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***Healthwatch Central  
Bedfordshire (HWCB) exists  
to make health and care  
services work for the people  
who use them.***

Everything we say and do is informed by our connections to local people. Our sole focus is on understanding the needs, experiences and concerns of people of all ages who use services and to speak out on their behalf.

We are uniquely placed as a national network, with a local Healthwatch in every local authority area in England.

Our role is to ensure that local decision makers and health and care services put the experiences of people at the heart of their work.

We believe that asking people more about their experiences can identify issues that, if addressed, will make services better.

***We believe no one should  
be afraid to speak up...  
because your opinion is as  
good as anyone else's.***

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# Message from Dave Simpson, our Vice Chair



***This past year has been particularly challenging for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) but also productive and full details of our activities have been set out in the following pages.***

2016/17 has been a year of considerable change for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. We said a sad goodbye to Robin Smith, our Chairman who retired in October, and at the same time our Communications and Engagement Officer, Steve Nash, also left us because of ill health. In such a small team this was quite an upheaval. However, this gave us the opportunity to restructure and, after receiving confirmation of our funding for the following year, we recruited two new members of staff. We also engaged the services of a local contractor to further develop our website, social media and Feedback Centre. The progress and achievements this year are due to the hard work and commitment of this

staff team together with the assistance of our very active Board and Volunteers.

Particularly impressive is HWCB's 'Young Healthwatch' Group which was born out of our successful Health & Wellbeing Event for Young People in February 2016. Young Healthwatch continues to develop, albeit with its own challenges, but the enthusiasm to highlight the experiences of young people when accessing health and social care services remains.

Following the advent of the NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STP), HWCB is working in collaboration to ensure you are represented on each of the five STP priorities promoting the voice of the public as plans progress.

Passing on the views of local residents to our partners and championing reports and recommendations on various local decision making Boards is of paramount importance to HWCB. A strong collaborative approach with our local partners has ensured that they help to promote and support our work.

We are the consumer champion for health and social care in Central Bedfordshire. Our dedicated team of staff and trained volunteers take this role seriously, listening hard to people in Central Bedfordshire to understand what matters most to them and using this information to influence what is happening locally so that you get the services that meet your needs. Whether this is through our outreach work, Enter & View programme or our Listening Events, our team led by our CEO, Diana Blackmun is here to empower you.

*Dave*



# Message from Diana Blackmun, our Chief Executive Officer

*Welcome to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Annual Report 2016/17. This year has been very demanding but also exciting and this report sets out our achievements.*

Our small team of dedicated staff, with support from our Trustees and fantastic Volunteers, generated over 4,000 comments last year. Positive and negative comments about specific health and social care services are logged and fed through into reports that help service providers and the decision makers understand how the experiences of local people can help to influence change and improve the quality of care received.

Through our Newsletters, e-bulletins, social media and our website, we have also kept thousands of people up to date on the issues that matter to them.

Particular focus of our work this year has been Domiciliary Care, Falls Prevention, Carers and the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service. We are also playing a prominent role in the new Sustainable Transformation Plans for Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. HWCB launched a successful event in January 2017 to raise awareness of the plans and to encourage local residents to share their views.

Our engagement activities have included Listening Events, Volunteer Training Days and an outreach project visiting various towns across Central Bedfordshire, working in partnership with the local authority and many voluntary organisations.



Everything that we do is based on discussion and feedback from Central Bedfordshire residents who present us with the evidence to challenge providers and commissioners to improve their quality of care.

We have developed a clear strategy and operational plan for the year ahead which includes 'Hidden Voices' designed to reach the seldom heard to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to tell us about their experience of health and social care services in Central Bedfordshire. This gives us an excellent opportunity to achieve even more next year, particularly as we have now reached our full staffing levels.

Finally, a big thank you to the Board for their continued support, our Volunteers for all their hard work and commitment, and to the staff team.

*Diana*

# Highlights from our year

Our reports have tackled issues ranging from Domiciliary Care to Falls Prevention



We've spoken to over 150 Carers about their experiences and the challenges they face'



Total engagement across all social media channels is over 99,000



Our volunteers help us with everything from office support to outreach activities



We've met hundreds of local people at our community events



We've visited many local services including Care Homes and GP Services



# We believe that...

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...no one should be afraid to speak up...because your opinion is as good as anyone else's.

+ No one should ever be afraid to criticise the care they receive

+ No one should ever be afraid to share their ideas for how things could be better

+ No one should ever be afraid to report abuse

+ No one should ever be afraid to change their mind about treatment

+ No one should ever be afraid to question decisions made about you

+ No one should ever be afraid to say they are confused and need more information about services.

Our job is to make sure that the service user's voice is always heard in Central Bedfordshire and that this enables patients and service users to remain at the centre of services in Central Bedfordshire.



# Who we are

We know that you want services that work for you, your friends and family. That's why we want you to share your experiences of using health and care services with us - both good and bad. We use your voice to encourage those who run services to act on what matters to you. We are uniquely placed as a national network, with a local Healthwatch in every local authority area in England.

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## Our vision

To enable local people to have their views, ideas and concerns represented as part of commissioning, delivery, design and scrutiny of health and social care services.

In other words HWCB acts as the eyes and ears of health and social care service providers, picking up on things that work well for people, and the elements of services that cause dissatisfaction and discomfort. We are also a 'smoke alarm' - able to communicate urgently when we can see that things are going badly wrong.

Our vision is that we will provide a safe and dignified way for local people to speak out and give them easy access to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

Our videos have been watched 4000 times



Our website has had over 35,000 page views



We will provide the information and education that people need to base a choice on, because not everyone is the same; we need to provide a variety of ways for local people to be listened to and involved in sharing their stories.

## Our priorities

### Is Central Bedfordshire a wonderful place to live and work?

We know that Central Bedfordshire Council and the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group work really hard to get services right for their residents, however residents have a responsibility to help as well.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is a means for fulfilling that responsibility. We approach you in many different ways to get your views on the services provided. Our job is to create a credible representative and influential public voice in the system to make sure your voice is heard.

If the decision makers do not hear from you they will have to make decisions without you. They do not want to do that and we doubt that you want them to do that either so our overwhelming priority is to make sure that at every reasonable opportunity the voice of patients and service users is heard both collectively and individually.



