

# Patient Hospital Transport Survey





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# Introduction

Central Bedfordshire does not have its own hospital within its boundaries. The closest hospitals for appointments, Accident and Emergency and admissions are Bedford General Hospital, which is within the Unitary Borough of Bedford, and the Luton and Dunstable Hospital, which is within the Unitary Borough of Luton. Other hospitals available for appointments for the residents of Central Bedfordshire are Addenbrookes in Cambridge, the Lister in Hertfordshire and Stoke Mandeville in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

The recent changes to the eligibility criteria for the Patient Hospital Transport service for residents in Central Bedfordshire, (“the Service”) have caused some issues with patients who are no longer eligible, yet feel that they have no other alternative than to access the Service to be able to attend their appointments.

Access to information regarding the changes and how they may affect patients can be located at <https://www.bedfordshireccg.nhs.uk/page/?id=4160>

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire received many calls and emails from people finding themselves no longer eligible for transport to appointments at hospitals out of the Central Bedfordshire area, yet not knowing what to do instead. Some people had to miss appointments because they had no way of attending without help with transport and many people were unclear about the changes and why they were no longer eligible. Such calls as these prompted Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to undertake the survey.





## Background

Central Bedfordshire currently has a population of 264,500 people<sup>1</sup>. A number of these residents have used the Service to attend appointments in one of the out of area hospitals in the past. Recent changes to the eligibility criteria have resulted in many patients becoming confused about why they no longer qualify for this service. It was clear, from the many calls and comments on the Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire website, that these changes were causing hardship and distress to patients.

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's research was to document how the change in criteria for accessing the Service had impacted on the more vulnerable people in the Central Bedfordshire Area.

The survey was designed to give an overall view of the demographics of those people in Central Bedfordshire, who had used the service in the past, but were now finding it difficult to get access under the new criteria. The outcome of this survey will be presented in this report and Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will then present these outcomes to the organisations involved in the changes in eligibility criteria to show their impact on service-users.

## Method and Approach

During July to September 2015 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire undertook a public survey of residents at various different locations within the Central Bedfordshire area.

19 questions were presented and results were obtained in person, at events hosted by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, via our website or email, or by mail, using survey question sheets with postage paid envelopes attached.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire volunteers and staff directly approached residents of Central Bedfordshire at various locations across Central Bedfordshire utilising the outreach project 'Just Ask'. Answers to the questions in the survey were then directly entered into Survey Monkey (the application hosting our survey). In addition, email was utilised by attaching a survey sheet in electronic form to a blanket email, describing the purpose of the survey, requesting that people complete the 'on line' form. The survey was also publicised on HWCB's website with an electronic link to the survey.

During HWCB's Enter and View programme which included GP Practices within Central Bedfordshire, Patient Hospital Transport survey sheets were completed by patients and posted into a dedicated box. This box was collected at the closure of the survey and physically entered onto Survey Monkey to form part of the overall results. The survey on the website was also publicised at events hosted by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. A total of 386 surveys was completed and the results of this survey are detailed in this report.

A copy of the questionnaire used in the survey can be found at Appendix A.

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<sup>1</sup> Central Bedfordshire Council, Key Facts and Figures, April 2015, p.4:  
[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Key%20Facts%20Figures%20April%202015\\_tcm6-10164.pdf](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Key%20Facts%20Figures%20April%202015_tcm6-10164.pdf)



## Summary of Findings

The Survey itself is restricted through necessity; it is limited to the experience of individual patients formed on a limited number of journeys. The data obtained was largely limited to a specific cohort of patients who had used the transport system in the three years prior to the survey. There was little or no comparison between recent patient transport experiences and historical consumer service experience, as that data either did not exist or was not available to us.

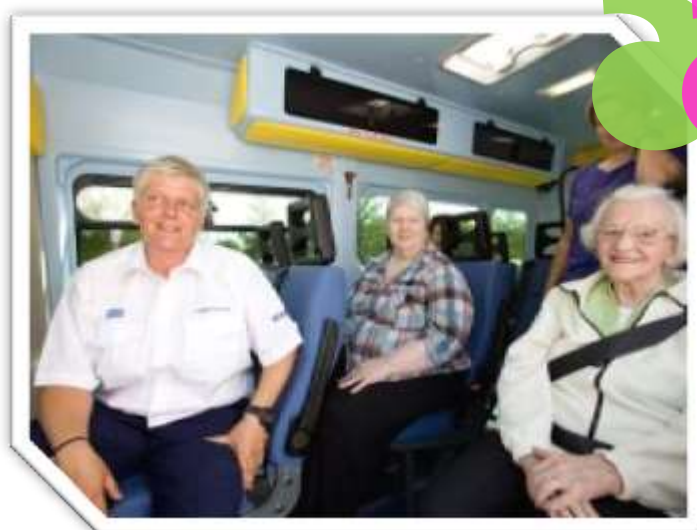
The Key Findings below indicate a limited amount of quantitative data regarding age, gender, localities and time keeping; and is largely self-explanatory.

One concern regarding the survey response is the large volume of respondents who are 'skipping' most of the questions (circa 75%) which suggests that the questions may be flawed in some way; either lacking in meaning, maybe not immediately intelligible to the respondents, or most likely the respondents preferred response was not available.

The qualitative data is largely restricted to the collection of additional comments from the patients. These comments hint, teasingly, at some of the major issues facing the providers of hospital transport i.e. lack of co-ordination, failure to arrive at all, poor communication, lengthy unexplained delays and protracted journey times without comfort breaks.

It is also clear from the comments that many people who have historically used hospital transport now no longer find themselves eligible and may, as a result, be suffering hardship.

There is also the suggestion that where the vehicle in use is appropriate and the driver properly trained, patients are extremely grateful and find this service critically important. The delays both during the journey, and at the hospital waiting for transport home after treatment has taken place, may not be clinically significant on their own. However, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire believes that the wellbeing and dignity of the patient is of paramount concern and that further investigation of this area of service activity is required; and furthermore could potentially assist with service and therefore budget efficiencies.





## Recommendations

Following analysis of the Patient Hospital Transport Survey by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, we would make the following recommendations.

Patients do appear to be unaware of the changes to the criteria for eligibility to use the Service. Some have been using the Service for some time but now find they are unable to access transport to their appointment. A more joined-up approach is required to ensure that all potential refusals to the service are backed up with a source of information (leaflet) giving the necessary information to the service user to be able to plan their own future transport needs.

