



# Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Just Ask Report 2017

# *About Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire*

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is the local consumer champion promoting choice and influencing the provision of high quality health, social care and wellbeing services for all across Central Bedfordshire.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) has significant statutory powers to ensure that the voice of the consumer is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services. HWCB engages and consults with all sections of the local population so that a wide cross-section of views are heard, understood and acted upon. Everything we say and do is informed by our connections to local people and our expertise is grounded in their experience.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is one of three local Healthwatch in the County of Bedfordshire and belongs to a network of local Healthwatch. Healthwatch England leads, supports and guides the Healthwatch network which is made up of the national body and local Healthwatch across each of the 152 local authority areas in England.

Healthwatch is the only body looking solely at people's experiences across all health and social care. As a statutory watchdog our role is to ensure that local health and social care services, and the local decision-makers, put the experiences of people at the heart of their care.

**healthwatch**  
Central Bedfordshire

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# Introduction

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire was developed to give the people of Central Bedfordshire a stronger voice in influencing and challenging how health and social care services are provided within our area.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's (HWCB) key engagement programme, 'Just Ask', is now in its fifth year and has enabled many local people to share their experiences of services delivered locally. The valuable feedback and intelligence we receive throughout the programme is used to influence and challenge the commissioners who design services for local people, and the providers who deliver services, across Bedfordshire.

The main aim of the programme is to reach out to the general public within their local community, to be visible, approachable, and to give everyone the opportunity to talk directly to HWCB staff and colleagues from key local organisations.

As in previous years, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has worked in close partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), Aragon Housing Association and other key stakeholders, including third sector organisations and community social groups, to deliver the 'Just Ask' programme.

Staff and colleagues from partner organisations join HWCB to provide a wealth of information, which includes health, social care, housing and education, community safety, transport and much more. Staff and volunteers from Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire engage with local people to provide signposting and information and advice on services and support available locally. This enables the public to have a greater choice, make informed decisions and can also help resolve issues and concerns.

The RAVE bus (Rural Area Vehicle for Education) is a recognised 'brand' for 'Just Ask' and is hired by HWCB from Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC). We are supported by a skilled and committed driver who joins us at each event and helps to set the stage with awnings and signage. We site the bus in places where there is high footfall, such as supermarkets and market squares during the week, and the programme of events also includes fetes and carnivals at weekends.

In response to feedback from last year we invited a wide range of voluntary sector providers to join us on the bus (please see page 17 for a comprehensive list). In addition, staff from Central Bedfordshire Council, as one of the main sponsors for the programme, joined us at the majority of the events and further support came from a diverse number of services within the Council. Other staff from the council, who were unable to attend the events, worked behind the scenes to provide follow-up activity and updates after each event.



*Just Ask at Houghton Regis*



Staff and volunteers from a range of voluntary and community organisations joined 'Just Ask 2017' to promote their services and engage with the public. This year a number of new groups, including those linked to young people's health and wellbeing, and smaller local 'good neighbour' schemes came along and benefitted from interacting with people in their community.

The 'Just Ask' programme of events gave key partner organisations the opportunity to engage directly with the public, reach a much wider audience, and also enabled them to promote their programme of activity and consultations. For example, consultations with the public included Adult Mental Health Crisis Care promoted by Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, a research survey conducted by Kings Road Surgery Patient Participation Group and HWCB's questionnaire to understand more about the public's view of the recently introduced BLMK Sustainability and Transformation Plans.



*Spin the Wheel*

As part of the programme last year, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire introduced two popular initiatives for 'Just Ask 2017'. To promote the work of HWCB and encourage longer term engagement, we offered everyone who visited the bus the opportunity to 'Sign up and win'. This has greatly helped to add to our growing network of contacts and widen the audience for our communications.



*Just Ask at Flitwick Carnival*



*Just Ask at Amptill Gala*

At the Fetes and Galas visitors were invited to 'Spin and Win'. A coloured wheel with themed pictures for guessing the name of the celebrity pictured in the photo earned the winners a sweet treat reward. The wheel attracted a broad range of visitors and was particularly popular with younger people.