**Our Healthwatch Team (left to right); Susan George - Research & Insight Officer, Clare McNulty - Digital Development Officer, Dee Dillistone - Engagement & Volunteer Co-ordinator, Diana Blackmun - CEO, Jane Kelly - Digital Communications Officer**

## How can you help?

You have a voice, so .....

- + Tell us about your experience, positive or negative, of a health or social care service.
- + Tell us about any issues or concerns you have about services in your area.
- + Give us some good news about services - what has worked well for you?
- + Participate in our on line surveys.
- + Look out for our outreach activities in your local area.
- + Take part in our 'Listening Events'.
- + Join one of our focus groups and give your opinion on service delivery.
- + Come along to one of our Board meetings to learn more about the work we do.
- + Be a film star - let us film you telling your story

## People who have contacted HWCB

Our contact with the public has grown year on year. 2016/17 saw an all time high number of contacts at over 23,000.

People contacted us for many reasons, including:

- + Complaints;
- + Signposting;
- + Information and advice;
- + To become a volunteer;
- + To take part in surveys and questionnaires

Over 58,000  
people saw our  
tweets



## Who we are

### So what are we asking you to do?

- + Visit our website at [www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)
- + Become a member of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to receive information, advice and guidance about health and social care services and receive our Newsletter to read about opportunities of how you can get involved in our work. Being a member does not place any pressure on you to do anything!

Our contact with the public has grown year on year. 2016/17 saw an all time high number of contacts at over 23,000

We've reached  
over 14,000 people  
through Facebook



- + Become a volunteer with HWCB if you do want to get more involved and help us to increase the number of people who are speaking out.
- + Keep up to date with our Feedback Centre on the website to see what other people have told us about your local services.
- + Tell your friends and family about us and encourage them to have their say.
- + Take a look at the Enter & View reports published on our website - if you are searching for a service provider these local inspections tell you what we have found. Likewise if a friend or family members are using these services you might want to add to what we have said or recommended.



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# Your views on health and care

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## *Your views on health and care*

### ***Listening to local people's views***

When we work with people to listen to their views and experiences we use lots of helpful and different techniques including:

- + Visiting local communities using the 'Rave Bus', inviting our partner organisations to join us to collectively gather local people's experiences of health and care services and to identify needs.
- + Visiting local community groups in village halls and in sheltered housing schemes to listen to the views and experiences of older people accessing health and social care services in Central Bedfordshire
- + Visiting local schools and colleges with Young Healthwatch Members to listen to young people talking about the challenges and issues they face whilst engaging with health professionals.
- + Visiting local support groups and parent/ Carer groups to listen to people who may be disadvantaged or vulnerable due to their physical or mental health.
- + Encouraging people via social media, who may live outside of Central Bedfordshire but who use services within our area, to give their feedback about local services using the Feedback Centre on our website at [www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)

### ***What we've learnt from visiting services***

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out 'Enter & View' visits.

Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care

services to find out how they are being managed and to make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families, patients and Carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP Practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.

Enter & View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation - so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Enter & View authorised representatives are as follows:

- + Dave Simpson (Enter & View Lead)
- + Catherine Davies
- + Stephanie Lillie
- + Pete Biernis
- + David DeButts
- + Linda Grant
- + Den Fensome
- + Linda Harrison
- + Nicola King

All our Enter & View representatives are fully trained to visit a range of NHS and social care premises to talk to staff, patients, Carers and other service users about their experience.

## ***Programme of visits 2016/17***

During 2016/17 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire carried out nine Enter & View visits to services in our area (for a full list, including a report of each visit go to [www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk))

## ***Quality Alerts***

Each Enter & View report is shared with the local authority, Central Bedfordshire Council, the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, the Care Quality Commission and Healthwatch England. The final reports, of which many include the Provider response, are then published on our website.

Since the beginning of 2016 we are working even more closely with the Care Quality Commission as we are now sharing a national organisational structure. We hope to continue to be at the forefront of improvements in service provision.

A particularly challenging Enter & View for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire was carried out in August 2016 which involved visiting three GP surgery sites which had amalgamated into one GP Practice.

## ***Impact & Outcomes***

### **Residential Care:**

One of HWCB's visits to a residential care home in Central Bedfordshire was undertaken as a result of some concerns raised with regard to dignity and respect afforded to residents at the home.

HWCB had previously visited the care home in April 2015 and, following the visit, had made several recommendations

to the Manager and staff of the home to improve the residents experience of care delivered within the home. The care home had made a limited response to HWCB's recommendations and a further visit was scheduled.

In September 2016, HWCB's Enter & View representatives spent a day at the home, talking to staff, residents and their relatives and friends, in addition to observing activities at the home.



Despite management assurance that the home delivers a 'person centred approach' to care, several areas of concern were noted during the visit and identified in HWCB's final report which was shared with the local authority, Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission. Concerns included a lack of dignity and respect shown to residents in respect of the home's laundry service, personal care and food choices. Several recommendations were highlighted within the report to address the concerns and other observations made on the day.

## *Your views on health and care*

HWCB were subsequently invited to attend a Provider Performance Meeting, held by the local authority, with the Manager and owner of the home, to summarise HWCB's report and to feedback any additional concerns.

The Manager and owner of the home welcomed HWCB's report and were very open to suggestions and recommendations to improve dignity and respect for their residents living at the home. Both detailed plans that were in the process of being actioned, to improve the resident's experience of care. HWCB agreed to carry out an additional visit to the home, later in the year, to observe the progress and effect on residents of these changes.

### **GP Practice:**

A particularly challenging Enter & View for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire was carried out in August 2016 which involved visiting three GP surgery sites which had amalgamated into one GP Practice. This necessitated utilising a large team of authorised representatives.

HWCB representatives spoke with staff and patients at all three surgeries and observed activities at the Practice.

The visit identified issues concerning specific services offered at the Practice but which covered three sites. Not all services were available at each site which caused confusion and logistical challenges for patients getting to outlying sites for certain clinical appointments.

Concerns raised by patients relating to a lack of public transport to the outlying surgeries was a main issue although being forced to use the 'sit and wait' service for a non-urgent appointment was equally as frustrating for patients.

In HWCB's report, which was shared with the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission, we recommended that more engagement with patients and patient groups is undertaken so that patient opinion is taken into account when making decisions about services offered and the appointment system used by the Practice.

