

# Share for Better Care: Community Hospital Experiences in Shropshire

A report into people's experiences of Minor Injury Units  
and Community Hospitals in Shropshire

Engagement period: February – July 2025

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# Contents

Contents.....	2
About Healthwatch.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Full Report Context.....	7
What we did and who we heard from.....	9
What people told us.....	13
What’s working well.....	14
What could be improved.....	17
Summary.....	22
Thank you.....	24
Appendix: Engagement Activity.....	26

If you have an experience to share about the issues raised in the report, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

# About Healthwatch

## Healthwatch Shropshire is your local health and social care champion.

If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. We are independent and have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



We work to make your voice count when it comes to shaping and improving services. We use a variety of methods to find out what people like about services, and what could be improved and we share these views with those with the power to make change happen. Our reports go to:

- the organisations who provide services
- the commissioners who pay for services (e.g. Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Board, Shropshire Council)
- service regulators (the Care Quality Commission, NHS England)
- our national body Healthwatch England to let them know how local services are working in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin

# Executive Summary

In early 2025, Healthwatch Shropshire (HWS) participated in the national [Share for Better Care](#) campaign, a joint initiative between Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The campaign aimed to encourage more people to provide feedback about their NHS and adult social care experiences, with a particular focus on reaching communities underrepresented in national feedback.

## Our Approach

During the Share For Better Care Campaign (19<sup>th</sup> February – 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2025) HWS received over 260 general comments online and via the telephone.

However, recognising that community hospitals and Minor Injury Units (MIUs) in Shropshire are vital services that we rarely hear about in general feedback, we decided to target these facilities with face-to-face engagements. Between February and July 2025, we visited **three community hospital sites**:

- **Oswestry MIU** – (11 February 2025)
- **Whitchurch Community Hospital & MIU** – (28 May 2025)
- **Bridgnorth Community Hospital & MIU** – (22 July 2025)

Attempts were made to visit Bishop's Castle and Ludlow Community Hospitals, but they were unable to arrange our visits.

## What's Working Well

The overwhelming majority of feedback was **positive**, with people expressing:

- **High satisfaction with service speed**
- **Strong appreciation for local access**
- **Preference over larger hospitals** to avoid long wait times
- **Excellent staff care**

- **Value to the community**

## Key Themes

**Convenience and Accessibility:** People consistently chose community hospitals because they offered quicker service than major hospitals, with typical wait times of 30 minutes to one hour compared to reported waits of 5–7 hours at larger Emergency Departments.

**Cross-Border Care:** Several patients travelled from Wales (Wrexham area) to access Shropshire's MIU services, highlighting the regional importance of these facilities.

**Repeat Users:** Many respondents were returning patients who valued having local access to x-ray services and urgent care close to home.

### What Could Be Improved

Despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback, **parking emerged as the single most significant issue**, mentioned in **24% of the overall comments**.

- **Limited parking capacity**
- **Impact on vulnerable patients**
- **Accessibility concerns**

## Strategic Importance

This engagement reveals that Shropshire's community hospitals and MIUs are highly valued assets that:

- **Reduce pressure on major hospital A&E departments**
- **Provide faster access to urgent care**
- **Serve cross-border communities**
- **Deliver care in calmer, more peaceful environments**
- **Maintain strong community connections**

The primary challenge is not service quality but **infrastructure—specifically parking provision** that doesn't match the facilities' importance and usage levels.

quick parking brilliant  
staff friendly MIU waiting  
hospital convenient community  
valuable treatment lovely care fantastic peaceful  
shrewsbury telford physio wrexham perfect nearby  
lucky alright wonderful xray bridgnorth  
whitchurch oswestry appointment fine happy

Word cloud created from survey responses

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- Communicate the findings with the public

# Community Hospital Experiences in Shropshire

## Context: The Share for Better Care Campaign

In February 2024, Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission launched **Share for Better Care**, a national campaign to encourage more people to provide feedback about their health and social care experiences.

The campaign was developed in response to [research](#) showing that:

- **62% of people** said they would be more likely to provide feedback if they knew it would help make positive change
- **People are more likely to give feedback** about commercial services and products than about their healthcare
- **Not everyone's voice is being heard** – particularly people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people from lower-income groups

The campaign focused on the insight that **people are more likely to give feedback when they can see it has made an impact**. The message was clear: your feedback, no matter how small, has the power to transform health and social care.

