

Annual Report 2019–20

Voiced by you

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 which 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



Dave Simpson, Chair

Welcome to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Annual report 2019/20. This has been one of the most challenging years we have had as a local Healthwatch, and notwithstanding what has transpired in the last three months of this reporting year, we have continued to evolve, strengthen and grow, further cementing our presence in the health and social care sector and gaining recognition and respect from our commissioners and partners.

We have strengthened our Board of Director Trustees with the recruitment of two new Directors with a wealth of experience, making us even more ready to face the challenges the future holds. With the merger of the Bedford and Luton & Dunstable Hospitals into one Foundation Trust, we are pleased to have one of our Directors as a Governor of the Trust which will ensure our influence as the new Trust integrates into the community.

We are delighted with the way in which our young Healthwatch volunteers have performed throughout the year, producing several reports to ensure the voice of young people in Central Bedfordshire is heard, and gaining plaudits and recognition - more details of which are on page 34 of this report.

During the recent pandemic our staff have responded positively to a rapidly changing environment and have ensured that local residents are able to feedback valuable insight to inform our work and influence the work of local decision makers. I am very proud of the achievements of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and the opportunity to help our residents to contribute to improving vital services is deeply rewarding.

I would like to thank the volunteers, Directors, staff and the CEO of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire for all their support during the past year, but particularly within the last three months.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dave Simpson'.

Dave Simpson
Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Chair

This has been one of the most challenging years we have had as a local Healthwatch.

Our priorities

Last year over 12,000 people told us about the improvements they would like to see health and social care services make in 2019-20. These are the six priorities we focused on in the last twelve months based on what you told us.



- Improved and timely access to non-medical interventions for people with mental illnesses



- A greater voice for young people to have their say on how health and social care is designed and delivered in their local community



- Appropriate and suitable access to health and social care services available in the local community



- Services that work better together for the benefit of patients



- Improved access to primary care and community services



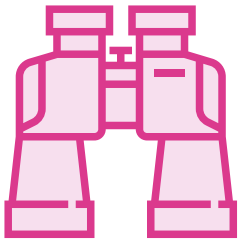
- More accessible services for those that live in rural areas

Healthwatch continues to provide a unique opportunity for all users of health and social care services in Central Bedfordshire to have an effective voice, which helps to influence our understanding of the health and social care issues faced by local residents. Through their wide range of public engagement projects, Healthwatch regularly report the views and concerns of service users to local decision makers, and we act on the advice they give us to ensure the experiences of service users remain an integral part of our commissioning decisions. In these very challenging times it is vitally important to hear from our local community and by working in partnership with Healthwatch, and using the feedback they provide, this will help to shape services for the benefit of all local residents.

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

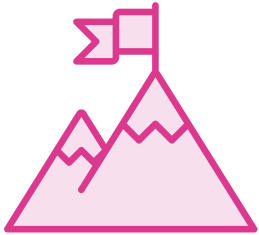
*Photograph taken by Heather,
Young Healthwatch volunteer*





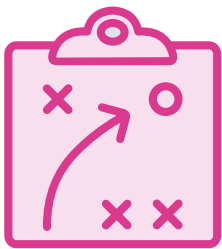
Our vision is simple

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 who 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.



How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. 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



Find out more about us and the work that we do

Website: www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

Twitter: @Healthwatch_cb

Facebook: @HealthwatchCentralBedfordshire

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20.



Health and care that works for you



53 adult and young volunteers

helping to carry out our work. In total, they gave up 1,490 hours.

We employed

5 staff

80% of whom are full time equivalent, which is a 20% increase from the previous year.

We received

£144,700 in funding

from our local authority in 2019-20, the same as the previous year.

Supporting people



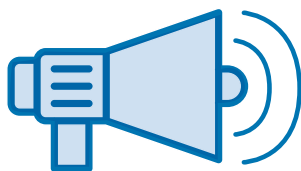
3,158 people

shared their health and social care story with us, including young people, 26% more than last year.

14,424 people

accessed Healthwatch advice and information online or contacted us with questions about local support, 28% more than last year.

Reaching out



24,249 people

engaged with us through our website, 90,404 people engaged with us through social media, and 11,568 people engaged with us at community events.

Making a difference to care



We published

21 reports

about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care, and from this, we made 164 recommendations for improvement.