HWCB also recommended that the Practice consider utilising a project which aims to educate patients to ensure each patient can access an appropriate health care professional (not necessarily a GP) in order to alleviate pressure on their appointments system. HWCB worked with another Practice in Central Bedfordshire last year on a similar project to gain an understanding of patient expectation of services provided by a modern GP Practice, ultimately to improve the patient experience. HWCB indicated we would be happy to work with all three surgeries in a similar way.

The Practice acknowledged receipt of HWCB's report which was subsequently published on our website.

HWCB has since worked with other GP Practices in Central Bedfordshire and identified that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to an efficient appointments system. However, HWCB intends to continue to highlight patient experience at GP Practices to ultimately influence and improve access to health care professionals across Central Bedfordshire.

**"I really enjoy working with the Healthwatch team and supporting them when engaging with the public during their outreach programme across Central Bedfordshire."**

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Roger Grimes, HWCB Volunteer

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# Helping you find the answers

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## Helping you find the answers

### **How we have helped the community access the care they need**

During our outreach events, which took place across various towns in Central Bedfordshire, we spoke to over 3,300 people giving advice and guidance about local services; how to access them; helping them to navigate the health and social care system; signposting people to statutory or voluntary organisations offering support; and listening to their experiences of health or social care services and investigating further where needed.

Our outreach activities are listed below:

- + 'Just Ask 2016/17'.
- + 'Listening Events 2016/17'
- + Programme of visits to local Community Groups and Support Groups

### **Older Peoples Festival 2016**

The Festival for Older People is facilitated and delivered by HWCB, in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council and Aragon Housing Association residents Group 'ROAR', as a local initiative designed to celebrate the life of Older People and the contribution they make to society. The theme for the Festival held in October 2016 was 'Taking a stand against ageism'.

Each year we bring together local services for older people to give residents and their Carers lots of opportunities to tell us what they need and want from these services, to try new things and pick up some new ideas to help older people live independent, healthy and happy lives.

This year's Festival included the following :

- + 47 exhibitors displaying information, advice and guidance about local services.

- + A wider range of themes and services.
- + An entertainment programme including armchair exercises and memories through music
- + 16 Volunteers guiding people to helpful services
- + A 'Wellbeing Room' for older residents to have their blood pressure taken, a relaxing massage and also a manicure.

### **Other ways we help the community access the care they need**

This year Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has been involved in a number of different ways to help the local community:

- + By taking part in various procurement streams for new services representing the voice of the people who use these services.
- + The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of the local area enabling both the community and service providers to understand local peoples most pressing health and social care needs and what support should be targeted as a priority.
- + This year the Beds, Luton and Milton Keynes Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STP's) has become an important focus of attention for local people as it may mean a significant change in services for local people. We have facilitated meetings for the public and the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group supporting members of the public to find a safe and dignified place to be listened to and their views to be taken into account.



## Helping you find the answers

- + Provided valuable material to the National Audit Office regarding local Learning Disability services.
- + In the midst of growing concerns nationally around mental health services, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire played a key role in the development and planning of local service improvements through our continuing membership of the Mental Health Recovery Partnership Board.

“When I retired I was worried about having nothing to do, but volunteering with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire helps me to fulfil my time and give something back whilst trying to help others. It’s good to know that a little help can make all the difference to others”.

Michael Hyde, HWCB Volunteer



## Case Study: “Just Ask” 2016

At the Just Ask stand in Biggleswade in August 2016, HWCB staff were approached by a couple of local residents who wanted to talk about their concerns for their adopted/fostered son, who was with them that day, and who had recently turned 18.

Their son has Autism and the support he had been receiving as a child had stopped as he is now considered an adult. As foster parents they were receiving support to care for their son but this was also withdrawn due to his adult status. They stated a lack of support, help or advice from a social worker regarding the ongoing support of their adopted son through the next stage of his life, and did not know where to go next for information. They were also very depressed at being told that they cannot now refer to themselves as his adoptive parents because he is over 18 and an adult in his own right. HWCB staff listened to their story and referred them to a member of the Fostering and Adoption team and a Council Officer, who had joined us that day, who gave them information on who to speak to at the Council, including direct contact details, regarding transition services (child to adult) to support them and their adopted son.

This couple were very appreciative of the information given and were grateful that the Just Ask project was sited in Biggleswade that day as they were becoming more and more anxious about getting the support they badly needed. After the event, HWCB staff contacted the couple to ensure they had received the support they needed and to provide further details of local services that could support their son as he begins adulthood.

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# Making a difference together



## *Making a difference together*

### **How your experiences are helping influence change**

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire use all the information and feedback you give us. Positive and negative comments about specific health and social care services are logged and fed through into reports that help service providers and the decision makers understand how the experiences of local people can help to influence change and improve the quality of care received.

We have collated information and made recommendations to providers to help improve services in the following areas:

- + Domiciliary Care
- + Rehabilitation & Reablement
- + Patient Hospital Transport
- + Carers
- + Falls Prevention
- + Residential Care Homes
- + GP Practices

#### **We would like your feedback**

Tell us about your experience by visiting the Feedback Centre at [www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)

### **Working with other organisations**

We work closely with other organisations so that we can influence the shape and quality of local health and social care services.

We share all our 'Enter & View' reports with the Care Quality Commission, Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Healthwatch

England, NHS England, the Providers and Commissioners of local services, and the public. All our Enter & View reports are published on our website.

### **Working with Healthwatch England**

#### **Contributing to national conversations**

As part of the Local Healthwatch network we continue to support Healthwatch England as the national consumer champion, in its wider engagement.

In 2016/17, we have actively circulated requests for intelligence to our members and networks. We have also contributed to numerous conversations coordinated by Healthwatch England and these include:

- + The National Healthwatch Communications Network
- + The National Healthwatch Conference
- + The Eastern Region Local Healthwatch Network
- + The Yammer social media network for all local Healthwatch.



