



**Falls Prevention Survey  
September 2017**

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# Introduction

The population in Central Bedfordshire is growing, rising from 254,400 in 2011 to approximately 274,000 in 2015. Further estimated growth of 20% will see the population rise to 333,000 by 2031.



The population is ageing as well as growing and between 2015 and 2021 the number of people aged 65 and over is forecast to increase from 47,100 to 74,400, a 58% increase.

In 2015, approximately 12,205 people aged 65 and over were estimated to have had a fall (note: this is the number of people that fall and not the number of falls) and since 2010/11 injuries due to falls in people aged 65 and over has risen. As a consequence, Central Bedfordshire has fallen from being significantly better than the England average to being statistically similar.

Falls are a major cause of disability and the leading cause of injury related mortality in people over 75 years, and osteoporosis increases the likelihood of serious injury. Up to 10% of falls are likely to result in serious injury, of which 5% are fractures.

Research shows that people who experience a fall are up to ten times more likely to fall again. So, a key factor is how to prevent that first fall; particularly as 'falls services' generally only work with people who have already fallen.

A hip fracture remains the most common cause of accident related death and approximately half of hip fracture patients who were previously independent will become partly dependent, and one third will become totally dependent. Approximately 20% of older people that suffer a hip fracture enter long term care in the first year after a fracture.

In Central Bedfordshire we are fortunate that integrated 'Falls Teams' provide a range of much needed support for people that have had a fall, however they only work with people who have fallen.

Through Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's (HWCB) engagement with local residents we became aware that falls prevention was a subject that was less likely to be addressed until one or more residents had suffered hospitalisation due to a fall in the home.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire therefore wanted to find out what level of awareness and understanding exists amongst the population of Central Bedfordshire about the best ways to prevent falls, and critically also, whether people have the willingness to 'future proof' their homes in advance of need and eliminate risk through good planning. For example, whilst they are mobile and active and have the confidence and flexibility to do so.



We also wanted to know whether older local residents felt a need for an information service to advise them of sensible and low key options to help prevent falls.



## Background



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire approached a popular local community group; University of the Third Age (U3A), to talk to their members, raise awareness of falls prevention, and to discuss and distribute HWCB's survey designed to ascertain their awareness of changes that might need to be made to their home in order to prevent falls in later life. Members were also asked to tell us what help they require in this area of self-care.

The U3A is a democratic, self-funded and self-managed organisation providing daytime educational and leisure activities at minimal cost for all local residents who are retired or not in full-time employment. This group of people were an ideal representative sample for HWCB's Falls Prevention survey. Over 100 people were in attendance on the day HWCB presented the survey.

The outcome of the survey will be available to local decision makers who commission and deliver preventative health and social care services to inform their work. Results of the survey will also be shared with Healthwatch England and published on our website at [www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)



## Methodology

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire staff and volunteers developed nine main questions, plus follow-up multiple choice questions, within the survey, to give respondents the opportunity to associate their answers with the situations suggested.

The survey was designed to spark recognition of likely hazards, normally taken for granted, and to gather information relating to thought patterns on the subjects covered, for example, *'Do you have rugs on the floor?'* Many people have rugs on the floor for aesthetics but may not have considered them a trip hazard. The questions were designed specifically to probe for responses that may not have been triggered on a daily basis.

The language and format was tested prior to conducting the survey by a user panel comprising HWCB volunteers and staff in addition to members of the public. All found the questions easy to answer. Although some thought the questions irrelevant to their current living circumstances they did agree that the survey questions needed to cover a broad spectrum of respondents in terms of age range and living environment. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at Appendix A.

In total over 120 surveys were distributed; 100 were given directly to attendees on the day of the meeting and, for those who did not wish to complete the survey on the day, a further twenty were posted to attendees following the meeting. Of the 120 questionnaires given out, 40 were completed and returned by the end of the meeting, a further 21 were received by post within the following three weeks, one questionnaire had been misprinted and was therefore incomplete, and two were received after the cut off time and were not counted. The total number of responses informing this report was therefore 61.

The survey was specifically targeted at the age range of those attending the U3A meeting. Critically, for this exercise, we wanted the opportunity to talk to older residents of Central Bedfordshire who were independent, fully mobile and self-caring. One of HWCB's Director's, Wendy Toomey, initially introduced the survey to all members, explaining the reason and purpose behind the survey and what the information would be used for. Wendy confirmed that all information provided by respondents would be anonymous. HWCB staff subsequently handed out surveys to members and offered further information as needed.



# Analysis of Surveys

The group of people surveyed were a very good representation of the specific cohort of local people we were targeting for this exercise. Overall the response rate to this questionnaire was very high, however because the survey was composed of multiple part questions we found occasions when respondents did not always complete each section. The numbers missed throughout are low and do not impact on the information available for analysis. A full account of data analysis for each question can be found at Appendix B.

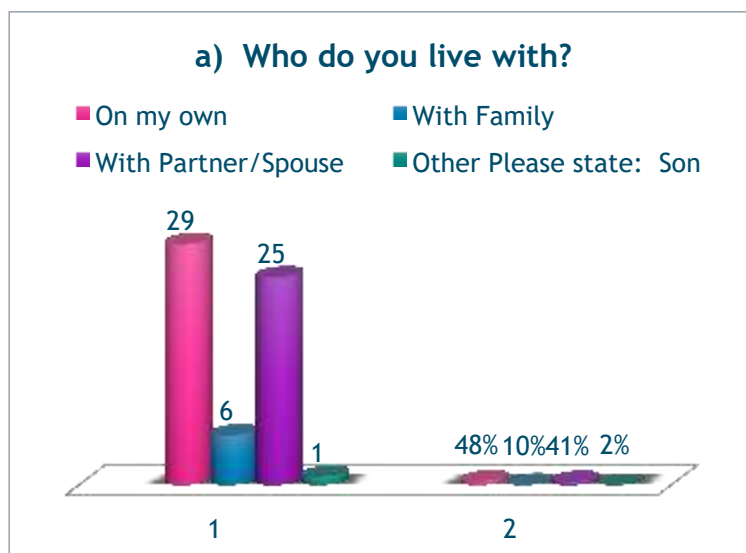
## Question One: About You

This question was divided into eight sections and was designed to build a profile of the sample group; their current living arrangements and capacity to self-care, as well as eliciting early indications of risk.

### (a) Who do you live with?

More people live alone nowadays than ever before, across all age groups. The purpose behind this question is to estimate the risk of fallers being undetected and therefore untreated, because they live alone.

