



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

Annual Report 2018-19

YOUNG
healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire



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 crosssection 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 belong 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 experience 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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Message from our Chair

Welcome to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Annual Report 2018/19. We have had a very productive and positive year, listening to thousands of local people from communities across our area, and this report highlights the wide range of activities, projects and our achievements.

It has been a year of change for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB); in the past year we have recruited two new Board Members, one Board Member stepped down and sadly we lost one of our founder Board Members who died suddenly last year. We also welcomed two new Youth Parliament Members to our Board and a new member of staff to support our back office functions. The new Board members bring a wealth of new experience to complement the strong Board we already had.

Hearing personal stories and lived experiences from local people is fed back to the health and social care providers, and decision makers, to help them improve services. We are very encouraged that locally they have welcomed hearing about and learning from your experiences and what is important to you.

Our Young Healthwatch team has been involved in a range of positive and empowering projects in the last year and they were also delighted to be awarded a local grant enabling young people to gain valuable life skills, enhancing their resilience and learning.

We were also very pleased to be awarded a Healthwatch Network Award in October 2018 for 'Giving people the advice and information they need'. This was in recognition of our outreach project 'Just Ask' in which we visit many towns across Central Bedfordshire providing information and guidance about health and social care services but also listening to peoples views and experiences.

More recently we supported a joint production of 'Phyllis' with our colleagues in Luton and Milton Keynes. Funded by our Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) ICS colleagues, Phyllis tells the story of one woman and her family attempting to navigate the complex system of older peoples care. Co-produced with the Women & Theatre production team, the show was presented to key stakeholders and members of the public to highlight the real challenges that many experience.



'Dave Simpson, Chair of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire'

In January 2019 the NHS in England published an ambitious ten-year Plan showing their priorities for the future and how they were going to invest extra money in the NHS. In March 2019, HWCB working in collaboration with our colleagues across BLMK, launched 'What Would You Do?' This campaign, commissioned by Healthwatch England, was designed to gather feedback from the public on ways to improve local services and to hear from you about what changes you would like to see in your community. We had an overwhelming response from the public and all the feedback gathered will be used to inform the BLMK ICS local Plan explaining how these

priorities will be delivered in your area. We are very keen to ensure that any decisions made are based on your views.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone we have worked with at HWCB, especially the people who have shared their experiences. None of what we have achieved would have been possible without the support of local people, our dedicated staff team, fantastic volunteers and Board of Directors. I would like to thank them personally for all their time, commitment and enthusiasm.

Dave Simpson
Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Chair

Changes you want to see

Last year we heard from over 8000 people who told us about their experience of a number of different areas of health and social care. Here are some examples of the changes that you want to see.



- + Better access to health and community services, with support available 24/7



- + A more holistic and joined up approach among healthcare professionals



- + More accessible services for those that live in rural areas where access is often restrictive



- + Improved and speedier access to non-medical interventions for people with mental illness

About us

Healthwatch is here to make care better

We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

As Chair of Healthwatch England, it's my role to make sure your Healthwatch gets effective support and that national decisions are informed by what people are saying all over England.

If you were one of the 400,000 people who shared their experiences with us last year, I want to say a personal thank you. Without your views, Healthwatch wouldn't be able to make a difference to health and social care services, both in your area and at a national level. One example of this is how we shared 85,000 views with the NHS, to highlight what matters most, and help shape its plans for the next decade.

If you're part of an organisation that's worked with, supported or responded to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, thank you too. You've helped to make an even bigger difference.

None of this could have been possible without our dedicated staff and volunteers, who work in the community every day to understand what is working and what could be better when it comes to people's health and care.

If you've shared your views with us then please keep doing what you're doing. If you haven't, then this is your chance to step forward and help us make care better for your community. We all have a stake in our NHS and social care services: we can all really make a difference in this way.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Francis', written over a thin blue horizontal line.

Sir Robert Francis QC
Healthwatch England Chair

Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you. People want health and social care support that works - helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



Our purpose

To find out what matters to you and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.



Our approach

People's views come first - especially those that find it hardest to be heard. We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



People at the heart of everything we do

We play an important role bringing communities and services together. Everything we do is shaped by what people tell us. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- + Visiting services to see how they work
- + Running surveys and focus groups
- + Going out in the community and working with other organisations

Our main job is to raise people's concerns with health and care decision-makers so that they can improve support across the country. The evidence we gather also helps us recommend how policy and practice can change for the better.





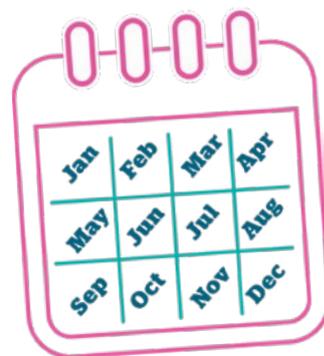
Highlights from

our year

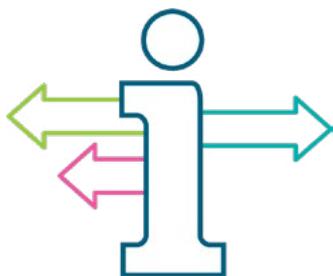
Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2018-19. **Our resources:**



3680 people shared their health and social care story with us, 20% more than last year.



We have 38 volunteers and young volunteers helping to carry out our work. In total, they gave us 1000 hours of their valuable time.



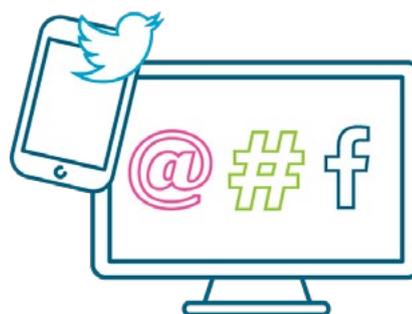
860 people accessed Healthwatch advice and information online or contacted us with questions about local support, 12% more than last year.