# Just Ask - at a glance

**Over 1440 visitors visited the Just Ask Roadshows**



**The event was supported by over 200 HWCB volunteer hours**



**Over 14 Organisations joined us this year**



**We visited 8 locations across Central Bedfordshire**



**102 staff, Volunteers and colleagues from key partner organisations joined us this year**



**Over 40 people signed up to receive our Quarterly Newsletter**





# Just Ask Summary

The planning for 'Just Ask' began in February, 2017. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's staff, volunteers and colleagues from our partner organisations met to evaluate the programme's outcomes from the previous year, to share ideas; to plan a draft timetable; and to research suitable locations for each event.

The publicity campaign included designing a poster to advertise the programme, which is widely distributed, and a digital promotional campaign which included all social media networks. This is completed at the early stages of the programme and continues throughout the season, all of which is key to ensuring that 'Just Ask 2017' is widely promoted to attract a large audience.

During 'Just Ask 2017' eight locations across Central Bedfordshire were visited; Dunstable, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Ampthill, Shefford, Leighton Buzzard, Sandy and Houghton Regis.

Where 'Just Ask 2017' was held in places that bordered neighbouring counties, people who visited Just Ask were given details of the local Healthwatch for their locality and signposted to services and organisations relevant to their local area.

Staff and volunteers from HWCB together with staff from Central Bedfordshire Council and other voluntary organisations were available throughout each event to talk with visitors, encourage feedback on consultations, signpost to other organisations or support groups, and to help with queries or concerns. Included in this report are details of each separate event within the Just Ask Programme. These show examples of case studies, highlight the kind of issues and concerns raised by local people and the outcomes that were achievable with the support of the 'Just Ask Team'. Please see pages 8 to 15.

The Just Ask programme is very popular with our partner organisations as it provides an effective and responsive means of engaging with the local population. This project has evolved into an effective network that is able to respond to issues or concerns that may otherwise go unheard or unresolved.

In addition to the Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire team, there will be representatives from Central Bedfordshire Council, Trading Standards, Skills for Life, local GP surgery Patient Participation Groups & Carers In Beds. Please come along & join us.

**JUST ASK...**  
Talk to us, we are listening

**JOIN US ON THE RAVE BUS 2017**

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, working in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council will be visiting an area near you to provide information, advice and guidance about social care, health, housing and additional services. We will be joined by our partner organisations and a wealth of local voluntary groups.

Please come along to any of the locations listed below to find out more about services available in your local area.

DATE	VENUE	TIME
Friday, 7 <sup>th</sup> April	Asda Supermarket Car Park Court Drive, DUNSTABLE LU5 4JD	9am-1.30pm
Friday, 26 <sup>th</sup> May	The Market Square BIGGLESWADE SG18 8AQ	9am-1.30pm
Saturday, 10 <sup>th</sup> June	Flitwick Carnival, Millennium Park, Dunstable Road, FLITWICK MK45 1HP	12noon-4pm
Sunday, 2 <sup>nd</sup> July	Ampthill Gala, Ampthill Park, Woburn Road, AMPHILL MK45 2HX	12noon-5pm
Sunday, 16 <sup>th</sup> July	Shefford Summer Fete, Hitchin Road, SHEFFORD SG17 5JA	12noon-5pm
Tuesday, 15 <sup>th</sup> August	The Market Square LEIGHTON BUZZARD LU7 1EU	9am-1.30pm
Friday, 15 <sup>th</sup> September	The Market Square High Street, SANDY SG19 1JA	9.30am-1.30pm
Tuesday, 3 <sup>rd</sup> October	Morrison's Supermarket High Street HOUGHTON REGIS LU5 5BJ	9.00am-1.30pm

Contact Susan George for more information  
Tel: 0300 303 8554 | Email: [susan.george@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:susan.george@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)

Logos for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, Aragon, ROAR, and Central Bedfordshire.



