

## **Shropshire Patients Helping to Heal the NHS**

Healthwatch Shropshire is supporting a new nationwide campaign #ItStartsWithYou launched to highlight the difference patient feedback can make and to encourage more people to speak up.

Since 2013 Healthwatch Shropshire has encouraged people to share their views of local health and social care services and passed this information to providers to help them gain insight into people's experiences. Volunteers and staff have met people in local markets, run stands at hospitals across the county, visited care homes to talk to residents and collected survey feedback from local students.

Jane Randall-Smith, CEO of Healthwatch Shropshire, said: "I would like to thank everyone who has given us feedback as it has allowed us to share information with providers who have worked to make improvements to services.

"One example of many where feedback has made a difference was when we were contacted last year by members of the public telling us about difficulties they were having accessing NHS dentists. We shared this with NHS England. As a result NHS England have agreed to make extra provision for approximately 857 more patients to access NHS dental services in Shrewsbury and Market Drayton."

During the last 12 months, over 1400 local residents have shared their stories to help diagnose where things aren't working and to let doctors, nurses and care workers know when they are getting it right. The more that people share their ideas, experiences and concerns, the more services can understand where improvements are needed.

The national Healthwatch network exists to make it easy for people to give feedback about health and care services, requiring no more than a short telephone call, email or even a Tweet.

In the last year the Healthwatch network has heard from almost 300,000 people specifically sharing their story so that the NHS and council-run care services can find ways to improve so that they can survive and thrive in difficult times.

But this is just the beginning, with new research suggesting just over 3 out of 4 adults in England would be interested in sharing their feedback in order to improve health and social care services if given the opportunity.

Reports from across the Healthwatch network suggest that the value of listening to patient feedback is starting to gain real traction within the NHS with two thirds of local Healthwatch reporting that healthcare providers are now actively seeking out information from them about how patients are experiencing care.

In recognition of all those who have shared their feedback, Healthwatch England is launching the campaign, #ItStartsWithYou, not only to highlight the difference people can make, but also to encourage more people to come forward.

Imelda Redmond, National Director of Healthwatch England, said: "Giving doctors and nurses or care home staff a box of chocolates to say thank you is a lovely gesture but sharing feedback about the experience with those in charge is far more powerful. Not only does it help to boost the morale of under pressure staff but it can help the whole health and care sector understand what it is getting right and where things need to improve.

"Healthwatch makes it easy for people to share their experiences, both good and bad, and ensures that from individual doctors' surgeries to the corridors of central government, those in charge of planning and delivering services hear what people have to say.

"It's heartening to see a growing culture of people willing to share their story and incredibly important that the NHS is also increasingly keen to find out what people are feeding back. But to unleash the full potential we need people to keep sharing their experiences with us, so I urge everyone to speak up and help us make the changes we all want to see."

People can let Healthwatch Shropshire know what they think about local services by phone 01743 237884, by email [enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk) or online [www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk).

**Ends**

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**Notes for Editors:**

**<http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/itstartswithyou>**

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

HWS is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services and exists to ensure that people are at the heart of care. HWS listens to what people like about services, and what could be improved and shares their views with those with the power to make change happen. HWS also helps people find the information they need about services in their area.

HWS has the power to ensure that people's voices are heard by the government and those running services. As well as seeking the public's views, it also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. HWS's sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

HWS gathers the views and experiences of patients, carers, and the general public about services, including hospitals, GPs, mental health services, community health services, pharmacists, opticians, residential care and home care services. It then makes reports and recommendations about how these services could or ought to be improved based on the information received from members of the public. This is shared with providers and

commissioners of services who have a statutory duty to listen to Healthwatch and act on the information it shares with them.

HWS has a team working in community engagement, plus a volunteer programme, a visit programme to health and social care premises, an advocacy service 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.

## **Contact**

Jane Randall-Smith, Chief Officer    Tel: 01743 237884

Healthwatch Shropshire

4 The Creative Quarter, Shrewsbury Business Park, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6LG

Tel: 01743 237884    Email [enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk)

Website [www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk)