**Press Release**

For immediate release: 30 November 2020

**Visiting family and friends in care homes and hospital during Covid-19**

As the county nears the end of the second national lockdown Healthwatch Shropshire, the local independent champion for people who use health and social care services, wants to hear about people’s experiences of visiting or keeping in contact with family and friends in care homes and hospitals.

The distress of patients, residents and their families who have not been able to see each other very easily during the pandemic has been widely reported and Healthwatch Shropshire would like to hear about what measures and systems have been put in place to help keep families in contact while keeping everybody safe.

Lynn Cawley, Chief Officer, told us, “We are aware that it has been a very difficult time for families with loved ones in residential care homes and in hospital. We have also heard of innovative ways staff have helped families keep in contact. We would like to hear from families and staff about their experiences and what has helped so that we can share this with all providers across Shropshire.

We would also be very keen to hear any suggestions people have about how visiting and contact can be improved.”

Healthwatch Shropshire can be contacted at <https://www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk/visiting-friends-and-relatives-hospital-and-care-homes> , 01743 237884, enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk, social media platforms and WhatsApp 07813 458955

Healthwatch Shropshire is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in Shropshire. It gathers the views and experiences of patients, service users, carers, and the general public about services including hospitals, GPs, mental health services, community health services, pharmacists, opticians, residential care and children’s services. It also has statutory powers that it can use to influence service provision by encouraging improvements.

**Ends**

**Notes for Editors:**

Healthwatch Shropshire is one of a network of 148 Local Healthwatch in England. It is supported by a national organisation, Healthwatch England.

It has a team working in community engagement, plus a volunteer programme, a visit programme to health and social care premises and an associate membership scheme to involve the public in its work. It also has a signposting service to help people access health and social care services and support.

Healthwatch Shropshire also provides the Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (IHCAS) for Shropshire. The IHCAS service provides information, advice and, if necessary, can support people through the NHS complaints process.

**Contact**

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