### Campaign Partners

Share for Better Care was developed in collaboration with:

- Race Equality Foundation
- National Dignity Council
- Royal Association for Deaf people
- National Voices
- Challenging Behaviour Foundation
- The Patients Association
- VoiceAbility
- Disability Rights UK

# Why Community Hospitals?

In planning our Share for Better Care Week activities for February 2025, Healthwatch Shropshire identified a significant gap in our knowledge: **we rarely hear feedback about community hospitals and Minor Injury Units** in our regular engagement work.

These facilities are crucial to the Shropshire health system, yet their voices and the voices of the people who use them, are often missing from discussions about service improvement and development. We recognised this as an opportunity to:

- **Reach communities** we don't often hear from in our regular work
- **Gather feedback** about services that play a vital role in local healthcare
- **Understand patient choice** – why do people choose community hospitals over larger facilities?
- **Identify strengths** that should be protected and celebrated
- **Highlight challenges** that may be preventing people from accessing care

By focusing on community hospitals, we aimed to amplify voices that might otherwise go unheard and provide valuable intelligence to commissioners and service providers about these essential local services.



## What We Did

**Sites Visited** (3 sites out of 5 community hospitals approached responded to our invitation to take part)

Map of Hospitals in Shropshire

- Community Hospitals visited
- Community Hospitals not visited
- Specialist and General Hospitals (RJAH, PRH, RSH)



Site	Date	Team Members	Comments Collected
Oswestry MIU	11 Feb 2025	With CF	11
Whitchurch Community Hospital & MIU	28 May 2025	With CF	11
Bridgnorth Community Hospital & MIU	22 July 2025	With JC	12
<b>Total</b>			<b>34</b>

## Engagement Method



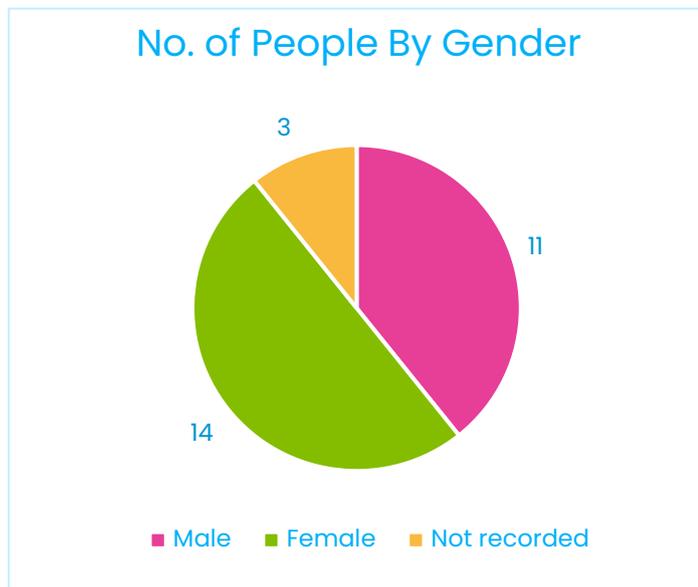
Following the principles of the Share for Better Care campaign, we conducted **face-to-face engagement** at three community hospital sites during regular operating hours.

This approach allowed us to:

- Speak directly with people using services in real-time
- Capture immediate feedback while experiences were fresh
- Reach people who might not complete online surveys
- Engage with diverse demographics, including older people and those less digitally connected

## Who We Heard From

We captured basic demographic information where shared:



### Geographic Origin:

- Shropshire residents: Majority
- Welsh residents: 4 respondents (from Wrexham and near Welsh border)
- English border areas: 2 respondents (Chester/Ellesmere area)

### Relationship Status:

- Several married couples
- Some individuals bringing family members
- Staff member (1)

### Age Range:

- Mix of working age and older adults
- One younger person supported by grandmother
- Several veterans

### First-Time vs Returning Patients:

- **Returning patients:** Majority had used the services before
- **First-time users:** Approximately 6 people
- **Frequent users:** Several had been "loads of times" or "many years ago"

### Reasons for Visits

#### Services Being Used:

Service	Responses Collected
MIU (Minor Injury Unit)	26
Physiotherapy	3
Blood tests	2
X-ray services	Multiple mentions within MIU visits
General community hospital services	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

### Why People Chose Community Hospitals:

- ✓ Shorter wait times compared to main hospitals
- ✓ Proximity to home
- ✓ Previous positive experiences
- ✓ GP referral/advice
- ✓ Awareness that MIUs are quicker than A&E

## What People Told Us



### The Feedback: An Overview

Of the 34 comments collected:

- **26 comments (76%)** were **entirely positive**
- **8 comments (24%)** mentioned **parking challenges** (though most still expressed overall satisfaction)
- **0 comments** were negative about clinical care quality
- **0 comments** expressed dissatisfaction with staff

This represents an **exceptionally high satisfaction rate** and demonstrates that the community hospitals and MIUs that we visited, are highly valued by the communities they serve.

# What's Working Well

## Service Speed and Efficiency

One of the most consistent themes in feedback was the **speed of service** at community hospitals compared to larger facilities:

- "The waiting rooms are empty now; they are very quick here." (Oswestry MIU)
- "I've only been here for a few minutes, but I have been before, and they were very quick then." (Oswestry MIU)
- "I have found that the average wait here is about an hour which is much better than Telford PRH A&E." (Bridgnorth MIU)

**Key Finding:** Wait times of 10-60 minutes were typical, compared to reported waits of 5-7 hours at major hospital Emergency Departments.

## Avoiding Larger Hospitals

Many respondents **specifically chose** community hospitals to avoid the longer waits and busier environment of larger facilities:

- "We had the option to go to Oswestry or Shrewsbury, and I thought we won't go to Shrewsbury as they will take all day." (Oswestry MIU)
- "My nearest emergency department is Countess of Chester, but they had advertised online that the waiting time at their Emergency Department was 7 hours, so I chose to come here instead." (Whitchurch MIU - person from Ellesmere)
- "If this wasn't here, I would have to go to Telford, and the wait would be much worse." (Bridgnorth MIU)

## Value to Local Communities

People expressed strong appreciation for having these services locally available:

- "It's brilliant, we would be lost without it." (Whitchurch – person attending for physiotherapy)
- "We are very lucky to have it, it is very convenient for people in Whitchurch." (Whitchurch)
- "It is great having this here." (Bridgnorth MIU)
- "I wish that we had an MIU service like this in my region." (Whitchurch – person from Ellesmere)
- "It's very comforting knowing we have this here." (Whitchurch – person attending for blood test)

## Quality of Care Environment

The **atmosphere and environment** of community hospitals was repeatedly praised:

- "It is really nice here, the Community Hospitals are always more peaceful, it makes you feel better when it is calmer." (Whitchurch – Veteran)
- "I like it here; it's a nice hospital in a nice setting and the staff are all lovely." (Whitchurch – Staff member)

## Staff Quality and Friendliness

**Every comment** about staff was positive:

- "They are very good here, I live so close, and they are so quick. It's great." (Oswestry MIU)
- "The staff are all lovely." (Whitchurch)
- "I've never had long to wait with the children, they get looked after well and they are comfortable there, they love the stickers or teddy they have been given." (Bridgnorth MIU – parent)

## Comparison with Larger Hospitals

Several respondents **explicitly compared** community hospitals favourably to larger facilities:

- "My wife spent some time in here recently, 7 weeks between here and Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. She much preferred it here compared to Royal Shrewsbury. They seemed too busy in Shrewsbury and didn't have much time for the non-medical things that help people get better." (Whitchurch – physiotherapy patient's husband)
- "Both Whitchurch Community Hospital and Robert Jones Agnes Hunt have provided me with excellent care and after-care. But I feel that the staff at Royal Shrewsbury and Princess Royal are too stretched to be able to provide good care." (Whitchurch)

## Repeat and Long-term Users

The **loyalty** of returning patients demonstrates sustained satisfaction:

- "We have been here before loads of times, so it is really valuable having this." (Oswestry MIU – person with disabled parking)
- "I live nearby and have been here loads before." (Bridgnorth MIU)
- "I am very happy with the treatment and care here at the hospital, they cared for my mother in 2009 and since then I have used them myself for many years." (Bridgnorth)

## GP Integration

Several respondents mentioned being **advised by their GP** to attend:

- "I was advised to come here by my GP, it's good here, I have come before." (Oswestry MIU)
- "It was our GP who advised us to come here today after an appointment I had with them yesterday. And it makes sense to come somewhere like here rather

than taking up spaces in A&E when it isn't an emergency." (Bridgnorth MIU – person from Telford)

## Cross-Border Service

Community hospitals are serving people from **outside Shropshire**, particularly from Wales:

- "My nearest hospital is Wrexham, but it would have been a 2 day wait there, although it looks like I might need to go there anyway. Getting here was fine." (Oswestry MIU – person from Wrexham)
- "Our options were here or Wrexham, but it is so hard to know the situation out there." (Oswestry MIU – Polish person living in Wales)
- "My nearest would have been Wrexham but I was working nearby so this was very convenient." (Oswestry MIU – person from Wrexham)

## Disabled Access (Where Available)

One respondent specifically praised disabled parking provision:

- "Really quick to sign in and I have disabled parking so that wasn't an issue." (Oswestry MIU – person from Whittington)

## Service Range

People valued having access to **x-ray services** and other diagnostic capabilities locally:

- "We've come here now because they aren't doing x-rays in Welshpool, they used to though." (Oswestry MIU)
- "We came here yesterday for an x-ray but it wasn't available for some reason and so they asked us to come back today." (Oswestry MIU)

# What Could Be Improved



(Image: [Shropshire Star](#))

## Parking: The Dominant Challenge

**Parking was mentioned as a problem in 8 out of 34 comments received (24%)** – making it by far the most significant issue raised. Critically, this was the **only consistent negative theme** in all feedback collected.

### The Scale of the Problem

- "Parking here was awful; we don't know the area. We looked at parking at The Range, but it was 40-minute stay maximum and for customers only. In the end we had to park at central car park (0.5 miles away / 11-minute walk), but he has come here because of an issue with his leg which made it difficult." (Oswestry MIU)
- "I drove here, there was no parking, so I had to find elsewhere which was difficult as my partner struggles with walking." (Bridgnorth MIU)
- "I had an accident at work today and I am lucky that my nan has been able to pick me up and drop me off with her blue badge as the parking here is terrible, it is the only thing that lets it down here." (Bridgnorth MIU)

## Impact on Vulnerable Groups

The parking problem has a **disproportionate impact** on those with mobility issues and injuries—precisely the people who need easy access:

- "You end up having to park elsewhere and pay which isn't a problem, but it isn't fair for those with mobility issues or those who have had accidents which have affected their ability to walk, hence why they are attending the MIU." (Bridgnorth MIU)
- "I drove here today and used my maps app to find the way, we also managed to get a car park space which was great as the car park here is small, probably too small for this MIU building. I wouldn't say the car park was accessibility friendly either, especially for those with mobility issues who can't get a space and have to park elsewhere and walk across." (Bridgnorth MIU - person from Telford)

## Limited Capacity

Multiple people mentioned that **parking spaces are extremely limited**:

- "Getting here was fine but there was only 1 parking space." (Whitchurch MIU - person from Chester)
- "I drove here today... we also managed to get a car park space which was great as the car park here is small, probably too small for this MIU building." (Bridgnorth MIU)
- "I came years ago with my child, today I parked in the big carpark opposite as there were no spaces here." (Bridgnorth MIU)

## Why This Matters

The parking issue is particularly concerning because:

1. **It contradicts the accessibility mission** – People come to MIUs because they're injured or unwell, yet may need to walk significant distances
2. **It may deter people from seeking care** – Some may choose to drive further to larger hospitals with better parking, or not to seek care at all
3. **It affects family members** – Carers and supporters struggle to accompany patients
4. **It impacts service perception** – Parking was described as "the only thing that lets it down here"
5. **It's an equity issue** – Those without blue badges or who can't be dropped off are disadvantaged

## Service Limitations

While not framed as complaints, a few respondents mentioned **limitations in what MIUs can provide**:

- "The one issue I have had is that the MIU here do not do x-rays on most parts of the body, only limbs." (Bridgnorth MIU – person who has been 4-5 times)
- "We came here yesterday for an x-ray but it wasn't available for some reason and so they asked us to come back today." (Oswestry MIU)

## Communication and Signage

One respondent noted **uncertainty about wait times**:

- "I can see the laminated sign on the wall that says 'we aim to see patients within 4 hours', but no one has indicated if that is the average for today or not, but we will see." (Bridgnorth MIU)

This suggests that **real-time wait time information** could be communicated more clearly.

## Administrative Issues

One person reported a **scheduling confusion**:

- "There was a confusion today though, my wife had lost her appointment card and couldn't remember her appointment time, so we came in early this morning to check. When we got here, they couldn't find any reference of her appointment which confused us... When we got back home my wife managed to find her appointment card and it was indeed for today, so we went back and presented it to them. They sorted it and she got to be seen in the end, but it was strange that there was nothing showing on their system when they checked." (Whitchurch - physiotherapy patient's husband)

While resolved satisfactorily, this indicates potential **system reliability issues** or communication gaps.

# Summary: Key Findings



## Strengths to Protect and Celebrate

1. **Exceptional patient satisfaction** – **76% entirely positive feedback**
2. **Speed and efficiency** – Consistently praised, 10–60 minute wait times
3. **Staff quality** – **100% of the comments received about staff were positive**
4. **Peaceful environment** – Valued alternative to busy main hospitals
5. **Community value** – Strong sense these services are essential
6. **Cross-border reach** – Serving populations beyond Shropshire
7. **Effective GP integration** – GPs appropriately directing patients
8. **Loyalty and repeat use** – People return because of positive experiences

## Critical Challenge

**Parking provision is inadequate** for the demand and needs of MIU users, creating:

1. Access barriers for people with mobility issues
2. Stress and difficulty for injured patients
3. Equity concerns for those without transport options
4. Risk of deterring people from seeking care

## Strategic Implications

These findings demonstrate that:

1. **Community hospitals are high-performing assets** that deserve investment and protection
2. **They reduce pressure on major hospitals** by providing faster, more accessible urgent care
3. **Parking infrastructure has not kept pace** with service demand and importance
4. **Investment in parking or “door to door” transport links** would yield significant returns in patient experience and accessibility

# Thank You

We want to thank everyone who contributed to this project by sharing their feedback with us during their visit to community hospitals. Your willingness to spare a few minutes while seeking care demonstrates the generosity and community spirit that the Share for Better Care campaign aimed to harness.

We would also like to thank:

- **The staff at Oswestry MIU, Whitchurch Community Hospital, and Bridgnorth Community Hospital** for welcoming us and supporting our engagement activities
- **Our Healthwatch volunteers CF and JC** who conducted the face-to-face conversations
- **Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission** for developing the Share for Better Care campaign
- **The partner organisations** who supported the national campaign

Your voices have highlighted elements of services that are working exceptionally well and identified parking as a clear area for improvement that, if addressed, would significantly enhance access to care.

## **Appendix: Engagement Activity**

### **Methodology**

**Project Name:** Share for Better Care – Community Hospital Engagement

**Campaign Period:** February – July 2025

#### **Local Engagement Dates:**

- 11 February 2025: Oswestry MIU
- 28 May 2025: Whitchurch Community Hospital & MIU
- 22 July 2025: Bridgnorth Community Hospital & MIU

**Engagement Method:** Face-to-face conversations with service users in waiting areas and treatment areas

**Team Members:** Healthwatch Shropshire staff and volunteers (CF, JC)

### **Data Collection**

#### **Information Recorded:**

- Date of visit
- Reference ID
- Basic demographics (where shared)
- Context of visit (service being used)
- Patient comments (verbatim where possible)

#### **Ethical Approach:**

- Voluntary participation
- Informed consent
- Anonymised reporting
- Respectful of clinical environment

## Analysis

### Coding Framework:

- Positive experiences
- Service speed/efficiency
- Staff quality
- Environment/atmosphere
- Parking challenges
- Service limitations
- Suggestions for improvement

### Quantitative Analysis:

- Total comments: 34
- Comments by site
- Demographic breakdown
- Theme frequency
- Positive/negative ratio

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*This report was produced as part of Healthwatch England's Share for Better Care campaign, demonstrating how local feedback can drive improvements in health and social care services*



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