Twitter Post



# Just Ask - Dunstable

<b>Members of the public visiting the stand (approximately)</b>	234
<b>Venue Details</b>	Asda Supermarket
<b>Organisations Joining the Event</b>	Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) staff & volunteers CBC departments; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships &amp; Performance</li> <li>• Apprenticeships</li> <li>• Skills for life</li> <li>• Jobs Fairs &amp; training</li> <li>• Lifeline</li> </ul> Age UK Bedfordshire Disability Resource Centre Dunstable Good Neighbours Scheme Aragon ROAR representatives Macmillan Cancer Support
<b>Signposting (summary listing)</b>	MIND national information Carers in Bedfordshire for carers and the newly launched dementia service
<b>Number of Calls/Contacts we made following the Event</b>	Five
<b>Key Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health</li> <li>• Older peoples issues, including housing and activity information</li> </ul>
<b>Case Study</b>	
<p>A young lady recovering from an episode of physical ill health requiring hospitalisation, had concerns that her care and medication were interfering with her mental health medication and felt vulnerable at the hospital. She did not feel able to pursue anything at that time, but wanted information to look over and consider next steps</p> <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Contact details and an information leaflet about MIND BLMK and PoHWER were given. Also, an information leaflet for HWCB for support in the future if needed. Just over a month later the young lady got back in touch to let us know the information had been very helpful.</p>	



# Just Ask - Biggleswade

<b>Members of the public visiting the stand (approximately)</b>	190
<b>Venue Details</b>	Market Square
<b>Organisations Joining the Event</b>	<p>HWCB staff &amp; volunteers</p> <p>CBC departments;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships and Performance</li> <li>• Libraries</li> <li>• Apprenticeships</li> </ul> <p>Aragon Housing</p> <p>Age UK Bedfordshire</p> <p>Stotfold Patient Participation Group</p> <p>Carers in Bedfordshire</p> <p>Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC)</p> <p>Disability Resource Centre</p> <p>Macmillan Cancer Support</p>
<b>Signposting (summary listing)</b>	<p>Specialist health information</p> <p>Highways</p> <p>CBC transport team</p> <p>Care Quality Commission</p>
<b>Number of Calls/Contacts we made following the Event</b>	Four
<b>Key Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Carers advice</li> <li>• Blue Badge queries</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case Study</b></p> <p>A lady approached one of HWCB volunteers with a query about medical aids. Following a recent operation she was in need of some aids, which had previously been supplied at the hospital, but were now running out and she felt she didn't know how to get more. These were key to her dignity and continued health and wellbeing.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>One of the volunteers who joined us on this day had a family member with the same condition, they were able to provide very detailed information about how to source the aids (whilst keeping the lady's details anonymous). The lady was very grateful for the information and advice.</p>	



# Just Ask - Flitwick

<b>Members of the public visiting the stand (approximately)</b>	160
<b>Venue Details</b>	Flitwick Carnival
<b>Organisations Joining the Event</b>	HWCB staff and Volunteers CBC Departments • Partnerships and Performance Aragon Housing Association and ROAR representatives Macmillan Cancer Support
<b>Signposting (summary listing)</b>	Mental Health Support Services Information about specific health conditions
<b>Number of Calls/Contacts we made following the Event</b>	Four
<b>Key Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing</li><li>• Transport</li></ul>
<b>Case Study</b>	<p>A couple visited the bus as they were very concerned about an email they had received from the Council about their property, which the Council currently lease to Aragon Housing. The Council advised the couple that they would not be renewing the lease and they will be serving a 'Section 21'. They were very anxious that they would be evicted and made homeless and wanted to know what their options were. They had lived in the property for ten years and although both were working they did not feel they could afford to privately rent.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>CBC staff followed up with the Housing Solutions Team for advice and guidance. The team were able to clarify the situation and advised that a dedicated housing officer would support them through the process of change. The couple were very appreciative of the advice and clarification.</p>



