

Shropshire Markets – What are you concerned about?

An engagement report into service users views and experiences

Engagement period January – March 2023
Report published 16 May 2023

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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. Last year, the Healthwatch network helped nearly a million people like you to have your say and get the support you need



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

We are not experts in health and social care and surveys are just one of the methods we use to put a spotlight on services and ask people to share their views with us.

Context

With the NHS across the UK having been through its worst winter in a generation [BBC News], all areas of health and social care have been affected. We wanted to ask Shropshire residents which services they were most concerned about based on their recent experiences, to see how this national problem was affecting the local community.

It is important to understand that all services across the NHS are facing huge pressures and a backlog of patients, particularly after the pandemic. This is a complex issue because there is a knock-on effect between services. However, we wanted to see how Shropshire residents were feeling in the midst of these pressures and find out what they were **most** concerned about.

The size and rurality of Shropshire also means that people's experiences of using services can differ drastically across the county. Therefore, we wanted to capture the voice of people from different parts of Shropshire and see how their experiences and concerns varied.

With the launch of the second phase of our '**Because we all care**' campaign, encouraging more people to come forward and share their experiences about health and social care, we also wanted to increase our engagement with the community by going back to places we hadn't been attending since before the lockdowns.



'Because we all care' social media tile.

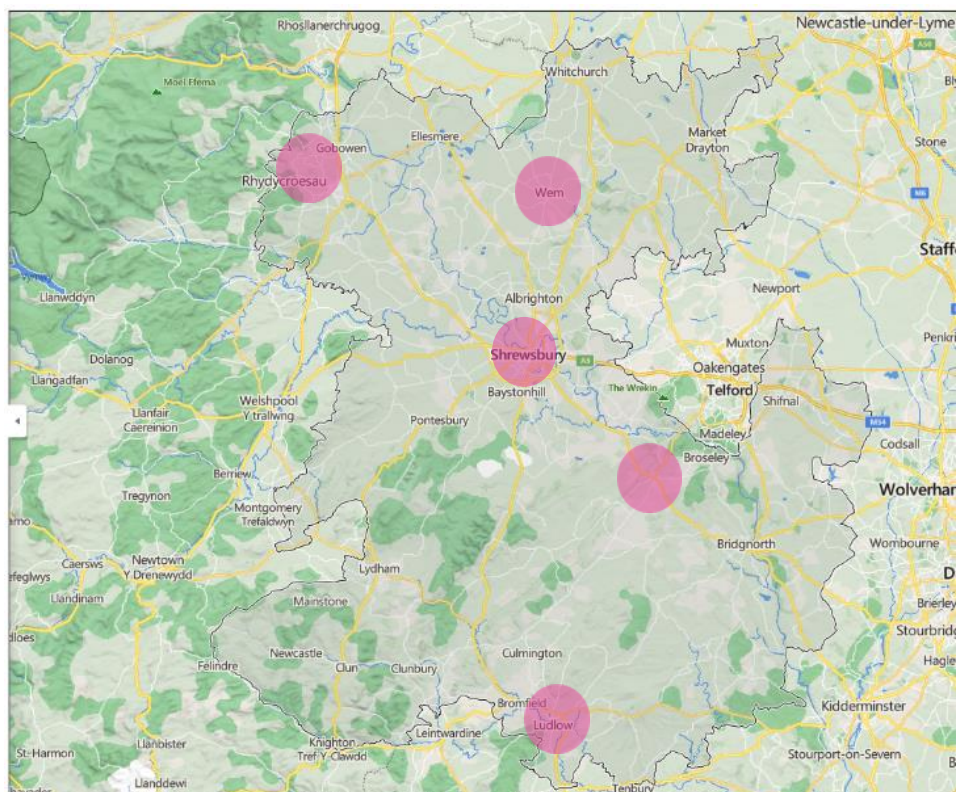
What we did

We contacted several different local councils and were granted permission to have a stand at five markets across Shropshire.

We felt that markets would be a good place to speak to people and catch them during their day-to-day activity in their communities, allowing us to get a broader understanding of which services people had most concerns about and not to pre-empt what people told us about (e.g. not speaking to them in their GP practice or hospital clinic). Speaking to people during their free time also meant we were able to have longer conversations and gather some in-depth feedback about people's experiences this winter.

We visited markets in:

- Shrewsbury
27th January
- Ludlow
15th February
- Oswestry
22nd February
- Wem (Co-op)
7th March
- Much Wenlock
23rd March



We posted tiles on our social media channels before each event to promote what we were doing and where we would be.



We also asked our volunteers if they wanted to be involved in gathering experiences and talking to people in the community. We had help from several of our volunteers across the county.



At each market we set up a stand and asked people to put in a button in the cup of the service (or services) they were most concerned about.

We asked...

Are there any local services that you are concerned about?

