposted (and indicated by small dinosaur foot prints on the floor), and attractively decorated children's waiting area with toys. On the morning of our visit, staff pleasantly directed all visitors with children to this area. Those we spoke to very much appreciated this facility.
- The A&E department had put up a Healthwatch poster to advise patients that there would be an Enter and View visit and encouraging them to send feedback and comments to Healthwatch Shropshire.
- The chairs are basic, armless, and uniformly quite low.
- In the main waiting area the way to the restaurant is clearly signposted. There is a money change machine and a hot drinks machine. Both of these were out of order at the time of our visit.
- There is a cold drinks vending machine and a snacks and confectionery machine by the entrance. These do not give change. A relative accompanying a small child was overheard to comment on the 'extortionate' price of a child's box drink.
- There are some large notices on the walls of the waiting area which tell patients about the conditions that can be treated in the Urgent Care Centre.
- There is a TV screen on one wall which was not on at the time of our visit.

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## Additional Findings

### Numbers of people waiting for treatment

- When we arrived at 9am there were nine people waiting for treatment in the main area. Five of them were accompanied by a friend, and a family was in the children's area. Two people said they had arrived more than an hour ago. By 10am six of the people who had been waiting when we arrived had not yet been called for treatment.
- The number of people waiting remained much the same during the first two hours, but by 11.30am numbers waiting had increased to 17 and there was still one person who had been in the waiting area when we arrived at 9am.

### Feedback from Fracture Clinic waiting area

These patients were waiting for follow-up clinic appointments after being treated in A&E for the original injury. One patient said their experience had been good throughout their treatment. Others rated the A&E treatment they had received as good, but all complained that, despite being given appointment times, they had been waiting a long time, more than two hours in at least one case. They accepted that appointments sometimes ran over time, but felt the clinic should be better timed and organised.

The Authorised Representatives (ARs) from Healthwatch Shropshire observed that the chairs in this waiting room are the same as those in the main A&E waiting area, i.e. basic, all the same height and with no arms. Many of the patients waiting were in plaster casts and with impaired mobility. The chairs are close together and the waiting area looked and felt very crowded.

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### Summary of Findings

The questionnaire did not distinguish between those who were expecting to see a GP or nurse practitioner in the Urgent Care Centre, and those who were waiting for A&E - Minor Emergencies.

#### Experience of A&E

- 80% (13 of 17 who completed parts 1 and 2) of patients were happy or quite happy with their experience at A&E today.
- Around 50% of patients felt comfortable, listened to and understood by staff and that staff communicated well.
- 60% said the waiting time was ‘acceptable’. All those (7 of 17) who waited longer than 2 hours said that the waiting time was ‘unacceptable’.
- Seven of the patients were referred to the A&E by their GP, a MIU or a pharmacist.
- Five patients attended A&E because they said they could not get an urgent appointment with their GP (either because they could not get through on the telephone, or because the earliest available appointment was not soon enough).
- 50% of those waiting for treatment had had an accident or injury.
- 30% had a sudden illness.

## Facilities for people waiting

- The drinks machine and the change machine in the waiting area were out of order.
- There were a drinks and a snacks vending machine in the space between the pair of entrance doors, which took only exact coinage.
- The children's waiting area is pleasant, well-signposted and appreciated by users.
- Two people said the chairs were uncomfortable for long periods of sitting. There was no variation in style of chair to reflect the differing needs of those waiting.

## Awareness of Urgent Care Services

- Everybody knew their GP offers an urgent care service, and some had used this in the past, but there were five people who said they had contacted the practice and could not be offered an appointment today.
- Most people knew they could obtain advice on urgent care from a Pharmacist, but no one who completed part 2 of the questionnaire felt this was appropriate for them today.
- Everyone (except a visitor to the County) knew about ShropDoc.
- 60% of respondents had heard of the NHS Choices website 111 phone line, and two had used the NHS Choices website before coming to A&E today.

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## Recommendations

- Review the seating available in the waiting area and consider if it could be made more comfortable for people with a range of mobility problems and health conditions
- Review the drinks available for people spending long periods in the waiting area and consider making drinking water available
- Consider explaining to people why they might need to wait longer than others

- Explore ways of making it clear to the public the different services and waiting times for A&E - Minor Emergencies and the Urgent Care Centre

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## Service Provider Response

Healthwatch Shropshire has received the following response to this Enter and View visit from the Operations Manager for the Emergency Centre at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital:

Overall, we have found the report to be relatively positive. The visit itself was conducted in a professional manner and did not disrupt the service in anyway. This report will be shared with department staff at the next meeting which is due to take place in January.