We visited 21 services and 10 community events to understand people's experience of care. From these visits, we made over 80 recommendations for improvement.



38% of improvements we suggested were adopted by services to make health and care better in our community.



59% more people engaged with us through our website and social media.

We believe that ...

...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

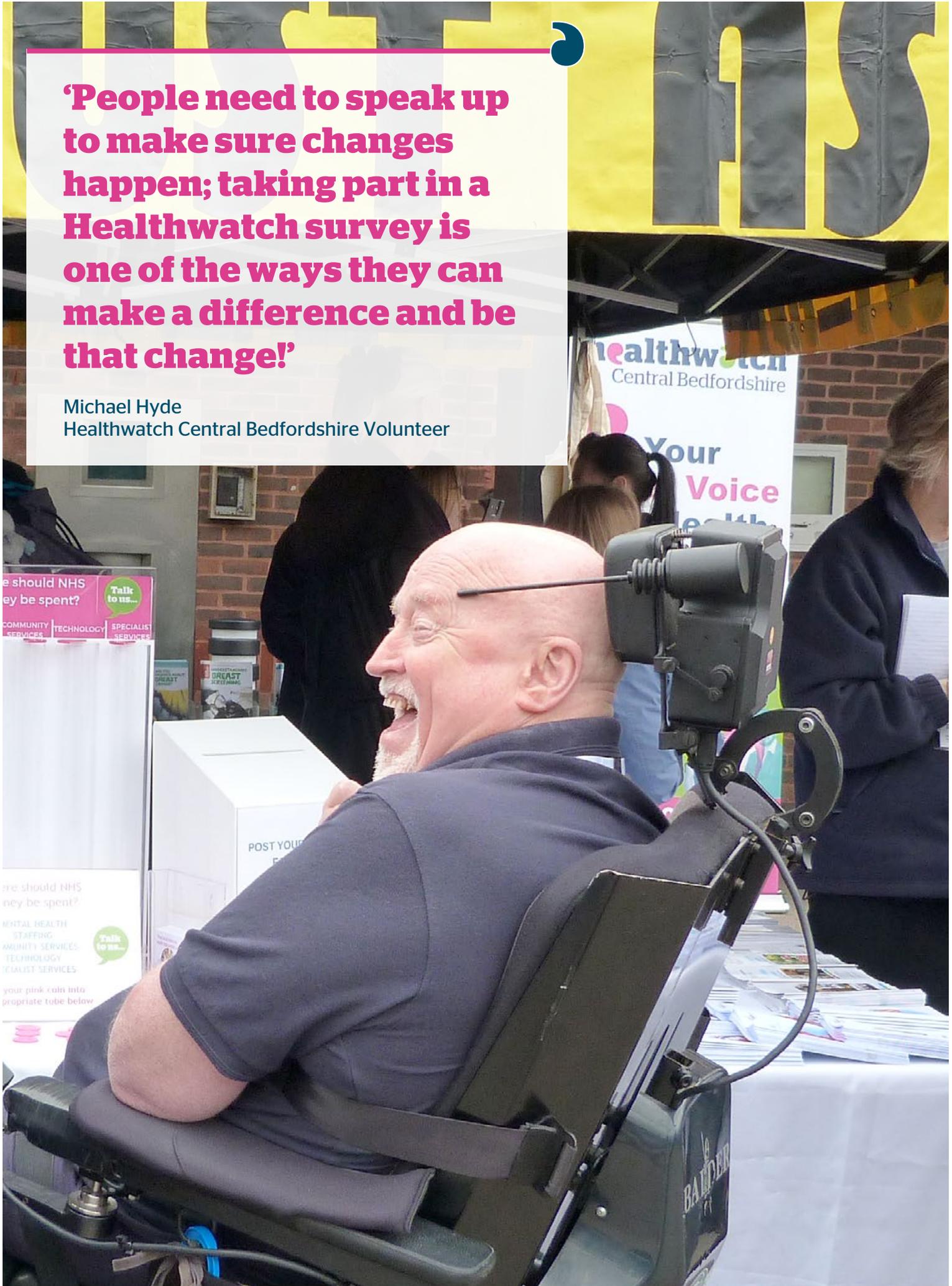
No one should ever be afraid to question decisions made about you

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.

‘People need to speak up to make sure changes happen; taking part in a Healthwatch survey is one of the ways they can make a difference and be that change!’

Michael Hyde
Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Volunteer





**How we've made
a difference**

Changes made to your community

Find out how sharing your views with your local Healthwatch has led to positive changes to health and social care services in Central Bedfordshire. We show that when people speak up about what's important, and services listen, care is improved for all.

Take a look at some examples of how Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire demonstrated how they have made a difference in their community.

How the NHS can make care better for people with Down Syndrome

Many people across Central Bedfordshire were keen to be involved in the national campaign 'What would you do?' to tell us their stories and what changes they want to see in their local community.

HWCB's recent engagement work on the NHS Long Term Plan included patient stories and we heard from the mother of a teenager with Down syndrome who shared her views about what would make NHS services better for people with learning disabilities.

HWCB was told that caring for a child with Down syndrome has meant frequent visits to local

health services, and that more training for staff in providing suitable environments for people with learning disabilities is required and finding information and support can be a worrying and stressful process. Accessing services in rural communities can be even more difficult and wider use of pharmacies could reduce pressure on GPs, as well as increased Skype consultations.

As a result of listening to local people as part of this campaign, patient and service user stories were included in a final report presented to our Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) ICS colleagues to inform their local Plan. The BLMK ICS has confirmed that they will need to plan services from a patient perspective and the report presents an opportunity for them to continue to focus on making improvements. Areas they will be looking at more closely are better communication, support and signposting which were key themes throughout our report.



“Life with a disabled child is certainly different - with frequent need to call on the health service. Mainly I want professionals to see the child first and not the Down syndrome. I want to be treated with respect and listened to when I know how I want my child treated”

Mother of a child with Down syndrome

Young Healthwatch support young people in their community to be more resilient

Members of Young HWCB had previously disclosed that they had found themselves in challenging and often difficult medical situations with family and friends. They were very concerned that they were not aware of what they could have done to help, and they recognised that rather than 'feeling scared and useless' they had a strong desire to learn how they could have offered help and support.

This led to further discussion on the type of training available and who would benefit. Although some First Aid training is provided in schools, the young people felt this was inadequate being too brief and uninformative. Training in schools is delivered en masse to a large group of students during assembly and only includes resuscitation techniques.

Thanks to Young Healthwatch securing local grant funding, over 40 young people, including young Carers, were able to benefit from a three hour course on Emergency First Aid and Safety Awareness delivered by experienced staff from St John's Ambulance in May 2019. This covered:

- + Chest pains and choking
- + Communication and casualty care

- + Recovery position and resuscitation
- + Unresponsive casualty
- + Severe bleeding and CPR

This project benefitted many young people, educating them in particular life skills and giving them confidence in their ability to help prevent further injury or preserving life, which can make a huge difference in critical situations before professional help arrives. Being involved in this project, in addition to safety awareness training and education, also helped young people to:

- + Increase their resilience
- + Improve their education
- + Equip them with the right skills and positive behaviours to be work ready
- + Feel happier and safer
- + Prevent anti-social behaviour
- + Provide additional skills for young carers
- + Make new friends, socialise and build relationships with other young people

This training resulted in long term benefits for young people living in Central Bedfordshire and impacted on one of Central Bedfordshire Council's outcomes in their Children & Young Peoples Plan. The event was also featured on a local radio station and in the TV News programme 'Look East'. Young HWCB are now planning further events of this type to ensure more young people will have the opportunity to benefit from this training.

Young Healthwatch members





“Don’t define me by my tablets, my diagnosis, I am an individual, a person, treat me as such. I am not my mental illness.”

Mental health service user

‘I Am Not My Mental Illness’

Over a four month period of engagement many people told us that they felt mental illness was reflected negatively by the public and even in some cases by those people employed in mental health services.

There was a strong belief that the medical model – medication, treatment, crisis management and discharge, was the focus for the NHS. People were keen to tell us that maintaining wellbeing was not always just about medication.

Prevention and long term wellness were a high priority for most people and there was real concerns that lack of funding for mental health services was having a significantly negative effect. People gave us many examples of where they felt interactions with health and social care focused primarily on their mental health and in some cases to the detriment of their overall wellbeing. Where people really wanted to set aside their mental illness was when managing other parts of their life. They were clear that they did not want to be defined by their diagnosis.

Some people also explained that they did not have a care plan in place and others said they did with many service users expressing a clear need for clarity when a Care Co-Ordinator and/ or care plan should be in place. They also gave consistent messages that engaging with individual members of mental health staff was challenging.

Many people contributed to this project, sharing their stories and raising important issues, and there has been clear and consistent messages about the need to improve the lives of those living with mental illness.

HWCB shared our recommendations for improvement with the mental health provider in Central Bedfordshire, East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) and the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG). Our recommendations continue to be considered by both the provider and commissioner, and as a result of our work, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will be supporting the development of a workstream of compassionate care in partnership with the Patient Participation Lead from ELFT. This means that front line staff, as part of their training, will hear directly from patients and carers to help improve empathetic care.



Have your say

Share your ideas and experiences and help services hear what works, what doesn’t, and what you want from care in the future.

w: www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

t: 0300 303 8554

e: info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

'It's not a phase!'

Young people in Central Bedfordshire designed a booklet for staff and teachers to give an insight into those little things that can make a big difference to those who belong, or are heading towards, the LGBTQ+ community.

A group of young people in Central Bedfordshire, supported by Groundwork East, aged between 12 - 18 years old, set up an LGBTQ+ group in Leighton Buzzard and teamed up with Young Healthwatch to work on a joint project to explore and improve attitudes to the LGBTQ+ community within a school/college setting.

The group is a safe space for young people to be a part of and gives them the opportunity to be who they want to be, without preconceived ideas or barriers. They were most passionate about, within a school setting, words and phrases that may offend them, although not always meant intentionally.

They all felt that if the teachers and staff were with them, rather than against or unknown to them, it would make a real difference to the LGBTQ+ community within the school and help staff to understand more.

After summarising all the ideas the group had discussed, and their beliefs about what they could do to challenge and change ethics and attitudes at school, they decided to work on a project to produce a small booklet called 'Its not a phase' to

include up to 10 phrases or situations that they personally experienced within a school setting and offer alternatives that could be used instead. They also wanted the booklet to provide links to information sharing sites to assist with further research about the LGBTQ+ community.

The booklet was presented to the Education Authority of Central Bedfordshire Council with the recommendation that it is widely distributed to schools and educational settings across the area, to raise awareness of the LGBTQ+ community within schools, to build resilience and educate school staff when engaging and speaking with members from the LGBTQ+ community.

Young people believe that use of this booklet in school will help everyone to understand that when someone comes out, they are still who they are but being more true to themselves, and are still perfectly normal.

"If someone has the confidence to confide or identify with you, all we ask is to be taken seriously - listen, don't judge."

Young Healthwatch LGBTQ member

Booklet for staff and teachers





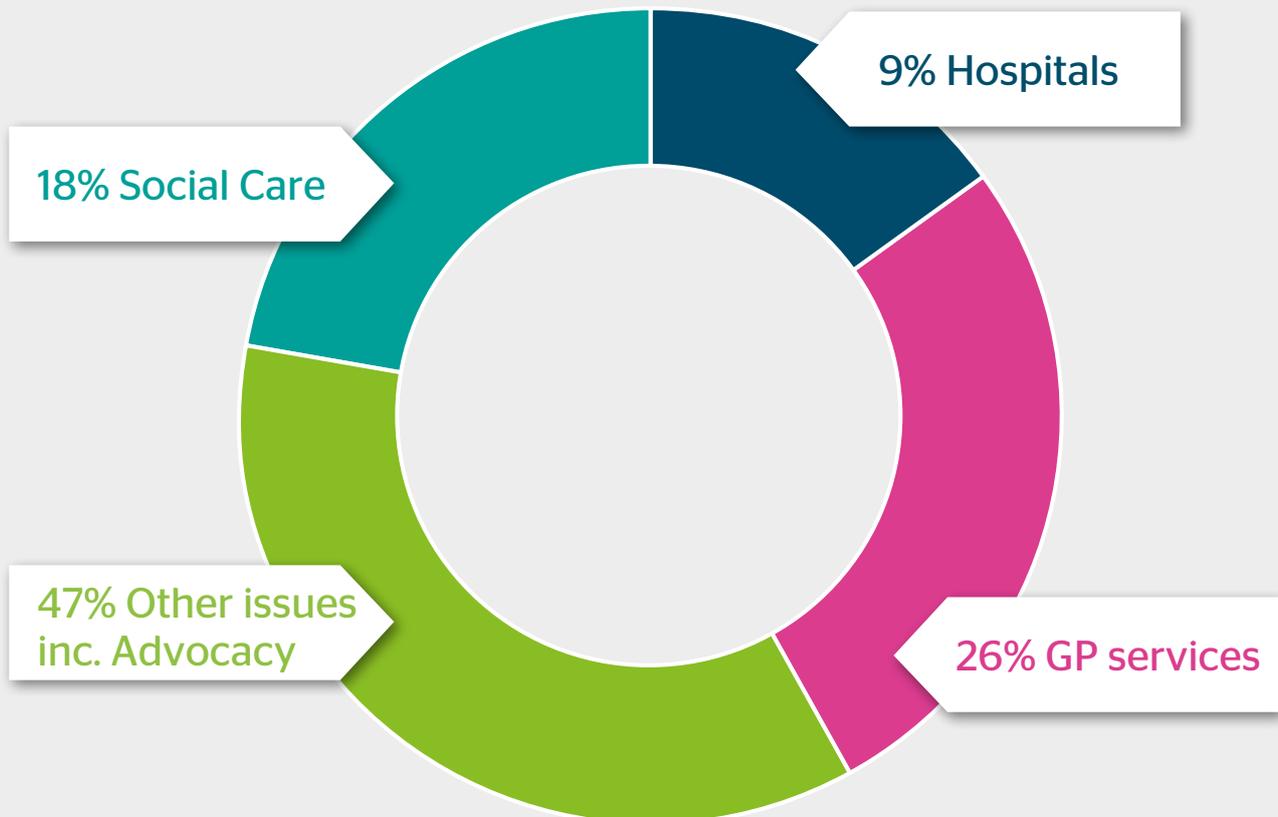
Helping you find

the answers

What services do people want to know about?

People don't always know how to get the information they need to make decisions about their own health and care. Healthwatch plays an important role in providing advice and pointing people in the right direction for the support they need.

Here are the most common things that people ask us:



'Healthwatch continues to engage effectively with Central Bedfordshire residents to hear about their experience of local services, to ensure their voice is heard and acted upon, whilst also providing information, advice and guidance to the public about those services through their award winning outreach project. It is becoming increasingly important to reach younger members of our community and over the past year Young Healthwatch has developed into a powerful voice for young people in Central Bedfordshire. I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with Healthwatch, and using the feedback they provide, to help shape services for the benefit of all local residents'

Julie Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing,
and President of Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)
Central Bedfordshire Council

How we provide people with advice and information

Finding the right care or support can be worrying and stressful. There are a number of organisations that can provide help, but people don't know where to look. Last year we helped over 8000 people access the advice and information they need.

You can come to us for advice and information in a number of ways including:

- + Through our Newsletters and regular ebulletins
- + At our community outreach events - 'Just Ask' and other annual events
- + Through our promotion of helpful services across our social media channels and our website
- + Over the phone



Tom's story:

Tom: I was very stressed and anxious looking after my wife as I am her main carer and really struggling to get the ongoing support I needed. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire helped me arrange for a social worker to visit and carry out an urgent needs assessment. I now have extra support thanks to speaking with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

'Thank you, thank you, I should have come to you months ago.'

Council services

Many people had concerns about Council Services; exactly where to go for help and support and what type of services the Council provide. At Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's 'Just Ask' Winter events, people were able to raise these issues and talk directly with a Council representative at each of the sessions. This was particularly helpful for one visitor who would normally have visited their local Council office which had been relocated and was too far for them to visit in person.



'It is so important to get the service you need when you need it and being able to talk to someone face to face has helped enormously.'



A visitor to 'Just Ask 2018' in Biggleswade, Bedfordshire

Making sure people get the right answers about their wellbeing

Over 2400 people have been supported with their health and care issues thanks to an outreach service Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire set up called 'Just Ask'. From help to support carers, older people, people with disabilities and learning difficulties and people with mental health conditions, to advice about housing and community safety, we helped to provide information, guidance and support during 2018/19.

We were able to work with many key partner organisations who were given the opportunity to reach a much wider audience, to engage directly with the public, and to promote their programme of activity and consultations. This year

consultations with the public included satisfaction surveys about housing support services and Age UK asked visitors about their opinions on the organisations key activities 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 Healthwatch staff and colleagues from key organisations. The full 'Just Ask 2018' report which includes issues and concerns highlighted at all the events, and the actions taken, can be found on our website - details below.

'You've helped me understand what I need to do and I feel like I can sort it now.'

