

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Shropshire
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our chair

Restrictions because of the Covid-19 pandemic meant we were only able to renew our face-to-face work in early 2022. However, using a variety of different methods of engaging with the public, we still managed to produce some valuable reports. We invited the public to respond to our on-line surveys, which were designed to explore more deeply issues that had been raised with us by local residents. You will read about many of these in this report.

Shropshire Public Health commissioned Healthwatch Shropshire to carry out a detailed piece of work to look at food insecurity in a part of the County. People affected by these problems are particularly vulnerable in the current economic and cost-of-living squeeze, and their experiences aren't being heard. The success of this project led to the award of national monies to extend the programme across the whole County.

As the restrictions continue to ease, we look forward to continuing our work through engaging more with the public face to face, while building on what we have learned during the last difficult years. I hope you find this Annual Report interesting and that it gives you a flavour of the range of activities undertaken by our staff team and wonderful volunteers and how we share what people tell us about their experiences to influence organisations and services to improve the care they provide.



Vanessa Barrett

Vanessa Barrett
Healthwatch Shropshire Chair

Pictured with Lynn Cawley (Chief Officer), left



“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities.”

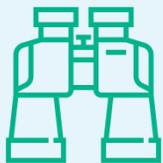
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Shropshire is your local health and social care champion. From Whitchurch to Ludlow and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

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



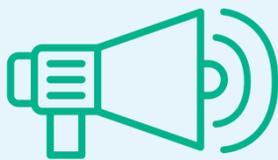
Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



701 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care. Including 236 responses to our surveys.

30,558 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as **mental health and COVID-19**. Including 27,689 website views.

Making a difference to care



We published

7 reports

Six about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services and one giving the feedback we have received on our own work.

Our most popular report was

Access to NHS dental services

which highlighted the struggles people have on finding an NHS dentist in Shropshire.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

23

outstanding volunteers, who gave up **700 hours** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£144,192

Which is **the same as** the previous year for our Healthwatch contract..

We also currently employ

7 staff

who help us carry out this work. Three of these joined us in January 2022 taking us up from 2.6 to 4.6 whole time equivalent (WTE)

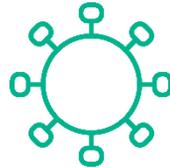
How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



We asked about people's experiences of contacting NHS 111 and were able to report to the local NHS that nearly 70% had a good experience



We answered queries and provided information about how people accessed the second covid vaccination dose, over 26,000 people visited our webpage

Summer



We worked with partners and people with lived experience to highlight the real effects food insecurity has on health and well-being in rural South West Shropshire



We trialled an online engagement platform to try to reach new audiences within Shropshire. The platform had over 2,500 page views during the trial.

Autumn



With NHS 111 First becoming more established in Shropshire we again asked about experiences and found that satisfaction with the service had fallen from nearly 70% to 43%



We highlighted the poor access to routine NHS dentist services in Shropshire and the lack of accurate information of where people could register

Winter



We gave young people and their families across Shropshire the opportunity to tell the NHS what would help them when they were in crisis with their mental health. We made 11 recommendations based on what they told us



As a result of our survey of users of Pain Management Services we highlighted to the service provider the need for accurate information at the point of referral. They confirmed improvements were being made.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve



Sharing people's experiences of accessing urgent medical care

In July 2020 NHS England began piloting 'NHS 111 First' to encourage people to call 111 for an assessment of how urgent their condition is (triage) before attending accident and emergency services. Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) asked us to help them hear people's experiences so they could see how it was working and raise awareness of the service.

If anyone has an urgent, but not life-threatening health problem the public are encouraged to call NHS 111 to be directed to the correct service, whether that is an Emergency Department (Accident & Emergency), their GP, or self-care. Callers to NHS 111 can now receive time slots at local Emergency Departments (EDs) or other Urgent Treatment Centres (sited at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital and Princess Royal Hospital), as well as receive time slots with GPs or out of hours GP services. The new service aims to reduce waiting times at EDs and demand on hospitals.

We worked with the CCG and Healthwatch Telford & Wrekin to develop a local survey that ran during March and April 2021 receiving 70 responses from people in Shropshire. In order to understand any change in use of 111 we ran the survey again from October to December 2021 receiving 181 responses from across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.



71% of people

who were not aware that NHS 111 First could book appointments said that, after reading our information and completing our survey, they were now likely or very likely to use the service next time they had an urgent medical problem.

Our findings were shared with the CCG, West Midlands Ambulance Service who provide 111 and the Urgent and Emergency Care Delivery Board.