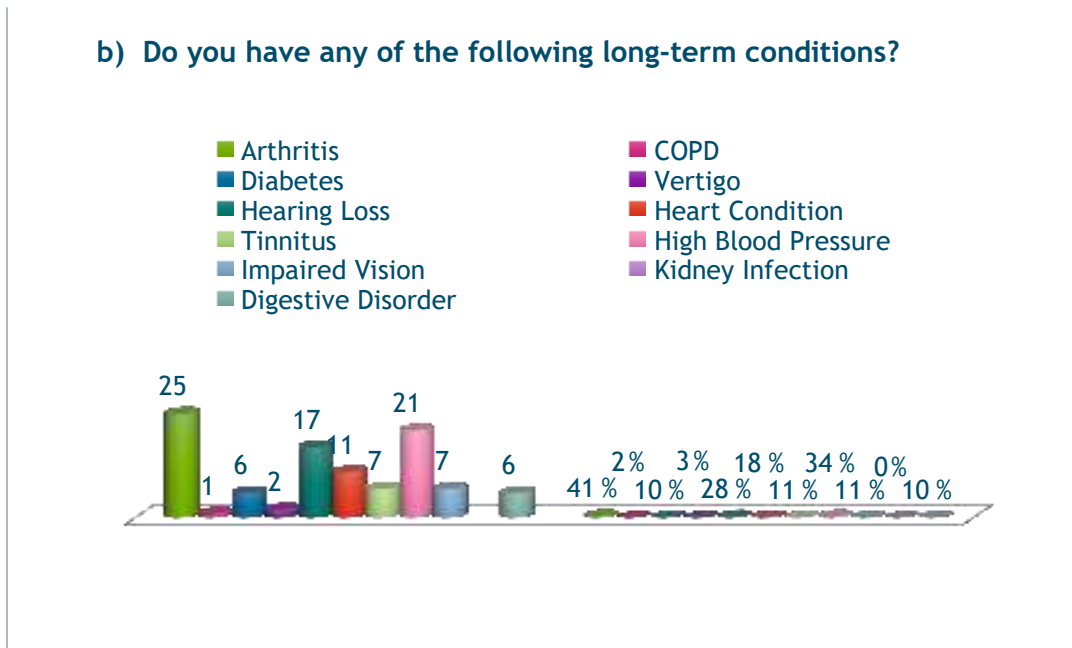
Nearly 50% of our sample group told us they lived alone - this seemed higher than we would have anticipated however given demographic changes and the age range this return suggests that we should anticipate this and other similar cohorts to contain a sizable number of people who live alone with the concomitant risks.



### (b) Do you have any of the following long term conditions?

Clearly we asked this question as specific vulnerabilities caused by long term conditions may increase the level of risk of falling when combined with other environmental factors.

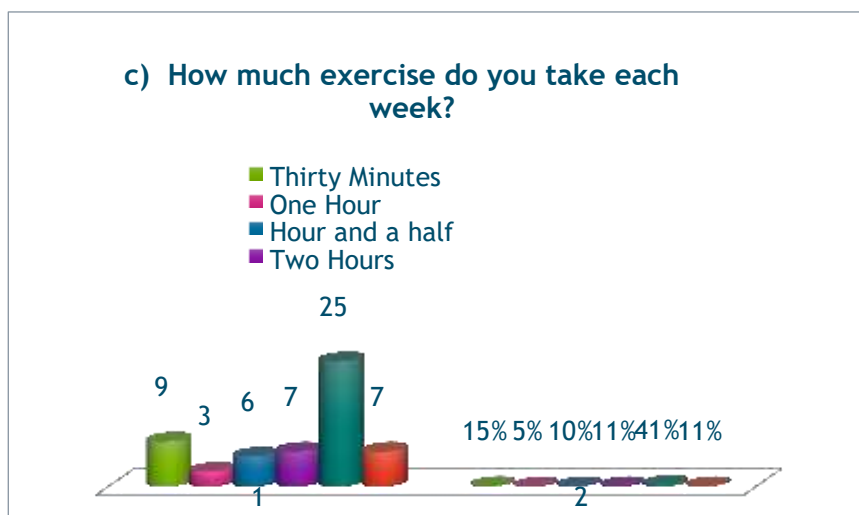
Our sample responded as we would have expected reflecting the known prevalence of long term conditions in the elderly population.



**(c) How much exercise do you take each week?**

Research demonstrates that regular exercise is of critical importance in the maintenance of both good mobility and positive mental health. This latter in turn ensures that people are more likely to take care of themselves physically. Therefore the amount of exercise taken each week is likely to be a good early indicator of potential in the sample for trips and falls risk.

The good news is that nearly 90% of respondents told us that they did take some form of regular exercise, with 41% taking the recommended 2.5 hours a week. However, we do see a significant proportion of the sample either taking rather less than the recommended level or no regular exercise at all, therefore potentially exposing themselves to a greater risk of falling in the future.



**(d) When did you last have an eye test?**

Poor/low vision is one of the most common causes of falls and trips around physical hazards such as steps/stairs, for example, missing steps altogether/underestimating height and depth of steps etc. A major factor in this is of course the physical environment; lighting levels and availability of secure handrails. However, appropriate and properly prescribed glasses are also critical for staying safe.

Regular eye tests are important to this age group and it is probably of some concern that only 43% of our respondents told us that they had an eye test last year.

**(e) Do you use a walking aid?**

Having identified a sample group who were *active* retired people we expected fewer members of the group to be using walking aids. Whilst walking aids are generally supplied to aid safe mobility, they are also often self-prescribed and if improperly used can make individuals less safe on occasions. The fact that nearly 25% of the sample were using walking aids is interesting but impossible to gauge its significance without further work.

A very high number of respondents indicated they did not use any kind of walking aid (72%) with a smaller number stating they did (23%). It should be noted that 5% of respondents did not answer this question.

**(f) Do you use the internet and social media?**

A lot information about self-care in general and falls prevention in particular is available on line and if our sample are regularly using the internet and social media that would offer commissioners and providers of preventative services an incentive to cater with online advice for this cohort.

Interestingly, a very high percentage of respondents use the internet and social media (82%) with only a small minority (18%) stating they do not.

**(g) Do you have a pet?**

Of course pets can represent a trip hazard, but they also offer significant well-being advantages, walking a well behaved dog regularly can aid good health. As with all aspects of life, having a raised awareness of risk enables you to manage it better, for example, using a harness for dog walking rather than a collar and lead.

The majority of respondents (72%) confirmed they do have a pet, with a smaller minority indicating they do not.

**(h) Do you have regular foot care?**

Regular foot care aids mobility and ensures the best positive walking gait for the individual. It also reduces pain from corns, callouses and ingrowing toe nails and hence the individual is more likely to walk more during the course of daily life. The relatively high number of respondents who stated they do not have regular foot care (64%) may indicate a lack of awareness regarding the benefits of foot care.

Do people in this cohort lack sufficient funds to regularly visit a chiropodist/podiatrist? Are people fully aware that certain long term conditions such as diabetes may entitle them to free foot care treatment? Again this may need further analysis.



## Question Two: Where you live

Living in an unsuitable environment, with unnecessary hazards is a major cause of trips and falls in the home. Evidence shows that most hazards in most homes can, however, be eliminated or at the very least mitigated. Results were as follows:

**(a) Do you own your own property?**

Of the 61 respondents, a majority (87%) stated that they own their property.

