

Autumn Newsletter 2017

healthwatch

Central Bedfordshire

Healthwatch is the independent consumer champion created to gather and represent the views of the public

Festival For Older People 2017



Seated Pilates session at the festival

Read more on Page 2/3

JUST ASK 2017

We completed a hugely successful "JUST ASK" tour of Central Bedfordshire which ended in October 2017.

Go to page eight to read about how we have listened to the views and experiences of local people and supported them to access health and social care services that meet their needs.

Tell us how you feel about any health or social care service in Central Bedfordshire - it has never been more important. You can rate and review services on our website.

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www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/services



Now in its 5th Year, the Festival for Older People took place on 6th October at the Rufus Centre in Flitwick, attracting over 300 visitors from towns and villages across Central Bedfordshire.

The event is designed to be both informative and entertaining with over 40 stalls providing advice and guidance about social care, health and housing services available to support older people. There were also a select number of stalls selling crafts, jewellery and traditional sweets.



Various workshops covered everything from Armchair Pilates and Mindfulness, to Skincare. In the main hall 'Elvince' entertained the crowd.

The event was organised by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council, Aragon Housing Association and Circle MSK and had Health and Wellbeing as the theme. Health checks including Blood Pressure and Diabetes were popular on the day and there was a range of useful medical and practical information.

Feedback from the Exhibitors



At the Circle MSK stand where Tom, a physiotherapist, was on hand to discuss conditions and concerns with passing visitors, Sarah Cottam commented: *"I'm absolutely astounded at how many people have come through today, it's a fantastic event. It's been great for me to realise that not so many people knew who we were. So, we can work on that. I've come away with some really good ideas on the things that we can do as a company to support the local community as well, so that's exciting for us"*

For voluntary organisations like 'Carers in Bedfordshire', it's a chance to access important groups of people who may not think to ask for help. *"A lot of people might think that when they're older and they're looking after their husband or their wife that they're muddling along and looking after each other. They might not recognise that what they're doing is a caring role and that there is support and groups and other things out there for them"*





What did the visitors think?

Both the event organisers and the exhibitors received a lot of positive feedback from visitors on the day. Many people were return visitors and have said that they would recommend a future event to others.

For visitor, Pat (pictured below), she was able to combine her health check with a relaxing hand massage: *“I’ve been to the healing gentleman and I was delighted to have my diabetes checked. It’s very low, so I’m going to live! I’m fit and healthy, isn’t that lovely”* It was Pat’s first time at the Festival for Older People. So, would she recommend to her friends?



Pat replied, *“Yes, I should tell them to come next year definitely. Perhaps we’ll hire a bus!”*

The Festival For Older People is rapidly becoming an eagerly anticipated annual event with visitor numbers growing year on year.

The event provides a ‘one stop shop’ of valuable advice and information, especially for people who are less mobile or those less inclined to seek assistance.

Listen to the views of some visitors and exhibitors in our audio clips:

<https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/festival-older-people>

A full report on the festival including comments from both visitors and exhibitors will shortly be available on the Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire website.

Take part in the Musculoskeletal (MSK) Survey

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire are conducting an independent patient experience survey of the MSK service delivered across Bedfordshire, to understand current service delivery from the patient’s perspective, with a focus on their current and/or previous experience including how they accessed the service.

We invite you to complete the short survey, giving us your views on the type of service you have received or are receiving.



This information will help the service provider, Circle MSK, to improve services and better meet patient expectations. Visit our website to complete the survey:

<https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/view-leave-feedback/musculoskeletal-msk-services-survey>

or call the office on 0300 303 8554.





How a charity helped one of our volunteers



Michael Hyde is a much valued volunteer for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. Here is Michael's story about how a local charity helped him to turn his idea into reality.

"I have been sitting or lying down for over 12 years and I wanted to be able to be upright. I am a double leg amputee; my posture and diaphragm were becoming folded and uncomfortable, especially when eating, so I thought standing would help.

After talking to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire about my thoughts I was signposted to Remap. I contacted the organisation and Martin, one of their engineers, visited me and listened to my idea. He said he would be able to make my idea a reality.

A few weeks later Martin returned with a custom made piece of equipment. After a bit of tweaking it worked, making me able to stand upright on my bed.

I am sure the equipment will eventually help improve my posture. It really is a nice feeling to be able to stand. "



www.remap.org.uk

Remap is a national charity that works through local groups of skilled volunteers.

They help disabled people achieve independence and a better quality of life by designing and making equipment for their individual needs.

Ways we've connected with you online

Visit our website or connect to us on social media and keep up to date with the work of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

We also regularly post both local and national news items and events on health and social care issues that we think will be of interest to you.

Details of our social media accounts can be found on page 8.

We tweeted 155 times between August and October and got 31 new followers



We posted 106 times and our Facebook posts reached 12,454 people



We received 8,974 page views on our website



Our Videos were viewed 143 times





Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Meetings

Annual General Meeting - 8th December 2017 - 10-12noon
Board Meeting - 12th December 2017 - 6-7.30pm

Everyone is welcome to attend the next two Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire meetings. Both the Annual General Meeting and the Board Meeting will be held at The Rufus Centre, Flitwick.

Come along and find out more about the work of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

Our guest speaker at the board meeting on 12th December will be Michelle Bradley, Director for Bedfordshire Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.

Michelle will talking about how East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) are making changes to Bedfordshire Community Mental Health Services to deliver a more sustainable model of community services.

Volunteer with us!

Ever thought about volunteering?

Volunteers are at the heart of everything we do here at Healthwatch – our volunteers really do make a difference!

You do not need to make a regular time commitment as we have many opportunities for occasional support.

Whether it's accompanying us at outreach events, attending meetings on behalf of Healthwatch, being a member of the board of directors or even stuffing goody bags. We are sure you will find something that takes your fancy!

Three reasons you should become a Healthwatch volunteer:



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Proposed Hospital Merger

In September, the Trust Boards of Bedford Hospital NHS Trust (BH) and Luton and Dunstable University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (L&D) announced plans to merge both hospitals and form a single NHS Foundation Trust.

The hospital boards have now begun work on the Full Business Case that is required as part of the approvals process.

Both trusts have advised that stakeholders, patients and staff from both hospitals will be engaged throughout the process and that staff will play a key part in developing and shaping the Business Case content.

The Full Business Case is due to be submitted in December 2017 for formal approval under the NHS Improvement Approval Process with an aim of establishing a joint board and single organisation by April 2018.

The Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) has announced dates for public meetings to be held at both hospitals and in Central Bedfordshire. Book your place to find out more about the proposed merger. Check our website for dates and details on how to book your seat.

You can find further information about the merger on both hospital websites:
www.bedfordhospital.nhs.uk &
www.ldh.nhs.uk

Healthwatch BLMK STP Survey

Between June and September, local Healthwatch in the Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes area (Healthwatch Bedford Borough, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, Healthwatch Luton & Healthwatch Milton Keynes) ran a snapshot survey to gather information on how much people know about the Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes (BLMK) Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP).

346 surveys were completed in total, 64 of which were responses from Central Bedfordshire residents.

The majority of respondents were not aware of the plans for the BLMK STP and only a small minority had attended one of the consultation events. Most people felt they had no opportunity to comment on the plans.

Almost everyone who completed the survey said that they would like to know more about the plans and want to be kept up to date with developments.

We will post all BLMK STP progress reports on our website and keep all our newsletter subscribers updated by email so please get in touch if you want to be added to our mailing list:

info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

Or you can keep up to date with developments by visiting the BLMK STP website:

www.blmkstp.co.uk/





Meet one of our dedicated volunteers

"Hello, my name is Linda Harrison and I am retired. I wanted something interesting to occupy some of my spare time so thought volunteering would be a good idea. I found Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire through Diana, the CEO, who I had previously volunteered with at Central Bedfordshire Council.

Volunteering with Healthwatch is ideal for me as it involves working in the health sector, getting out & about and talking to people. I am able to help people find the right path to follow and assist them getting any help they might need.

I find this work very interesting and have also gained a lot of knowledge about health and social care for the older generation, me being one of them!"



(Linda with fellow volunteers Michael Hyde & Brian Scott talking to a visitor at The Festival For Older People 2017.)

Volunteer Engagement Day

The second volunteer engagement event of 2017 took place on 31st October at The Rufus Centre in Flitwick. This event was a great opportunity for all our volunteers to spend time together, exchange views and experiences.

We were pleased to welcome a member of staff from Healthwatch Luton plus two of their volunteers. They presented an overview of the work of Healthwatch Luton, their volunteering activities as well as the training and support provided to their volunteers.

Vice Chair, Dave Simpson, talked about his role as the Enter & View champion and Linda Harrison, one of our regular volunteers, gave a heartfelt talk about her volunteering experiences.

Volunteers are an integral part of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and we recognise and value the huge contribution they make. If you are interested in volunteering for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire please get in touch.





Spotlight on a Local Charity

The Forum - Busy Getting Stronger



The Forum - Busy Getting Stronger was founded following the tragic loss of two local young people to suicide.

Their families aim to raise awareness of mental health issues among young people in the Ampthill/Harlington area and to inform them about the support that is available to them and their families.

Every six months they hold open meetings for young people, families, professionals and volunteers. Topics discussed include suicide, self-harm, anxiety, eating and mental health and the effects of social media.

Whilst they are not a counselling service, they have developed a good network of contacts to help people onto the next step. Several members work for local organisations, such as Mind BLMK and Chums.

Richard Luscombe, founding member, says *“There's always more we could do. So please get in touch if we can help you, if you want to come to our meetings, or if we can speak to your school or group.”*

Contact Richard on Facebook - [TheForumBGS](#), Twitter [@TheForumBGS](#) or by email at theforumbgs@yahoo.co.uk

Follow Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire on Social Media

Stay up to date with our activities in the local community and join in our conversations.

We will let you know what local organisations and community groups are doing throughout Central Bedfordshire as well as keep you informed about nationwide health & social care initiatives and issues.