## ***Working with local Providers***

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has maintained and improved its relationships with local service providers this year, receiving appropriate and timely responses to our formal requests for information. Specifically issues such as:

- + Phlebotomy Services
- + Public Health Checks
- + Response to Quality Statements
- + Patient Transport
- + Equality & Diversity Policies
- + Continuing Healthcare
- + Hospital & GP Complaints Procedures
- + Respite Services
- + Autism Services for Children & Young People
- + Older Peoples Services
- + Occupational Therapy
- + Hearing Loops

## ***How we have worked with our community***

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has promoted and supported the involvement of local people in the commissioning, provision and management of local health and care services in the following groups and forums:

- + Special Interest Groups
- + Pharmaceutical Committees
- + Mental Health Groups
- + Patient Participation Groups
- + Locality Boards
- + Partnership Boards
- + Public & Patient Participation Groups
- + Voluntary & Community Groups

“Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is a recognised key stakeholder and a valued Health and Wellbeing Board Member. Representatives from Healthwatch have contributed agenda items for discussion and consideration at Board meetings. Presentations and reports produced by Healthwatch, which are developed following in-depth engagement with patients and service users, provide a unique perspective and insight into how well local health and social care services are operating.

Both commissioner and provider organisations utilise learning from the information provided by HWCB to help improve services for Central Bedfordshire residents. Over the next year the Health and Wellbeing Board looks forward to receiving further reports and presentations from Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire on important issues as it is vital the Board constantly utilises feedback and input from patients to improve services”

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Cllr Brian Spurr, Chair, Health & Wellbeing Board, Central Bedfordshire Council

## Making a difference together

### Working with the Health & Wellbeing Board

We play an active role in numerous forums responsible for planning and delivering health and social care across Central Bedfordshire; the Health and Wellbeing Board is one of the most important.

The Health & Wellbeing Board has a duty to encourage integrated working between health, care and other public services in order to improve wellbeing in Central Bedfordshire. It is also responsible for the delivery of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Our representative on the Board in 2016/17 continued to be our Chief Executive Officer, Diana Blackmun. As a member of the Board we have been able to contribute to discussions about improving the health and wellbeing of our local population.

### Volunteers

We have over 25 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Volunteers who are trained in specific roles to help us carry out our statutory duties.

We have nine 'Enter & View' Volunteers who receive in house Enter & View training which includes Confidentiality & Data Protection and Equality & Diversity. Volunteers also regularly attend Safeguarding training.

In this way we enable our volunteers to take up specific roles in particular forums, for example, procurement, service improvement, stakeholder recruitment panels and interviewing and signposting the public.

**“Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire ensure that the voice of the public is heard and acted upon. We have a very good relationship with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and find their work to be invaluable in assessing the service user experience. We regularly consult with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to request consumer views or when designing new service specifications. We listen to what they have to say and use the public voice to shape, inform and influence service delivery and design”.**

Julie Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health & Housing, Central Bedfordshire Council



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# It starts with you



## *It starts with you*

### *It starts with you*

*We have explained the many different ways we listen to people who use local care services - but what do we do with the information you give us about your experiences and your needs?*

**We .....**

- + Publish details of all our consultations, surveys and reports that affect local health and care services;
- + Tell you about other opportunities to have your say on health and care surveys and consultations;
- + Film local people having their say and talking about their health or social care experience and we place the films on our website so everyone can view them;
- + Record your feedback and log the information on our system. We then share this information anonymously with people who make decisions about our health and care services. We may use quotes from your experiences when we do this.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire regularly attends a special meeting of the local decision makers in health and care called 'The Health and Wellbeing Board' of Central Bedfordshire Council.

The following are some of the things you told us that we fed back to the decision makers:

### *You Said...*

- + You contacted us with concerns about a local school that appeared to be hindering the mother's efforts to allow her transgender child to live life as a girl and who were more concerned for the wellbeing of the parents of other students than that of the young person attempting to transgender. Inequality concerns were highlighted in addition to the young child's health and wellbeing. It was felt that such inequalities; being segregated during her school life, could lead to mental health issues if not addressed now.
- + You told us that some GP Surgeries in Central Bedfordshire were no longer providing Phlebotomy Services, particularly those patients whose blood tests had been requested by hospital consultants. This had caused particular concern to a number of patients who struggled to access transport to their local hospital or who were too physically frail to make the journey for regular blood tests. This issue was not just about the detrimental effect on patients but overwhelming already over-stretched acute services. In addition, according to a front line priority of the STP's, the plan is to 'bring care closer to home' which is unlikely to come to fruition unless patients can access the services they need from a local GP Practice.

***“On arrival at the surgery I was told they would not be able to do my blood test and I had to go to the hospital which is miles away. This surgery is going backwards; I feel forgotten and defeated”***

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Older Patient in West Mid Beds Surgery.

- + Many complaints were raised from the public and service users about the Non-emergency Patient Hospital Transport Service. Issues related to late arrival times, not being collected and inadequate vehicles. Further difficulties highlighted included the inability to get through to the new contact number and a lengthy waiting time or queue system which caused many people to give up trying.
- + You asked questions about Public Health Checks and wanted to know why invitations had not been sent out by those surgeries required to do so for eligible patients, in line with NHS Guidelines.
- + Issues were raised from Carers who struggled to access information about support for Carers including details of how to access respite care they so badly needed, which was affecting their own wellbeing and ability to continue to provide care.
- + You contacted us with concerns about the withdrawal of Continuing Healthcare and the support needed to assist with the appeals process.
- + You raised concerns about the long waiting times for an appointment with Community Mental Health Teams within Central Bedfordshire; poor service delivery and inadequate follow up.
- + You raised concerns about Domiciliary Care; in particular the difficulty in securing a local agency to provide care if living in a rural location and the inconsistency of Carers.
- + Young People told us that they find it difficult to approach health care

professionals as they feel intimidated and lack the confidence to express their feelings.

- + You told us about your dissatisfaction with treatment received at Acute Trusts and the lack of care and understanding shown to relatives, particularly following bereavement.
- + You raised concerns about the lack of clear information about hearing loops at Bedford Hospital.
- + You told us about communication issues with some staff at the Luton & Dunstable Hospital who were described as ‘indifferent and rude’ to relatives on particular wards.

“I enjoy being a HWCB volunteer as I get to meet lots of people from all different backgrounds, it’s nice to know that I can possibly make a difference albeit big or small. It is fun and a really nice atmosphere working with the HWCB Team and we fit in very well”.