If 'self-funders' are looking to access this Service they should be given a full explanation as to why they must make their own arrangements to attend their hospital appointments. This explanation should include information that satisfies their questions or concerns about costs etc., and should also be tailored specifically for those patients who may have difficulty understanding anything but plain English.

Whilst it is difficult to ensure that all patients reach their appointments in good time and are returned home in good time, it has to be accepted by the patients who are eligible for this Service that there is no guarantee that they will be returned home within a specific timeframe. This should be made clear at the time of booking to avoid any misunderstanding or misapprehension on the part of the patient. Alternatives could be suggested at this stage such as community buses, volunteer agencies etc. For example, use the Service to reach the appointment but make their own arrangements to return home later. Bus timetables and other details could be provided.

Clarity of who is responsible for the changes in eligibility criteria would be a useful piece of information for questions posed by patients. Where and why was the decision made to change the eligibility criteria? Was a reasonable period of research undertaken to ensure that vulnerable people would not suffer hardship and loss?

Set up of a helpline which answers frequently asked questions. This number could be publicised within Central Bedfordshire to ensure that there are no cases of anyone being unaware of the changes in eligibility.







# Key Findings

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's target area covered the whole of Central Bedfordshire. In total, surveys and responses were received from 44 areas across Central Bedfordshire, one of which was Luton which has been discounted as being out of the Central Bedfordshire area. 386 surveys were completed and the results form the basis of this report.

The Data and Graphs section of this report details the numbers of those who answered or skipped each question. A percentage of those who completed the questionnaire did not continue past question six as they had not previously used the Patient Hospital Transport service.

Findings from both sections of the questionnaire are detailed below:

## Section One:

### **Question 1**

In question one, respondents were asked where in Central Bedfordshire they lived. As detailed above, the areas stipulated covered a wide range of towns and villages across Central Bedfordshire.

### **Question 2**

In question two, respondents were asked their age. The survey data shows that the majority of people in Central Bedfordshire who feel they need access to the Service are between the ages of 50-100. Interestingly, there are a number of vulnerable people in the age range of 25-49 who also feel they need help with transport.

### **Question 3**

In question three, respondents were asked their gender. In response to this question 70% (273) of the people surveyed were female and 29% (113) were male.

### **Question 4**

In question four, respondents were asked if they knew where to obtain information about the Patient Hospital Transport Service. 232 people said 'No', they did not know where to get this information and 152 said 'Yes' they did.

### **Question 5**

In question five, respondents were asked if they thought they would need help from the Patient Hospital Transport Service to enable them to attend a medical appointment. 91 people replied 'Yes' and 293 people replied 'No'.

### **Question 6**

In question six respondents were asked if they had used the Patient Hospital Transport Service in the last three years. 66 people responded 'Yes' and were directed to section two in the survey. 15 replied 'No' because they did not qualify to use the service. These were directed to answer only questions 7 and 8 below. 293 answered 'No' and were told they did not need to answer any further questions and were thanked for their time.

### **Question 7**

In question seven respondents were asked if there was a reason they did not qualify for the service and had this been explained to them. 18 people said they did not have the reason explained to them and 3 people said they did have the reason explained to them. 366 people skipped this question.

### **Question 8**

In question eight respondents were asked how had they got to their appointment without using patient hospital transport. 19 people answered this question. Of these, six people used their own transport, two used public transport, two used a taxi service and the remaining nine had to make their own way at their own expense.

## **Section Two**

This section was completed by those people who had previously used the Patient Hospital Transport service.

### **Question 2.1**

In question one respondents were asked how many times they have used Patient Hospital Transport in the last three years. Answers below:

- 10 people had used PHT once
- 9 people used it twice
- 9 people used it three times
- 7 people used it four times
- 2 people used it five times
- 26 people used it over five times
- 323 people skipped the question.

### **Question 2.2**

In question two respondents were asked if they would recommend the Patient Hospital Transport Service to other people. 52 people said 'Yes', they would recommend the service" and 12 said they would not. 323 people skipped the question

### **Question 2.3**

In question three respondents were asked which organisation booked the transport for them. 20 people answered 'GP', 43 answered Hospital/healthcare provider and 326 skipped the question.

### **Question 2.4**

In question four respondents were asked if they needed support from a Carer, friend or family member to attend an appointment. 30 people responded 'Yes' to this question, 46 people responded 'No' and were directed to question 14. 310 people skipped the question.

### **Question 2.5**

In question five respondents were asked whether the Patient Transport Service allowed them to take a family member/carer with them on the journey. 22 answered 'Yes'. Six answered 'No' and 358 people skipped the question.



### Question 2.6

In question six respondents were asked at which hospital/treatment centre was their appointment. The following responses were recorded. 67 people answered this question.

<b>30 Bedford</b>	<b>1 Stoke Mandeville</b>
<b>14 Luton and Dunstable</b>	<b>1 Papworth</b>
<b>6 Lister</b>	<b>1 Royal Free</b>
<b>4 Milton Keynes</b>	<b>1 Great Ormond Street</b>
<b>2 Leicester Royal</b>	<b>1 Health Village Kimbolton Road</b>
<b>2 Addenbrookes</b>	<b>1 RNOH Stanmore</b>
<b>1 Oxford</b>	<b>1 High Wycombe</b>

### Question 2.7

In question seven respondents were asked what type of appointment/treatment they needed hospital transport for. 54 stated that it was for a regular outpatient appointment, five indicated a full day procedure, 12 said it was for an overnight/long term stay in hospital and 321 people skipped this question

### Question 2.8

In question eight respondents were asked whether the hospital transport arrived to pick them up at the expected time. This was further clarified by stipulating *'if you have used Patient Hospital Transport more than once, on average, did they arrive on time?'*

42 people answered 'Yes' to this question and 19 answered 'No' and 325 people skipped this question.

### Question 2.9

In question nine respondents were asked whether the hospital transport service got them to their appointment on time. This was further clarified by stipulating *'if you have used Patient Hospital Transport more than once, on average, did you get to your appointment on time?'* 45 people answered 'Yes' to this question, 15 people answered 'No'. 326 people skipped this question

### Question 2.9a

In question nine respondents were also asked if they were late, approximately how late for the appointment were they. Only eleven people answered this question. The times ranged from up to two hours late, up to 40 minutes late or in some cases the transport did not turn up at all.

### Question 2.9b

In question nine respondents were also asked, if the transport arrived later than the appointment given, what reasons they were given for the delay. Eight people said no reason or explanation was given for the lateness, seven people said the expected transport had broken down and five people said that the transport did arrive however; it was not suitable for their needs. The remainder of people who answered this question stated that there were a variety of reasons given for the delay, for example, from the number of people needing transport to other passengers delaying the transport.