# Just Ask - Ampthill

<b>Members of the public visiting the stand (approximately)</b>	244
<b>Venue Details</b>	Ampthill Gala
<b>Organisations Joining the Event</b>	HWCB staff & volunteers Aragon Housing and ROAR representatives Macmillan Cancer Support
<b>Signposting (summary listing)</b>	Specific Cancers and support Support for parent carers Housing advice Macmillan Cancer Support
<b>Number of Calls/Contacts we made following the Event</b>	Six
<b>Key Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Carers support</li> <li>• Positive feedback about services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case Study</b></p> <p>A couple had an elderly relative living in Hertfordshire. They wanted to help them move to be closer to the family, but this would involve selling a home and also finding appropriate accommodation in Central Bedfordshire. They felt there might be some element of care needed, but not a residential or nursing home. They were unsure what to do in terms of next steps</p> <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Given contact details for housing providers in the area, including CBC Housing - for extra care options and Aragon Housing Association. Also a contact was given for home care support services. The couple were pleased to have more information to hand and would discuss with other members of the family before making contact.</p>	



# Just Ask - Shefford

<b>Members of the public visiting the stand (approximately)</b>	75
<b>Venue Details</b>	Shefford Fete
<b>Organisations Joining the Event</b>	HWCB staff & volunteers CBC departments; • Partnerships and Performance Aragon Housing and ROAR representatives Shefford Good Neighbour Scheme Carers in Bedfordshire Macmillan Cancer Support
<b>Signposting (summary listing)</b>	Local GP information Local Plan information
<b>Number of Calls/Contacts we made following the Event</b>	Two
<b>Key Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing Options</li><li>• Support for Carers</li></ul>
<b>Case Study</b>	<p>A visitor was very concerned about the number of empty homes they had seen locally, some that had been that way for some time. The issues concerned; lack of housing when people were in need; poor maintenance of council owned properties and anti-social behaviour around empty homes.</p>
<b>Outcome</b>	<p>The CBC representative acknowledged that empty homes were a concern and said that this issue was one of the Councils priorities. They discussed the issue at length with the visitor and agreed to take back specific information and concerns to be addressed by the Housing team.</p>



# Just Ask - Leighton Buzzard

<b>Members of the public visiting the stand (approximately)</b>	217
<b>Venue Details</b>	Leighton Buzzard Market
<b>Organisations Joining the Event</b>	<p>HWCB staff &amp; volunteers  CBC departments;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Hygiene</li> <li>• Skills for Life</li> </ul> <p>Home Instead  Carers in Bedfordshire  Age UK Bedfordshire  ICASH  Macmillan Cancer Welfare Rights  AAA Health Screening Service</p>
<b>Signposting (summary listing)</b>	<p>Activities for older people  Specific health information  Adult Education courses  Health Walks</p>
<b>Number of Calls/Contacts we made following the Event</b>	Six
<b>Key Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern about available transport to health appointments</li> <li>• Compliments for community matron service and Luton &amp; Dunstable Hospital</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case Study</b> - An example of how Just Ask can help with all kinds of queries.  A gentlemen approached the bus, but felt perhaps we weren't the right people to ask. He had reported dumped vehicles close to his home to CBC, but despite receiving a job number, some months ago, he had heard nothing further. He said other neighbours had also raised the issue with CBC and the police. HWCB agreed to follow up with CBC and see if they could resolve the issue.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b>  Contact was made with CBC contact centre. They were able to trace the activity from the initial call and explained the following: The 1st vehicle had been surrendered and would be moved within the month and the 2nd vehicle had been claimed, so was no longer abandoned. However, although CBC has no jurisdiction to take action they advised that as the car was without MOT or insurance, members of the public could report it to the DVLA. The gentleman was very pleased with the outcome and with the actions the team had taken.</p>	