How we've made a difference



Speaking up about your experiences of health and social care services is the first step to change.

Take a look at how your views have helped make a difference to the care and support people receive in Central Bedfordshire.

Helping to improve hospital services for young people

Thanks to an initiative by Young Healthwatch, staff from various children's wards at Bedford Hospital have made changes to the way in which the wards are managed and operated to improve a young persons stay on the ward.

Following their '15 Steps' training programme in September 2019, Young Healthwatch worked with various nursing and administrative staff at Bedford Hospital to arrange a visit to several children's wards, to focus on seeing care through the eyes of a young person or carer, and exploring their first impressions.

The young peoples initial impression was that of welcoming staff with many activities and items put in place to engage with young people suited to their age group on particular wards. However, they could see that more could be done to improve a young person's stay, and for the families visiting.

The full report of their visit included main recommendations for improvement as follows:

- Signage and maps to the children's wards to be clearer with correctly colour coded areas;
- Security at the entrance to each ward to be reviewed and ID's checked more frequently;
- An area to be allocated for teenagers/ young adults to watch a film, use a tablet or chill out;



Young Healthwatch visit Bedford Hospital

- An area for family to stay overnight which is made to feel like a 'home from home' with a suggestion box for people to help develop it further.

In March 2020, two young Healthwatch volunteers presented their report to Trust Board members and as a result of their visit, Bedford Hospital are now working with their facilities team to review and action the young peoples recommendations, including sourcing funding for the improvements to be implemented.

The full report of their visit can be found at <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/bedford-hospital-15-steps-report>.

Young Healthwatch will be visiting other hospital services as part of their on going '15 Steps' challenge in 2020/21.

I can tell what kind of care my daughter is going to get within 15 steps of walking on to the ward.

A mother who inspired the development of the 15 Steps Challenge



Helping D/deaf people to have a voice to improve communication support

Over 40 D/deaf people, via a focus group and survey in March 2020, told us that they need additional help communicating when visiting health and social care services. People experienced difficulties when booking an appointment and asking for an interpreter.

Working with a local D/deaf community group, we were able to reach many service users who shared their views and experiences, both positive and negative, raising common issues and themes.

As part of this engagement activity, we also reviewed local health services website information, specifically looking at content for D/deaf users and their carers, to determine how services publicise their offer of support for D/deaf people and if this information is easily identified and accessible. The results are highlighted in our full report.

‘You don’t need an interpreter, I can write it down’ - this is what she said, it was just a list of words, not even in my language.

Comment given to a patient by a GP receptionist

From feedback received it was clear that communication support varied across healthcare settings and despite the introduction of the Government’s Accessible Information Standards (AIS), challenges remain for D/deaf people when accessing healthcare. The main recommendations in our report included the following:

- Full implementation of the NHS AIS - all providers of healthcare should be aware of the AIS and put measures in place to ensure they are compliant, and staff are aware of the principles.
- Staff training and development - upskill all staff to understand their responsibilities and encourage confidence when supporting people with additional communication needs.
- Use of the appropriate technology to enable effective communication and regular testing of the hearing loop and education of staff in its use.

Our report was shared with commissioners, providers and key stakeholders to encourage improvement of their communication support to better meet the needs of D/deaf people. The full report can be accessed here: <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/d-deaf-report>



Helping homeless people access health and care support

Homeless shelters are designed to provide temporary residence for homeless individuals and families offering safety and protection from exposure to the weather, while also reducing the environmental impact on the community.

Our Engagement Officer made regular visits to a homeless shelter in Leighton Buzzard (drop-in), a soup kitchen in Dunstable and other trusted venues in Central Bedfordshire, during 2019/20 to initially build a relationship with the homeless community, and to respond to queries to enable people to access the care and support they needed.

People told us that they struggled to access GP services, obtaining glasses was problematic and they often failed to understand letters from the NHS. The drop-in venue was also in urgent need of sharps boxes, and people needed up to date information about Tuberculosis.

As a result of our visits we provided people with advice and information to secure a GP appointment, visit an optician, clarified medical terminology used in letters to patients, and advised the venue on how to source sharp boxes.

We provided current information relating to the Tuberculosis offer in Bedfordshire including contact information. In addition, the drop-in venue now has a 'wellbeing' area to showcase artwork after people were encouraged to engage in arts and crafts activities, share affirmations and be creative.