### Question 2.10

In question ten respondents were asked what happened if they arrived late for their appointment. Two people said they missed their appointment. Five people said the appointment was rearranged, ten people said the appointment went ahead even though they were late and 369 people skipped this question.

### Question 2.11

In question eleven respondents were asked if they needed the transport service to take them home, which included discharge from hospital. 57 people answered 'Yes' to this question, 8 people said 'No' and 321 people skipped this question.

### Question 2.12

In question twelve respondents were asked whether they were given a time for the hospital transport to take them home. 21 people answered 'Yes' to this question, 37 said 'No', only one person said they did not remember and 327 people skipped this question.

### Question 2.13

In question thirteen respondents were asked how long, on average, did they have to wait for the hospital transport to take them home. 328 people skipped this question however; the responses from those who did answer the question are listed below:

AMOUNT	TIME WAITING
13	Less than 30 minutes
20	30 minutes to 1 hour
14	1 to 2 hours
5	2 to 3 hours
6	Over 3 hours

### Question 2.14

In question fourteen respondents were asked, if they did not use Patient Hospital Transport to get home, how had they got home. The majority of people who answered this question stated they asked family or friends to collect them with the remainder stating that they used their own car/transport. A small minority said they used a taxi either independently or arranged by the Hospital

### Question 2.15

In question fifteen respondents were asked if they needed help at home, were the necessary arrangements made for family, Carers or friends to meet them when they arrived back at home. 26 people answered 'Yes' to this question, 8 answered 'No', 32 stipulated that they did not need help at home and 321 people skipped this question

### Question 2.16

In question sixteen respondents were asked would they know where to direct a complaint about the Patient Hospital Transport Service if they wanted to make a complaint about the service. 17 people answered 'Yes' to this question and 49 people answered 'No'. 320 people skipped this question.

### Question 2.17

In question seventeen respondents were asked if they had made a complaint about the Patient Hospital Transport Service in the past three years. Only 64 people answered this question, six people answered 'Yes' and 58 said 'No'.

### Question 2.18

In question eighteen respondents were asked whether the vehicle used to transport them to hospital was appropriate for their needs. Responses included the following:

- *'I do not know as they did not arrive'*
- *'The first time a car was sent it was no good to me as I had a broken hip; I informed them when booking but a car was still sent'*
- *'Yes when it arrives'*
- *'Just an everyday Taxi'*

### Question 2.19

In question nineteen respondents were asked if they had any additional comments that they wanted to add about the Patient Hospital Transport Service. A variety of comments were received, both positive and negative, as follows:

#### Positive Comments:

Drivers are very helpful

Pretty good really; efficient, driver was with me all day

Drivers very courteous

Felt MK transport treated me very well; all friendly staff

Very happy; although timing needs to be seen to,

Brilliant service; Hospital excellent too.

Very thankful that this service was available to me

Very good service and would recommend it

Excellent service; professional and caring staff, much appreciated

Very pleased and grateful to all concerned. I have only met and been dealt with in a pleasant manner.

Treatment first class; well done.

The drivers are very helpful and make sure we are safe in our homes by taking us to the door.

Both the ambulance and car have been very good

Good services, 5 star

In general very excellent service

I don't think they're appreciated as much as they should be

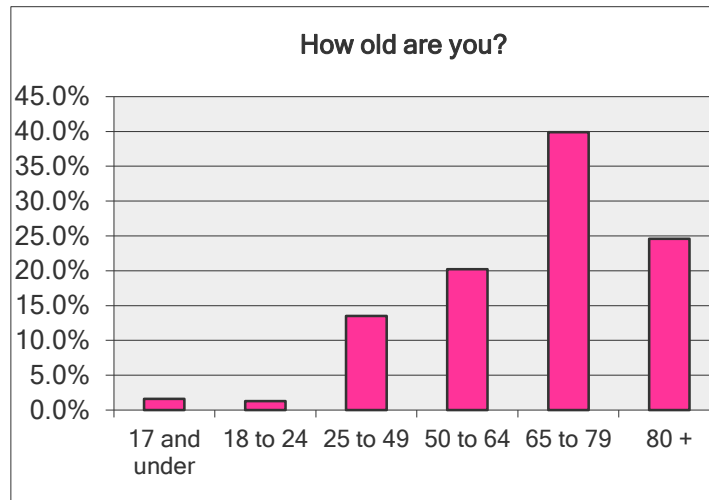
#### Negative Comments:

No proper co-ordination between departments; takes too long a route back home

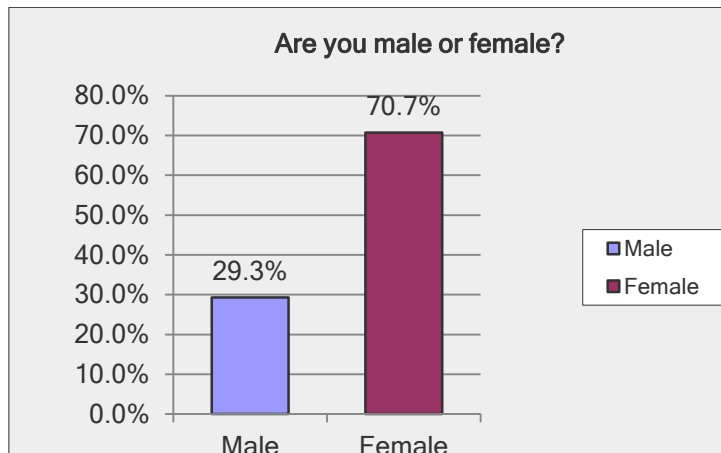
As a volunteer and phone holder with the Good Neighbour Scheme, Houghton Regis Helpers we are getting regular calls from patients who are no longer eligible for the Hospital Transport Service. These calls include residents who do not live locally and we are therefore unable to help them get to appointments. It concerns our group that [a] our details are being given to patients who do not live in the town, [b] often last minute requests that we cannot fulfil, [c] we do not have specialised transport for those who may need it, e.g. wheelchair users, [d] calls from patients who are not current clients and therefore unknown to us - this includes requests from hospitals when patients are due for discharge. A copy of the current criteria for eligibility was requested some time ago but not yet received. Please forward a copy, if available, to [houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk).

If I am late being collected it means my appointment runs late. I am normally finished by 8pm but last appointment didn't finish until nearly 10pm and I arrived home at 10.20pm. I need carers to get me into bed and they only work until 10pm
Had problems also last week (June 2015) with not turning up on time. Being looked into, needs improvement to the service
In the evening after my appointment I received a call from the transport service asking why I was not there when they came to collect me. They had not even realised they had neglected to collect me and take me to the appointment.
The driver was driving too fast and caused severe pain in my leg. The hospital checked the 'tacho' and found the driver had broken the speed limit.
Parents booked the transport for 6 year old son and requested a booster seat so they did not have to carry one around all day. On all occasions of using transport a booster seat was not provided.
Last week I waited for the transport for more than 2 hours. When they arrived it appears I had been forgotten!
They did not want to consider or discuss my needs. I was told I was not usually down for transport for appointments. Appointment W/C 18th May 2015
I do not need to use PTS at present as my daughter travels from Hemel Hempstead to take me but in the future this may not always be possible
Concerned about the cost of parking has recently paid 2 x £6 and 2 x £4
Refused free transport today 6th May 2015 from home to hospital and return. Had to find my own way at the cost of £43 for a CT scan. I have to go again on 14th May 2015 to see the oncologist at my own expense which is hard to find on a widows pension.
Please note that I have always booked my husband's appointment for him through the old system via GP and never had any problems at all. I have appointment on 14th May at MK and another in May and L&D for DEXA scan, both have been booked but will wait and see if they turn up.
Was given a time to go home but took a long time as went all around the villages.
My father used the service; he had MS and was on oxygen. Sometimes on the journey he would wet himself but he did not complain because he was embarrassed.
I am lucky to have family around to take me to my appointments. If I didn't I would need help.
Treatment - use of wheel chair and transport, communication and staff excellent
It's run by good hearted volunteer and part time drivers; it's the management between the Hospital organisation and the transporter that's the PROBLEM....no continuity or lateral thinking.
Necessary service but needs improvement.
It is a much needed service especially for wheelchair bound patients who do not have any other means to get to hospital apart from taxi which is too expensive; especially if you are disabled they charge too much money
Worried about reducing the criteria still further in future.
I made a formal complaint and so did the clinic I attended.
Had difficulty with arranging appropriate transport; journey took a long time, and two hour wait for transport home.
It seriously breaks down, on the return journey, It might be pre-arranged, but if the Hospital Bed Manager forgets and goes home.....there is no-one in authority to get transport to take you home at 10pm, waited since 9am you have any other comments on the Patient Hospital Transport Service.

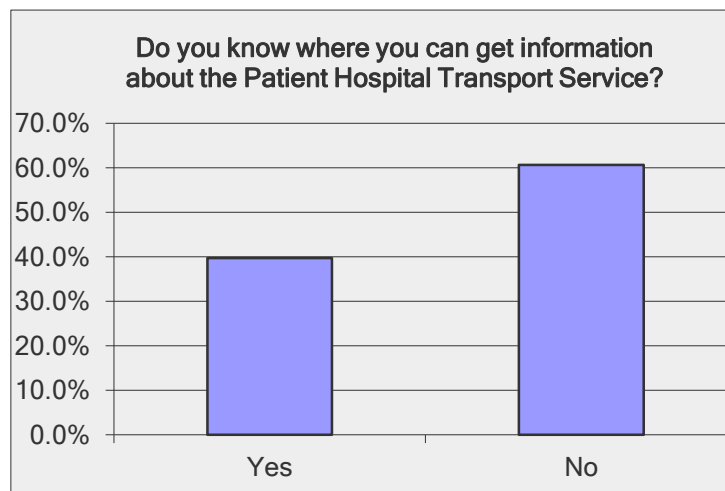
# Graphs and Data



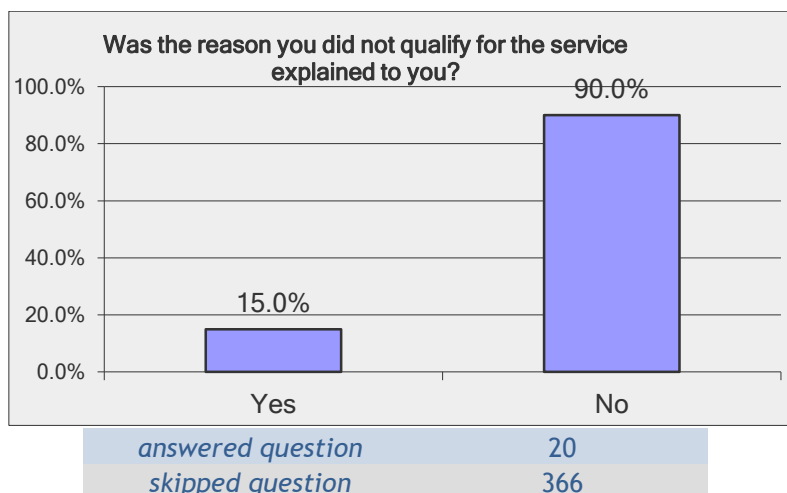
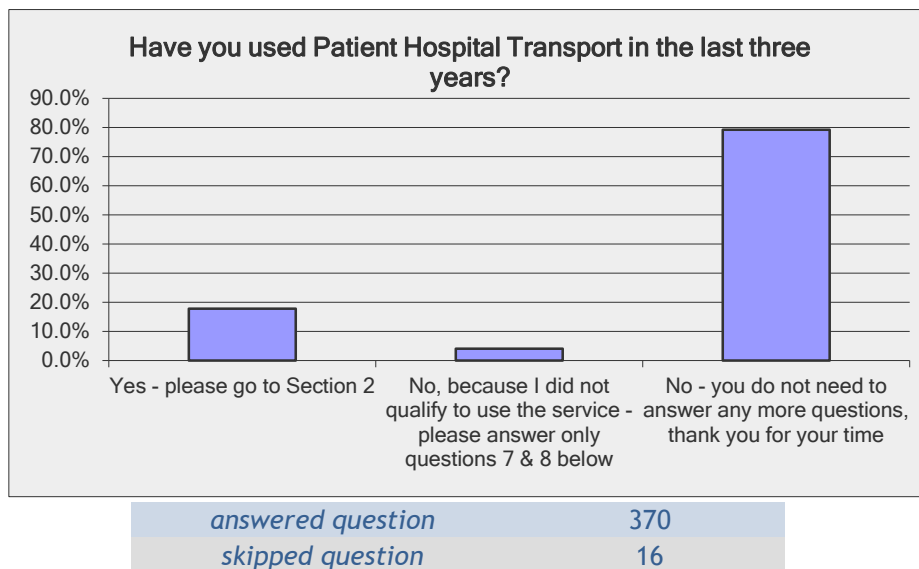
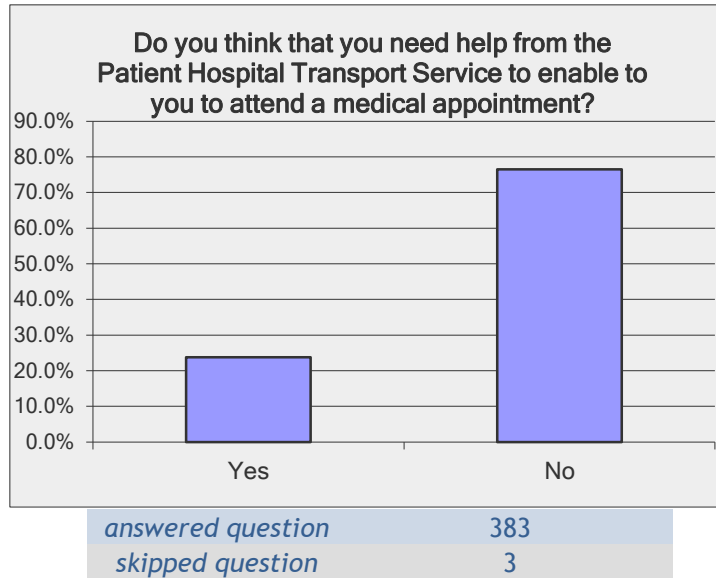
<i>answered question</i>	386
<i>skipped question</i>	0