**(b) Do you live in rented accommodation?**

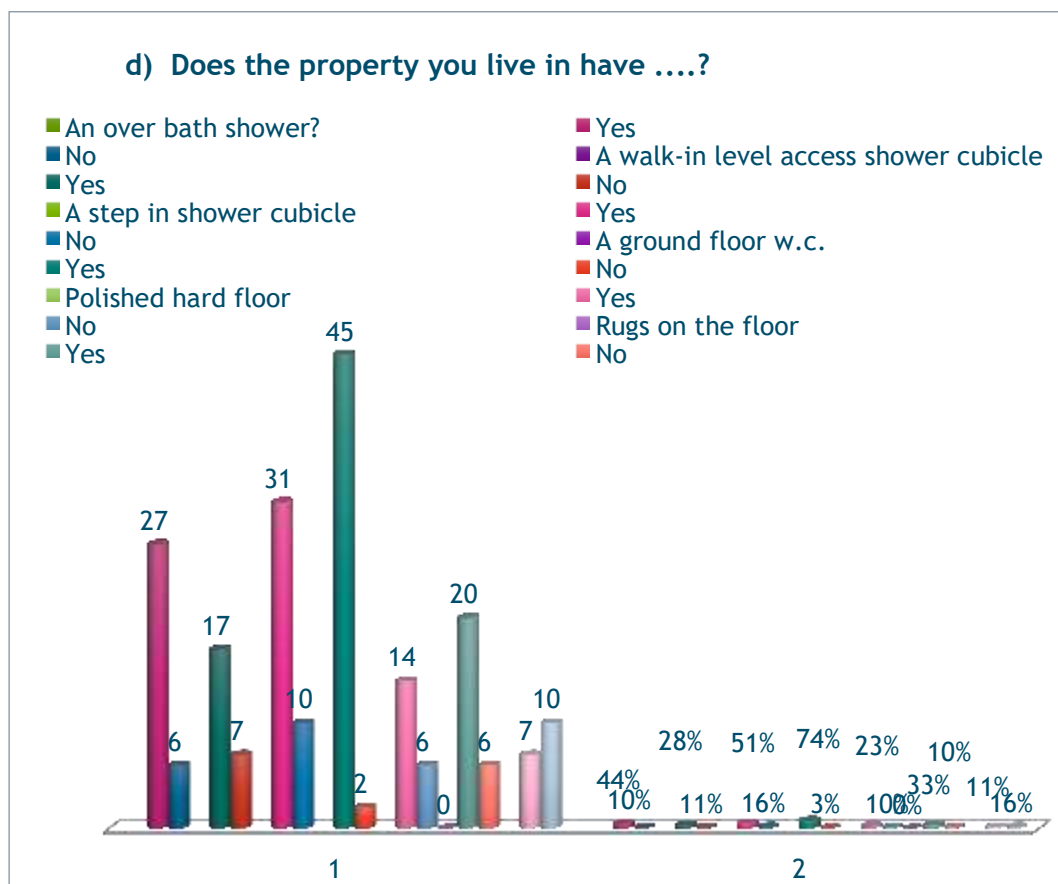
Of the 61 respondents, a small minority (8%) stated they lived in rented accommodation.

**(c) Does the property you live in have stairs / steps?**

79% indicated that their property included stairs/steps. Further analysis revealed that 64% have a step to the front door and 49% have a step to the back door. Nearly two thirds (61%) stated that they have stairs to the first floor bedrooms with a smaller minority (7%) stating they have steps into internal rooms. It should be noted that there was a poor response rate to certain elements of this question.

**(d) Does the property you live in have .....?**

This question was specifically designed to highlight well known and common hazards in the home, presented to the respondents, and gathering information about the ongoing prevalence of such hazards.



44% of respondents who answered questions relating to the type of bath or shower in their home stated they have an over the bath shower, where they step into the bath and stand in a shower. 30% stated they have a level access shower and 52% stated they have a step in shower cubicle; (a grab rail is a simple way to mitigate a step up shower cubicle trip risk).

A fairly high percentage (75%) of respondents stated they had a downstairs WC. Polished hardwood floors can pose a slip hazard however, 23% of people stated they have hardwood floors. 31% of respondents indicated they have rugs on the floor which can also represent a significant trip hazard.

Respondents were asked if they had trailing electrical wires in any room. Response to this was limited and may have indicated a flaw in the questionnaire, however a worrying 11% of the respondents told us they did have trailing wires in their homes.

**(e) Can you reach all your cupboards to access storage comfortably without standing on something?**

Standing precariously on furniture to access hard to reach places is yet another well observed cause of accidents in the home. This question highlighted that 52% of respondents **do** have to stand on something to reach some storage in their homes, whilst 43% do not.

**(f) Does your property require regular maintenance that you cannot perform comfortably and safely yourself?**

Many of our respondents told us they were owner occupiers (see question 2a). Maintaining a property yourself becomes increasingly demanding and dangerous with age and fragility.

When asked whether their property requires regular maintenance (climbing ladders, dealing with electricity etc.) that cannot be performed by the respondents, 56% of people stated they cannot comfortably and safely perform these duties themselves. 44% feel they can. Over half this group appear to be managing significant risk around basic home maintenance.

**(g) If your property has a hall, stairs and landing, is it well lit?**

Poor/low visibility is a common cause of trips and falls in the home especially around stairs. 87% of those questioned said that their hall stairs and landing are well lit.

**(h) Can you easily open all the windows and doors in your property without standing on a chair or stepladder?**

RoSPA estimate using a chair, stool or a ladder to access a window opening is one of the leading causes of falls in the home. Only 59% of our sample were able to access all windows and doors to open and close them, potentially exposing over 40% of our sample to quite a high risk.

**(i) Do you have an outside light?**

87% of respondents indicated they have an outside light at the front door with 69% having an outside light at the back door. This would suggest that our sample have greater concern for callers at the front door than ease of access at the back; this may be about distraction burglary or rogue traders.

**(j) Do you have neighbours / friends / family you can call on living nearby your property?**

Having neighbours and friends to call in an emergency limits the risk to older people struggling with risky tasks, and remaining unattended after a fall.

A very high percentage of our sample (93%) said they have neighbours /friends/family they can call on living nearby. This was a really positive response from the sample which also may indicate why so many older people are reluctant to move.

### **Question Three: What are your lifestyle plans for the future?**

In question three respondents were asked what are their lifestyle plans for the future to determine whether they intended to carry out any home improvements and whether or not there would be scope to undertake any ‘future-proofing’ at the same time, such as adding grab rails or non-slip flooring. The following observations were made from the data received:

**(a) Do you plan to remain in your current property indefinitely?**

80% of the respondents said that they intend to stay in their current home indefinitely.

This correlates with known data about this cohort and indeed see question 2(J).