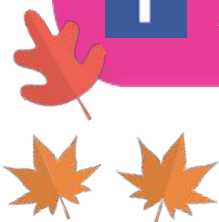
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'Just Ask' 2017

The 'Just Ask' project completed its 2017 road trip in Houghton Regis on 3rd October. This year we took the RAVE bus to eight towns across Central Bedfordshire and spoke with hundreds of visitors.

The 'Just Ask' team answered queries on a wide variety of topics ranging from information requests on specific health conditions to questions about council tax banding.



We would like to extend our thanks to the many representatives from all our partner organisations and to all the wonderful volunteers who made this project possible.

Ways we've helped at 'Just Ask' this year include:

- ❖ A carer visited the stand to ask if any additional support was available for their parent, who had suffered a stroke, had other health difficulties and who also felt lonely and isolated. The carer was already in touch with Carers in Beds and very happy with the support received. The carer was given several information leaflets and was introduced to a representative from Age UK. They were also advised to contact the Older People's team at Central Bedfordshire Council to request a re-assessment following a change in health needs.
- ❖ A number of concerns were raised about the proposed hospital merger. We were able to reassure visitors that any changes would not be immediate and that Healthwatch will be liaising closely with both hospitals and the Clinical Commissioning Group throughout the process to ensure communication is timely & transparent for patients.

We also get to hear plenty of good comments and praise for local services - *"Luton and Dunstable saved my life last year, I can't praise them enough"*

The Just Ask project has helped to provide us with a barometer of how people feel about the quality of health and social care services they received during 2017.

Listening Events at Priory View, Dunstable

Priory View is an independent living development that is home to 83 apartments for residents aged 55+.

As part of our Listening Events programme we visited Priory View twice in September where we spoke with local people and listened to their stories and experiences of accessing health and social care services in Central Bedfordshire.

Many of the people that we spoke to were not very mobile so they found it helpful that we were able to visit them on site and were keen to share their personal experiences. We answered questions on how to request hospital transport, signposted people to specific support services and provided information and guidance on local services.



Did You Know?

A Minor Eye Conditions Service has been launched in Bedfordshire



The Minor Eye Condition service is for if you have a recent problem with your eyes, such as sore eyes, red eyes or visual disturbance.

You can be assessed and treated by the local Minor Eye Conditions Service (MECS).

This is a free NHS service for patients registered with a GP in Bedfordshire and is available from a select number of local opticians.

So, what is a Minor Eye Condition?

- ❖ Red eye or eyelids, dry eye, or gritty and uncomfortable eyes
- ❖ Irritation and inflammation of the eye
- ❖ Significant recent sticky discharge from the eye or watery eye
- ❖ Recently occurring flashes or floaters
- ❖ Ingrowing eyelashes
- ❖ Recent and sudden loss of vision
- ❖ Foreign body in the eye

An appointment will normally be required, so remember to telephone first.

Click on the following link to find out more about the service and which opticians are participating in the scheme - <https://www.bedfordshireccg.nhs.uk/page/?id=5294>

We Need Your Feedback!

You can make a difference. Share your experience of health or social care services in Central Bedfordshire and help us make services better for your community.

You can leave your views on local services on our website:
<https://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/services>

or on our Facebook feedback widget

or call 0300 303 8554





What happens when people leave hospital and other care settings?

This Healthwatch report outlines where important steps have been made towards improving the discharge process for patients. Key findings include:

- ❖ People still don't feel involved in decisions or that they have been given the information they need
- ❖ People continue to experience delays and a lack of co-ordination between services
- ❖ People feel left without the services and support they need after leaving hospital

Download the full report at <http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/people-share-their-experiences-leaving-hospital>

Life in a care home, what's it really like?

Between January 2016 and April 2017, local Healthwatch staff and volunteers across England visited 197 care homes to find out what day to day life is really like for many of those living in care homes.

The resulting report, Life in a care home what's it really like, outlines key next steps for care homes in how feedback can be used to identify a whole host of small, low cost changes that ensure all residents feel 'at home'.

Read the summary and download the full report at <http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/life-care-home-whats-it-really>

Home Care Services Report

This report analyses the experiences of 3,415 people, their families and front line staff across 52 local areas between August 2015 and June 2017.

Most people had positive things to say about their home care. However, there are areas where people's experiences could be improved.

Download the report and read responses from organisations across the health & social care sector at <http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/Home-care-services-what-people-told-Healthwatch>

What do the numbers say about emergency readmissions?

As part of a broader investigation into people's experiences of leaving hospital, Healthwatch England has published new analysis of NHS emergency readmissions data.

Healthwatch England asked hospital trusts across England for a day-by-day breakdown of their emergency readmissions data for each of the last five financial years. New figures show that emergency readmissions to hospital have risen by a fifth since 2012/13.

Read the full report at <http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/nhs-needs-do-more-understand-why-people-are-returning-hospital-after-being-discharged>





If you would like this newsletter in another format please contact the office on 0300 303 8554 or email info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

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