Visitor to Just Ask 2018



Are you looking for help?

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

w: www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

t: 0300 303 8854

e: info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

The Festival for Older People 2018 - at a glance

Over 340 visitors attended the Festival



The event was supported by 22 volunteers



There were 49 organisations offering information and advice



Over 85 people gave feedback about the event by filling out evaluation forms



HWCB organised transport for over 80 visitors to the event



Over 110 visitors took advantage of the health checks on offer





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:

- + Raise your concerns, issues and complaints directly with the organisations that provide health and care services, requesting prompt responses and action to reach resolution;
- + Notify health and care service providers of the positive comments we receive about a service;
- + Escalate any comments that staff identify as a safeguarding concern and act according to local procedures. This includes communication with key partners such as the Care Quality Commission and Central Bedfordshire Council's Safeguarding Team;
- + Use feedback to inform current issues of interest to HWCB such as our Enter & View plan of visits or specific research projects;
- + Inform relevant persons about outcomes that may have been generated from their individual involvement;
- + Inform local and national health and social care agendas by contributing intelligence to specific networks and bodies;
- + Alert Healthwatch England to concerns about specific care providers so that they can escalate concerns about health and social care services raised by local Healthwatch to the Care Quality Commission. Healthwatch England will provide advice to the Secretary of State, NHS Commissioning Board, Monitor and the English local authorities; and they must have regard to that advice;
- + Publish and disseminate 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 and YouTube 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.

Further examples of the things you told us, some of which we resolved directly and others that we fed back to the decision makers, as shown below:

You said...

Concerns were raised by patients about services being reduced at a local GP surgery, more recently, ear syringing, which had previously been carried out for one patient, on a regular basis due to an underlying health condition. The patient was advised that equipment used at the practice had broken and they were not planning to fix or replace it. They were offered a contact for a commercial organisation that would charge for the treatment. Patients were very concerned about ongoing costs for regular treatment.

We did...

We advised the patient to raise this issue with the practice manager to reconsider the surgery position in light of additional costs, and as many patients had raised this issue, HWCB also spoke with the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG). New NHS guidance means that there are now revised criteria for ear wax removal and the service will not be available at every GP Practice. The BCCG are developing a leaflet, prepared by clinicians, to help patients to treat ear wax safely at home. Patients will only be able to get ear wax removed at their practice if they come under one of the categories which will be listed in the new leaflet. HWCB agreed to review the leaflet to ensure it addressed all concerns and to share with patients who contact HWCB direct about ear syringing.

You said...

A number of visitors to our Just Ask events in the summer were concerned about housing growth in the area and the negative impact this would have on local health and social care services. Several issues were also raised about housing in general, mainly related to moving out of larger accommodation into smaller or sheltered accommodation and the challenges this presents.

We did...

Staff from Central Bedfordshire's housing team were on hand to provide support with information and advice at several of our 'Just Ask' events throughout the summer. We also fed back concerns about housing growth and infrastructure to our colleagues at Central Bedfordshire Council's Health & Wellbeing Board and the Governing Body of the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. This was to ensure they were aware of local feelings and to recommend that they action plans which address community concerns.

You said...

Concerns were raised about travelling to and from hospital settings as a number of people found this quite difficult as public transport had recently been reduced. Many people raised issues that living in such a rural county always posed challenges if you did not have access to your own transport and you needed to get to medical appointments, either quite regularly, or for a short series of treatments.

We did...

Everyone who contacted us about this issue was provided with information about the Bedfordshire Good Neighbour and Village Care Scheme operating in their local area, who can help to provide transport for hospital appointments. Advice about local community transport was also provided with relevant contact details. It was also suggested that they speak with appropriate healthcare professionals who may be able to offer them an appointment closer to home.

You said...

Concerns were raised about the quality of mental health support in the community and where to access advice and information before people reach crisis. A number of people thought that they had to be in crisis before services would respond. Some people had experienced very challenging situations before help was put in place.

We did...

HWCB is a member of the Bedfordshire Mental Health Recovery Partnership Board and we also frequently meet with East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) colleagues, to discuss issues and concerns raised with us, and to seek better outcomes for service users and their carers when accessing mental health services. HWCB advised ELFT about the concerns raised and it was agreed that HWCB would facilitate an engagement project with service users across Central Bedfordshire to gather additional feedback on their experiences of mental health services and support. The full report 'I am not my mental illness' with our recommendations to improve the quality of services can be found on our website at www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

‘ELFT adult mental health services continue to have a constructive working relationship with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. We meet regularly to receive feedback on our services and this is invaluable in helping us to improve the service we offer, both in our in-patient units and in our community mental health teams. We greatly appreciate the feedback our service users give through Healthwatch. It not only enables us to improve our services in the here and now, but also helps us shape our services for the future.’

Paul Rix, Deputy Director
Bedfordshire Mental Health and Wellbeing Service



You said...

Dentists promoting private treatment was a concern for many people in addition to anxieties about rising costs for basic dental care.

We did...

We offered advice and information, including the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) leaflet on dental care to ensure that people know what to expect from their dentist and how to complain or challenge should they wish to do so. Issues and concerns were also raised with NHS England, and HWCB's Enter & View lead will include visits to local dentists in our future programme, to highlight the concerns raised.

You said...

Many people were not always clear about how to access health and social care services, in particular whether they could self refer, or if they needed to go through a healthcare professional.

We did...

Advice and information was given to help guide people through the right pathway including links to advocacy services such as POhWER. Support was also given to some people to self-refer to CHUMS, a local mental health and wellbeing service for children and young people.

You said...

A patient contacted us because he was very unhappy that he could no longer collect his repeat prescriptions from his local pharmacy. Instead he was advised to go to the health centre to collect a paper prescription and get it filled. This was a distance away which he could not easily access. Added to this, on the occasions he had done so, the health centre had advised that his medication was not in stock which meant additional journeys.

We did...

We directly contacted the Medicines Management team at the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) and spoke with the Manager about Mr R's issues. We were advised that any patient on repeat can decide for themselves where they wish to collect their prescription, but this had to be organised with their GP and ordered online. The patient was happy for his son to manage this for him and we also contacted the pharmacy who agreed to contact him direct so that he fully understood the process. This issue highlighted the need for greater awareness of patient choice and HWCB continue to promote this at public events and through our website.

You said...

A patient contacted us directly as they were experiencing difficulties with their request to move to another GP surgery that was just outside of their practice boundary area. They were very happy with their current practice and the services offered but wanted to change to another practice that was in a more convenient location for the whole family. The practice the patient wanted to transfer to had tried to dissuade her from moving and asked her to attend a meeting to explain her reasons.

We did...

Prior to the meeting we gave the patient links to NHS England websites about patient choice which clearly states that since January 2015, all GP practices in England have been free to register new patients who live outside their practice boundary area which means patients can register with a practice that is more convenient for them, if the practice is happy for them to do so. We also gave information about the practice and their complaints process. The patient contacted us after her meeting to confirm that the meeting had gone well, and she was very pleased to tell us that she can register at the surgery of her choice. She thanked HWCB for all our support.





**Young
Healthwatch**

Young Healthwatch

At Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire we also involve younger people in our projects and activities to help improve local services for children and young people.

Young Healthwatch volunteers have made a difference by amplifying the voices of young people

Members of Young Healthwatch have met regularly for the past year and worked on projects to highlight the views and opinions of young people.

Young Healthwatch were keen to support the Central Bedfordshire Red Box Project by having a donation point in the office. The Red Box Project seeks to provide free sanitary items for young women in our local schools and the group wanted to help young women experiencing period poverty. Several boxes of products have been donated and thanks to the efforts of all involved, earlier this year the government announced it will provide free sanitary products in secondary schools and colleges in England from the next school year.

Young Healthwatch have also been successful in setting up an 'Instagram' account with the help of one of our more active senior volunteers and are regularly posting about their activities and projects to encourage other young people to get involved. HWCB also helped a young Healthwatch member to secure a work experience placement in a local medical setting.

What our young volunteers do:

- + Engage with local young people to learn more about their views and experiences
- + Act as a powerful voice for young people
- + Support and facilitate young people's ideas
- + Use young people's opinions to inform our reports

In addition to the Emergency First Aid and Safety Awareness campaign and LGBTQ+ projects mentioned earlier, Young Healthwatch, based in Dunstable, have been working on a project researching Sexual Health Services available to Young People in the community and are currently developing a survey and will be visiting a local Sexual Health Clinic.

Further information about Young Healthwatch activities and projects can be found on their website at www.younghealthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk



Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire volunteers

'I am passionate about health and social care as I face difficulties of my own. I would like to make a difference to the community'

Daisy Kelly, Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Volunteer



Our volunteers

How do our volunteers help us?

At Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire we couldn't make all of these improvements without the support of our 38 volunteers and young volunteers that work with us to help make care better for their communities.

What our volunteers do:

- + Raise awareness of the work we do in the community
- + Visit services to make sure they are meeting people's needs
- + Support our day to day running e.g. governance
- + Collect people's views and experiences which we use in our reports



Mani- a Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire volunteer at a 'Just Ask' event

Volunteers make a difference to the Enter & View programme

Thanks to the support of our volunteers we are able to visit residential care homes, GP surgeries, hospital wards and other publicly funded health and social care premises to find out how they are being managed and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

Acting on some negative feedback from local residents about the 111 service, as part of our joint working arrangement with Healthwatch Luton (HWL), Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and Luton scheduled a weekend visit to the Bedford

Integrated Urgent Care (IUC) Contact Centre in Nov 2018 to better understand the challenges and pressures on the Contact Centre outside of normal working hours. The contact centre manages 111 calls from residents across Bedfordshire and Luton.

Staff and volunteers from each local Healthwatch observed and listened in to various calls and spoke with contact centre staff and clinicians. Healthwatch representatives were impressed by the professionalism shown by call centre operatives during calls, some of which were very stressful, and we were pleased to be able to reassure the public about the efficiency of the 111 service.

A full report of our visit can be found on our website at www.Healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

'I really enjoy being a part of the Enter & View team and I was very pleased to be involved in the ICU visit as it gave me a real insight into the other side of the 111 service.'

Dave, HWCB Volunteer

Meet our volunteers

We caught up with a few of our fantastic volunteers to show you how their work truly makes a difference to the lives of people in our area.



Christine, 70

I became interested in health and social care when working as a young parent 'volunteer' and then paid community development worker. As a Healthwatch volunteer, I represent the patient voice on the local Patient Participation Group Network meetings and I also work with other volunteers establishing the Leighton Buzzard Voluntary Transport Service supporting vulnerable older people.

Cameron, 17

I have always been interested in science since a young age but more recently the idea of a career in a medical science has been at the forefront of my ambitions. So when I discovered Healthwatch it was impossible to turn down. Since joining Young Healthwatch I successfully applied for an apprenticeship with Cancer Research. I believe that being a part of Young Healthwatch elevated my application and interview putting me head and shoulders above the rest.



'Volunteering for Healthwatch enables me to share information learnt with other organisations. It gives me confidence to help people, pointing them in the right direction if need be. I have also met a lot of lovely people who I feel support me.'

Carys Martin, HWCB Volunteer

'I am proud to be a volunteer for Healthwatch and it is rewarding to take part in surveys, Enter and Views to hospitals, surgeries etc to help protect a variety of health services and their users. I was very moved by a recent hospital visit where dementia patients were being supported in a new initiative to which they were clearly responding very positively.'