**(b) Do you plan to carry out any improvements to your current property to make it more comfortable / safe / pleasing?**

44% of people stated they were intending to carry out improvements against 54% who said they did not intend to.

Nearly half of the sample appear to be minded to continually improve their homes and therefore potentially could be persuaded to look at ‘future proofing’ that home against risk of falling.

**(c) If you answered ‘yes’ to the above question, what type of improvements are you planning for the next two years?**

HWCB’s hope was that this questionnaire would also act to raise awareness of the risk of trips and falls. We have no means of knowing whether or not the answers received to this question reflect any success in this ambition but it is interesting that at this point in the questionnaire people are looking at some future proofing activities.

When given a timeframe of two years, those who said they were intending to carry out improvements varied in areas, however the most popular improvements were:

- New Kitchen (10%);
- Additional Stair Rail (11%);
- New Carpets/Floor Coverings (29%).
- Additional suggestions included: General Maintenance; Replacement Front Door; Utility Room built inside to stop having to go outside to do laundry etc; A seat in the garden; Pave the Garden.

**(d) Have you planned to take advice about ‘future proofing’ your property when making any of the improvements?**

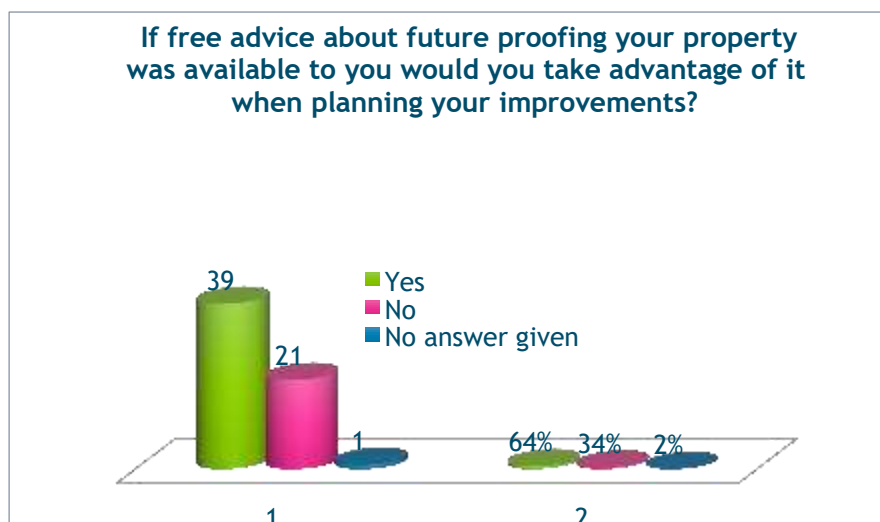
With this question we wanted to investigate whether this was an action commonly considered by people in this cohort.

89% stated they had not sought out any advice to do so. This would seem to indicate the need for further awareness raising in the subject area.

**(e) If free advice about ‘future proofing’ your property was available to you would you take advantage of it when planning your improvements?**

A high percentage (64%) said they would take advantage of advice on ‘future proofing’ if free advice was made available.

This response would seem to indicate that once the subject has been introduced people are receptive to advice even though they may not seek that advice without prompting.



**(f) If you are not currently living in level access accommodation (ground floor or bungalow) do you plan to do so at any point in the future?**

This question was really about whether people saw getting rid of stairs in their homes as an attractive option; unfortunately the wording may have been flawed or misleading.

79% of respondents said they were not planning to move to level access accommodation at any point in the future. Given the large proportion of the sample that are unwilling to move anyway (possibly for very good reasons) this percentage is not surprising.

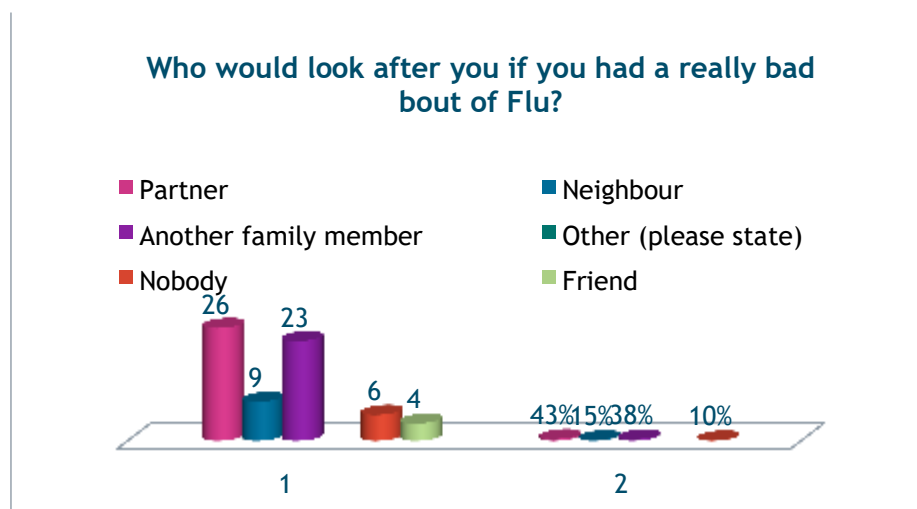
## Question Four: What arrangements have you made to look after yourself if you became ill?

In question four we asked what arrangements people had made to look after themselves if they became ill. Given that nearly half the sample describe themselves as living alone it seemed sensible for the questionnaire to raise this eventuality. This is probably a scenario that many people living alone dread. We thought that it was important not to avoid this question.

Certainly from the responses, particularly to 4b, it is reasonable to assume that few people in this sample have given the matter much thought, despite the evidence of the response to question 6, which demonstrates that this cohort is, in many ways, used to planning for their own futures. Responses were as follows:

### (a) Who would look after you if you had a really bad bout of flu?

Almost half the respondents (43%) who answered the question about arrangements when they became ill stated that they would rely on a partner to look after them. 38% would rely on another family member and a minority (10%) stated they would have nobody to rely on for care in such a situation.



### (b) If you do not have level access accommodation, where would you sleep if you cannot manage the stairs temporarily?

When presented with the scenario in which respondents were asked what would happen if they were temporarily unable to use the stairs and where they would sleep in such an event, 51% of people said they would sleep in a comfortable armchair; 32% would ask someone to put a bed downstairs and 16% of people considered themselves fit enough that this did not apply to them.



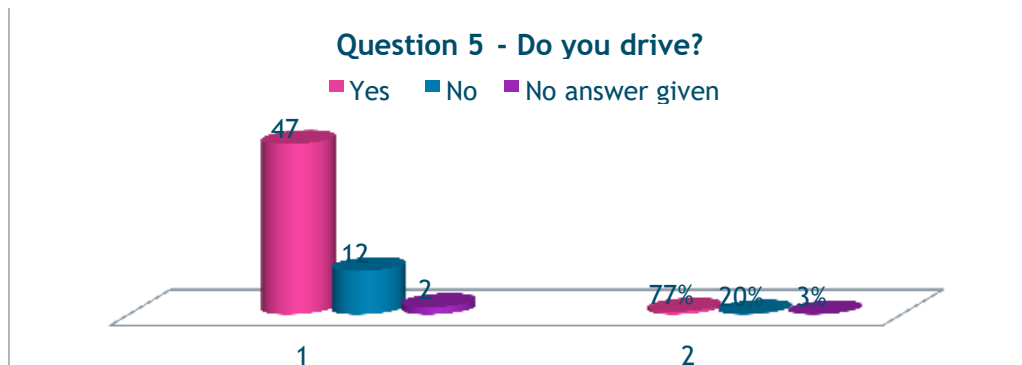
## Question Five: Out and About

In question five respondents were asked questions about how they travel around the County and if they maintain their garden.

Getting out and about regularly is an important part of aging well, as is getting fresh air and outdoor activity. We assumed that because these respondents attended an activity like U3A, they were at this stage in their lives, actively mobile; this question was designed to gauge any concerns about the built environment / street scene or indication of impending change / deterioration. Results as follows:

### Do you drive and do you find it easy to park close to your destination?

A high percentage of respondents stated they were able to drive (77%) and many found it easy to park close to their destination (72%).



### Do you have a disabled parking badge and do you always use pedestrian crossings?

Only 15% of the representative group indicated they currently hold a disabled 'Blue Badge' and 77% of the group confirmed they always use pedestrian crossings.

### Do you have local shops within walking distance to your home; have you ever tripped on a pothole or raised paving and do you find some kerbs higher than others?

A fairly high number of respondents (72%) stated they can access shops within easy walking distance of their home. When asked if they have ever tripped on a pot hole, surprisingly the percentage was fairly high at 57% and finding some kerbs higher than others was recorded at 75%.

Attention to our built environment: improving street lighting, lowering kerbs and mending potholes/ blacktopping, are massively beneficial investments for all residents of all ages, but particularly should never be underestimated in terms of the benefit to this cohort both in regards to offering safe independent access to the community, preventing trips and falls; but also by ensuring the continuing ease of mobility for this group

### Do you maintain your garden? (If applicable)

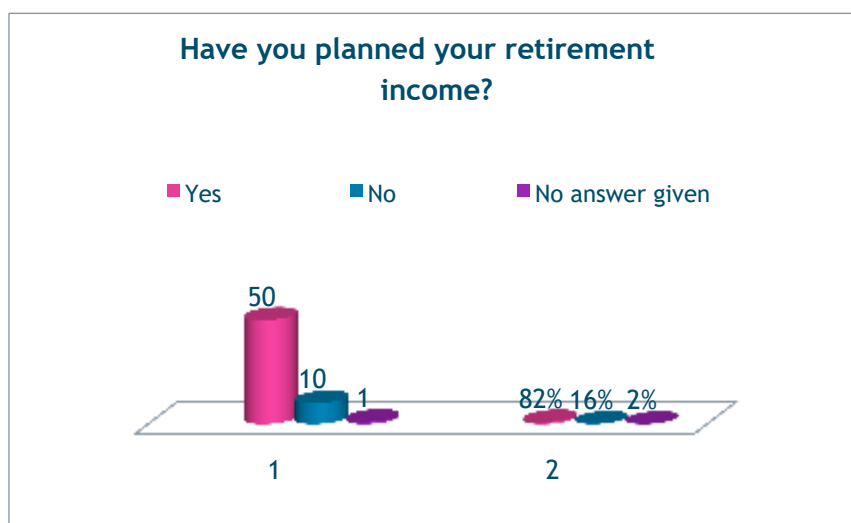
A fairly high number of people (77%) who responded to the question about garden maintenance confirmed they are able to maintain their own garden.

## Question Six: About Planning

In question six respondents were asked about their plans for the future, such as retirement income and writing a will, to planning a holiday. We wanted to identify whether this cohort were comfortable and proactive about making plans for their future. Questions included the following:

### Have you planned your retirement income?

A high number of people (82%) indicated they have planned their retirement income.



### Do you plan your budget and have you written a will?

75% plan their budget and a very large majority (98%) indicated they had written a will.

### Do you plan your grooming and care? (E.g. haircuts, pedicure, manicure, dentist, chiropodist)

89% plan their own grooming and care.

### Do you plan your holidays?

A fairly large majority (75%) plan their own holidays.

### Would you say you have a positive approach to planning ahead?

Interestingly a very large percentage of the group (95%) indicated they have a positive approach to planning ahead.

Comparing answers throughout the questionnaire it becomes clear that individuals in our sample do systematically plan for their future particularly when the weight of public advice is to do so, e.g. pensions and wills, which would further suggest that campaigns that advise people how to future proof their homes may also be acted upon.

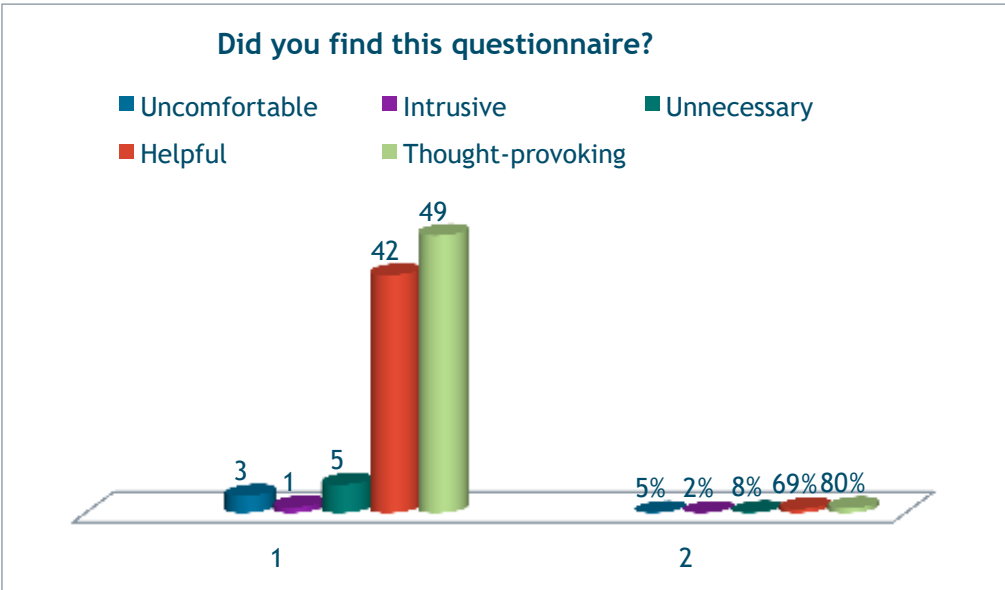
# Question Seven: About This Questionnaire

This questionnaire was something of a departure for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire; it was not a commissioned piece of work although it does tie in with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and local prevention strategies. It was essentially an exploration of the level of awareness and understanding that exists amongst the older population of Central Bedfordshire in relation to falls prevention.

Having completed the questionnaire we were interested to learn whether respondents found the questions uncomfortable, intrusive, unnecessary, or helpful and thought provoking.

Respondents ticked more than one answer in this category however the two highest scoring categories were 'helpful' and 'thought-provoking'. Only one or two respondents felt the survey was intrusive or were uncomfortable completing it.

Interestingly, additional comments from respondents in relation to this question, following completion of the survey, were that some of the issues raised had not yet been picked up on their radar and they would now be rethinking things.



## Question Eight: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Finally respondents were asked to add any additional comments they felt were pertinent to the questions raised in the survey. Comments as follows:

- *“I would like to see more advice on sensible shoes (thinking of my mum who wears silly smooth-soled shoes)”.*
- *“People need to be made aware that stick-on motion lights are cheaply available”.*
- *“More doctors in Flitwick!”*
- *“What happened to the Falls Clinic?”*
- *“Local pavements are a pitfall for those with walking problems. How can the Council be promoted to act on this?”*
- *“I had a bad fall outside Flitwick Tesco. I had an ambulance to Bedford Hospital. I had to go to the Falls Clinic for 8 weeks. A tooth went through my lip and I had to have it removed as it was broken”.*
- *“I worry about people carrying things such as washing downstairs. A large, foldable bag with handle would leave one hand free to hold raise while carrying loaded bag in the other hand. They would also be able to see where they were going”.*
- *“I would appreciate a local talk and advice on falls prevention at home and to include falls outside when walking. Perhaps in a local community centre. There is a need for an information service. For people unable to attend a talk for various reasons they could be either sent information or told where to collect it”.*
- *“Handrails in showers and downstairs toilet needed. Gardening difficult”.*
- *“Two things: Two bathrooms upstairs and down with WC for bedroom just upstairs and a second I don’t use downstairs; I have a long term medical condition Scleroderma/Astomatic Sclerosis”*
- *“At present I have my mother in law who will be 98 next Monday living in a private care home near Bletchley. We are paying full fees so don’t know what the future might hold. Thankfully we have Power of Attorney”.*

# Key Findings

The responses to this survey would suggest the following key findings.

- Nearly half our sample lives alone.
- The overwhelming majority are owner occupiers.
- Their overall morbidity appears to reflect the known incidences of long term conditions for the over 65 age group.
- Less than half of the sample exercise for the recommended 2.5hrs a week.
- Less than half the group had an eye test last year.
- Over a quarter of the group use a walking aid.
- A large majority of the group are on-line using both the internet and social media.
- Over half the group do not engage in regular foot care.
- A sizable majority of the sample 57% have experienced a fall hazard in their local neighbourhood and an even greater majority have struggled with kerb heights 72%.
- Whilst the group do seem to plan effectively for many of their long term requirements they do not appear to plan for reduced mobility and flexibility in the home.
- Very few members of the sample live in level access accommodation but, perhaps because they feel safe, connected and known in their local community, they do not anticipate moving.



# Recommendations and suggested actions

From information provided within this survey, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire would like to make the following recommendations and suggested actions:

Analysis of risk levels in this cohort suggests significant potential to reduce the future prevalence of trips and falls through judicious and minor self-funded interventions.

1. Further interactive research predominately with older people who have not yet experienced a fall would be required to identify the most beneficial approach and delivery points.

We would recommend that both CBC and BCCG support Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to explore the following areas of investigation (with information and expertise including collaboration from the equipment provider).

- What is the prevalence of self- prescribed walking aids, where are they are purchased from and what, if any, advice should people have when they self-prescribe walking aids? How should this advice be delivered?
  - If the benefit was clear, would people be prepared to pay for a home survey by a trusted assessor (for the identification of hazards in the home and simple means of eliminating them) and if so how much? Who might deliver and monitor such a service?
  - Exercise - what types and opportunities to exercise would encourage people to exercise more, how much would they be prepared to spend if necessary?
  - Organisation of a Neighbourhood Street Scene Audit using volunteers.
  - The development of a simple self-assessment home hazard survey/ risk assessment tool for active older people to use themselves
2. That Central Bedfordshire and the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group consider that they or their agent design and develop a short (as opposed to a full range of equipment) simple glossy sales catalogue showing the most common hazards in the home, alongside the equipment available to eliminate or mitigate those hazards presented in the most attractive and commercial manner, with all the appropriate retail and fitting information; regularly updated and distributed at leisure and shopping outlets etc.



# 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 engage and consult 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 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 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.



## Contact Us

If you have any comments regarding this report please contact Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire at:

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**Tel: 0300 303 8554**

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**[www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)**

## Questionnaire



### FALLS PREVENTION SURVEY – APRIL 2017



After years of working hard for a living we all plan a relaxing and enjoyable retirement that meets our personal goals for getting the best out of life. Most of us have acquired a few aches and pains by the time we retire but have no intention of letting those impede our plans.

On the whole we are living longer and are better off than our parent's generation. More of us own our own homes and are busier than ever before.

We all know that we are going to age and be subject to some deterioration in our health, but we do not expect that to happen overnight; in a catastrophic and life changing way, from something as avoidable as a trip or a fall. Yet statistically, trips and falls are the single most common way that most of us will compromise our mobility and independence, in old age. Most falls happen at home. The good news is that because it is so common, we now know both a lot more about falls, and how to avoid them.

The simple truth is that people who fall once are 70 times more likely to fall again with worse consequences. Whilst we now have excellent integrated falls teams that provide a sophisticated range of support, they only work with people who have already fallen. Avoiding that first fall is down to us.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire would like to find out what level of awareness and understanding exists amongst the population, about the best ways to prevent falls, and critically also, whether people have the willingness to 'future proof' their homes in advance of need and eliminate risk through good planning, for example, whilst they are mobile and active and have the confidence and flexibility to do so.



We would also like to know whether you think there is a need for an information service to advise you on sensible and attractive low key options to help prevent falls.

This survey is designed to 'risk assess' and to help raise awareness of falls prevention but also for you to tell us, and the decision makers, what help you would welcome in this area of self-care.

If you require help to complete this questionnaire or if you have any queries please contact Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire on 0300 303 8554 or email [info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk).

## Question 1: ABOUT YOU

### (a) Who do you live with? (Please tick)

- On my own                       With Partner / Spouse  
 With Family                       Other, please state \_\_\_\_\_

### (b) Do you have any of the following long term conditions? (Please tick)

- Arthritis                       Hearing Loss                       Impaired Vision  
 COPD                       Heart Condition                       Kidney Condition  
 Diabetes                       Tinnitus                       Digestive Disorder  
 Vertigo                       High Blood Pressure

### (c) How much exercise do you take each week? (please tick)

- 30 mins                       Hour and a half                       Two and a half hours or more  
 One hour                       Two hours                       None

### (d) When did you last have an eye test?

\_\_\_\_\_

### (e) Do you use a walking aid?

- Yes                       No

### (f) Do you use the internet and social media?

- Yes                       No

### (g) Do you have a pet?

- Yes                       No

### (h) Do you have regular foot care? (pedicure / chiropody)

- Yes                       No

Please turn over page



## Question 2: WHERE YOU LIVE

(a) Do you own your own property?

