SHROPSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD
Report

Meeting Date	**19th November, 2026**					
Title of report	**Director of Public Health – 2026 Annual Report** **"More Than Money: *How Poverty Shapes Lives, Places and Health*"**					
This report is for (You will have been advised which applies)	Discussion and agreement of recommendations	**X**	Approval of recommendations (With discussion by exception)		Information only (No recommendations)	
Reporting Officer & email	Rachel Robinson - *Corporate Director – Population, Wellbeing and Neighbourhoods (DPH) / Deputy Chief Executive* Rachel.Robinson@shropshire.gov.uk					
Which Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy priorities does this report address? Please tick all that apply	Children & Young People	**X**	Joined up working	**X**		
	Mental Health	**X**	Improving Population Health	**X**		
	Healthy Weight & Physical Activity		Working with and building strong and vibrant communities	**X**		
	Workforce		Reduce inequalities (see below)	**X**		
What inequalities does this report address?	Poverty impacts across a wide range of wider determinants. The support schemes outlined within the report and delivered by partners, direct payments and advice services can reduce poor housing conditions, increase financial resilience, and reduce debts.					

1. Executive Summary

- The Director of Public Health Annual Report 2026, *"**More Than Money**: How Poverty Shapes Lives, Places and Health",* examines poverty, hardship and deprivation in Shropshire and their relationship with health inequalities. The report particularly considers the often-hidden nature of rural poverty and the additional pressures associated with transport, energy, housing, access to services and lower earnings.
- Although Shropshire performs relatively well on some traditional measures of deprivation, the report identifies significant inequalities within the county. For example, 12.8% of households are estimated to be in fuel poverty; 23.4% of children are identified as being in relative poverty after housing costs; around 16,000 households are described as being in a negative budget; and 57.4% of Shropshire's population live in rural locations. The report also highlights the challenges Shropshire experiences in relation to barriers to housing and services.
- The report describes current activity across Shropshire to address both the immediate consequences and underlying causes of poverty. This includes the Crisis & Resilience Fund, investment in advice and resilience services, support for fuel poverty and energy costs, community-based support, work on employment and skills, Best Start in Life (BSIL), the Family First Partnership Programme (FFPP) and the development of a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach. Partnership working with the voluntary and community sector is a significant priority and represented throughout the report.
- The report concludes that reducing poverty and health inequalities requires a continued shift towards prevention and early intervention alongside crisis support. Seven recommendations are proposed covering the best start in life, household financial resilience, a "No Wrong Door" approach, reducing fuel poverty, good-quality employment and skills, rural inequalities and improved identification of hidden poverty.

2. Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

1. Note the findings of the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2026 and its assessment of poverty, hardship and health inequalities in Shropshire.

2. Endorse the seven recommendations set out within the report:

    - Give every child the best start in life.
    - Improve household financial resilience.
    - Strengthen a "No Wrong Door" approach.
    - Reduce fuel poverty.
    - Improve access to good-quality employment and skills.
    - Address rural inequalities.
    - Improve identification of hidden poverty.

3. Support continued partnership working across the Council, NHS, VCSE sector, education partners and communities to address the wider determinants of poverty and health inequalities.

4. Support a continued focus on prevention and early intervention, alongside appropriate crisis support, through the emerging Health and Wellbeing Strategy and wider partnership activity.

3. Report

Directors of Public Health (DPH) produce annual reports providing an independent assessment of the health of their local population. This 2026 report focuses on poverty, hardship and deprivation, building an understanding of how these issues affect health and wellbeing within Shropshire and how the challenges associated with rurality can make poverty less visible.

The report brings together local and national evidence and describes activity being undertaken by Shropshire Council and partners to address both immediate financial hardship and its wider causes.

The report identifies several interconnected challenges:

- **Rurality:** 57.4% of Shropshire's population live in rural locations.
- **Fuel poverty:** around 18,500 households, or 12.8%, are estimated to be in fuel poverty.
- **Child poverty:** 23.4% of children are identified as being in relative poverty after housing costs in 2025.
- **Financial resilience:** approximately 16,000 households are described as being in a negative budget.
- **Employment and earnings:** median gross weekly pay for full-time workers in Shropshire was £727 in 2025, compared with £769.50 for England.
- **Access to services:** the report highlights transport and access to housing and services as particularly important dimensions of rural inequality.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate why poverty in Shropshire cannot be understood through income or geographically concentrated deprivation alone. The report highlights the importance of recognising hidden poverty and the additional costs and access barriers experienced by rural communities.

Significant activity is already underway. The Crisis & Resilience Fund provides a major component of the local response, with Shropshire's annual allocation being £3.7 million. Its four strands comprise Crisis Payments, Housing Payments, Community Coordination and Resilience Services, with an emphasis on linking immediate financial assistance to advice and longer-term support.

Wider activity includes Best Start in Life and the Family First Partnership Programme, affordable warmth and energy-efficiency activity schemes, employment and skills programmes, local food resilience initiatives, financial skills support, community-based provision and the development of Health in All Policies across the organisation.

The overall direction is towards earlier intervention, simpler referral pathways, reduced stigma, improved access and stronger coordination between the Council, VCSE organisations and wider system partners.

The annual report proposes seven areas for continued action, with delivery extending across both Council services and partners. These focus on giving children the best start in life, improving financial resilience, strengthening "No Wrong Door", reducing fuel poverty, improving employment and skills, addressing rural inequalities and improving the identification of hidden poverty.

These priorities provide an opportunity to connect poverty reduction more clearly to the wider prevention and health inequalities agenda and to the development of Shropshire's future Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal	**Risk:** Poverty and financial hardship are associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes and wider inequalities. Rurality can make need less visible and create additional barriers in relation to transport, housing, energy and access to services. Failure to identify and support households' early risks problems escalating and increasing demand for crisis and statutory services. **Opportunity:** The report provides an evidence base for strengthening preventative and partnership approaches to poverty and health inequalities. Opportunities exist through improved referral pathways, "No Wrong Door", community-based provision, better identification of hidden poverty and action on wider determinants through Health in All Policies. **Equalities and community:** Poverty affects a wide range of groups and places and can intersect with age, disability, childhood disadvantage, rurality and other circumstances. The report emphasises accessible routes to support, reducing stigma and reaching residents whose needs may otherwise remain hidden.
Financial implications	There are no direct financial decisions arising from publication of the Director of Public Health Annual Report. The report describes a range of existing programmes and interventions, including activity supported through external grant funding such as the Crisis & Resilience Fund (CRF). Shropshire's CRF allocation is identified within the annual report as £3.7 million per year for 2026-29. Any future financial implications arising from implementation of specific programmes or recommendations would be considered through the appropriate governance and decision-making arrangements.
Climate Change Appraisal as applicable	The report recognises the relationship between poverty, climate change, housing quality and energy costs. Lower-income households can have less capacity to adapt to extreme temperatures, flooding and increased energy costs, while Shropshire's older housing stock and reliance on off-grid heating contribute to fuel-poverty risks. Existing activity highlighted in the report includes energy advice, affordable warmth and energy-efficiency programmes, boiler upgrades and retrofit activity. Improving household energy efficiency can therefore

<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">contribute both to reducing financial hardship and supporting environmental objectives.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Where else has the paper been presented?</td><td>System Partnership Boards</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Voluntary Sector</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Other</td><td>Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet, ICB (after HWBB)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

• Crisis & Resilience Fund (CRF) – Delivery Plan Proposals - Date</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) or your organisational lead e.g., Exec lead or Non-Exec/Clinical Lead

• Cllr. Ruth Houghton, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health
• Rachel Robinson - Corporate Director – Population, Wellbeing and Neighbourhoods (DPH) /Deputy Chief Executive</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Appendices

• Appendix A: Shropshire Director of Public Health Annual Report 2026: “More Than Money: How Poverty Shapes Lives, Places and Health”
• Appendix B: DPH Annual Report – presentation
• Appendix C: “Worrying about Money?” leaflet – Digital version</td></tr>
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