

Healthwatch Shropshire Spotlight Report

Phone, video and on-line appointments during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Service Providers' response

The report was considered by the Shropshire Health & Wellbeing Board (HWBB) whose job it is to ensure that key leaders from the health and care system work together to improve the health and wellbeing of Shropshire residents. Health and Wellbeing Board members collaborate to understand their local community's needs, agree priorities and work together to plan how best to deliver services.

The HWBB asked the main service providers in Shropshire to tell the board how they intended to act upon the report recommendations.

In our report we made the following recommendations to health and social care services:

1. Inform the public that phone, video and on-line appointments are being used to triage patients and make sure people receive a face-to-face appointment if it is necessary and with the most appropriate professional, e.g. doctor, nurse, social worker.
2. Fully implement the NHS Accessible Information Standard to make sure the communication needs and preferences of all people and their carers (if relevant) are known, recorded, shared across services and acted upon.
3. Provide the public with clear information and instructions about how to set up and use the software needed to access video appointments and electronic consultations (e.g. e-Consult, the NHS App). This information should also be available in Easy Read.
4. Provide training for professionals about how to manage a phone or video consultation/meeting to make sure people have the opportunity to share any concerns and ask questions.
5. Share the Healthwatch England guidance on 'Getting the most out of the virtual health and care experience' which gives tips for the public and professionals. The guidance is available at <https://www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2020-08-03/getting-most-out-virtual-health-and-care-experience>

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin CCG

Recommendation 1: Inform the public that phone, video and on-line appointments are being used to triage patients and make sure people receive a face-to-face appointment if it is necessary and with the most appropriate professional, e.g. doctor, nurse, social worker.

- Pre-pandemic, many practices were already utilising telephone triaging and online booking. The options available for patients to access primary care services have been communicated on CCG website and practice websites.
- Resources for various national NHS campaigns over the pandemic period which inform people about accessing appointments are being utilised by primary care. Campaigns include 'Help Us Help You', 'Your Practice Team is here to Help You' and 'NHS 111'. The information has been made available online via websites and through face book and twitter, in addition to displaying traditional paper posters where this has been possible over the covid period. Wider public facing media resources have been used such as various press releases and regular BBC Shropshire radio interviews have taken place with GPs and other medical professionals talking about how to get appointments and what is available for patients.
- GP Access toolkits have been shared with GPs and practices. The toolkit, which included posters, website messages, videos and social media messages, was issued in February this year and was updated in May following further updates. The toolkit has been developed so that practices can use the information quickly at busy times.
- The CCG in preparing messages about how GPs services are working differently have done so alongside Telford Patients First Group, Shropshire Patient Group and the individual Patient Participation Groups to help tailor messaging for patients. However we acknowledge feedback that not everyone has heard this message and we are committed to working with the public to increase awareness of the different appointment and triage methods in place.

Recommendation 2: Fully implement the NHS Accessible Information Standard to make sure the communication needs and preferences of all people and their carers (if relevant) are known, recorded, shared across services and acted upon.

- All organisations that provide NHS care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The CCG recognises the importance of commitment to this standard and will undertake a review of this as part of our practice visit programme.
- Recommendation 3: Provide the public with clear information and instructions about how to set up and use the software needed to access video appointments and electronic consultations (e.g. e-Consult, the NHS App). This information should also be available in Easy Read.
- There are a range of readily available resources provided on how to access the electronic platforms and NHS APP in use in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. We have reminded our practices and providers to ensure that the literature is displayed on their websites and made available as appropriate in practices, There are links on practice websites explaining on how to register for Apps including video links for how to use econsult.

- Whilst there are a range of resources available the CCG acknowledges there may be other means of promoting and assisting people to engage with these APPs and are reviewing what other measure may be feasible to assist. As social distancing guidelines lift, this could include linking in with wider partners around available community resources linked to accessing and using IT.

Recommendation 4: Provide training for professionals about how to manage a phone or video consultation/meeting to make sure people have the opportunity to share any concerns and ask questions.

- Training on the utilisation of the various platforms is offered by the provider of the platform and does give clear guidance on the requirement to build in the opportunity for users to share concerns/ ask questions.
- We will investigate opportunities to offer further training and development to our providers through avenues such as practices Protected Learning Time. The CCG recognise and acknowledge the importance of ensuring that we are fully promoting and facilitating these new means of consultations with a clear “patient focused approach”.

Recommendation 5: Share the Healthwatch England guidance on ‘Getting the most out of the virtual health and care experience’ which gives tips for the public and professionals.

- The CCG can confirm they shared this guidance with our providers

Shropshire Community Health Trust

We support remote appointments. Many of our services are provided within people’s homes and we have continued to do this throughout COVID. We do run Outpatients and clinic based services, and we work on the basis that we provide remote appointments where this is clinically possible, but obviously with some treatments these need to be done within a clinical area, so we very much use a mixed approach based on clinical need and on discussion and support of the patients/carers needs and requirements. The report has been circulated to our operational and clinical teams for review and to support any improvements and changes to the pathways that we provide.

Shropshire Council: Public Health

Healthwatch reports are shared with the HWBB Comms and Engagement group to cascade through their networks.

The report has been shared on the Council website [Who sits on the Health and Wellbeing Board? | Shropshire Council](#), alongside links to other Healthwatch reports.

During COVID-19, the Social Prescribing Programme made adjustments to support people on the telephone. On-line communication was not used, just telephone support so there were no technical barriers or confidence issues for clients to overcome. Telephone consultations have gone well from an advisor point of view, and from feedback received from Social Prescribing clients. Advisors are meeting

face to face in a small number of cases where the client's needs require this e.g. for those with communication barriers and learning difficulties.

Primary Care worked alongside Public Health to make the changes needed to continue to support people through Social Prescribing, and the offer was extended to support the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable.

[Healthwatch Spotlight report on remote appointments.](#) and [Getting the most out of the virtual health and care experience | Healthwatch](#) have been forwarded to the Programme Lead who has looked through these reports and resources, and found 'Dr Zoom top Tips' particularly valuable. This has been shared with all the advisors as a quick reminder of the issues to think through.

Shropshire Council Adult Social Care

Confirmed they are fully in support of the recommendations of the Healthwatch Shropshire report on remote appointments and suggest it would be helpful to monitor the impact.

Cabinet Member for Communities, Place, Tourism & Transport

Responded that the recommendations appear eminently sensible.

MPFT

Confirmed they are happy to support.

The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (RJAH)

RJAH fully support the recommendations and are ensuring these are fully embedded.

They have asked for these to go through their Patient Experience Committee.



About Healthwatch Shropshire

Healthwatch Shropshire is the **independent health and social care champion for local people**. We gather people's experiences of services and share them with local providers, the organisations who pay for services (e.g. Shropshire Council, Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group) and regulators (e.g. the Care Quality Commission, NHS England/Improvement) to highlight where things are working well and ensure **your voice counts** when it comes to shaping and improving services.

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Contact us



01743 237884



enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk
www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk



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