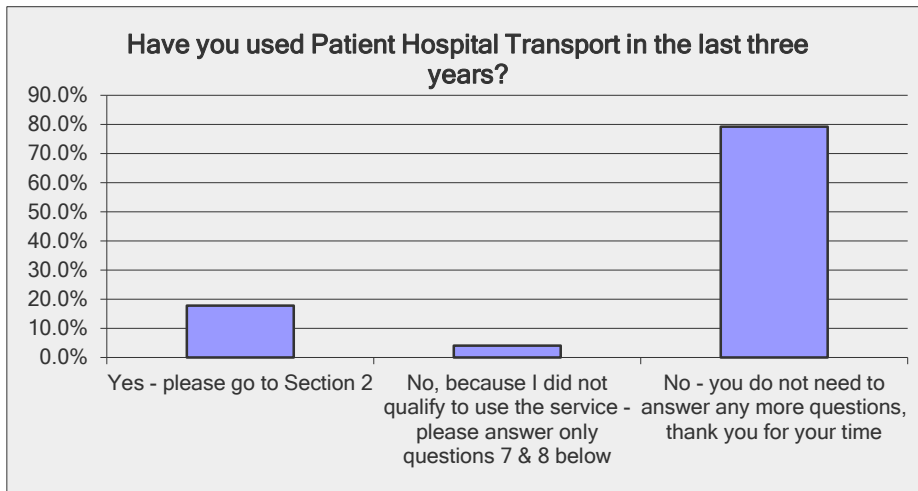
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<i>skipped question</i>	0



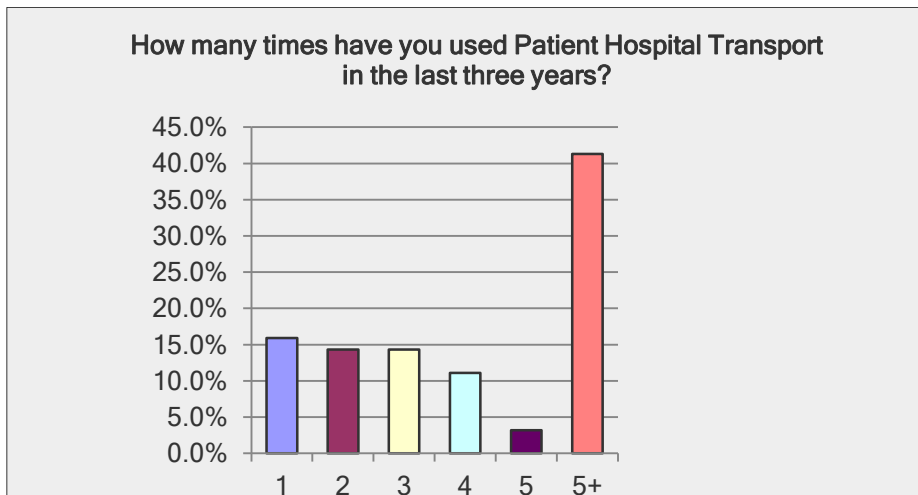
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<i>skipped question</i>	3



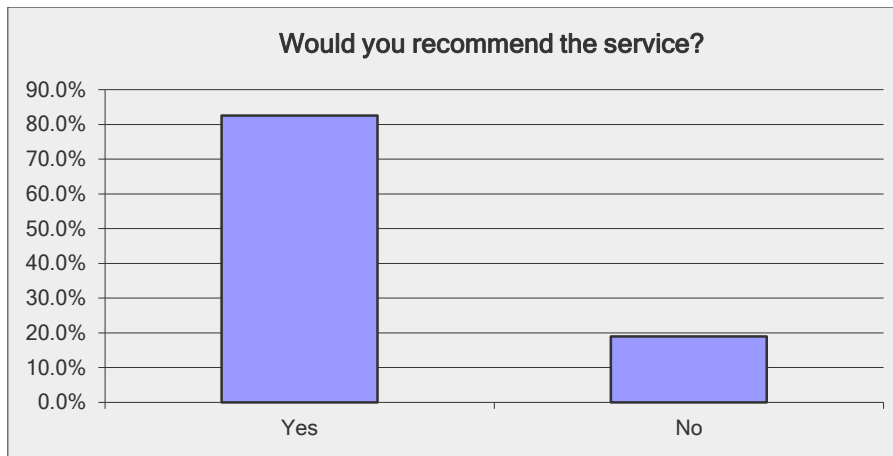




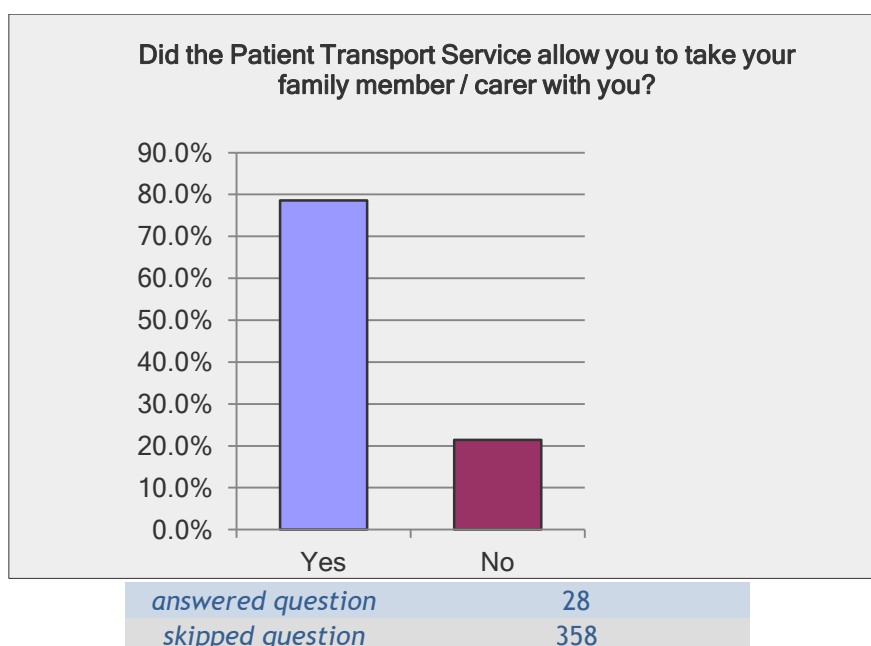
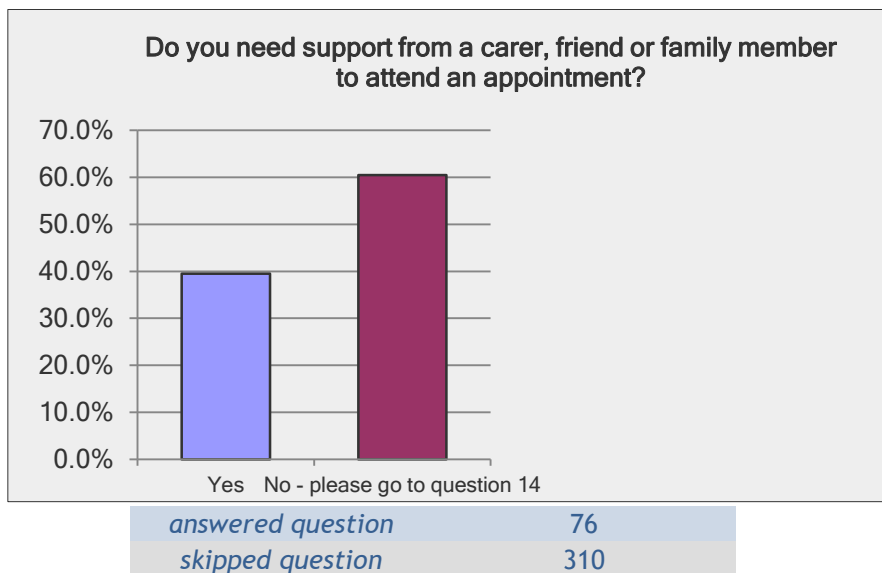
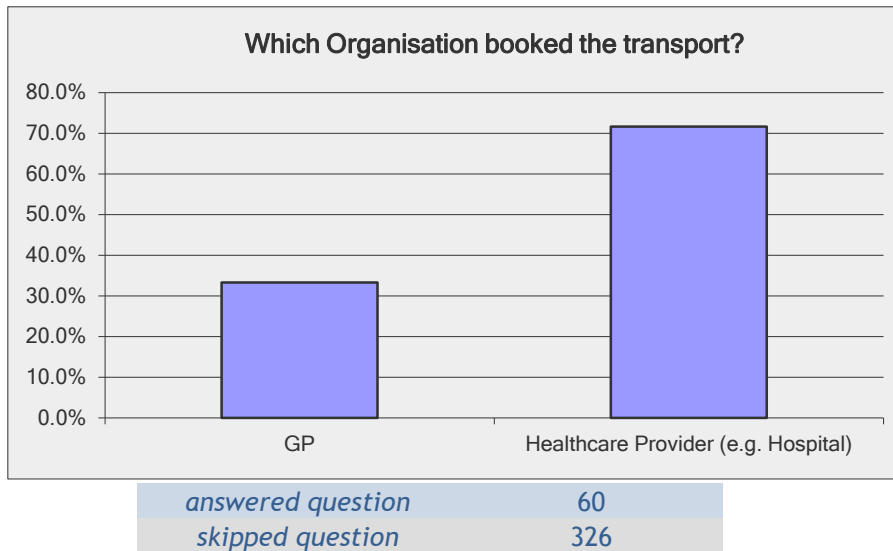
<i>answered question</i>	20
<i>skipped question</i>	366