Just prior to the lockdown announcement, people were supported to be COVID-19 prepared by providing advice on hand washing, sourcing easy to read posters, demonstrating the use of hand sanitisers and moving furniture to funnel visitors to handwashing and 'sign in' stations on arrival, plus advice was given to cleaning staff on appropriate routines. The venues were also provided with government guidance at the early stages of the pandemic, before the guidance was officially provided for the homeless community.

Our visits to homeless shelters were suspended following the lockdown announcement, however our intention is to continue to support the homeless community as soon as we can.

I don't know what this all means, there are words in here I can't even read let alone pronounce.

Homeless gentleman at the shelter referring to a letter from the NHS

Long

Term

Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo

Highlights



More than 1000 people shared their views with local Healthwatch across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK).



We held 12 focus groups reaching different local communities across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK).



Local Healthwatch across BLMK areas attended over 25 community events.

NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment in the NHS, the NHS published the 'Long Term Plan' in January 2019, setting out its key ambitions over the next 10 years. Healthwatch England launched a countrywide campaign to give people a say in how the plan should be implemented in their communities.

Local engagement took place through three focus groups in Central Bedfordshire, attended by 44 people in total and covering a wide age range. Useful information was also received through the free format questions on the survey. Here's a key summary of our work in Central Bedfordshire and what we found.

What currently works well for people in Central Bedfordshire?

- Prevention, screening and public awareness schemes are highly valued by focus group participants.

- Community Support from the voluntary sector - both national and local - works well.
- People like the range of communication methods that are available.

What could be better for people in Central Bedfordshire?

- A more holistic and joined up approach among healthcare professionals - links between services are seen to be problematic.
- Greater parity as to what is on offer in different areas.
- Better mental health services. There are calls for a wide range of improvements.

Faster access to medical professionals, especially my GP, nurse practitioners and specialist consultants, with time to talk to you.

Personal story



Our relationship with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has proven key to our ability to engage in meaningful ways with our residents. The Healthwatch team continue to deliver on their important role of ‘critical friend’ to the CCG. We value their input through the BCCG Governing Body and our patient engagement committee, where they work with other partners and patients to scrutinise and support our communications and engagement plans.

The way in which Healthwatch advocate for patients is a credit to them and local health services provide better care because of their commitment and the dedicated team that work for them. Their strong links in the community have meant they have helped us to cascade important information quickly and through their Young Healthwatch initiatives we have been able to hear the voice of young people and capture their views on the way services are delivered. As we develop services to meet the needs of our population, we look forward to continuing our positive working relationship with the Healthwatch team in Central Bedfordshire.


Patricia Davies
Joint Accountable Officer
NHS Bedfordshire, Luton
and Milton Keynes Clinical
Commissioning Groups

Working with our colleagues across Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes

Working with local Healthwatches in Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) on the NHS Long Term Plan, we asked people #WhatWouldYouDo to improve the NHS locally. The top issues that people told us could be better across BLMK is:

- Better access to services, both health and community, with support available 24/7, with shorter waiting times, culturally appropriate services and more local provision.
- A more holistic and joined up approach among healthcare professionals - links between services are seen to be problematic.

- Improved information across a range of areas: basic health literacy and awareness of services is desperately lacking, which is impacting on people's ability to make informed decisions about their health and care; awareness of services is also lacking - people want better signposting to groups, networks and sources of information.

 *I need to be able to access care when I need it - it should not be made so hard to see the right person.*

Personal story

Next steps

Prior to publication of the final report(s) of our findings, HWCB, as the coordinating Healthwatch for the NHS LTP Engagement Programme across BLMK, presented some early findings of public feedback from initial evidence gathered, to key stakeholders and the public, including our ICS colleagues, in May 2019 at a Discovery Day organised by BLMK colleagues.

Following this event, HWCB presented a copy of the initial draft report to our ICS colleagues to establish where and how they will be using the insight provided and how this is influencing decisions. The BLMK ICS advised us of the following:

- We will use the local Healthwatch NHS Long Term Plan engagement programme to set the standard for ongoing engagement with our population (Scale) and with our communities (Place).

- We will use our existing governance structure which includes local forums and committees, patient and public representation and Healthwatch, to track progress against the Plan.
- The findings in the local Healthwatch report will be discussed at various BLMK groups and committees, including patient groups which, collectively, will be responsible for developing the local Plan and will take into account the findings from the BLMK Healthwatch report to inform the Plan.