Leanne Fitzsimons, HWCB Volunteer



Christine Shepherd, HWCB volunteer

## *It starts with you*

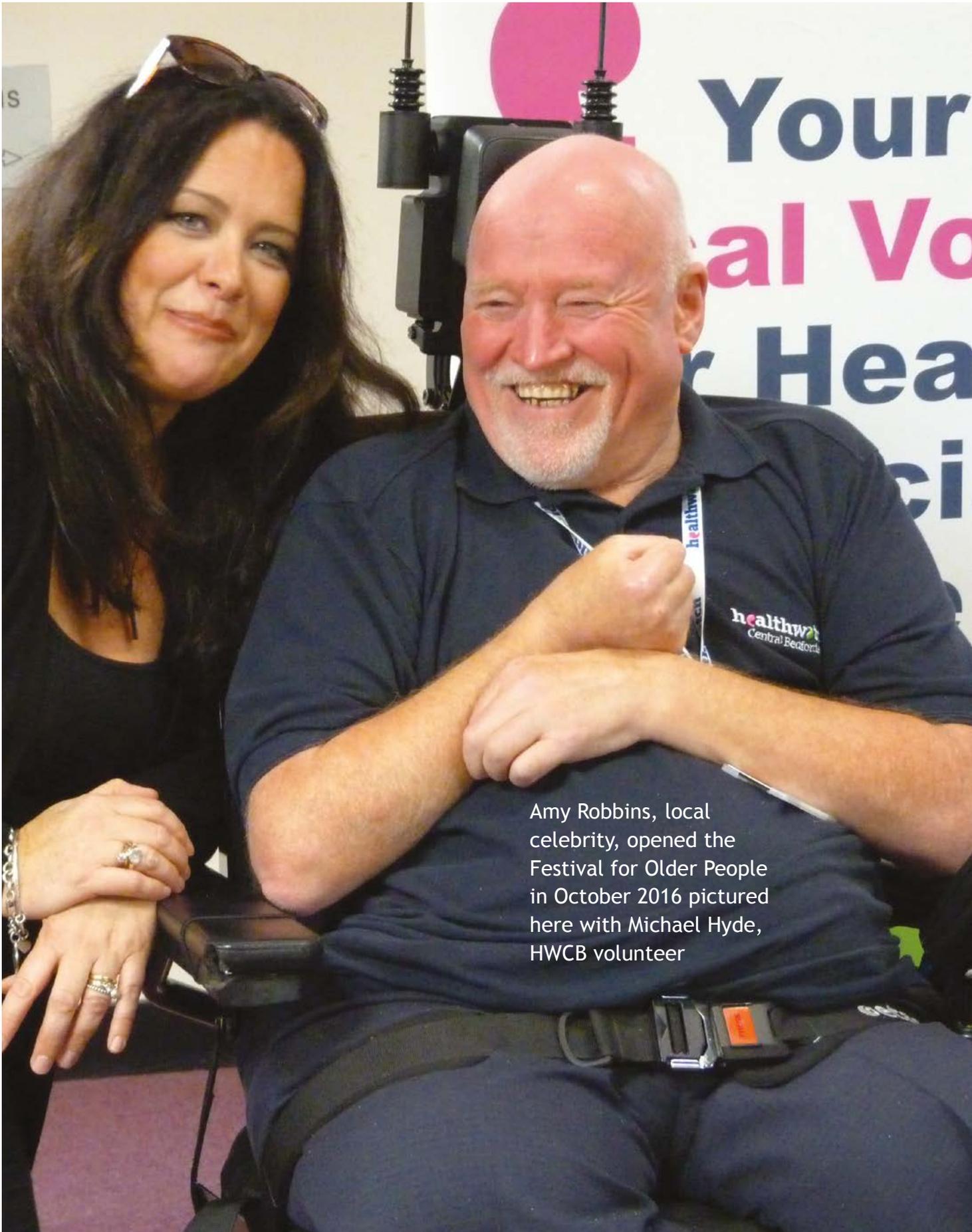
### **We did...**

- + We contacted the Equality & Diversity Manager at Central Bedfordshire Council to highlight the concerns raised about inequalities experienced at a local school and its effect on the young student's wellbeing and her family. HWCB stressed the importance of following national guidance for schools relating to their legal duty to support transgender pupils. The Manager at CBC was very supportive and the school has since addressed the issues raised and are now working together with the parent to ensure the student is treated with dignity and respect. The parent was also delighted that she was finally being listened to.
- + Following your concerns about the withdrawal of phlebotomy services from some local GP Surgeries, we directly contacted the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) to raise your concerns, and to highlight the challenges faced by frail and vulnerable patients particularly given recent issues raised about the Patient Transport Service. The BCCG confirmed they are currently looking into how phlebotomy services are commissioned from GP Practices and hope to have a solution agreed and implemented in the summer, 2017.
- + In response to your complaints concerning the Non-emergency Patient Hospital Transport Service, HWCB conducted a snapshot survey during May/ June 2017 to gather additional feedback from patient's regarding their experience of the Private Ambulance Service (commissioned by the BCCG).

The results are currently being analysed and a full report, including our recommendations to improve the quality of the service for the benefit of patients will be presented to the BCCG and published on our website, [www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk) in July 2017.

- + We contacted Public Health at the local authority with regard to your questions raised about receiving an invitation for a Public Health Check. Public Health confirmed that GP Practices are encouraged to promote the Health Check with promotional resources supplied by them including posters in waiting rooms and via the waiting room screens.

GP Practices are commissioned by Public Health and receive payment for not only delivering each NHS Health Check, but the contract also provides financial incentives for inviting eligible patients and delivering above quality thresholds. Practices are given targets for the number of eligible patients to invite and the number of NHS Health Checks to deliver. We have subsequently highlighted the need to 'invite' eligible patients for a health check with GP surgeries and also met with Public Health to work on a joint promotion to encourage more people to find out if they are eligible to receive a health check.



Amy Robbins, local celebrity, opened the Festival for Older People in October 2016 pictured here with Michael Hyde, HWCB volunteer

*It starts with you*



Amy Robbins with Katelyn Johnson, young Healthwatch volunteer.

- + We invited Carers across Central Bedfordshire to talk about their experiences, the challenges they face as a Carer and the support they feel they need, on film. Many Carers gave a moving account of their caring responsibilities, how it affects their lives, including their ideas for how they can be better supported. In addition to publishing on our website, the film was shown to CBC's Health & Wellbeing Board (HWBB) and the BCCG's Governing Body as well as to other stakeholder and community groups.

We received a positive response and all felt it was a powerful and convincing way of highlighting the needs of Carers.

Suggested actions were:- to include the film as part of the training given to Social Workers; to include Carers as part of the procurement process to help design services that they want and need and better communication of support available for Carers from GP's with a strong commitment to ensuring that information is consistent across all GP surgeries. The film can be viewed at <http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/videos/>

- + Following issues and concerns raised with regard to the withdrawal of Continuing Health Care (CHC), we met with the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's CHC team to understand how relatives and patients can be better supported through the withdrawal of funding and the appeals process, highlighting the concerns raised with us. This was a very positive and informative meeting and the CHC team were open to ideas to better support family members, with our help, to manage the appeals process.

- + In response to your complaints raised through a variety of methods, including our Feedback Centre, about the quality of service delivered by Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT) across Central Bedfordshire we raised your complaints with the Clinical Group Manager at East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) who are responsible for delivering mental health services in Bedfordshire. In Biggleswade CMHT your feedback was initially shared widely with the team and then they met to discuss and reflect on the feedback to take forward how they can improve the service provided by Biggleswade CMHT. Discussions also took place to determine how the team can make sure that the voice of the service user and carer is heard to influence service change and improvement.

The team have since organised meetings with service users in addition to setting up a 'Working Together Group' held in a community venue, with the Care Co-ordinators taking a focussed approach to inviting service users and Carers to attend. We subsequently helped to promote and encourage service users and Carers to attend the meetings through our website and newsletter, to share their story directly with the team to ultimately help improve the quality of the service. In addition we directly contacted the CMHT in Leighton Buzzard to express your concerns and anxieties in relation to long waiting times for an appointment. The team were supportive and we were able to secure earlier appointments for service users in urgent need.

## *It starts with you*

“I felt I must write to you because of what you did for me to secure an earlier appointment with the CMHT in Leighton Buzzard and to thank you for all your support”

Mental Health Service User, Leighton Buzzard.

- + To learn more about the concerns you raised regarding Domiciliary Care we worked with Central Bedfordshire Council’s Contracts and Commissioning Team to design a confidential postal questionnaire for the users of council purchased Domiciliary Care services. The Council wanted to give local residents, who currently use these services, the opportunity to shape the way in which domiciliary care services are provided in the future.

The analysis of our findings highlighted positive responses and satisfaction with the care services that people receive in their own homes, however there were areas of concern where a significant minority of respondents identified serious dissatisfaction. The outcome of the survey and our recommendations will be used to inform the Council’s procurement processes for Domiciliary Care providers, for both the Council and local residents. In addition to the survey we also invited service users to talk on film about their experience of receiving domiciliary care in Central Bedfordshire.

The films are available to view on our website at <http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/videos/> and were shown to commissioning officers and Councillors at Central Bedfordshire Council to inform their commissioning processes.

Through our work with Young Healthwatch, we developed a supportive tool for young people to use on their first independent visits with a healthcare professional which includes a body map to help show areas of pain or discomfort and a template form to use prior to and during their appointment with a healthcare professional. This tool will shortly be available on our website for young people to download. More information about the work of young Healthwatch can be found on p34

- + We contacted the acute trusts to highlight the complaints you raised with us about the treatment you or a family member received during their hospital stay. We have worked with the Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALs) at the hospital to highlight your dissatisfaction with the way in which the hospital handled your complaint and we have also written directly to the Chief Executive in a case where a relative died unexpectedly, to highlight the concerns of family members, prior to and following the death of their relative. In this instance the hospital have recognised that when things do not go as well as you would expect that learning is identified and action taken to prevent the situation from happening again. In the cases we highlighted to the acute trusts, following their investigations, they identified learning in particular areas to ensure these situations did not occur again.



## *It starts with you*

- + Following information received with regard to a lack of a hearing loop at Bedford Hospital we contacted Audiology at the Hospital who confirmed there is a hearing loop system on the 4th Floor and that patients can access this from all over the hospital grounds. However we were advised that there is little information available at the hospital to advise patients of this. We have therefore recommended that the Hospital improve their communication to highlight how hard of hearing or deaf patients can access the hearing loop.
- + In response to complaints received about staff attitude at the Luton & Dunstable Hospital, we initially discussed options with patients and family members and also signposted to the Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALs) at the hospital. Knowing the correct channel to pursue their complaint gave patients and relatives the confidence to fully raise their issues and concerns, with the knowledge that we would support and assist where necessary.

“I work in Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire’s office doing finance and admin tasks. There are lots of different jobs you can volunteer for to suit all. You could be talking to people on our ‘roadshows’, helping with telephone surveys or do some research on line”

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Nicola Kidby, HWCB Volunteer



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# Young Healthwatch

*Learning, sharing  
experiences, getting  
involved...*

‘ Working with Young Healthwatch has enabled me to develop and progress my own skillset, at the same time as helping and encouraging the members of Young Healthwatch to express their views and opinions. I passionately believe that young people should have a voice, and through Young Healthwatch be able to influence the quality of Health and Social Care services provided for young people’.

Katelyn Johnson, Young Healthwatch member



## Young Healthwatch

HWCB's Young Healthwatch group meet on a regular basis to discuss ways to engage with their peers, talk about their experiences and to explore ways of engaging with the decision makers of health and social care services for young people. Group meetings are always lively and interactive, empowering young people to express creative ideas to influence and improve the quality of care and wellbeing services provided for young people living in Central Bedfordshire.

Since the launch of Young Healthwatch, many young people have joined other volunteers and staff at our 'JUST ASK' events held throughout the year, engaging with young members of the public to talk to them about their health and social care experiences.



Other activities include intergenerational work supporting staff and volunteers at our Festival for Older People in October 2016, helping to guide older people to various organisations exhibiting at the Festival whilst learning about their experiences of health and social care.

Members of Young Healthwatch recently met with surgery staff at a local surgery in West Mid Beds to talk about young

people's experience of visiting healthcare professionals. This productive meeting led to a better understanding from professionals of the challenges faced by young people and a number of actions were discussed to better support young people when accessing their GP Surgery.

In addition, young people wanted a supportive tool to use on their first independent visits with healthcare professionals; they suggested the following:

- + A body map to help show areas of pain or discomfort;
- + A template form, designed to write down their symptoms and thoughts prior to and during their appointment;
- + Prompts for asking questions.

This tool will be published on the Young Healthwatch page of our website to enable young people to download with ease. We will seek ongoing feedback from those who have used the tool to ensure it continues to be effective.

## Young Healthwatch plans for 2017

- + A dedicated Young Healthwatch website, developed by young people for young people - currently in development;
- + Young Carers talking on film explaining how caring affects their wellbeing;
- + Young people sharing their experience through online activity such as blogging;
- + Young Healthwatch ambassadors visiting local schools encouraging other young people to get involved and have their say about local health and social care services.

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# Our plans for next year

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## Our plans for next year

### Future Priorities

By 2013 the population of Central Bedfordshire had risen to 264,500. This is estimated to increase by 12.4% to 287,300 by 2021 which is higher than the projected increase for England overall (9%).

The number of people registered with a Central Bedfordshire GP Practice as at March 2017 is 283,648.

The increasing growth in the number of older people will place greater demands on health and care services in all areas of Central Bedfordshire and although Central Bedfordshire consistently performs above the average for England in terms of health and wellbeing indicators, significant inequalities exist across the county in terms of the health and lifestyle behaviours which lead to health problems for people.



The scale of challenge across health and social care is not underestimated, and a system wide, collaborative, critical friend approach is how Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire seeks to measure the impact of services on patients lives, and improve their experiences as they access, or seek to access, services across Central Bedfordshire.

### Future challenges

Potential gaps between people's expectation of health and social care services, and what is achievable, may present significant challenges over the coming years. It is our job to work towards a better fit between people's aspirations and their current experience. Engaging to ensure a compassionate, patient-centred approach across services is likely to be a key role for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, from using patient experiences to influence transformation and remodelling, to more specific monitoring of current activity being delivered day to day.

### What Next?

Britain now faces unparalleled change; another general election, Brexit and concomitant changes to all health and social care legislation.

Therefore the consumer's voice throughout this process of change is critical in order to safeguard the care that residents need.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recognises its role and responsibility over the next 12 months to support and engage with the population of Central Bedfordshire as effectively as possible.

We are committed to having a pivotal role in both the BLMK Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) and the Right Care initiative and also contributing wherever possible to better integration between health and social care.

We plan this year to look at initiatives around self-care and social prescription because they are the two emphasis for the Better Care Fund.

## Forums to which we are committed so far this year:

- + Public Voice Partnership
- + STP Wide Prevention Champions
- + Digitilisation Programme Board
- + Right Care Special Interest Groups
- + Right Care Delivery Group
- + Joint Co-commissioning Committee
- + Integrated Commissioning & Quality Committee
- + Health & Wellbeing Board
- + BCCG Governing Body Meeting
- + Safeguarding Board
- + JSNA Steering Group

## Self-Care

The priorities above will hopefully result in answers to system wide changes to the way we deliver health and social care. We also need a cultural change to our services, one that supports people to better manage their health.

Self-Care is an area that is being increasingly recognised in national policy and guidance. This is an area that we need people to talk to us about so that we can relay to service providers the difficulties that people may have around self-care and the suggestions that people might have that would help more of us to care more productively for our own health needs, preventing illness or accidents.

We have made a good start with our Falls Prevention work as a result of which we hope to be able to identify work that individuals will be happy to undertake in their own homes to make them safer and also the support they would value to do this.

## Hidden Voices

Hidden Voices is an approach to ensuring everyone has access to having their voice heard and everyone has the opportunity to talk to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and tell us about their experience of services, including their care and support needs.

A programme of activities will be developed targeting the 'seldom heard' or 'hard to reach' groups in our local community such as the Homeless and the Gypsy and Traveller Community who may need support to voice their views and needs. We will also help this group to understand how to access and make best use of their local health and social care services.

Information gathered will be shared with local decision makers to ensure services are delivered that meet the needs of diverse communities.

**“Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has been a valued partner in the work of the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group over the past year. They have provided support and challenge to strengthen the patient focus in the services which we commission. I thank them for their efforts and look forward to another productive year”.**

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Alvin Low, Chair, Governing Body, BCCG

## Our plans for next year

### Listening Events

We will continue to develop our Listening Events across Central Bedfordshire to provide us with further opportunities to listen to the public, so that information can be added to the feedback already received to support improvement, or to drive up the quality of health and care services.

### Filming

We have produced several films during 2016/17 to showcase the experience of service users and Carers and will continue to do so in 2017/18. Having produced a film showing Adult Carers, our plans this year include a film specifically for Young Carers telling their story to highlight the challenges they face juggling their caring responsibilities with school/college and seeing their friends, and the support they feel they need.



All the films we produce are published on our website and shown to the Providers and Commissioners of health and social care services to inform their work and encourage other people to speak up and have their say.

### Surveys and questionnaires

We will continue to develop surveys and questionnaires in response to feedback received from the public about services delivered locally such as Mental Health, Phlebotomy services and Social Care.

We will also continue to work collaboratively with our partners to ensure the success of our priorities to ultimately improve service quality.

## Diary 2017/18

Some of our diary entries for 2017/2018 are as follows:

### Surveys scheduled

June July	Falls Prevention Non-emergency Patient Hospital Transport
August September	Self-Care - initiatives around self- care and social prescription
October November	Mental Health and Recovery Services
December January 2018	Learning Disabilities

## Diary 2017/18

Some of our diary entries for 2017/2018 are as follows:

### Engagement events scheduled

March to October	'Just Ask' 2017
June to December	Listening Events 2017
July to August	Young Carers Film
August to December	'Hidden Voices' targeting 'hard to reach' groups
September to January 2018	Stakeholder Forums
October	Festival for Older People 2017

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# Working with our local authority



### Case study

In September 2016, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire were invited by the Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing at Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), in agreement with Bedford Borough Council (BBC), to undertake a telephone survey of current and previous users of the Reablement and Rehabilitation service. The outcome of the survey was used to inform a joint Local Government Association Peer Review of the service. The Review was commissioned by CBC and BBC in partnership with South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT) and the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG), to understand current service delivery.

HWCB staff, with the help of our volunteers, contacted 131 users of the service to collate the views and opinions of users who had experienced the six week programme of Reablement / Rehabilitation, using a questionnaire. The questions were designed to examine the impact of the service taking account of user views including how they accessed the service, the type of support received, satisfaction levels and any arising issues within the remit of a telephone survey.