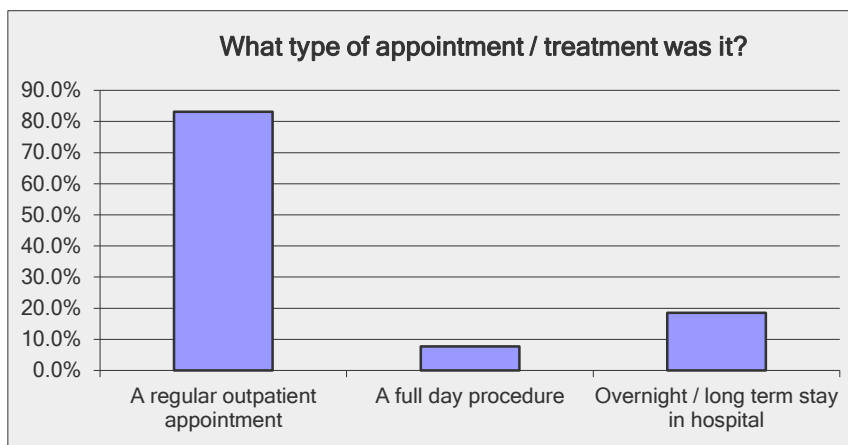


<i>answered question</i>	63
<i>skipped question</i>	323

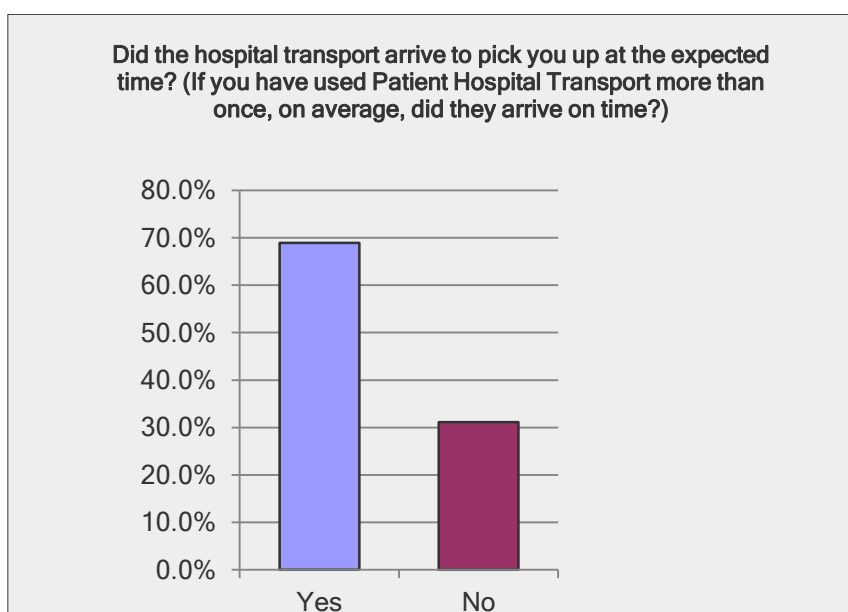


<i>answered question</i>	63
<i>skipped question</i>	323

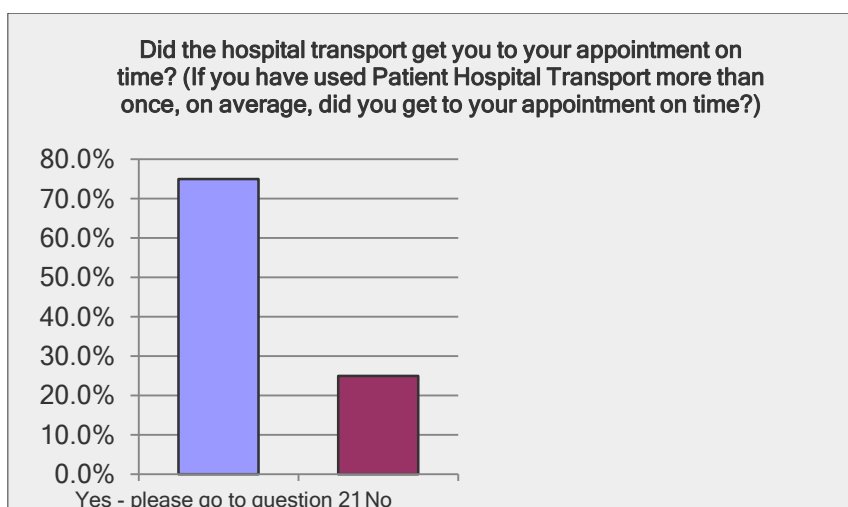




<i>answered question</i>	65
<i>skipped question</i>	321

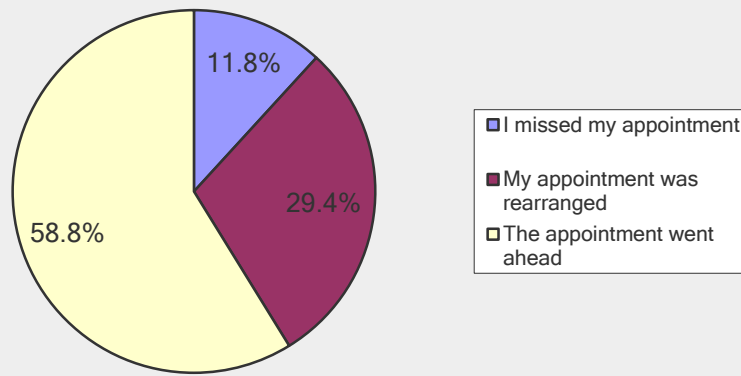


<i>answered question</i>	61
<i>skipped question</i>	325



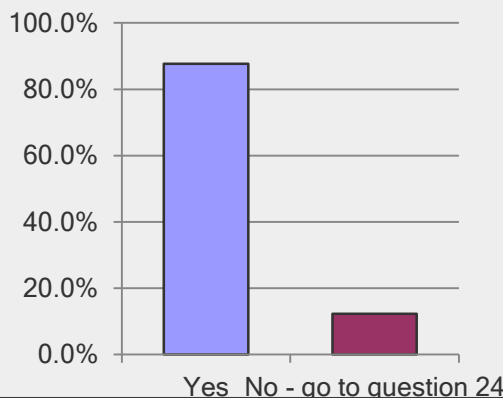
<i>answered question</i>	60
<i>skipped question</i>	326

**What happened when you arrived late?**



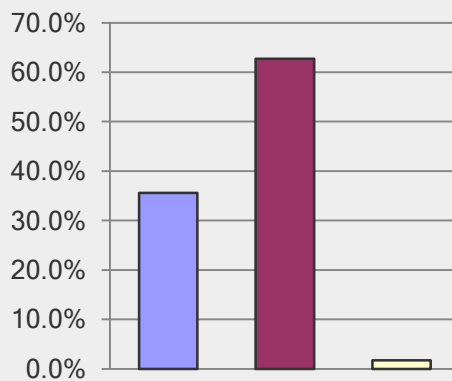
<i>answered question</i>	17
<i>skipped question</i>	369

**Did you need the transport service to take you home?  
(including discharge from hospital)**

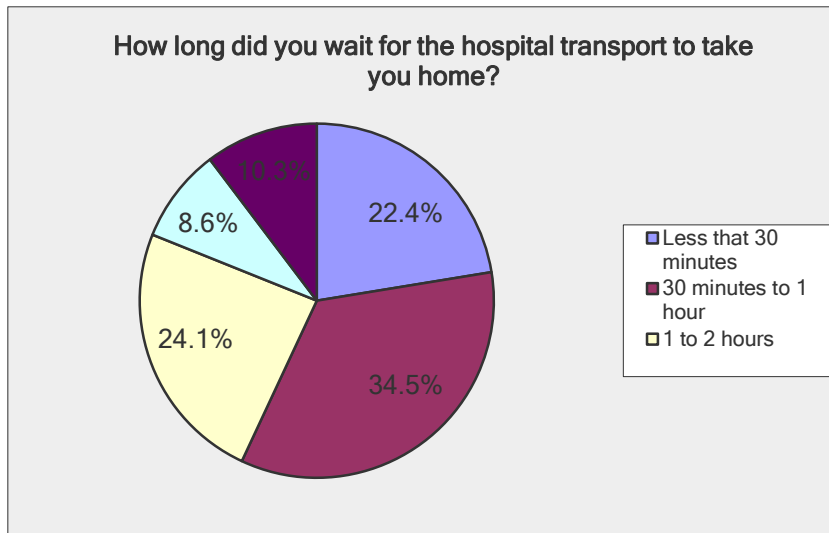


<i>answered question</i>	65
<i>skipped question</i>	321

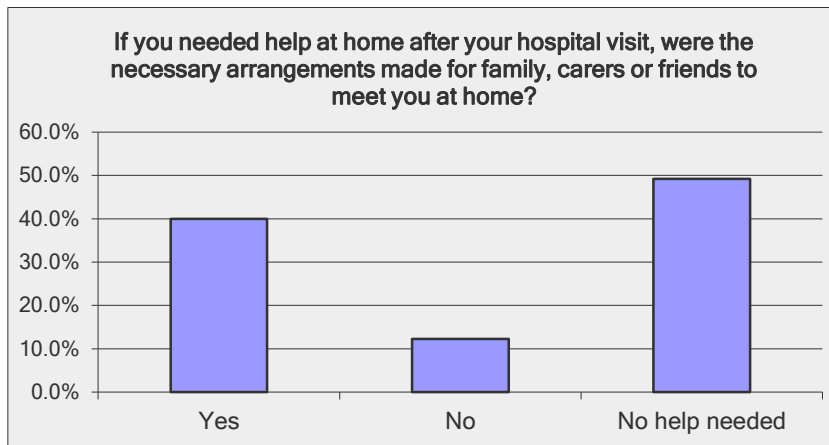
**Were you given a time for the hospital transport to take you home?**



<i>answered question</i>	59
<i>skipped question</i>	327



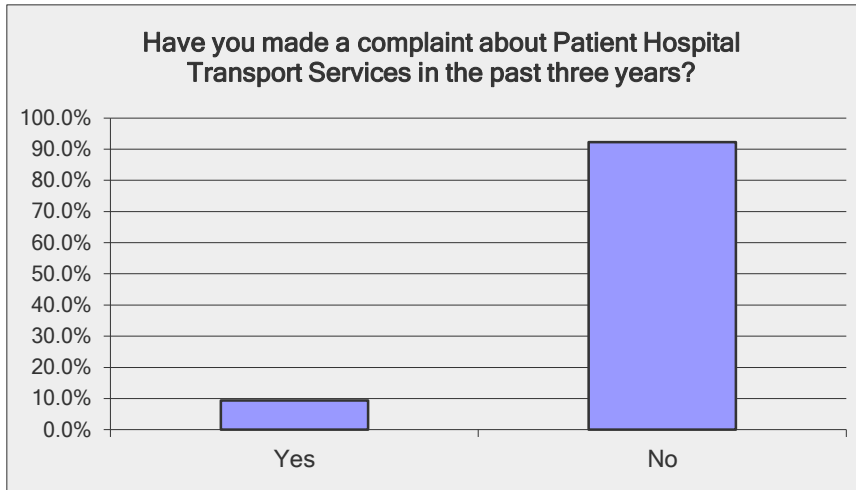
<i>answered question</i>	<b>58</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>328</b>



<i>answered question</i>	<b>65</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>321</b>



<i>answered question</i>	<b>66</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>320</b>



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<i>skipped question</i>	<b>322</b>



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<i>skipped question</i>	<b>328</b>







# 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 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 is heard, understood and acted upon. Everything we say and do is informed by our connections with 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 we all 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 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.



# Patient Hospital Transport Survey

## Section 1:

1. Where in Central Bedfordshire do you live?

2. How old are you?

- 17 and under     18 to 24     25 to 49     50 to 64     65 to 79  
 80+

3. Are you male or female?

- Male     Female

4. Do you know where you can get information about the Patient Hospital Transport Service?

- Yes     No

If yes, where can you get information?

5. Do you think that you need help from the Patient Hospital Transport Service to enable you to attend a medical appointment?

- Yes     No

6. Have you used Patient Hospital Transport in the last three years?

- Yes – please go to section 2     No, because I did not qualify to use the service – **please answer only questions 7 & 8 in Section 1**

- No – **you do not need to answer any more questions,  
Thank you for your time**

7. Was the reason you did not qualify for the service explained to you?

Yes     No

If yes, what was the reason?

8. How did you get to your appointment without using the patient hospital transport service?

**Section 2 - Please only complete Section 2 if you have used Patient Hospital Transport in the past three years:**

1. How many times have you used Patient Hospital Transport in the past three years?

1     2     3     4     5     5+

2. Would you recommend the service?

Yes     No

3. Which Organisation booked the transport?

GP     Healthcare provider (e.g. Hospital)

Other Please state.....

4. Do you need support from a friend, family member or carer to attend an appointment?

Yes     No – **please go to question 6**

5. Did the Patient Transport Service allow you to take your family member/ carer with you?

Yes     No, if not why not .....

6. At which hospital / treatment centre was your appointment?

7. What type of appointment / treatment was it?

- A regular outpatient appointment       A full day procedure  
 Overnight / long term stay in hospital       Other: Please state below

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8. Did the hospital transport arrive to pick you up at the expected time? (If you have used Patient Hospital Transport more than once, on average, did they arrive on time?)

- Yes       No

9. Did the transport get you to the appointment on time? (If you have used Patient Hospital Transport more than once, on average, did you get to your appointment on time?)

- Yes – **please go to question 11**       No

If no, approximately how late were you?	
What reasons were you given for any delay?	

10. What happened when you arrived late?

- I missed my appointment       My appointment was rearranged  
 The appointment went ahead       Other – please provide details below

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11. Did you need the transport service to take you home? (including discharge from hospital)

- Yes       No - **go to question 14**

12. Were you given a time for the hospital transport to take you home?

- Yes       No

13. How long did you wait for the hospital transport to take you home?

- Less than 30 mins     30 mins to 1 hour     1 to 2 hours  
 2-3 hours     over 3 hours

14. If you did not use the Patient Hospital Transport Service to get home, please tell us how you did get home from the hospital?

15. If you needed help at home, were the necessary arrangements made for family, carers or friends to meet you at home?

- Yes     No     No help needed

16. Would you know where to direct a complaint about the Patient Hospital Transport Service if you had one?

- Yes     No

If so, where would you complain?

17. Have you made a complaint about Patient Hospital Transport Services in the past three years?

- Yes     No

18. Was the vehicle appropriate for your needs?

- Yes     No - If not, please expand

19. Any additional comments you would like to make about Hospital Patient Transport: