Shropshire Council

Health & Wellbeing Board
19th November 2026

Shropshire's Director of Public Health Annual Report 2026

More Than Money: *How Poverty Shapes Lives, Places and Health*

A review of rural poverty, hardship, and the normalisation of deprivation

- Introduction & foreword
- A profile of Shropshire
- Chapter 1 – What is Poverty & what causes it?
- Chapter 2 – How are we tackling poverty in Shropshire - Current Activity
- Chapter 3 – Summary & Recommendations
- What support is available?
- References
- Appendix 1. Citizens Advice Shropshire – Food Basket Research
- Appendix 2. Glossary

Acknowledgements and thanks:

Acknowledgements to the fantastic team who have led and supported the development of this report, in particular: **Phil Northfield, Mark Trenfield, Wendi Shepherd and Ellen Tracey**

With Special Thanks to: **Jackie Jeffrey, Catherine Devaney and Citizens Advice Shropshire**

Designed by: **Phil Northfield and Mark Trenfield**

Data sources: *This report utilises the most recently available published information from a variety of data sources, these are available on the council's website. References are listed at the back of this report.*

---

www.shropshire.gov.uk - If you would like this information in a different format, please contact **0345 678 9000**



citizens advice Shropshire

Poverty in Shropshire at a glance...

INFLATION

27.6% between Jan 2021 and Jun 2026

57.4%

live in rural areas in 2022 – 187,931 people. Rural areas account for 97.3% of Shropshire's land mass

12.8%

of households are in fuel poverty (18,500 homes)

16,000

households are in a negative budget

30%

households without a broadband connection (22)

36%

of households are in Transport Poverty

£2,210 lower gross average earnings per year than England average

68%

of children (1,865) achieved a good level of development before starting school in 24/25.

For children on FSM this is only 43.7% (135 children)

23.4%

of children (12,249) in relative poverty after housing costs in 2025

14%

of households are in food poverty/food insecurity

(2021 UoS Study)

Only 63%

of residents can access a GP practice within 15 minutes using public transport. Over 88,993 can't

£113.90 average weekly transport spend in rural Shropshire Vs £76.20 in Urban areas

Hidden hardship affects health

- Poverty can affect both working and non-working or retired households and remain hidden in apparently prosperous communities.
- **57.4%** of residents in Shropshire live in rural areas.
  - Travel costs, limited and harder to access services and lower than average wages can make everyday life harder. This is referred to as a **"Rural Premium"**
- **12.8%** of households in Shropshire face fuel poverty, around **18,500** homes, compared with 9.9% across England (*2024 data*).
  - Around 24,000 properties are off-grid. The average EPC rating in Shropshire is a grade D.
- Approximately **14%** of households are in food poverty/food insecurity.
  - The county has 14 foodbanks.
- Around **16,000** households are in a negative budget *(their costs exceed their income)*
- Cold homes, food insecurity and money worries can damage physical and mental health.

How Shropshire is responding

Immediate help

- The Crisis & Resilience Fund allocates £3.7m a year to Shropshire for 2026–2029.
- It combines crisis and housing payments with community support and advice.
- Heating Oil support payments to those on low-incomes.
- Localised, needs-based proposals from foodbanks and community venues & organisations across the county.
- Training for VCSE partners on what support is available and how to refer.

Longer-term support

- Citizens Advice Shropshire, Marches Energy Advice, Age UK Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Community Resource and other local partners help with benefits, debt, energy costs and applying for other support or entitlements.
- Internal family-based programmes, skills support and energy schemes can help to address underlying pressures.
- Coproduced delivery plans will listen to the voice of resilience partners and deliver a Shropshire-specific programme.

Earlier help and easier access

- The report calls for earlier support for families, stronger referral pathways, fuel poverty and food insecurity support programmes and better access to good work.
- A **“No Wrong Door”** approach aims to connect people to appropriate help, wherever they first ask.
- Community Hubs, Welcome Spaces, Foodbanks, outreach and phone options can help people facing rural or digital barriers.
- For help with money worries: Shropshire Council’s Cost of Living Help or **worryingaboutmoney.co.uk/shropshire**.
- In-person advice can be found at Shropshire Local.

Conclusion/ Closing Summary

This report has shown that poverty remains one of the greatest challenges to health and wellbeing in Shropshire. It affects people of all ages and backgrounds, influences outcomes across the life course and contributes significantly to health inequalities.

Whilst Shropshire is often viewed as an affluent county, this report has highlighted the hidden nature of hardship and deprivation that exists within our communities. Rurality, housing costs, transport barriers, fuel poverty and rising living costs can combine to create significant challenges for residents and families.

There is no single solution, but there is a clear direction. By giving every child the best start in life, improving financial resilience, tackling fuel poverty, supporting good quality employment and strengthening our communities, we can reduce the impact of poverty and create opportunities for people to thrive.

Our challenge now is not simply to respond to poverty when it becomes visible, but to prevent it wherever possible, identify it earlier and work collectively to address the wider conditions that allow it to persist.

Together, we can help ensure that **everyone** in Shropshire can achieve better outcomes.

Poverty is preventable and not inevitable. While no single organisation can solve poverty alone, every organisation has a role to play in reducing its causes and consequences.

Over the coming years, partners across Shropshire will continue working together to tackle both the symptoms and root causes of poverty, reducing health inequalities and supporting residents to live healthy, independent and fulfilling lives.

What are the next steps?

- 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

What support is available?

Where do I get help?

Where?	What?
Click here	**Cost of Living Support** including: • Crisis & Resilience Fund • Council Tax Support • Blue Badges • Free School Meals • Holiday Activities & Food • Library Cards • Bus Passes • & more...
Click here	**Citizens Advice Shropshire** Advice, guidance and support: • Debt advice • Budgeting • Advocacy • Income Maximisation • Consumer rights • & more...

Where?	What?
Click here	**AgeUK Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin** Advice, guidance and support for older people: • Income maximisation • Benefit advice • Social care • Financial Assessments • & more...
Click here	**Marches Energy Advice** Advice, guidance and support: • Debt arrears • Grant schemes • Tariffs • Home upgrades & EPC • & more...

Or call Shropshire Local on **0345 678 9000** or visit in person at **one of their many locations**.

Can't get online?

Shropshire Local

Shrewsbury:
Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, England SY3 8HQ
Mon to Fri:
09:30 – 17:00

Ludlow:
Ludlow Library, 7-9 Parkway Lane, Ludlow SY8 2PG
Mon to Fri (no Weds):
09:30 – 17:00

Oswestry:
Free public phone access, regular library opening times apply.

Resources



Produced by the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) – and informed by Shropshire Council, Citizens Advice Shropshire and CRF Partners. Leaflets were produced on available support and shared in key locations across the county.

https://worryingaboutmoney.co.uk/shropshire

Cost of living help | Shropshire Council

Refresh and rebranding of cost-of-living support available through Shropshire Council, simplifying access and promoting all opportunities including, but not limited to the Crisis & Resilience Fund.