Yes  No

(b) Do you live in rented accommodation?

Yes  No

If you answered yes to this question, is your landlord a private individual or a social housing provider: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Does the property you live in have stairs / steps?

Yes  No

If you answered yes to this question, does your property have: (tick all that apply)

Steps to front door  Steps to the first floor (bedrooms)

Steps to back door  Steps in and out to internal rooms

(d) Does the property you live in have:

An over bath shower?  Yes  No

A walk in level access shower cubicle?  Yes  No

A step in shower cubicle  Yes  No

A ground floor W/C  Yes  No

Polished hard floors?  Yes  No

Rugs on the floor?  Yes  No

Trailing electrical wires in any rooms  Yes  No

(e) Can you reach all your cupboards to access storage comfortably without standing on something?

Yes  No

(f) Does your property require regular maintenance that you cannot perform comfortably and safely yourself?

Yes  No

Please turn over page

(g) If your property has a hall, stairs and landing, is it well lit?

Yes  No

(h) Can you easily open all the windows and doors in your property without standing on a chair or stepladder?

Yes  No

(i) Do you have an outside light?

Front door?  Yes  No      Back door?  Yes  No

(j) Do you have neighbours / friends / family you can call on living nearby your property?

Yes  No

### Question 3: WHAT ARE YOUR LIFESTYLE PLANS FOR YOUR FUTURE?

(a) Do you plan to remain in your current property indefinitely?

Yes  No

(b) Do you plan to carry out any improvements to your current property to make it more comfortable / safe / pleasing?

Yes  No

(c) If you answered 'yes' to the above question, what type of improvements are you planning for the next two years?: (please tick all that apply)

New Kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
New Bathroom	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Rewiring	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
New Heating System	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Replacement windows	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Additional Stair Rail	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Burglar Alarm	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
New carpets / floor coverings	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Hand rails to outside steps or garden features	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Reconfiguring accommodation for ground floor living	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Other (please state) _____		

Please turn over page

**(d) Have you planned to take advice about 'future proofing' your property when making any of the improvements?**

Yes       No

**(e) If free advice about 'future proofing' your property was available to you would you take advantage of it when planning your improvements?**

Yes       No

**(f) If you are not currently living in level access accommodation (ground floor or bungalow) do you plan to do so at any point in the future?**

Yes       No

#### **Question 4: WHAT ARRANGEMENTS HAVE YOU MADE TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF IF YOU BECOME ILL?**

**(a) Who would look after you if you had a really bad bout of flu? (Please tick)**

Partner                       Another family member  
 Neighbour                       Other, please state \_\_\_\_\_

**(b) If you do not have level access accommodation, where would you sleep if you cannot manage the stairs temporarily? (Please tick)**

Comfortable sofa       Get someone to put a bed in downstairs  
 In an armchair       I am fit and healthy; I do not need to think about this

#### **Question 5: OUT AND ABOUT** (please tick all that apply)

Do you drive?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you find it easy to park close to your destination?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you have a disabled parking badge?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you always use pedestrian crossings?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you have local shops within walking distance to your home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you ever tripped on a pot hole or raised paving?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you find some kerbs higher than others?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you maintain your garden? (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Please turn over page

**Question 6: ABOUT PLANNING** (please tick all that apply)

- |  |                              |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Have you planned your retirement income?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you plan your budget?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have you written a will?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you plan your grooming and care?<br>(e.g. haircuts, pedicure, manicure, dentist, chiropodist) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you plan your holidays?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Would you say you have a positive approach to planning ahead?                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

**Question 7: ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Did you find this questionnaire: (please tick all that apply)**

- |                    |                              |                             |
|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Uncomfortable?     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Intrusive?         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Unnecessary?       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Helpful?           | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Thought provoking? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

**Question 8: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?**

Please turn over page

## FINALLY, just few details about you .....

(1) What is your gender?

Male       Female

(2) In which geographical area do you live, e.g., Flitwick / Leighton Buzzard etc?

---

(3) Please indicate your age range (please tick)

18 – 24       25 – 34       35 – 44       45 - 54  
 55 - 64       65 - 74       75 - 84       85 and over

(4) What is your ethnic group? Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background (please tick)

White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British

Gypsy or Irish traveller

Irish

Any other White background

Mixed / multiple ethnic groups

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

Asian / Asian British

Indian / Pakistani / Bangladeshi / Chinese

Black / African / Caribbean / Black British

Arab

Any other ethnic group, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for completing this survey. If you have any queries or questions about this survey please contact Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire direct on **0300 303 8554**, by email to [info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk) or write to: **Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, Capability House, Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedfordshire, MK45 4HR**

Please hand this questionnaire to a member of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire staff or post back to us by the  
**30<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

# Full Analysis of Questionnaire Data

## QUESTION 1 - ABOUT YOU

This question was divided into 8 sections

	No: responses	% total (n=61)
<b>(a) Who do you live with?</b>		
On my own	29	48%
With Family	5	8%
With Partner/Spouse	26	43%
Other Please state: Son	1	2%
	25	41%
<b>(b) Do you have any of the following long-term conditions?</b>		
<i>(Respondents were asked to tick more than one answer)</i>		
Arthritis		
COPD	1	2%
Diabetes	6	10%
Vertigo	2	3%
Hearing Loss	17	28%
Heart Condition	11	18%
Tinnitus	7	11%
High Blood Pressure	21	34%
Impaired Vision	7	11%
Kidney Infection		
Digestive Disorder	7	11%
<b>(c) How Much Exercise do you take each week?</b>		
Thirty Minutes	9	15%
One Hour	3	5%
Hour and a half	7	11%
Two Hours	7	11%
Two and Half Hours or more	25	41%
None	7	11%
No answer was given	3	6%
<b>(d) When did you last have an eye test? (Open Question)</b>		
This Year	13	21%
Last Year	26	43%
2 years	10	16%



3 years	0	0
more	0	0
No Answer	12	20%

**(e) Do you use a walking aid?**

Yes	14	23%
No	44	72%
Did not answer	3	5%

**(f) Do you use the internet and social media?**

Yes	50	82%
No	11	18%

**(g) Do you have a pet?**

Yes	16	26%
No	44	72%

**(h) Do you have regular foot care?**

Yes	20	33%
No	39	64%

## QUESTION 2 - WHERE YOU LIVE

No: % total  
responses (n=61)