# Just Ask - Sandy

<b>Members of the public visiting the stand (approximately)</b>	137
<b>Venue Details</b>	Market Square
<b>Organisations Joining the Event</b>	<p>HWCB staff &amp; volunteers</p> <p>CBC departments;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships and Performance</li> <li>• Trading Standards</li> <li>• Food Hygiene</li> </ul> <p>Disability Resource Centre</p> <p>ICASH</p> <p>Macmillan Cancer Support</p>
<b>Signposting (summary listing)</b>	<p>Other Local Healthwatch</p> <p>POhWER</p> <p>Bedfordshire Wellbeing Service</p> <p>Gardening Service</p>
<b>Number of Calls/Contacts we made following the Event</b>	Three
<b>Key Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bedford/Luton &amp; Dunstable Hospital merger</li> <li>• Public transport</li> <li>• Gardening services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case Study</b></p> <p>A couple discussed a family member’s current residency at the nursing care home, which was at the time, wholly privately funded. However, due to dwindling savings this was not sustainable. The Council had advised their funding would only cover 55% of the bill. They are concerned that they would have to move their family member who has lived in the area all their life and is settled in the home.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Information leaflets on the Councils charging policy for residential and nursing care were given, together with the Care Directory. They were also advised to contact CBC Older People’s Team for a full assessment to include discussion about finances/funding and options. HWCB staff subsequently called the family to ask about progress. They had followed the advice given at Just Ask and the outcome was that their family member would remain at the home they currently reside in. Both the cared for person and their family were very appreciative of the advice given on the day and were very happy that they had stopped to discuss their issue with the ‘Just Ask’ staff .</p>	

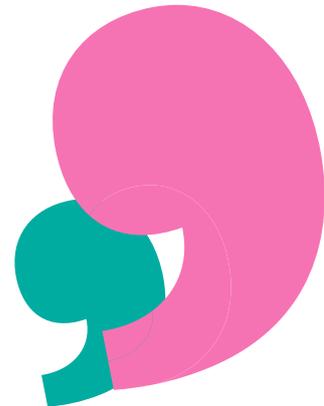
# Just Ask - Houghton Regis

<b>Members of the public visiting the stand (approximately)</b>	137
<b>Venue Details</b>	Morrison's Supermarket
<b>Organisations Joining the Event</b>	<p>HWCB staff &amp; volunteers</p> <p>CBC departments;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships and Performance</li> <li>• Trading Standards</li> <li>• Skills for Life</li> </ul> <p>Disability Resource Centre</p> <p>Home Instead</p> <p>Macmillan Cancer Support</p>
<b>Signposting (summary listing)</b>	<p>Arthritis UK</p> <p>Citizens Advice Bureau</p> <p>CBC Highways Department</p>
<b>Number of Calls/Contacts we made following the Event</b>	Three
<b>Key Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns that the growing population of Houghton Regis will not have their health needs met with the current number of GP surgeries</li> <li>• Street lighting</li> <li>• Anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case Study</b></p> <p>A gentleman visited the bus to talk about applying to renew his blue badge. He was given a leaflet and talked with HWCB about the process. Although he had access to a computer, during library hours he was concerned about the amount of time needed to fill out the form. Health difficulties meant that sitting for long periods at a screen was very difficult.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>A representative from the Disability Resource Centre understood the challenges faced by the gentleman. They offered an appointment with the Blue Badge service, where they could have help and support to fill out the application face to face. The gentleman was very pleased and an appointment was made.</p>	



# Making Connections

Key partner organisations were able to promote and raise awareness of their services, programmes of work, engagement and consultations, and to ask visitors attending 'Just Ask 2017' their opinions on a range of different topics, which included the following:



Kings Road Surgery, Sandy  
(now Shannon Court)  
Patient Participation Group



Surveyed visitors to 'Just Ask 2017' in Sandy  
19 people took their survey about PPGs  
*"Interesting feedback"*

Good Neighbour Schemes  
across Central Bedfordshire

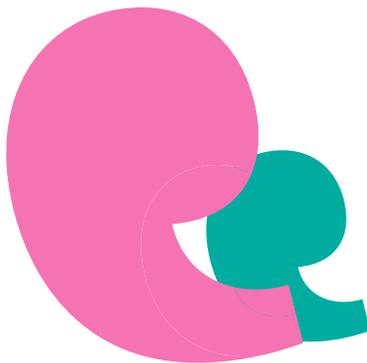


Recruiting volunteers and registering  
service users



Promoting awareness and gathering feedback on:

- Local Plan
- BLMK Sustainability and Transformation Plans
- Adult Mental Health Crisis Care
- NHS Healthchecks

# Organisations

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire staff were joined on the Just Ask bus by staff and volunteers from a number of organisations throughout the year.

After each event Central Bedfordshire Council engaged with their colleagues to follow up the issues raised at each event and to provide feedback to members of the public. They also shared learning with colleagues and were actively involved in the promotion of the 'Just Ask 2017' programme.

## *Representation from CBC Services*

- Service Development, Engagement and Consultation
- Libraries
- Trading Standards, Health and Safety, Food Hygiene
- Skills for Life
- Planning - Local and Neighbourhood Plans
- Learning and Development - Apprenticeships
- Housing - Tenant Involvement, Jobs Fairs and Training, Independent Living, Housing Solutions, Lifeline
- Public Health - Healthy Eating, Stop Smoking, One You, Excess Weight and Obesity
- Public Transport and Travel Choices Leisure
- Community Safety and Anti Social Behaviour.

## *Other Organisations*

- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Scening (AAA) Service
- Age UK Bedfordshire
- Aragon Housing
- Aragon ROAR - Resident Representatives
- Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
- Carers in Bedfordshire
- Disabiity Resource Centre
- Dunstable Good Neighbour Scheme
- Home Instead Care Service
- iCaSH - Sexual Health Service
- Kings Road Surgery, Sandy, Patient Participation Group (PPG)
- Larkfield Surgery, Stotfold PPG
- Macmillan Welfare Rights
- Shefford Good Neighbour Scheme





# A Big Thank you

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire would like to extend a special thank you to all the visitors who gave valuable feedback and shared their experiences of accessing health, social care and housing services in the Central Bedfordshire area.

Many volunteers gave their time, expertise and commitment to ensure that 'Just Ask 2017' ran smoothly throughout the programme of events. Being part of the Planning Committee, attending at each location, managing the equipment, setting up and engaging with the public are all equally essential tasks, and we are very grateful to have such a dedicated team to help and support HWCB staff throughout the programme.

Special thanks to Roger Grimes, who is the regular driver for the 'Just Ask' programme. Roger is very familiar with the mechanics of the RAVE bus, which is integral to the setting up on arrival at each location. He also takes care of staff and volunteers with hot and cold beverages throughout the day, accompanied by the very popular and much admired rock cakes baked by his wife. Roger does all of this with a huge smile and it is a pleasure to work with him.



*The Lovely Roger Grimes*



*Our twitter post*

Our thanks also go to the Town and Parish Councils across Central Bedfordshire who allow space and permission for the bus to be sited in their town. Thanks also to the organisers of the fetes and festivals we attended across Central Bedfordshire.

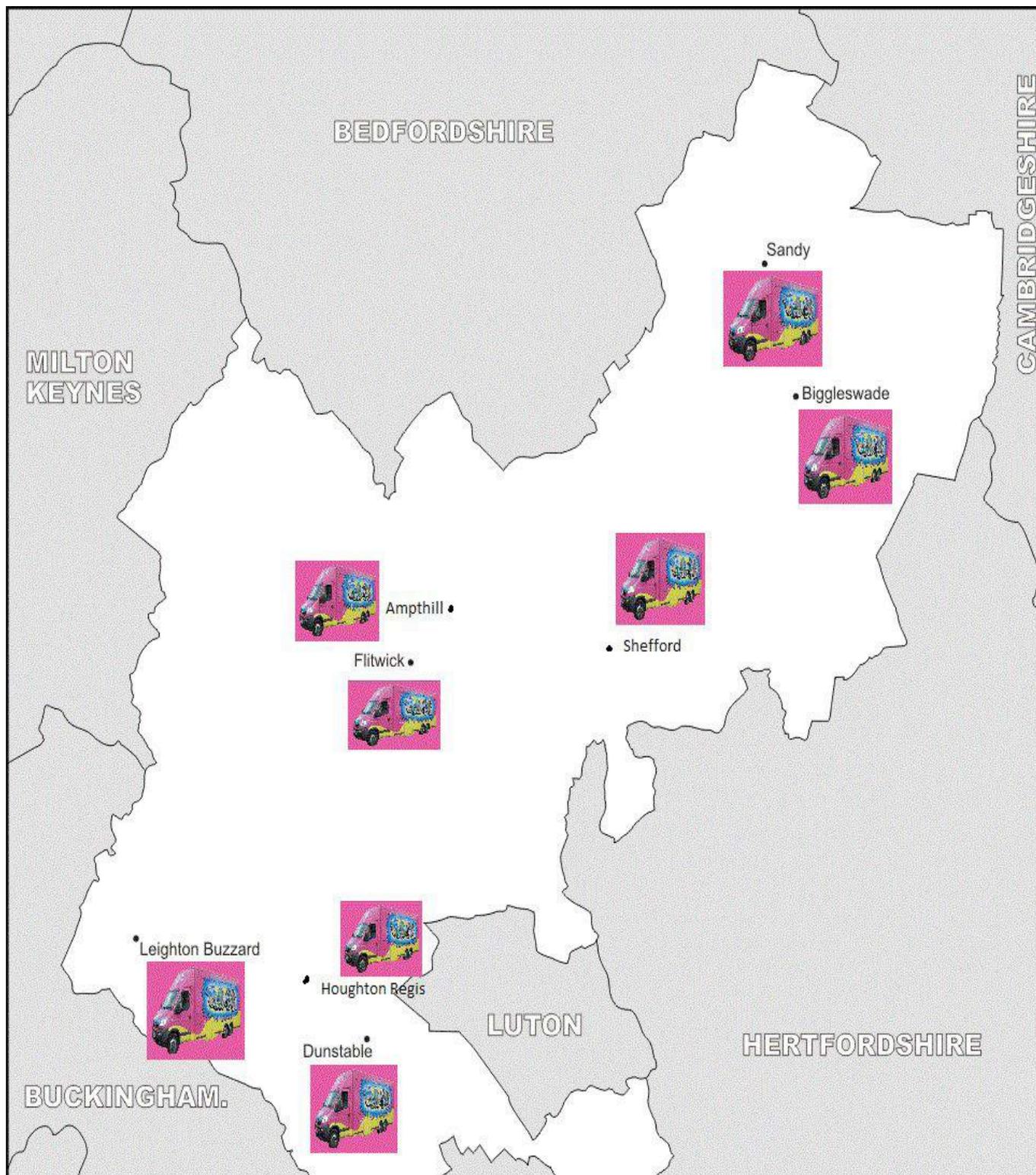
We would also like to thank the local supermarkets; Asda in Dunstable and Morrisons in Houghton Regis, who allow us valuable space in their car parks to enable us to reach their many customers.

So many people are involved in the success of the 'Just Ask' programme each year and if we have omitted to mention them in this report we appreciate the support we are given to allow us to perform our statutory function as a local Healthwatch.

Finally, the 'Just Ask 2017' programme would not have been possible without the support of Central Bedfordshire Council, Aragon Housing Association and their residents group ROAR, and the RAVE bus, owned by Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC).



# The Rave Bus Tour



The RAVE bus tour took in eight locations across Central Bedfordshire.



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire  
Capability House  
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