What difference did this make

The CCG committed to use our feedback to work with partners to:

- Increase the use of 111 bookable appointments in A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres, Minor Injuries Units and Primary Care.
- Increase the use of alternatives to A&E including raising awareness across the County of services on offer and options for self-help

West Midlands Ambulance Service committed to:

- Recruiting and training an additional 450 call handlers across the region



"The key findings of this invaluable survey will feed into existing work plans to improve the provision of urgent and emergency care for our population ensuring that patients are seen in the right healthcare setting, first time."

Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin CCG



Bringing food poverty in rural Shropshire into the spotlight

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of living in food poverty in South West Shropshire with us we have helped Shropshire Council Public Health to understand this issue, raise awareness across the health and social care system and identify solutions that can help people across the county.

Even before the emerging cost of living crisis it was well known that some people in rural communities can have difficulty getting affordable, healthy food locally and need to travel to shop, adding to any financial difficulties they may already experience because of lower wages and higher energy bills.

Working with Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, Shropshire Larder, Citizen's Advice and Shropshire Council Public Health we delivered a range of engagement activities to hear from as many people as possible.

- We heard from 11 people with lived experience of food insecurity and 121 people working in the public and community sectors through our online surveys.
- We had detailed conversations with 11 people to understand their experiences of living with food insecurity and its impact on their lives.
- We led four focus groups involving 33 people working across the public and voluntary sectors to identify issues and solutions, including the need for closer partnership working.



'Stressful. The stress affects my [health] which makes me get poorly which makes me more stressed it's a vicious cycle. The emotional anxiety makes my [health] worse.'

Person with lived experience



What difference did this make

- Shropshire Council were awarded £300,000 from 'Shaping Places, Healthier Lives' (Health Foundation and Local Government Association) over the next three years to tackle food insecurity in south west Shropshire and use this learning to address this issue in other parts of the county.
- Healthwatch England asked us to share our approach and learning with other local Healthwatch undertaking engagement with people whose experiences aren't heard.



"The findings from those with a lived experience are especially stark and highlight this growing problem and its impact on people's health and wellbeing. I endorse the recommendations highlighted in the report and the need to work together with communities, the voluntary sector and with partners to tackle the stigma and issues raised through the research.

Director of Public Health, Shropshire Council



Listening to the experiences of children, young people and their families of using crisis mental health services



'I remember there was a long wait before I saw someone, and I almost gave up. I think professionals think because we are young, we don't understand as much'

14- year-old from Telford & Wrekin



In June 2021 the Director of Nursing at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust (SaTH) asked us to speak to children and young people about their experiences of crisis mental health services and give them a voice. This was in response to a Care Quality Commission inspection that highlighted the challenges faced by the Trust and the importance of working with the Clinical Commissioning Group and Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT) to ensure 'effective plans are in place to meet the needs of children and young people with significant mental health needs, learning disability or behaviours that challenge'.

We worked with SaTH, MPFT and Healthwatch Telford & Wrekin to develop our approach. We asked the Trusts to contact the children and young people who had used their services to let them know we wanted to hear their experiences. This was not possible so we used a press release, flyer and social media to let people know what we were doing. We heard directly from five young people aged 13-20 and 46 parents and carers who described the experiences of another 50 children and young people aged between 10 and 26. Sixteen professionals from across the NHS, education, the charity and voluntary sector and an independent counsellor got in touch. We asked everyone what could be done to improve the help they received or their experience.



11 recommendations

were made based on what people told us about waiting times, referrals, face-to-face appointments, communication, care plans, post-diagnosis support, training and joint working

What difference did this make

- SaTH have increased their mental health workforce and now have a mental health matron for children and young people.
- MPFT described the work they are doing in schools, including their Diagnostic Only Service.
- The CCG told us about the work they are doing to identify and fill gaps in services, including investing in a children's crisis team to treat children at home, prevent hospital admissions or provide support on discharge.
- We have been asked to present our findings to the Health and Wellbeing Board and a Joint Safeguarding Community Partnership Challenge Event.

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

It's important for the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture, through hearing personal experiences, and the impact on people's lives. This provides a deeper understanding than using data alone, can challenge assumptions and motivate people to think and work more creatively.

In 2020 and early 2021 we published our reports on experiences of End of Life Care and Out of Hours Palliative Care services. During this year we used the case studies and experiences people told us about to influence the local End of Life Care System Review through workshops and participation in Task and Finish groups where we championed the patient voice.