In response to our recommendations we have been told:

**Review the seating available in the waiting area and consider if it could be made more comfortable for people with a range of mobility problems and health conditions**

The chairs were purchased two years ago via an NHS supplier of waiting room chairs. There is scope for the area to be re-configured with chair layouts which we will look into. At present we have not received any complaints regarding the layout. The supplier will be contacted to discuss the option of having arms on chairs that are at the end of an aisle to aide patients.

This will be overseen by the Operations Manager and Ward Manager and be completed by February 2017.

**Review the drinks available for people spending long periods in the waiting area and consider making drinking water available**

There is no facility to have a water fountain in the patient waiting area but one is available in the majors/consulting area of the department. Currently there are discussions taking place to change the hot drinks machine available in the main

waiting area which we hope will have a cold water option included. A vending machine for cold drinks is in the entrance of the Emergency Department along with snacks.

This will be overseen by the Operations Manager and Ward Manager and be completed by March 2017.

**Consider explaining to people why they might need to wait longer than others**

There are posters in the waiting area which we will look to have enlarged. Often staff do explain to patients why they are waiting longer but only when asked.

This will be overseen by the Operations Manager and Ward Manager and be completed by February 2017.

**Explore ways of making it clear to the public the different services and waiting times for A&E - Minor Emergencies and the Urgent Care Centre**

We will look to revise the current poster in the waiting room and ensure visibility from all seats.

This will be overseen by the Operations Manager and Ward Manager and be completed by February 2017.

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## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Shropshire would like to thank the service provider, service users, visitors and staff for their contribution to this Enter & View.

## Appendix 1: The questionnaire

<p>No. <input type="text"/></p> <p><b>healthwatch Shropshire</b></p> <p><b>RSH –Accident &amp; Emergency Department Survey</b></p> <p>Over the last two years there has been considerable local public debate about how health services can best meet the needs for urgent (i.e. not 'emergency') care in a rural county like Shropshire.</p> <p>Healthwatch Shropshire is inviting people using the Accident and Emergency Department (A&amp;E) to tell us about their experience of using the service and why they decided to come to the department today. The information you provide will be handled confidentially in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.</p> <p>You will not be identifiable in our final report which will be published on the Healthwatch Shropshire website (<a href="http://www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk">www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk</a>). Our findings will be used to contribute to the discussions on transformation of urgent and emergency care services in the county.</p> <p>Please fill in this short questionnaire and/or talk to the Healthwatch Shropshire Volunteers who are here today.</p> <p><b>Part 1: Please complete while you are waiting (tick appropriate answers)</b></p> <p>1. Where do you live? (Please tell us the village/town you are from or give us your postcode)</p> <p>2. What time did you arrive at A&amp;E today?</p> <p>3. Please tell us your reason(s) for coming to the A&amp;E today  <small>*'Condition' includes a mental health condition</small></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Accident / injury <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Victim of crime <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Change in a long term condition* <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Recent/sudden illness <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Referred by GP/111/Pharmacist <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Wanted a second opinion <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Medication problem <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Thought might need an x-ray <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">Prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</td> </tr> </table> <p>4. 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What time are you leaving A&amp;E today?</p> <p>2. Was the waiting time acceptable? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  <small>Comment/feedback:</small></p> <p>3. How happy are you with your experience at A&amp;E today?</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p><small>Comment/feedback:</small></p> <p>4. 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## **Who are Healthwatch Shropshire?**

Healthwatch Shropshire is the voice for people in Shropshire about the health and social care services delivered in their area. We are an independent body providing a way for people to share their experiences to help people get the best out of their health and social care services. As one of a network of Local Healthwatch across England we are supported by the national body Healthwatch England, and our data is fed to the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

## **What is Enter & View?**

Healthwatch Shropshire gather information on peoples experiences of health and social care services and there are times when it is appropriate for Healthwatch Shropshire to see and hear for ourselves how services are being delivered: these visits are called 'Enter & View', they are not inspections.

Teams of specially trained volunteers carry out visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to services users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.

## **Get in Touch!**

**01743 237884**

**[enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk)**  
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**Healthwatch Shropshire**  
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