- Dentistry
- Ambulance and emergency Services
- GP practice
- Inpatient hospital care
- Outpatient hospital care
- Social and domiciliary care
- Mental health support
- Other (please specify)
- None of the above



These services were chosen based on what we had been hearing most about over the winter months. We included options for 'other' or 'none of the above' to ensure everyone could share their views.

We also gave everyone we spoke to the opportunity to leave a comment with us and share a little bit more detail about why they were specifically concerned about the service(s) they chose, or why they did not have any concerns.

Who we heard from

- Overall we spoke to **112 people** across the five markets.
- We received **210 responses** to the button in a cup activity as some people indicated they were concerned about more than one service.
- **Nine people** shared an experience of a friend, relative or someone they care for and everyone else shared their own experience.

Please note

Because we were talking to people out in public, we did not feel it appropriate to ask for more detailed demographic data.

Key findings

- Across Shropshire we spoke to **112 people**, and **80% (90 people)** told us they were **particularly concerned** about a local service or services.
- Those who indicated multiple services were concerned about **2 services** on average.
- **20% (22 people)** said they had no concerns at all because they were either **very satisfied** with the care they were receiving or felt that they **did not need to use services**.

Main Concerns

Service	Number of concerns
GP practice	39
Dentistry	33
Ambulance and emergency	28
Mental Health Support	27
Outpatient hospital care	23
Social/domiciliary care	19
Inpatient hospital care	12
No concerns	22
Other	7

Main themes

- **Access to GP appointments:** 39 people were concerned about their GP practice and 14 left a comment with us about struggling to get a GP appointment, particularly navigating complicated, busy phonelines and being able to get a face-to-face appointment. However, nine people did share a positive experience with their GP when they were able to get an appointment.
- **Hospital care:** People generally described feeling well cared for when they were in the local hospitals, with seven people telling us that the staff and the care they provided was excellent.
- **Getting an NHS dentist:** 33 people told us that they were finding it very difficult to get an NHS dentist and so had either paid privately or just not had an appointment at all, voicing particular concerns about the cost.
- **Support for learning disabilities:** Three people told us that their child with learning disabilities was not receiving the support they needed, and this support just didn't seem to be available.
- **Transport:** Six people had various concerns over accessing their health and social care services due to difficulties with public transport in Shropshire.

‘What did you talk to us about in February?’



GP APPOINTMENTS

You're struggling to book appointments, long phone queues when you call and some people are still unable to get face-to-face appointments.

@HealthwatchE



NHS DENTISTRY

You're still struggling to find an NHS dentist that accepts new patients and find the NHS website not useful and out of date.

@HealthwatchE



ACCESS TO URGENT CARE

You are having to wait a long time in A&E and waiting conditions are poor. There are also long waits for ambulances to arrive, and then you are kept waiting in the ambulance hours when you reach A&E.

@HealthwatchE



[Source: [Healthwatch England Instagram](#)]

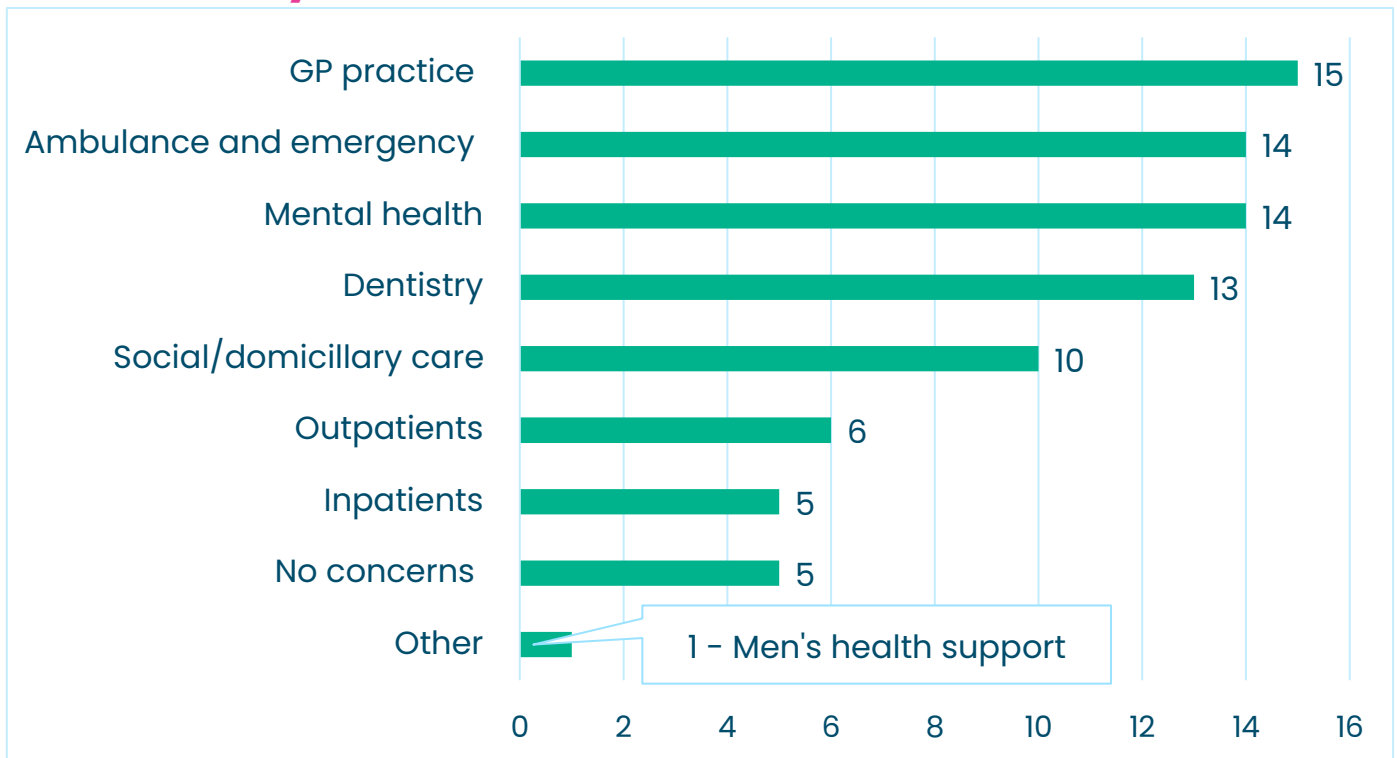
The top three services about which the Shropshire residents from whom we heard had concerns were **GP practices, Dentistry, and Ambulance and Emergency.**

These findings aligned with what Healthwatch England reported on in a similar period, suggesting that the concerns **local people** are raising are also **national problems.**

What we found out

Shrewsbury

27th January



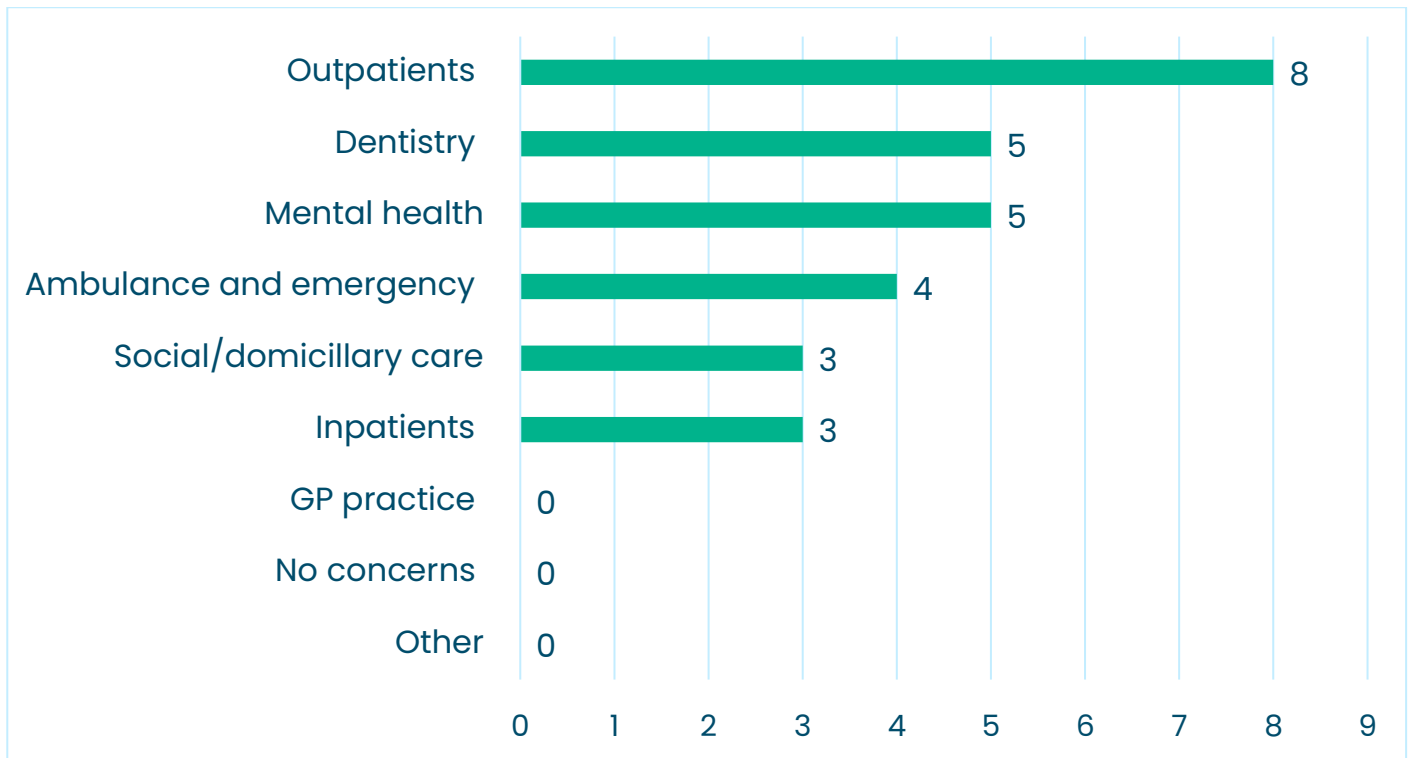
We spoke to **35 people** at Shrewsbury market and had 83 responses to the button in a cup activity, as some people said they had concerns about multiple services.

- **15 (42%) people¹** told us they were concerned about their GP practices, mainly telling us that they were struggling to get an appointment.
- **Three people** were also concerned over how they would access their GP if it moved into the proposed health hub.
- **Five people (14%)** were not concerned about any services and felt satisfied with the care they were receiving.
- **One person** was concerned about lack of support for men's health, suggesting more advice and support with prostate checks.

¹ Percentages have been calculated from the number of people we spoke to, not number of responses as some people indicated more than one priority.

Ludlow

15th February



We spoke to **nine people** at Ludlow market and had 28 responses to our activity.

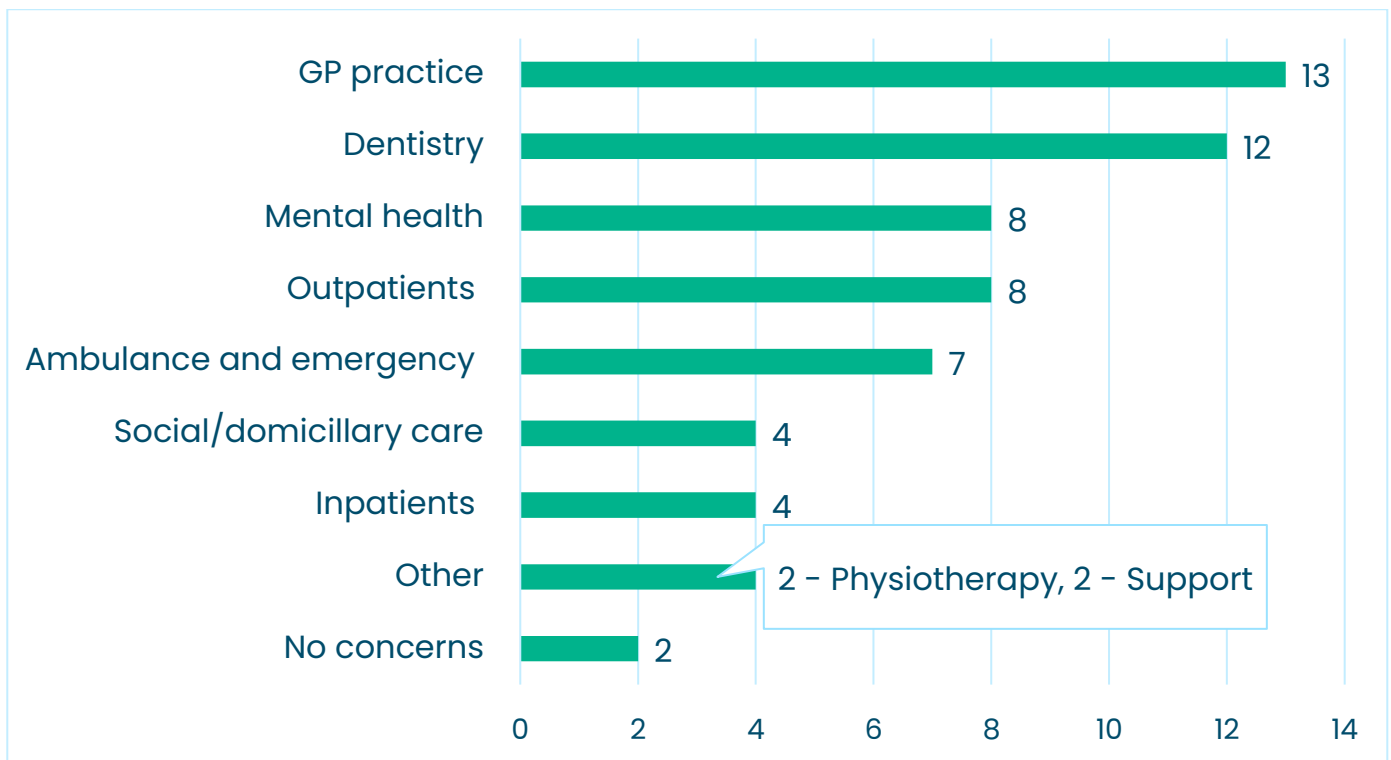
- **Eight people (89%)** were concerned about outpatients.
- **Five (56%)** were concerned about mental health services, feeling that the support they needed just wasn't there or wasn't accessible.



“Mental health support is not there in schools or in GPs. I still have to wait to get a call with my GP even though I have a red mark on my file that shows I have a mental health condition.”

Oswestry

22nd February



In Oswestry we spoke to **30 people**, and the activity got 62 responses.

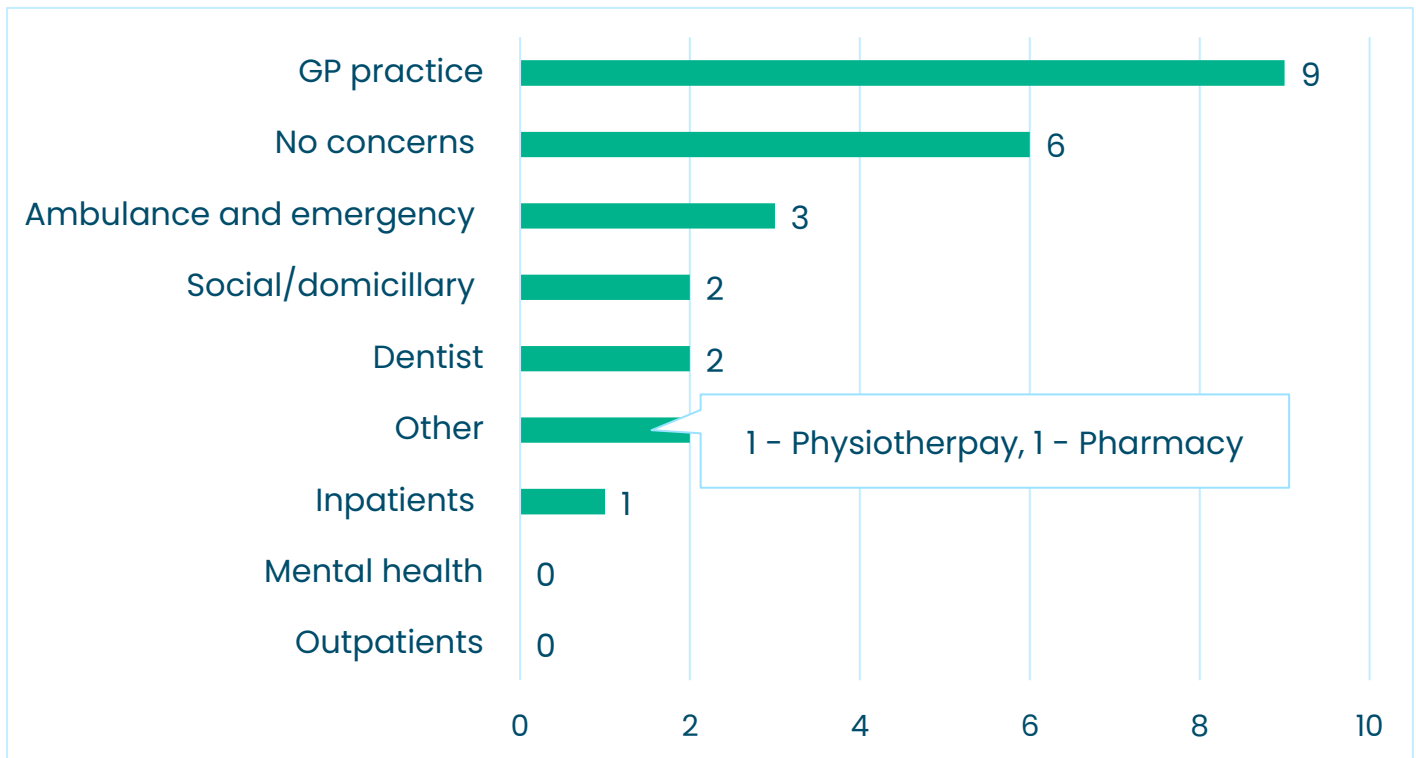
- **13 people (43%)** were concerned about their GP practice, particularly getting through busy phonelines to get an appointment. People were also concerned about getting referred by the GP to the hospital, but generally they expressed feeling well cared for when they were in Oswestry, Shrewsbury, and Telford hospitals.
- **12 people (40%)** were concerned about dentistry, with most attributing this to not being able to access an NHS dentist. Oswestry residents who responded to our 2021 call for experience also reported poor access to an NHS dentist. Report available here, [report](#).
- Some people also felt that limited public transport in the area caused problems accessing health and social care services across the county.



“The disparity between rural and urban areas is drastic and that is the main problem in Shropshire.”

Wem

7th March



In Wem, we spoke to **25 people**, and got 25 responses.

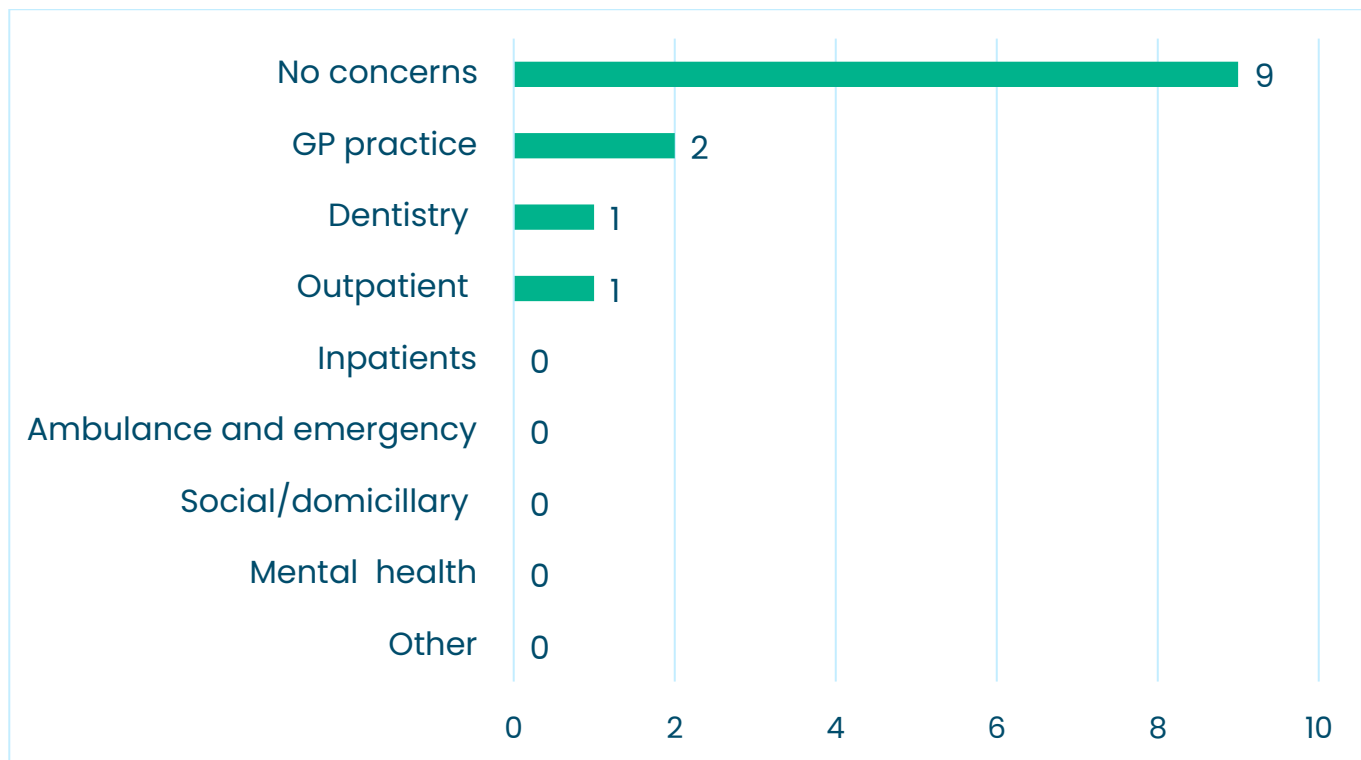
- **Nine people (36%)** were concerned about their GP practice and voiced particular concern around waiting times for appointments and not feeling listened to by their doctors.
- **Six people (24%)** had no concerns at all, either because they were satisfied with the services or didn't feel they needed to use them.
- **Two people (8%)** who spoke to were worried about the cost of domiciliary care, resulting in them choosing to stop having a carer and manage on their own.



"I can't afford carers every day, so we have had to stop them. My wife looks after me and I look after her."

Much Wenlock

23rd March



In Much Wenlock, we did not put out the cup activity because of windy weather, however we spoke to **13 people** who told us if they had any concerns.

- **Nine people (69%)** said they had no concerns at all and were happy with the services they were receiving.
- **Two people (15%)** told us they were not satisfied with their GP practice because of difficulty getting the appointments they needed.
- **One person** was concerned about their dentist because they were no longer taking NHS patients.



“The doctors’ surgery is excellent!” [Much Wenlock and Cressage Medical Practice]

What people told us

Access to GP appointments

14 people spoke to us about struggling to book GP appointments, with several people highlighting difficulties with phonelines and being unable to see a doctor face-to-face.



“I can’t get a face-to-face appointment with my GP. You call up and get triaged even when you are ill and need to see a doctor. The system is inflexible, and most people can’t just have a phone call appointment whenever. It feels very cumbersome, we are not in COVID anymore. They are adamant that there is no face-to-face and you always talk to different GPs, there is no continuity of care. People are then going to A and E because they can’t get diagnosed early enough or can’t see a doctor in person – they are getting frustrated.”
[Radbrook Green Surgery]



Can’t get a GP appointment, nobody answers the phone. You have to go in and ask at reception for any help. My friend was told she couldn’t get her test results from reception, she had to ring in. So she went outside and called but nobody answered. She went back in and the phone was ringing but it was being ignored.
[Plas FFynon Medical Practice]



It is difficult to get an appointment with my GP. You have to wait a long time to get through. I book straight after the appointment on the day. [Wem and Prees Medical Practice]



You never hear anything from my GP. There should be better communication, they should ask if I am Ok etc. [Wem and Prees Medical Practice]



Wem practice you can't get an appointment, had to wait a month and then they never got in touch. [Wem and Prees Medical Practice]



It takes three months to get an appointment here. GP doesn't listen to you. [Wem and Prees Medical Practice]



The doctors don't listen to what you are trying to tell them. They just send you off for a blood test and a wee test and don't listen to my problems. I think my doctor is younger and inexperienced. [Wem and Prees Medical Practice]



I have friends in this surgery, and they ring up and are something like 14th in the queue. Then the phonenumber cuts off and they ring up again and are at the back of the line again. [Cambrian Medical Practice]



Church Stretton GP difficult to get an appointment. Can't get past the receptionist- it's like the Spanish inquisition on the phone! [Church Stretton Medical Practice]



It would be nice to see a doctor. To get an appointment you have to ring up as early as possible. [Plas FFynon Medical Practice]



We had the most superb practice at Worthen, it was fabulous, if you needed to see a doctor that day you did. We were assured the merge [with Pontesbury] would be the best thing since sliced bread. But it's impossible to get through and you can't see a doctor for six weeks. [Pontesbury and Worthen Medical Practice]



I can't get through to my doctors. They say they are overworked but everytime I go there the place is deserted! [Pontesbury and Worthen Medical Practice]



I'm tired of permanent answer phones, everyone assumes that you can use a computer or a high-tech phone. [Practice not given]



Much Wenlock is largely a village of elderly people – they want us all to go online but a lot of us don't have computers or transport.

Nine people told us that they had a positive experience using their GP, explaining they were able to get an appointment and were happy with the care they received.



I phoned my GP for an appointment and waited no longer than five minutes to speak to a receptionist. A phone appointment was booked for 5 days time very swiftly and easily. I am very pleased with the service. [Radbroke Green Surgery]



My GP has all changed since COVID, it's difficult to get an appointment but my GP will sit and talk with me which is brilliant. They take the time to listen to me and don't just go by my notes – I feel listened to. [Portcullis Surgery]



I have no problem getting an appointment with my GP. I had to wait two and a half weeks for face-to-face but it's fine. You don't have to make up a sob story to see them. [Caxton Surgery]



I have no complaints about my GP practice. My doctor is lovely, I think you get back what you give. [Wem and Prees Medical Practie]



I'm lucky I'm at Clive surgery and they're really good. [Clive Medical Practice]



I am extremely pleased with my GP practice. [Clive Medical Practice]



I moved from Wem to Clive GP and they're brilliant - so much better. [Clive Medical Practice]



The doctors are doing well! [Much Wenlock and Cressage Medical Practice]



Teldoc have been brilliant.

Getting a referral

One individual told us that their GP was able to give them a referral but advised that Shropshire wouldn't be able to provide timely care so suggested seeking to a referral elsewhere.



“The doctors at Cambrian are brilliant, but when I was seen by my GP she said I would have to wait too long in Shropshire to get the appointments she was referring me for. She recommended I went somewhere else for treatment, so I registered as a resident with my daughter and have had multiple check-ups and appointments very quickly. I was terrified to go to Shrewsbury hospital because of what I have heard and my family's experiences there. The disparity between rural and urban is drastic and that is the main problem in Shropshire.”

Hospital care

Seven people told us they had a positive experience in inpatients and outpatients at Shrewsbury, Telford, and Oswestry hospitals, describing good and timely care.



“At Shrewsbury hospital the care was next to none, and in A+E there was no flapping! Everything was followed up properly and explained well. I decided to leave at 7am after the overnight stay because I couldn't sleep as the gentleman next to me was loud and unwell. The doctor came and discharged me. There was great patient care, and everything was explained well to me. [RSH]”



Inpatient at Telford recently and the care was wonderful! [PRH]



My GP and the ambulance service were great in admitting me for a brain injury. My care at Shrewsbury hospital was also great! [RSH]



Recently I took a 94 year old to Telford hospital and they were traiged within the hour, you cannot fault them. [PRH]



Telford hospital is great, straight in straight out. [PRH]



I've had good experiences in both Shrewsbury and Telford hospital for thyroid problems. [PRH, RSH]



The Orthoepedic hospital is brilliant – they're the best! [RJAH]

Four people told us that they had negative experiences in the hospitals or had been waiting long periods of time to be given an appointment.



During my daughter's pregnancy Telford hospital was great. However once she gave birth (pre-eclampsia) the baby was losing weight and they were sent home. They realised this was a terrible mistake and now the baby is back in the hospital being cared for. They missed vital signs and dismissed my daughter when she was concerned. [PRH]



Both my brother and my mother have been on emergency waiting lists for over a year at RSH.




I have regular MRI scans at both Shrewsbury and Hereford hospital. In Hereford they give you two gowns so your back is covered, they only give you one in Shrewsbury so your back is exposed which is uncomfortable. [RSH]





I had to make all the phone calls and find out what was happening to find out that the physio had mixed up the patients and dad had been left out... Each team were doing their own thing without thinking about the whole picture - a lack of Co-ordination. [RSH]


Getting an NHS dentist

Six people we spoke to mentioned that they couldn't get an NHS dentist, describing feeling hopeless and concerned about costs they would have to cover if they went private.


 "I can't get an NHS dentist. I've got diabetes which causes more problems with your teeth, and you get penalised for it – in terms of cost!" [Comment from Wem]

 NHS dentist access is such a problem. I have had to move three times and had to go private just to get a checkup. [Comment from Shrewsbury]

 My dentist is no longer taking NHS patients since the pandemic, so I have had to go on a paid plan which isn't cheap. [Comment from Much Wenlock]

 Can't get an NHS dentist. [Three comments from Shrewsbury]

One person told us they had access to an NHS dentist, and they were pleased with the service.

 "I am happy with my dentist – they're fine. If you have a major problem, they'll see you that day." [Osmond House]

Support for learning disabilities

Three people spoke of difficulties their child had experienced with using services to support with learning disabilities. One person drew attention to how a lack of male support workers in the care industry can negatively affect male service users.

6

Social housing sent my daughter with learning difficulties and mental health a bill for £2.5k without any warning. A bill she didn't even know she owed! [Comment from Shrewsbury]

6

Support for children with learning difficulties is not there these days, you can't get a diagnosis or a referral or any extra support. [Comment from Ludlow]

6

Respite care at Whittington [community centre] and social care is very good for my son. It's a shame there is such a shortage of male support workers because it's really good for my son to have some boy time. [Comment from Oswestry]

Transport

As Shropshire is such a rural county, transport is a challenging issue. **Three people** we spoke to mentioned long and unpredictable journeys to access their health and social care services.



They stopped the bus to the hospital [RSH] so now it's quite a journey. Have to get a train and a bus from Ludlow.



Transport is such a problem, there is a bus here twice a day that gets you in and out of town, if it's on time, and that's it! [Oswestry area]



The parking in Telford hospital is terrible, it took me over 25 minutes of going around and around to get a space. [PRH]

Three people spoke to us about concerns over transport to the proposed **health and wellbeing hub** that affects six GP practices in Shrewsbury.



“My GP is going into this new hub. I'm concerned about transport, particularly for elderly people, how will they get there? [Practice not known]”

Other services

Two people spoke to us about positive experiences they had with clinics they had attended in Shropshire. They told us they felt outsourcing some NHS services had been a good idea.



I had my cataracts done for the second time as there was a regrowth of cells through CHEC [Community Health and Eye Care] and they contacted me very quickly and got lazered very quickly. Was brilliant, outsourcing has worked quickly and smoothly. Would recommend to anyone.



Bellevue Skin Clinic was superb. I had a skin cancer check after 5 days of making the appointment.

Response from the NHS and Public Health

Shropshire Public Health

“Understanding the lived experience of our residents needs to be at the centre of all that we do; it helps us to see beyond the data and hear the real impact these delays are having on people’s experiences of care and outcomes.

This independent report from Healthwatch highlighting these experiences, residents needs and priorities will be used as part of our evidence base, alongside additional surveys and local engagement, in the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) for Shropshire. The JSNA seeks to identify current and future health and wellbeing needs in the local population and identifies strategic priorities to inform commissioning of services based on those needs. The work helps inform the commissioning, and the development of services and activities to address gaps in needs and ensure the needs assessments reflect local priorities and understand what matters to local residents.”

Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin NHS

“NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin welcomes the insightful work of Shropshire Healthwatch. It is essential that as the local health and social care patient’s champion, it informs and challenges our healthcare system to continue to improve services, standards and patient outcomes. We value the important role Healthwatch plays in providing feedback from people who face barriers accessing services and have poorer experiences and outcomes. We are committed to understanding the needs, challenges and aspirations of our population and working together with partners across the system to reduce inequalities and improve their health and wellbeing. NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin is currently developing its Joint Five Year Forward Plan (JFP). The findings from the Healthwatch report will be fed into the JFP and will continue to inform service improvement plans in the coming five years.”

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Shropshire would like to give thanks to the town councils for their help facilitating this project by allowing us to have stands at the local markets. We give particular thanks to all members of the public who took the time to speak to us and share their experiences of health and social care.

We would also like to thank our volunteers for their help running the stands.



Healthwatch Shropshire

www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk

t: 01743 237884

e: enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk

 [@HWshropshire](https://twitter.com/HWshropshire)

 [Facebook.com/Healthwatchshropshire](https://www.facebook.com/Healthwatchshropshire)