**(a) Do you own your own property?**

Yes	53	87%
No	8	13%

**(b) Do you live in rented accommodation?**

Yes	5	8%
No	46	75%
Did not answer	1	2%

**(c) Does the property you live in have stairs/steps?**

Yes	48	79%
No	7	11%
Did not answer	5	8%

If you answered Yes to the above question, does your property have:

**Steps to the front door?**

Yes	39	64%
No	2	3%

**Steps to the back door?**

Yes	30	49%
No	1	2%
<b>Does it have steps to the first floor, bedrooms?</b>		
Yes	37	61%
No	2	3%
<b>Does it have steps in and out to internal rooms?</b>		
Yes	4	7%
No	3	5%
<b>(d) Does the property you live in have .....</b>		
An over bath shower?		
Yes	27	44%
No	6	10%
A walk-in level access shower cubicle		
Yes	18	30%
No	7	11%
A step in shower cubicle		
Yes	32	52%
No	10	16%
A ground floor w.c.		
Yes	46	75%
No	2	3%
Polished hard floor		
Yes	14	23%
No	6	10%
Rugs on the floor		
Yes	19	31%
No	6	10%
Trailing electrical wires in any rooms		
Yes	7	11%
No	10	16%
<b>(e) Can you reach all your cupboards to access storage comfortably without standing on something?</b>		
Yes	26	43%
Did not answer	3	5%
No	32	52%
<b>(f) Does your property require regular maintenance that you cannot perform comfortably and safely yourself?</b>		

Yes	34	56%
No	27	44%

**(g) If your property has a hall, stairs and landing, is it well lit?**

Yes	53	87%
Did not answer	5	8%
No	3	5%

**(h) Can you easily open all the windows and doors in your property without standing on a chair or stepladder?**

Yes	36	59%
Did not answer	3	5%
No	22	36%

**(i) Do you have an outside light?**

Front Door

Yes	53	87%
No	5	8%
Did not answer	3	5%

Back Door

Yes	42	69%
No	14	23%
Did not answer	5	

**(j) Do you have neighbours/friends/family you can call on living nearby your property?**

Yes	57	93%
Did not answer	2	3%
No	2	3%

### QUESTION 3 - WHAT ARE YOUR LIFESTYLE PLANS FOR YOUR FUTURE

	No: responses	% total (n=61)
<b>(a) Do you plan to remain in your current property indefinitely?</b>		
Yes	80%	49
No	16%	10
Did not answer	3%	2
<b>(b) Do you plan to carry out any improvements to your current property to make it more comfortable/safe/pleasing?</b>		

Yes	44%	27
Did not answer		1
No	54%	33

**(c) If you answered yes to the above question, what type of improvements are you planning for the next two years?**

New Kitchen		
Yes	10%	6
No	3%	2
New Bathroom		
Yes	7%	4
No	3%	2
Rewiring		
Yes	0%	
No	3%	2
New heating system		
Yes	5%	3
No	3%	2
Replacement windows		
Yes	8%	5
No	3%	2
	3%	2
Additional stair rail		
Yes	11%	7
No	3%	2
		1
Burglar Alarm		
Yes	2%	1
No	3%	2
New carpets/floor coverings		
Yes	29%	18
No	2%	1
	5%	3
Hand rails to outside steps or garden features		
Yes	3%	2
No	3%	2
Reconfiguring accommodation for ground floor living		
Yes	2%	1
No	3%	2
Other Please State (open response)		
6. New Boiler	2%	1
21. General Maintenance	2%	1

24. Replacement Front Door	2%	1
31. Utility Room Inside to avoid going outside	2%	1
43. Seat in the garden	2%	1
53. Pave Garden	2%	1

**(d) Have you planned to take advice about 'future proofing' your property when making any of the improvements?**

Yes	8%	5
No	89%	54

**(e) If free advice about 'future proofing' your property was available to you would you take advantage of it when planning your improvements?**

Yes	64%	39
No	34%	21

**(f) If you are not currently living in level access accommodation (ground floor or bungalow) do you plan to do so at any point in the future?**

Yes	13%	8
No	79%	48

## **QUESTION 4 - WHAT ARRANGEMENTS HAVE YOU MADE TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF IF YOU BECOME ILL?**

	No: responses	% total (n=61)
<b>a) Who would look after you if you had a really bad bout of flu?</b>		
Partner	26	43%
Neighbour	9	15%
Another family member	23	38%
Other (please state)	0	0%
Nobody	6	10%
Friend	4	7%
	0	
<b>(b) If you do not have level access accommodation, where would you sleep if you cannot manage the stairs temporarily?</b>		
Comfortable Sofa	31	51%
In an armchair	1	2%
Get someone to put a bed downstairs	20	32%
I am fit and health I don't need to think about this	10	16%

Not Applicable	4	6%
Floor	1	2%

## QUESTION 5 - OUT AND ABOUT

	No: responses	% total (n=61)
<b>Do you drive</b>		
Yes	47	77%
No	12	20%
<b>Do you find it easy to park close to your destination</b>		
Yes	44	72%
No	12	20%
<b>Do you have a disabled parking badge</b>		
Yes	9	15%
No	46	75%
<b>Do you always use pedestrian crossings?</b>		
Yes	47	77%
No	11	18%
<b>Do you have local shops within walking distance of your home?</b>		
Yes	44	72%
No	17	28%
<b>Have you ever tripped on a pot hole or raised paving?</b>		
Yes	35	57%
No	24	39%
<b>Do you find some kerbs higher than others?</b>		
Yes	46	75%
No	12	20%
<b>Do you maintain your garden?</b>		
Yes	47	77%
No	14	23%

## QUESTION 6 - ABOUT PLANNING

<b>Have you planned your retirement income</b>		
Yes	50	82%
No	10	16%
<b>Do you plan your budget</b>		
Yes	46	75%



No	13	21%
<b>Have you written a will?</b>		
Yes	60	98%
No	1	2%
<b>Do you plan your grooming and care?</b>		
Yes	54	89%
No	5	8%
<b>Do you plan your holidays?</b>		
Yes	46	75%
No	12	20%
<b>Would you say you have a positive approach to planning ahead?</b>		
Yes	58	95%
No	3	5%

## QUESTION 7 - ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

	No: responses	% total (n=61)
<b>Did you find this questionnaire .....</b>		
Uncomfortable	3	5%
Intrusive	1	2%
Unnecessary	5	8%
Helpful	42	69%
Thought-provoking	49	80%

# About You

From information given on the survey form the following demographic information was obtained:

## Gender:

44 Female  
17 Male

## Age:

55-64	5
65-74	29
75-84	23
85/over	4

## Ethnic Group:

White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	- 58
Irish	- 3

## In which geographical area do you live?

Amphill	12
Barton Le Clay	2
Clifton	1
Dunstable	1
Eversholt	1
Flitwick	26
Harlington	1
Leagrave (Luton?)	1
Leighton Buzzard	1
Marston Moretaine	3
Maulden	2
Sandy	1
Silsoe	3
Studham (Luton)?	1
Toddington	2
Westoning	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>