### Key findings

Following analysis of the results of the questionnaires, a report was prepared and submitted to the Councils which included key findings from service users as follows:

- + A high level of service users told us that they were satisfied with the Reablement and Rehabilitation services and in general the service was well received and valued.
- + Service users told us that the majority of staff involved in the service were well liked and appreciated, although the consistency of Carers/therapists was important to people.

- + A high percentage of service users told us that they had not been able to achieve their goals.
- + A minority of service users told us they had not understood the purpose of the services received.
- + Some service users had unrealistic expectations of the service and many people were confused about the discrete nature of the service.
- + Many service users wanted equipment to be removed when they no longer needed it and viewed the Council / NHS as wasteful for not recycling.

### Our recommendations

Our suggested actions to enhance service delivery were also listed in the report and included the following:

- + To rebadge / rebrand the service in a way that suggests its function is distinct from other long term community support services (such as domiciliary care) to avoid confusion for the user.
- + A short film to be prepared using positive rehabilitation experiences to properly introduce patients to the service.
- + Consideration to be given to stills of exercises or tasks.
- + Investigation is undertaken to compare service user outcomes with referral points and pathways.

Central Bedfordshire Council included our report in their Peer Review which helped them to better understand service delivery and user views of the current service. This will assist the Council in focusing on offering a good, accessible, consistent experience for the customer regardless of how they access the Reablement and Rehabilitation service.

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# Our people

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## *Our people*

### ***Involving People in our decision making***

We enable local people to have their views, ideas and concerns represented as part of the commissioning, delivery, design and scrutiny of health and social care services. In order to achieve this, the Board, its Chair and Directors, will undertake to provide a coherent, practical and cost effective framework. Within this framework both paid staff and volunteers will be supported to gather and collate the information required. The Board will not use or allow their personal experiences to be promoted over and above the experiences of the rest of the resident population.

The Board will ensure that the organisation is cost effective with a balanced budget at the end of each financial year and will take responsibility to ensure the continued development of its members to implement its purpose. It will embrace succession planning to assure the future sustainability of the Board and the organisation within its resources.

### ***How we involve the public and volunteers***

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire value the support of the public and the work of our volunteers. We have continued to involve the public and our volunteers throughout 2016/17 in our work and to undertake various roles. We involve and amplify people's voices in the following ways:

- + Board Meetings in public
- + HWCB Annual General Meeting
- + HWCB representation at Stakeholder meetings, Locality Boards and Committees

- + Our activities, engagement events, meetings, reports and policies are published on our website and shared with public organisations.
- + We take responsibility for capturing system-wide learning from complaints feedback and consumers personal experience.
- + We ensure that marginalised groups are listened to through our work with young and older people.
- + Through our Feedback Centre we identify local trends and preferences.

### ***Our Board of Directors 2016/17***

Our Board is comprised of up to eight Volunteer Directors, which includes two Youth Parliament Members and our Chief Executive. It is our Governing Body and oversees our strategic and operational activities. Its overall responsibilities are to:

- + Establish our vision, mission and values
- + Set company policy, strategy and structure
- + Monitor progress towards achieving our objectives
- + Seek assurance that systems are robust and reliable
- + Promote a positive culture

All Board meetings are held in public and minutes and agendas for the meetings are posted on our website. [Visit http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/tabbed-page/](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/tabbed-page/)

In October 2016, our Chair, Robin Smith retired and we are currently looking to recruit a new Chair.

In March 2017, we announced the appointment of a new Director to our Board, Miriam Coffie.

We will be seeking to recruit Directors in 2017/18. If you have experience working in the following areas we would be interested in hearing from you:

- + Legal
- + Data Research
- + Human Resources

Call 0300 303 8554 or email [info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)

## ***HWCB Board of Directors 2016/17***

Robin Smith - Chair (retired October 2016)  
Dave Simpson - Vice Chair, Co-Chair, Trustee and 'Enter & View' lead  
Wendy Toomey - Co-Chair and Trustee  
Catherine Davies - Director, Trustee and Volunteer Lead  
Linda Grant - Director and Trustee  
Gill Hiscox - Director and Trustee  
Miriam Coffie - Director and Trustee

## ***Youth Parliament Members 2016/17***

Tegan Ingram  
Paige Taylor



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# Our finances



## Financial Report

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire receives funding directly from Central Bedfordshire Council to deliver the statutory functions of a local Healthwatch for Central Bedfordshire. We have been advised by our local authority commissioner that we received all of the funding allocated by the Secretary of State for Health to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. This equates to approximately £140,000 per annum.

The table below shows Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire statement of activities for the year ending 31st March 2016.

INCOME		£
Funding received from local authority to deliver local Healthwatch statutory activities		140,000
Additional income		15,214
Total income		155,214
EXPENDITURE		
Operational costs		36,787
Staffing costs		86,212
Office costs		15,758
Total expenditure		138,757
2013/14 Underspend B/F		45,426
2014/15 Overspend*		(8,575)
2015/16 Overspend*		(4,341)
2016/17 Underspend^		16,457
Balance carried forward		46,550

\* The term overspend in this context is used to refer to expenditure against existing Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire assets and not our annual contract from commissioners, hence how we are adding qualitative value to this contract.

^The Underspend during 2016/17 relates to staffing changes.



# Contact us

## Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire registered office:

- + Capability House  
Wrest Park  
Silsoe  
Bedfordshire  
MK45 4HR

## Contact details of the local authority holding Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire contract as at 31.03.17

- + Central Bedfordshire Council  
Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands  
Bedfordshire  
SG17 5TQ

### Get in touch

- Phone number:** 0300 303 8554
- Email:** [info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)
- Website:** [www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)
- Twitter:** @healthwatch\_cb
- Facebook:** Facebook - Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
- You Tube:** Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

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We will be making this annual report publicly available by 30th June 2017 by publishing it on our website and circulating it to Healthwatch England, CQC, NHS England, Clinical Commissioning Group/s, Overview and Scrutiny Committee/s, Health and Wellbeing Board and our local authority.

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you require this report in an alternative format please contact us at the address above.

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**‘The Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group work closely with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and value their input. They ensure that the patient voice is paramount in our decision making processes, and assist us to disseminate information out to communities. They also have a seat on our Governing Body and we are grateful for their involvement and commitment’.**

**Jane Meggitt**  
Director of Communications & Corporate Affairs, BCCG