



Press Release

For immediate release: 31 October 2017

Local older people asked to share stories of stressful hospital journeys

A local healthcare consumer champion and charity are asking older people from Shropshire to share the difficulty they have in getting to and from hospital appointments.

The 'Painful Journeys' campaign, which has been launched by Age UK, seeks to highlight the long, uncomfortable and often painful journeys that many older people have to endure when they are unwell, in order to have treatment or consultations. It calls for an urgent government review of essential transport services.

Almost a fifth (18%) of over-65s who have attended a hospital appointment in the past year – more than one million people – reported feeling worse afterwards because of the stress involved in the journey, according to new research from the charity.

This comes at a time when Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust are about to increase their car parking charges from 1 November, community transport schemes are facing an uncertain future with national discussions about changes to licensing and hospital non-emergency transport services are under pressure from increasing demand and budget constraints.

Age UK warns that difficult hospital journeys are making older people feel more unwell and adding to NHS costs due to missed appointments and possible relapses, making the need for treatment at a point of crisis more likely.

In order to gather evidence of this locally, Healthwatch Shropshire, the independent health and social care consumer champion, is asking older people in the county to share their experiences of getting to and from hospitals so these can be fed into the debate.

Jane Randall-Smith, Chief Officer, Healthwatch Shropshire said: "Getting to hospital for an appointment or to visit a relative can be a long journey using public transport. Some services, such as neurology, are now being provided out of the county which can add to the difficulties of reaching hospitals for non-emergency treatment. We really want to hear from older people who are experiencing difficulties in getting to and from hospital."

Heather Osborne, Chief Executive, Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin, said: “As we grow older, so too do our chances of having multiple health conditions requiring regular outpatient appointments. If older people cannot actually get to the hospital services they need, or have to endure long, painful and stressful journeys in order to access them, this translates into extra costs for the NHS, which we know is already stretched to the limit.”

To share your experience of a painful or difficult journey to hospital please call Healthwatch Shropshire on 01743 237884 or go to www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk

For more information about local transport options for older people in Shropshire please contact Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin on 01743 233123.

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Notes for Editors:

About Healthwatch Shropshire

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 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.

About Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin

Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin is a local charity which has been working tirelessly for over 65 years to make life better for older people across the whole of Shropshire.

Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin offers a range of services for older people in the county. These include: Information and Advice, Day Centres, dementia support, the Help at Home Service, volunteer befriending visitors, Home from Hospital services, Pub Clubs, Living Well activities, Benefits Advice, and Advocacy on behalf of older people.

Last year over 100,000 volunteer hours were given to support older people, ranging from helping people to fill in benefits forms, supporting people in our 40 Day Centres, visiting isolated older people at home, to acting as receptionists in our Shrewsbury office.

Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin is based in Shrewsbury and in Telford. The Shrewsbury office is open from 10.00am – 4.00pm Monday to Friday, 01743 233123. Our office at Meeting Point House in Telford is open every morning, 01952 216018. Further information about our local services is available on our website www.ageukshropshireandtelford.org.uk

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