A copy of the NHS Long Term Plan Engagement report(s) can be found on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's website, using the link below:

<https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/publications/general-reports>

Helping you find the answers

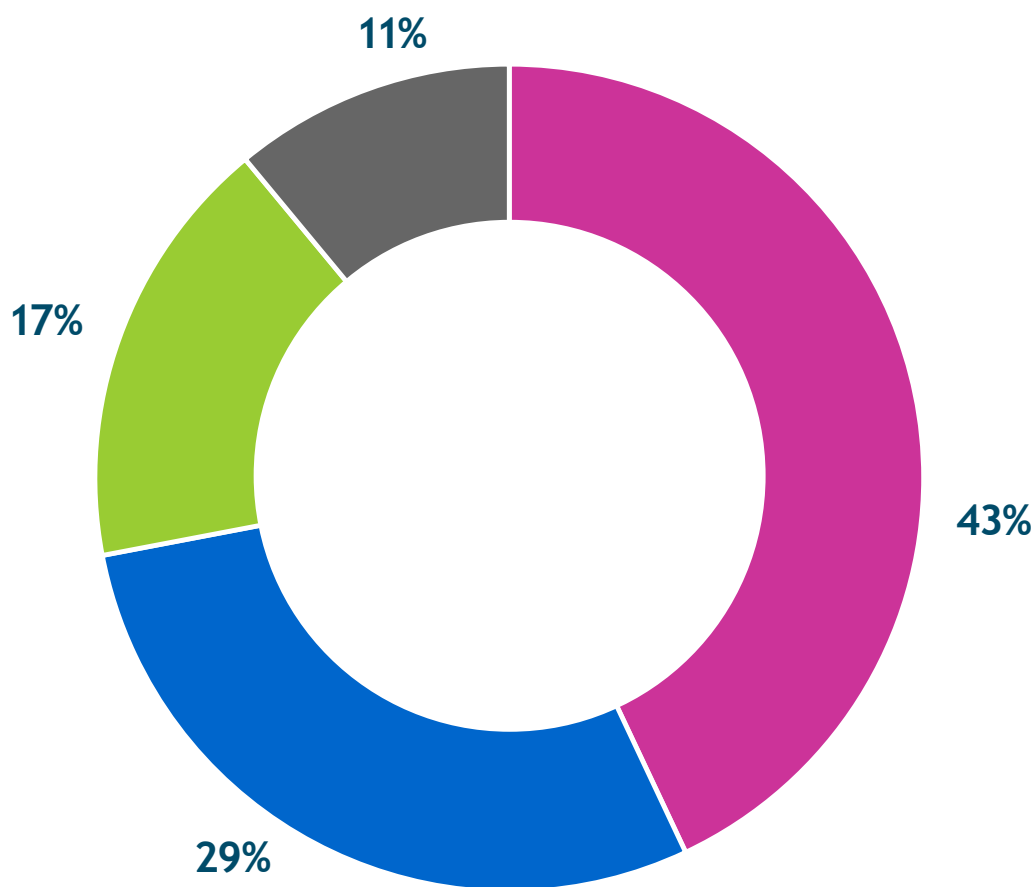


Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

This year we helped 126,221 people get the advice and information they need by:

- Providing advice and information articles on our website.
- Answering people's queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
- Talking to people at community events.
- Promoting services and information that can help people, via our social media.

Here are some of the areas that people asked about.



It's been a pleasure to work with HWCB over the last year and to see the difference they make. HWCB and Young HW play a vital role for all ages in providing feedback on resident experience of the health and care services they receive. The information is collated and reported to local decision makers through the Central Bedfordshire Health & Wellbeing Board and the Social Care, Health & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This gives the opportunity to those of us who serve on these bodies to reflect on the services offered and how we can help to improve outcomes. As well as supporting strategic policy, the practical effectiveness of the work is so impressive. For example, the excellent work that Young Healthwatch have been doing for schools in Central Bedfordshire to enable girls to access free sanitary products through the Red Box scheme. Thank you for all you have done in the past year and for all that is planned for the year ahead.