Getting services to listen to the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

In Spring 2021 we heard from 45 patients of Shifnal and Priorslee Medical Practice mainly expressing concern about aspects of the service. We used our statutory powers to write to the practice and raise the issues of appointments, staff and services, confidentiality, and patient involvement. We received a response from the practice (published on our website) informing us of changes that were being put in place in relation to staff training, availability of appointments and improvements to the telephone system.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes to consistently raise issues and push for changes.

We have heard for some years of problems with accessing NHS dental services and finding information about available services. This is part of an ongoing national issue but we wanted to highlight the real effects that it has on people so asked to hear about experiences. We shared these with the NHS, who told us they would continue with 'procurement plans to secure a new NHS dental practice in Oswestry and review access in other areas of Shropshire.' We have now been invited to represent the patient voice in the procurement process and the NHS has set up a local information and advice line.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need



Signposting people who needed additional support

During this year one of the key signposting themes has been supporting people who are receiving health care but are concerned that things are not going as well as it should for either themselves or their relatives.

This can be problems with communication with staff because of restricted visiting in hospitals, extended waits for appointments and treatment as we are moving out of the pandemic, or arranging an appointment that is provided in a way people feel comfortable with.



For some people who are particularly vulnerable this can involve providing information about organisations in the community that can provide advocacy services.

We help people find the most appropriate person to speak to, which could be a hospital Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) team, a ward manager or a GP surgery Practice Manager all of whom work to help resolve issues and help patients and relatives navigate through their healthcare.

Providing information and support when people need to complain

We provide the Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (IHCAS) in Shropshire. This year we have seen a 22% increase in contacts to the service and were contacted by 47 people in the last quarter of the year which was the highest number in any single quarter since the contract began in 2016.

We provided additional support putting complaints in writing or attending meetings for 23 IHCAS clients this year.

Top 5 topics mentioned in complaints:

- Waiting Times
- Patient Choice
- Diagnostics (including misdiagnosis)
- Staff attitude
- Communication



'I'm so glad there is a service like this to help me, I already feel like a weight is being lifted.'

IHCAS Client October 2021



Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Got involved in planning our return to Enter & View activities by developing a proposal for a new 'light touch' approach.
- Created digital content on our social media.
- Carried out website reviews for local services on the information they provide and making sure they are clear, easy to understand and navigate.
- Assisted as part of 'Readers' Panels' – checking local services' publications to make them more people focussed and easier to read.
- Continued to help with the local vaccination centres supporting local people to get their COVID vaccinations





Orla

"Hi, I'm Orla and I am an undergraduate History student at the University of Cambridge. At Healthwatch Shropshire I am an Engagement Support volunteer and also help out with creating graphics for social media. I am excited to be getting involved in the local community and look forward to an improved Shropshire."



David

"I was drawn to volunteering with Healthwatch Shropshire as I really enjoy meeting people and getting out and about. I feel volunteering provides a sense of purpose and I have many years of experience in the field of business management and digital data. I have previously volunteered with the Shropshire Community Hospital NHS Trust and look forward to applying my previous skills and experience to my voluntary work with Healthwatch".



Geoff

"I wanted to be involved with something worthwhile where I could use my skills and potentially make a difference.

It's great to interact with committed and proactive team members and I am looking forward to getting back to face-to-face visits and meeting with a wider group of people."



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk



01743 237884



enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk



Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£144,192	Staff costs	£99,209
Additional funding (IHCAS)	£17,808	Operational costs	£28,255
Additional project funding	£1,775	Support and administration	£19,426
Total income	£163,775	Governance	£1,951
		Total expenditure	£148,841

Top three priorities for 2022–23

- All age mental health** – we will continue the work we have started by listening to children and young people about the help and support they need to improve their health and wellbeing. We will make sure people using services are involved in the Community Mental Health Transformation and continue to monitor the implementation of the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Dementia Strategy.
- Highlighting inequalities** – we will continue to work to build relationships and gain the trust of people from different communities so that they feel able to make full use of the services provided. We will work to highlight the inequalities experienced by people including digital and rural inequality.
- Promote public involvement** – we will continue to recruit and support volunteers to take an active role in the work of Healthwatch Shropshire, including Enter & View visits and speaking to the public about their experiences of health and social care services. We will promote opportunities for people to get involved in the work of the Integrated Care System to improve and develop services and the valuable contribution they can make in their local area, e.g. joining their GP Patient Group.

Next steps

Healthwatch Shropshire has had a positive relationship with the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) as they have valued the insight we have shared from the comments and experiences we have received from the public and the reports we have produced. At times they have asked us to speak to the public about key issues to get their views and ideas to inform the work they are doing and shape services. From 1st July 2022 the CCG will be replaced by the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System which will include the NHS providers (e.g. Hospital Trusts) and the Local Authorities. We will be working to maintain and strengthen our relationships across the system.