Carol Carter, HWCB Volunteer

Susan, 72

I came across a leaflet suggesting volunteering for Healthwatch and after perusing it for some days, I decided I did need a new challenge, so I applied and I haven't stopped working since! Whether its supporting the team at our Just Ask events or being involved with Young Healthwatch projects, I constantly interact with new people. I learn more, contribute a lot and work very closely with young Healthwatch members to support their work and activities. I would thoroughly recommend volunteering with Healthwatch.



Linda and Den, 66 and 71

We have been volunteers with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire since its inception in 2013. During this time we have been involved in various projects, from mystery shopping to the Annual Festival for Older People to being a member of the Enter & View Team. We also get to help many people from our local community to access the information, advice and guidance they need, on health and social care services, by being a part of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Just Ask outreach project.



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for more volunteers and young volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering get in touch.

w: www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

t: 0300 303 8854

e: info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk



“Becoming a Volunteer for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has given me a better idea on how many ways we can help each other and take the word out to the Community that there is a lot of help out there if you have the right information to hand. Listening to some of the things that are happening to other people has made me realise that I have been able to help people find help and advice when it is most needed. It is very heart-warming to know that I have helped someone in need find a resolution to a problem that has been worrying them for a long time”

Linda Harrison
Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Volunteer

healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.

0300 303 8554

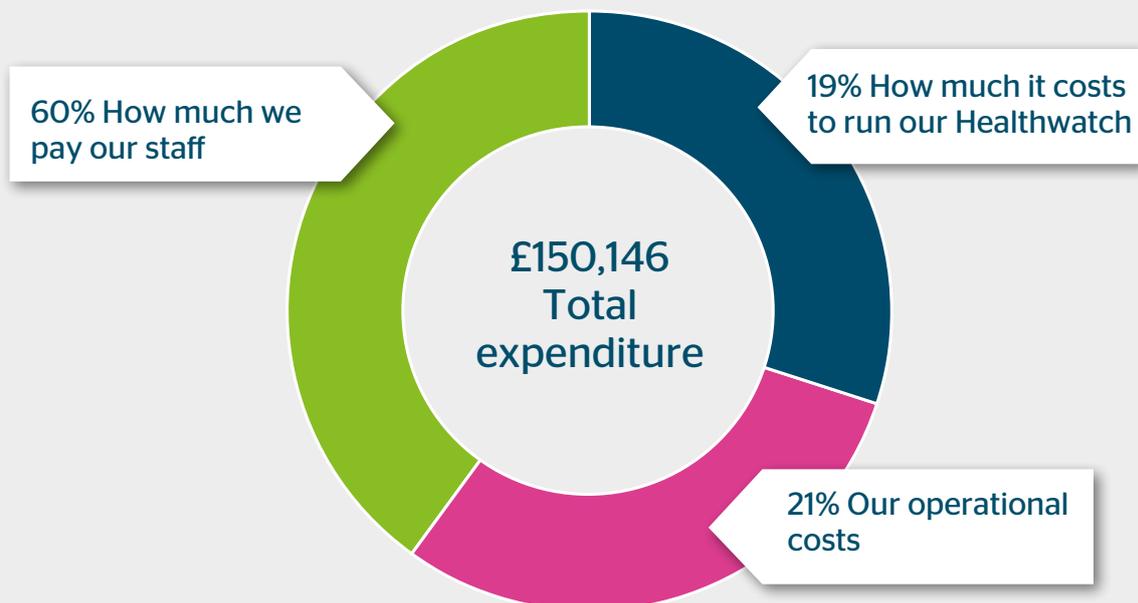
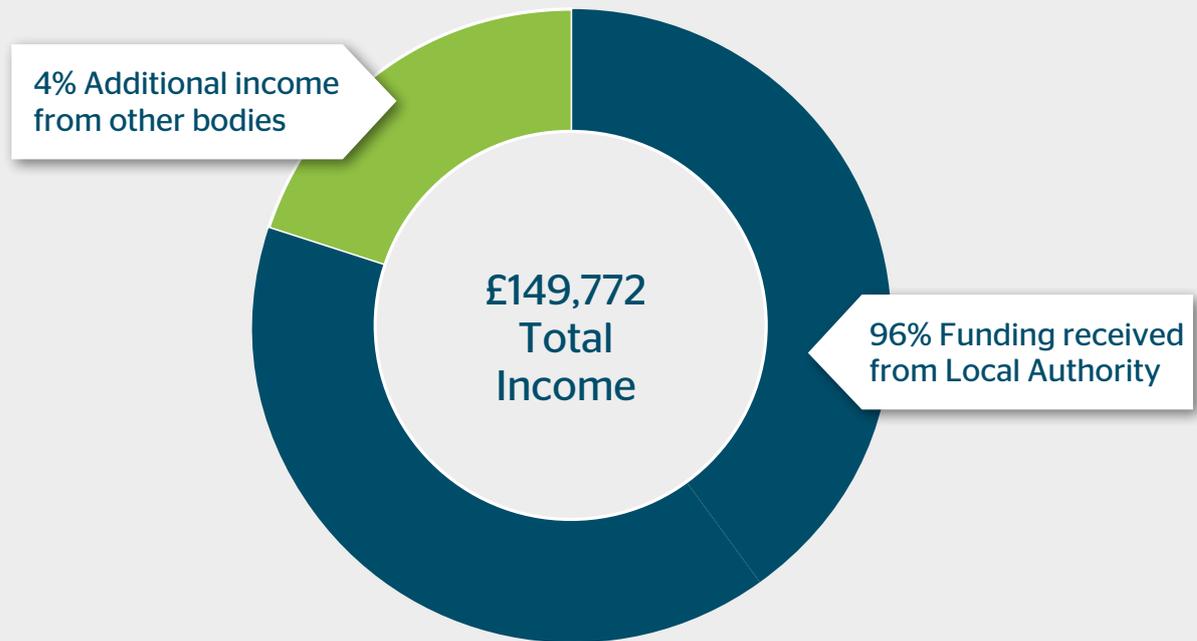


Our finances

How we use our money

To help us carry out our work, we are funded by our local authority. In 2018-19 we spent £150,146.

We also received £5,572 of additional income from additional project work and contributions to cover costs of engagement events.





**Our plans for
next year**

Plans for 2019/2020

Over the next few months our staff, volunteers and Directors will be focusing on several projects and events and engaging with our community, to hear more about their experiences of health and social care services delivered locally.

These projects include:

- + **D/deaf community** - access to healthcare for the deaf community called 'Getting it Right'. We want to hear from the D/deaf community who have accessed healthcare services, both positive and less positive experiences. The aim of the project is to engage with the deaf community in a meaningful and effective way. We will then provide a comprehensive report of our findings to key stakeholders with recommendations for improving the patient experience.
- + **Homelessness - 'Does no home equal no access?'** We want to hear from service users who would like to share their experience of access to the full range of health and social care services delivered through primary and secondary services. Central Bedfordshire Council is looking to develop improved support in key areas for those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and our project aims to provide examples of lived experiences to identify the challenges and help minimise the barriers that put them at a disadvantage. The resulting report, presented to the local authority, will include recommendations to minimise barriers and improve equality of access to services.
- + **Enter & View visits** - following training given to young Healthwatch members, and a presentation to the group by a member of the

sexual health service, they expressed an interest in carrying out an observation visit to the sexual health clinic to gain a better understanding of how the service operates, and to look at what improvements, if any, they felt could be made to make it a better experience for a young person. This visit is scheduled for June 2019 and their report of the visit will be shared with the service provider and key local stakeholders. They will also be developing a young Healthwatch Enter & View programme of visits in the coming months, to other services, to inform the decision makers how a young person views the service.

- + **Young Healthwatch Awayday** - with support from our Youth Engagement Officer, members of the young Healthwatch group are planning an Awayday to celebrate the hard work and efforts of our young volunteers and forward planning for the next few months.

Events:

- + **Festival for Older People** - we will be holding our annual festival for older people in October 2019 to build on the success of past years events providing a 'one stop shop', bringing together organisations and community groups who support older people.
- + **Just Ask 2019** - our award winning outreach programme of events will continue until the end of this year. We will be working with our partner organisations and key stakeholders to provide advice and information to the local community.

'Through volunteering with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire I have gained a lot of self worth and satisfaction. I am excited to be involved in their plans for the future'

David, HWCB Volunteer

Message from our CEO

In the past year we have spoken with thousands of people in our community, increased our activities and events and seen Young Healthwatch go from strength to strength.

Looking back

We heard many personal stories during our engagement programme which took place earlier this year, gathering feedback from the public about the NHS Long Term Plan, a few of which are reflected in this report. These stories are also included in our full Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) report *'What Would You Do'* and I would like to thank all who took part for their valuable contributions without which the report would not have had the same impact or meaning.

Last year concerns were raised with us regarding mental health and recovery services and we undertook a project to further explore the issues highlighted and to hear from those accessing the service. Once again, many people shared their experiences and our report, which was shared with key stakeholders, reflects the need to improve the quality of the service.

In October last year we held a hugely successful Festival for Older People which took place after our popular outreach project 'Just Ask' had finished in 2018.

Looking ahead

As detailed earlier in this report, in addition to increasing our activities with young people in the community, we are looking forward to working on projects engaging with the D/deaf community and the homeless, or those at risk

of homelessness. We will also be working closely with our BLMK ICS colleagues to ensure that the voice of local people, as highlighted in the BLMK report, informs their local plans, whilst continuing with our award winning outreach events, our annual events and targeted engagement activities.

Thank you

I would like to thank our amazing and supportive staff and volunteers, who go above and beyond and without whom we could not achieve everything we do. I would also like to thank our Chair, Dave Simpson, for his continued support and empowerment and our loyal and encouraging Board of Directors and Trustees.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DBlackmun". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a thin horizontal line.

Diana Blackmun
Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire CEO

Thank you

Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- + Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us
- + All of our amazing staff and volunteers
- + All our wonderful young Healthwatch volunteers
- + Our Directors and Trustees
- + The voluntary organisations that have contributed to our work; ; Age UK, Groundwork East, Carers in Bedfordshire, Disability Resource Centre, Voluntary Community Action, Sight Concern, Mind, Minds2gether, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Trust (BRCC), Chums, AAA Screening Service, Victim Support, The Forum, Path2Recovery, Home Instead and The Red Box Project Central Bedfordshire.
- + Staff and colleagues at Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC)
- + East London Foundation Trust (ELFT)
- + Staff and colleagues at Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG)



- + Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes (BLMK) ICS colleagues
- + Our regional Healthwatch colleagues, particularly, local Healthwatch across BLMK; Bedford Borough, Luton and Milton Keynes
- + Healthwatch England

“Working with our partners in the wider Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System (BLMK ICS) is essential to achieving the transformative care that we want for our local populations. We are committed to engaging with our local communities to ensure that their voice is heard and considered in commissioning decisions and welcome the support we receive from Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire as a ‘critical friend’, helping us to achieve this. We have particularly valued their work leading on the engagement programme undertaken by Healthwatch across BLMK around the NHS Long Term Plan. The comprehensive Healthwatch report has provided real insights around what matters to local people and guided our own local planning. We also welcome their contribution as members of the BCCG Patient and Public Engagement Committee and Governing Body, scrutinising and supporting communications and engagement activities to ensure we continue to meet our statutory duty to involve and put patient views at the heart of our work.”

Patricia Davies

Joint Accountable Officer
Bedfordshire CCG, Luton CCG and
Milton Keynes CCG

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www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

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08399922

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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.

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