Cllr Tracey Stock
Chair, Health & Wellbeing Board
Central Bedfordshire Council



Improving access to information and advice for rural communities

We helped people access information and advice about health and social care services across Central Bedfordshire, thanks to working in partnership with many key stakeholders.

Through our outreach project 'Just Ask 2019' people shared their experiences of accessing health and social care services across such a rural area as Central Bedfordshire. They told us that a key concern is housing growth and the lack of infrastructure to support it which could result in limited access to health and social care services in the future.

By working together with our partners, we spoke with over 1300 visitors, of which 700 took part in voting polls. We visited seven locations across Central Bedfordshire and 16 key partner organisations joined us to answer health and social care questions from local residents.

This year, our 'Just Ask' programme has seen a 21% increase in the number of visitors seeking advice and information about health and social care services in their area, and the local council and health services are using people's questions and feedback to make wider improvements.

The programme has also helped many people, and in some cases, had a significant impact on people's lives. For example, a family, who wanted to move their elderly relative from another County to live closer to them was supported with information about local GP services, hospital and home care services. This led to the family making informed choices for the cared for person which will make a big difference to the whole families wellbeing.

A full report showing details of our Just Ask 2019 programme including queries, issues and concerns raised by the local community, and our response, can be found here: <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Just-Ask-2019-Report-Final-web.pdf>

Chums were amazing (for a young family member who lost a parent). They helped incredibly, so much so, she is where she is now because of them.

Visitor to Just Ask



You said, We did

Here are just some of the ways we have helped people in the community.....



Complicated Dermatology pathway:

A lady emailed us concerned about confusing pathways for dermatology services which resulted in a poor quality of service in terms of referral, treatment, communication and support. She felt she was not treated with dignity and respect throughout her entire journey on the dermatology pathway. We spoke with the service provider and made recommendations for improvement. The hospital has now made a significant change to the way in which the dermatology pathway is managed. This lady told us *“I think this experience proves the importance of making a complaint and ensuring that it is done in a constructive way - it allows the Trust to improve and this can only be a positive thing. I really appreciate your support and value the involvement of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire”*.



Securing an appointment:

We received a call from a lady asking for help with securing an appointment with ‘Physioline’ to treat a damaged knee. Despite following Physioline exercises her condition worsened and she needed a face to face appointment. She had tried on several occasions to contact the service with no success. We escalated this issue to the Clinical Lead at Physioline and within four days the lady had been contacted and an appointment secured for two weeks’ time. The lady told us *“I am extremely grateful for your help in resolving this matter for me, thank you”*.



Support to make a complaint:

Following several issues with services received at a local GP Surgery, a lady called us to ask for help to make a complaint about the surgery and an advocacy person to support her. The lady had severe communication difficulties, restricted due to a brain condition and mental health issues. We signposted her to the Practice Manager at the surgery, POhWER for advocacy support, NHS England and the PHSO. In addition we contacted her social worker and community support worker to explain that she needed their support through this process. The lady told us *“Thank you so much for giving me that advice and laying it out in a way I can totally understand. I am grateful for this. You have been most helpful and thank you very much”*.



Support for IVF referral pathway:

A same sex couple contacted HWCB to ask for our support and advice in dealing with a complaint to PALs following an IVF referral to a local Hospital by their GP, as their initial appointment was cancelled and the referral subsequently rejected. We signposted to POHWER, NHS England, the PHSO and Stonewall. We also contacted the BCCG for clarification relating to their IVF Policy, and as the couple were also upset with the attitude of staff at the hospital, we contacted the Director of Nursing to highlight their concerns. Following an investigation the couple subsequently received a letter from the hospital to explain the miscommunication and current policy relating to IVF referrals. Improvements have been implemented as a result of their complaint, however the couple are continuing to pursue their request for an IVF referral. The couple told us *“Thank you very much for all of your advice and support so far. We really do appreciate it and will keep you updated”*.



Strengthening the evidence

HWCB were regularly hearing from people who were having difficulty accessing mental health services and who had experience of poor service delivery. This feedback, and first-hand experiences, prompted HWCB to prioritise work in this area and further strengthen the evidence from a local perspective. It was agreed with the local provider of mental health services, (ELFT), that HWCB would facilitate an engagement project to gather additional feedback and insight from service users across Central Bedfordshire. Several participation groups were facilitated and a report written showing a summary of feedback received, including recommendations for improvements. The report was shared with ELFT colleagues who will be reviewing their pathways to accessing services and delivery. HWCB continue to work closely with ELFT to address service user issues, using open and transparent communication.



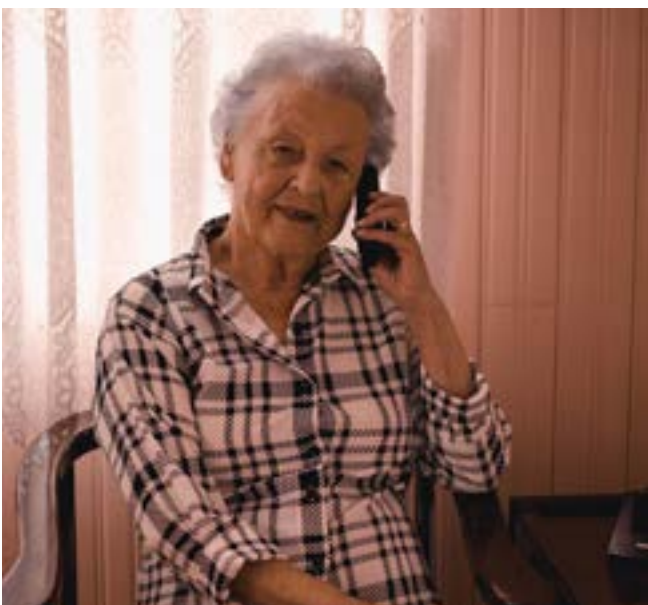
Finding your own support:

Some people told us that they felt healthcare professionals ‘pushed’ them to conduct their own research and find their own support. For people with mental health issues, this activity was sometimes challenging, particularly in times of poor wellbeing. HWCB decided to compile a resource document with links and contact details for support networks, key organisations and wellbeing, including mental health services. We are also developing web pages to easily display the resource document to enable people to quickly access the information they need.



Accessing Dentistry services:

A father contacted HWCB as they were having trouble getting an appointment for their autistic child at the local hospital, who had a super numeric tooth, who was in pain and struggling to cope. The dentist had referred the case as urgent but nothing had progressed. We spoke to the clinic and although the referral was on their system it could be up to 18 weeks before an initial appointment could be offered. We flagged the urgency and advised that their only option was to contact PALs. Shortly after, the clinic called the family and offered an appointment for the following week, which they accepted. The father was very pleased with the outcome, feeling that *‘the intervention had certainly helped’* and was dealt with to the patient’s family’s satisfaction.



Vulnerable resident seeks help:

Shortly after Lockdown was announced in March, a vulnerable elderly lady, with a serious underlying health condition, called HWCB as she was extremely anxious about her inability to secure a grocery slot for delivery from Sainsbury’s. She felt that she should have been identified as a high risk vulnerable person but had not received notification from the Council and appeared to have fallen through the net. We spoke with our contact at Central Bedfordshire Council who directly spoke to their Covid-19 Team. A member of the team called this lady immediately and she was added to the Council’s vulnerable list to enable her to access specific help and support. The lady was extremely complimentary about HWCB’s help and grateful that we were able to help.



Registering at a GP Practice:

A couple who had recently returned to the UK from living abroad had tried to register their details several times with a local surgery but every time they checked on progress were told that the details had been lost. In March 2020, as urgent repeat prescriptions were now due for both of them, they contacted HWCB to see if we could help. We advised the couple to contact NHS 111 online to obtain an emergency prescription and to contact the Practice Manager at the surgery to find out why their registration had not been actioned. Their call to the 111 service resolved their issue as NHS 111 were able to access their medical records and register the couple with a local surgery. The couple told us *“Thank you for your kindly and efficient help”*.



Delayed Orthopaedic referral:

On behalf of her husband who needed a new hip, a lady contacted HWCB in March 2020 to ask for help in finding where clinic appointments were made centrally for orthopaedic referrals to hospital. After further discussion we ascertained that a referral had been sent by their GP to the MSK service four months previously. We contacted the Head of Integrated Care who, after investigation into the case, advised that there had been an administrative error and immediately called the patient to apologise. Within two weeks the patient had received an appointment letter from Bedford Hospital for April. The lady was very grateful for our help and told us *“Thank you so much for your help with this problem”*.



