Barriers to Accessing Healthcare

Practical & geographic

Distance, transport, rurality, unsuitable times, work and caring responsibilities.

Financial

Travel, parking, childcare, prescription or dental charges, and loss of income.

Information & health literacy

Unclear or inaccessible information, language, limited understanding of services or entitlements.

Digital

Digital exclusion, inaccessible platforms, account creation or identity checks, and digital-by-default routes.

Service availability & navigation

Long waits, limited capacity, fragmented pathways, referral thresholds and difficulty knowing where to go.

Physical, sensory & communication access

Buildings, equipment, sensory environments, communication support and reasonable adjustments for individuals with intellectual or physical disability.

Social & cultural

Stigma, cultural relevance, social norms, isolation, competing priorities and limited support.

Trust, experience & discrimination

Previous poor experiences, fear, confidentiality concerns, racism, ableism or other discrimination.

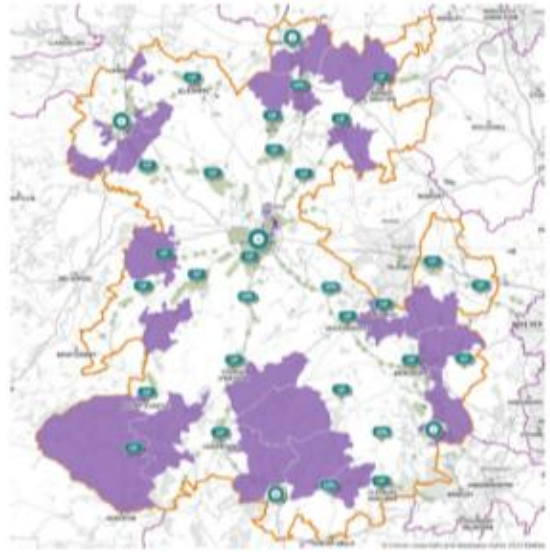
Key point: barriers are not simply “patient choice” or “non-attendance”. They often reflect a mismatch between people’s circumstances and how healthcare is designed or delivered.

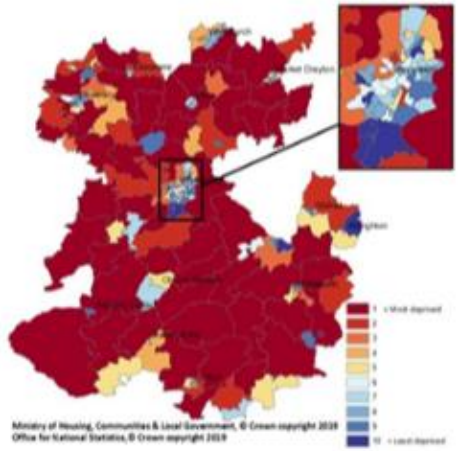
How the Council with TWIPP partners are tackling barriers to access

- Live Well Hubs
- Family Hubs
- Independent Living Centre and Autism Hub
- Here to Help and Healthy Hearts Bus
- Vaccination education and pop up clinics
- Health Checks
- Neighbourhood Health

Transport and Access Exclusion

Map 5: Access to General Practice within 15 mins





Source: IMD 2019 and SHAPE

Access to services provides a particular challenge in rural areas. The index of multiple deprivation contains a measure for the physical and financial accessibility of housing and key local services. In 2019 Shropshire has an average score of 25.4 and is ranked 68th most deprived local authority in England out of a total of 317 lower tier local authorities. In addition, Map 5 specifically identifies those who cannot access a GP practice within 15 mins using public transport

Challenges

Rural populations in Shropshire may experience barriers to accessing health care services due to distance, transport and waiting times. Data identifies that 37% of Shropshire's population cannot access a GP within a 15-minute journey on public transport. This may be more detrimental for more deprived populations which make up 1.6% of the total 37% figure.

Opportunities and Action

Transport and access to services features in several strategic plans within Shropshire, which include actions to implement. Collective plans include:

- The Shropshire Inequalities Plan
- The Shropshire Plan – Healthy People
- Shropshire Health and Wellbeing Board's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- The Local Transport Plan (LTP4) which considers and prioritises the mobility needs of people, places, and activities in promoting and maintaining healthy, equitable and sustainable communities. This includes the Local cycling and walking infrastructure plan (LCWIP) to encourage and enable sustainable physical activity in daily life for all population groups
- Integrated Care Strategy priority – Primary Care access, Urgent and Emergency Care access, inequality of access to preventative care.