Statutory statements

About us

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 licence agreement.



The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch board consists of eight members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities through four Committees of the Board:

- Business Committee
- Intelligence Committee
- Enter & View Committee
- Engagement & Marketing Committee

Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the board met four times and made decisions on matters such as which key pieces of work to undertake and increasing staffing levels to improve our capacity for face-to-face engagement once the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions were lifted.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by making Board meetings open to the public, holding Volunteer Meetings and asking our volunteers for their feedback and to propose engagement activities. These may include identifying suggestions about where we should do Enter & View visits. We also use the comments we receive from the public to identify issues that we need to explore further.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website and Freepost address to help address digital inequality and the fact that we have a large older population. We have attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities (including focus groups) and engaged with the public through social media. We have translated social media posts into other languages. We also piloted an online engagement platform for Healthwatch England to try to extend our reach.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible by sharing it with our contacts and publishing it on our website.

Responses to recommendations and requests

During 2021-22 we have received responses from all providers we approached to respond to requests for information on our reports and recommendations. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Shropshire is represented on the Shropshire Health and Wellbeing Board by Lynn Cawley our Chief Officer. During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by sharing key messages from the insight we gather from the public, highlighting work we have done previously (e.g. sharing reports) to continue to represent relevant experiences people have shared with us, presenting our key findings and recommendations and asking members to tell us what actions they are taking or planning to take in response. For example, our report on ‘Phone, video and online appointments during the Covid-19 pandemic’ was published 29th October 2020 and presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board 8th July 2021

2021-2022 Outcomes / Updates

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services / Update
Priority: All age mental health	
HWS joined new meetings to represent the voice of the people of Shropshire	We gave feedback on public facing information about the Community Mental Health Transformation led by Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust and the Living Well Plan for people with Dementia as part of the Dementia Strategy led by the CCG.
Priority: Prevention and place based care	
Pain Management Services Survey and Report	Provider committed to improving the information given to people before they attended pain management clinics. Pain Management Services in Shropshire Healthwatch Shropshire
Met with professionals across the NHS to understand the offer for women in perimenopause, menopause and post-menopause	We identified a gap in knowledge between services and shared our findings to help ensure women receive appropriate referrals. We shared the training offer from the Consultant at SaTH with the CCG. We worked with SaTH and other partners to design the SaTH Women’s Health Survey which received 2000 responses.
Visiting care homes during the pandemic	We followed up our report from 2020-21 by giving Shropshire Council myth-busting information from Healthwatch England about the ‘Essential Care Giver’
Service change and redesign	We attended meetings around changes to Phlebotomy services (blood tests) to ensure the views of service users were taken into account and feedback on the process
Shifnal & Priorslee Medical Practice	As a result of raising patient concerns with the Practice our Chief Officer was invited to attend a meeting of the Patient Participation Group to raise awareness of Healthwatch, hear further feedback and how the provider were responding directly to patients about the issues they raise.

2021-2022 Outcomes / Updates (continued)

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services / Update
Priority: Prevention and place based care	
Covid-19 Booster Programme	We continued to feedback people’s experiences of the vaccination programme to the CCG and Public Health to identify gaps and barriers. We joined the Vaccination and Autism Steering Group to try to increase vaccination uptake amongst people with Autism and used our engagement tools to promote.
Eye care	We joined the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Eye Care Delivery Group and Local Eye Health Network to ensure the experiences people share with us about eye services feed into the transformation programme.
Priority: Acute care	
Cancer care	We shared our previous reports and comments with the Care Quality Commission to inform their work to understand the patient experience of the cancer pathway and approach to inspection.
Maternity services	We continued to signpost people to share their views on Maternity Services at SaTH with the Ockenden Review Team until the report was published. We met with the PALS Officer for Women and Children’s at SaTH to share comments we received and attended the public meetings of Ockenden Review Assurance Committee to continue to monitor and challenge the progress made against the report recommendations.
Cardiology services	We attended a Cardiology Stakeholder Event to hear about potential inpatient service changes and promote service user involvement and engagement.
Priority: Public involvement	
Public Involvement	We were involved in planning a series of workshops led by the CCG to improve public involvement and engagement across health and social care, including the ICS Involving People and Communities Strategy Workshop. We shared our experiences of engaging with people whose experiences aren’t being heard, good practice and guidance from HWE to inform the local toolkit.
Feedback on Healthwatch Shropshire	We invited feedback from organisations across Shropshire on our work and identified areas for improvement including raising awareness of our role with Local Councilors What people told us about our work Healthwatch Shropshire



healthwatch

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