

Report 1: Access to Medication in Shropshire

Background and Purpose:

In 2019 Pharmacists told us of ‘**national concern** about the stress on Pharmacists with increased responsibility, increased disturbances throughout the day.’”

Early 2025 we reported on the **impact of the introduction of Pharmacy First** in early 2024. Aswell as positive experiences we heard about ‘the impact the additional demand on pharmacy staff was having on waiting times for prescriptions to be dispensed’

Later in 2025 local Councillors reported ongoing concerns from Shropshire residents about delays in getting medication and the POD service closed

Previous reports by HWS

- [Experiences of accessing Primary Care Services in Shropshire | Healthwatch Shropshire \(2020\)](#)
- [Shropshire Pharmacy services and Consultations | Healthwatch Shropshire \(2025\)](#)

“Patients are understandably very concerned as their health, and in some cases, their lives depend on timely access to medication.” Shropshire Councillor

So what?

Key findings:

- **45%** said the **NHS App** made ordering and receiving prescriptions *quick and easy*.
- **20%** praised the **speed and helpfulness** of their local pharmacy.
- **20%** reported **unacceptable waiting times** for prescriptions to be processed or collected.
- **10%** described the **prescribing system as confusing or inefficient**.

A small number of responses described **multiple pharmacy trips**, stock issues and communication gaps.

Recommendations:

1. **Improve waiting times** and reduce delays (e.g. between prescription and dispensing)
2. **Address system inefficiencies**, (e.g. communication, information sharing)
3. **Explore ways to reduce stock shortages** leading to multiple trips
4. **Address variation in experience** across different pharmacies and areas (e.g. out of hours services)
5. **Address health inequalities** and improve information for the public (e.g. entitlements and use of technology)

Report 2: Veterans' Experiences of Accessing Healthcare in Shropshire

Background and Purpose

Healthwatch Shropshire partnered with Shropshire Council Armed Forces Outreach Team

Face-to-face engagement was carried out across community outreach venues

25 veterans shared their views with us

Approximately 14,800 veterans live in Shropshire and 6,285 in Telford

NHS organisations have responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant

Veterans reported:

- Confusion about why they should identify as veterans
- Inconsistent recognition of veteran status across services
- Limited understanding of NHS veteran coding systems
- Inconsistent understanding of veterans' entitlements among professionals
- Poor communication between GPs and hospitals
- Repeated need to explain service history and traumatic experiences
- Gaps in support during transition from military to civilian life

Mental Health and Information Sharing

Key Concerns Raised

Veterans highlighted:

- PTSD diagnoses and veteran status not always visible across services
- Distress caused by repeatedly recounting traumatic experiences
- Reliance on individuals to self-advocate
- Lack of awareness of specialist veteran services
- Risk that vulnerable veterans may “slip through the net”

Positive feedback was also received regarding:

- Local mental health services
- Armed Forces Outreach support
- Staff with specialist knowledge and lived experience

Key message:
Systems should not depend on veterans being well enough to navigate services independently

Recommendations

Healthwatch Shropshire Recommendations

1. Make asking about Armed Forces service routine
2. Simplify recording of veteran status
3. Improve communication between GP and hospital services
4. Strengthen understanding of veterans' healthcare entitlements
5. Improve support during transition from military to civilian life
6. Build on existing good practice locally

Suggested organisational priorities:

- Consistent identification processes
- Better information sharing
- Workforce awareness and training
- Improved veteran communications
- Stronger partnership working

“Some [professionals] know about it, and some don't, and that's the problem.” Veteran

NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin ICB Response

The ICB welcomed the report and findings

Supported all six recommendations


Recognised need for:

- Better understanding of veteran healthcare entitlements
- Improved recording of veteran status
- Stronger implementation of Veteran Friendly and Veteran Aware standards

Commitments included:

- Continuing to promote Veteran Aware accreditation
- Working with primary care, trusts and VCSE partners
- Building on effective local practice and partnership working





I found the other day as I needed to check my medical records that my veteran status and PTSD diagnosis was right at the top of my medical record, it was great to see...

It would be really good to have a system that works and communicates as no one wants to introduce themselves as a diagnosis.



Conclusion and Board considerations

The report demonstrates that:

- Veterans value the care and support they receive
- Experiences remain inconsistent across the healthcare system
- Current systems rely too heavily on self-identification and self-advocacy
- Improved coordination and awareness could significantly improve access and outcomes

Board considerations:

- How can system partners strengthen identification of veterans?
- Are current information-sharing processes effective?
- How will veteran awareness be embedded across services?
- How can transition support and communication be improved?