Access to the right advice:

After being advised by her local surgery that they did not offer a particular gynaecological service and to contact ‘Icash’, a lady called HWCB to find out if there was another option. For various reasons it was difficult for her to book the procedure using the Icash service. HWCB advised her that another local surgery offered this procedure and she did not have to be registered there to book in, as the service is offered through the GP Enhanced Sexual Health and Contraception Clinic. She secured an appointment and was very grateful that someone had listened to her, she told us *“Thank you again for your support and advice at this very stressful time”*. We also contacted the lady’s surgery to ensure their staff are aware of an alternative provider available in the local area.

Providing a 'one stop shop' to information and advice for older people

Working in partnership with many key stakeholders, HWCB hosted a 'Festival for Older People' in October 2019. The Festival provides a unique opportunity for a wide range of organisations, to supply information, advice and guidance to older people, to come together in one place.

Over 300 people visited the Festival to talk directly to service providers and exhibitors, to hear more about the support services they offer, available to them in the local community, that they may not have previously been aware of.

The theme for our annual event in 2019 was 'The Journey to Age Equality' in which we focussed on reducing inequality by equipping older people, their carers and those who work with them, with information and advice that would support them now and in the future.

The event also offered a lighter escape from the every day, with activities, refreshments and entertainment.

My mum really enjoyed it. I had a smile on my face catching her singing along to 'Elvis' and she took home plenty of reading material because so many of the stalls were relevant to her needs. Well done to all.

Visitor to the Festival for Older People 2019

In addition to service providers, we also invited exhibitors with handmade goods and food items, providers of hand massage and nail care. The diverse range of exhibitors also included an opportunity for people to take a journey with the aid of virtual reality, courtesy of Escape2VR.

The Deputy Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, who opened the Festival with Meryl Dolling, High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, said *"It was wonderful to meet so many stallholders representing a host of organisations working hard to improve the lives of older people in Bedfordshire. I especially enjoyed speaking with local residents who themselves contribute much to the support of others in the County and to hear their personal hopes for ageing well"*.

A full report, including a video of the event, can be found here: <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FOP-2019a.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJNqxLJpX6A>





The Festival for Older People 2019 - at a glance

Over 300 visitors to the event



Information/ advice and products from 49 organisations



The event was supported by 27 volunteers



People travelled from 42 Towns & Villages across the region and beyond to come to the Festival



Over 115 people gave feedback about the event by filling out evaluation forms



The Macmillan Cake Stall raised over £170.00 for the charity



Volunteers



At Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire we are supported by 23 adult volunteers and 27 young volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what people would like to improve, to services in their communities.

This year our volunteers:

- Raised awareness of the work we do at events, in the community and with health and care services.
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Helped support our day-to-day running.
- Listened to people's experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.

Young Healthwatch Volunteers visit sexual health services in Bedfordshire

Thanks to the hard work of a group of young HWCB volunteers, changes have been made to a sexual health clinic in Bedfordshire.

Following a workshop held at a local college, Young Healthwatch Volunteers were invited to visit and view a newly located sexual health clinic in June 2019, to identify any areas, from a young persons perspective, that could be changed or improved. This included their observations on the venue, location and environment.

Our Young Healthwatch volunteers wrote a report letting those in charge know what could be improved; some ideas included:

- Consideration to be given to extending the opening hours on a Friday allowing more young people to access the service after school.
- The clinic to consider developing an App to help young people book appointments at the clinic, as the majority of young people would find this more accessible and user friendly.

The provider was delighted to welcome Young Healthwatch representatives to visit their service and share valuable feedback about which aspects of the service are working well, together with some practical ideas of how the service can be improved.



Newly located sexual health clinic in Bedfordshire

They have agreed to look into how some of the ideas might be introduced. Developing a bespoke LSH App to make booking appointments or advising about the different clinic sessions is definitely something they will be looking into, and will ask the young people to support them in some user group testing.

To view a full copy of the report, go to: <https://younghealthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/YHW-Observation-Visit-Report-SHClinic-28.06.19.-Final.pdf>

With our volunteers' help, we are keeping an eye on what people think of local sexual health services and working with those in charge to make sure people's views inform changes.

The services at the clinic tailor to all types of people, including adolescents, in a non-judgemental background.

A Young Healthwatch Volunteer

Our volunteers

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers. Meet some of the team and hear what they get up to.



Brian, 73

Having been a Practice Manager in the 1980's I have an interest in Primary Care. I am Vice Chair of the Patient Group at our surgery and HWCB came to do a talk at our Patient Participation Group Network Meeting. They were looking for 'Enter & View' volunteers and I was looking for something to get me out of the house and to give something back to the community.

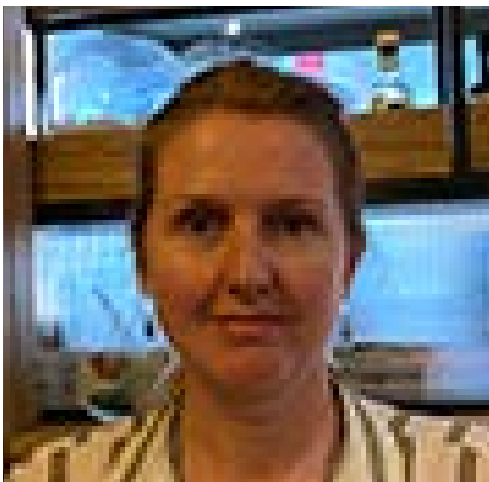
I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting lots of interesting people over the years and have made many new friends.



Emily, 17

I joined Young Healthwatch after a school assembly and liked the idea that it gave us a voice when I feel our voice can sometimes be dismissed in society. It allows us to somewhat influence the lives of the youth in Central Bedfordshire and to give back to the community. I really enjoyed getting involved with the CPR training and it has inspired me to want to help others more.

I love how the young Healthwatch volunteers all work so nicely together with no one judging anyone's ideas; if anything we build on them. I can't wait for future projects.



Annette, 48

I heard about HWCB whilst doing research for my health and social care course; I then went along to HWCB's AGM and became interested in what they did and learned that volunteers were welcome.

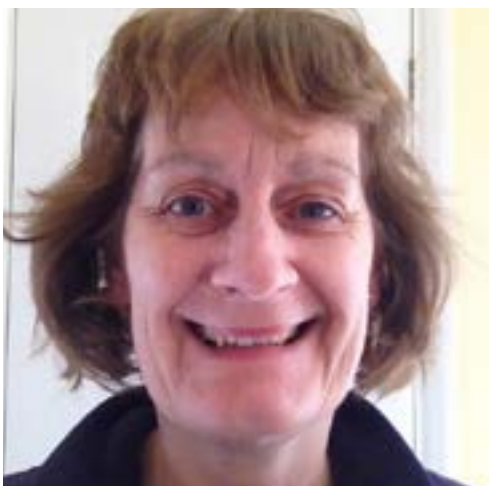
I realised I had skills and experience that could be put to good use to help improve local services. I was particularly interested in the 'Enter & View' programme and have so far been involved in updating questionnaires and visiting care homes with other volunteers.



Taylor, 17

The thing I have liked so far about joining Young Healthwatch is that it gives me the opportunity to learn new skills whilst giving something back. For example, I have been helping on the social media page by making posts and publishing them. I have found this really helpful as I am looking at social media as part of my school work and potential career options, so I have been able to explore and learn new things with HWCB by doing this role.

I also like it that everyone comes together and supports you with the ideas you suggest, whilst providing alternative ideas or other ways to look at it to ensure our voice is heard.



Nicola

I first heard about HWCB when volunteering on a Bedford Hospital re-organisation programme. I had been struggling with obtaining healthcare for my child and HWCB provided a great avenue to understand how local healthcare was organised. I have been volunteering with HWCB, in various roles, for over 5 years. Mainly I carry on because its good fun with a great team. They listen to what you want to do and don't push (too hard) to do other tasks. I have been able to keep my skills up to date. You really are valued for your time and what you contribute.



Carys, 78

For many years care and treatment of mental health in Bedfordshire has been my primary concern. A few years ago I went to a local mental health meeting and it was there I was introduced to HWCB. I realised this was an independent organisation supporting anyone needing advice about their physical or mental health care.

Since becoming a volunteer with HWCB I have received valuable information and advice, and made many new friends. It feels good to know I am supported.



Heather, 14

I joined Young Healthwatch as I wanted to meet new people, learn new skills and have an extra out of school activity, and having volunteered for other things before, I thought this sounded good.

I am particularly interested in capturing images for projects and developing them to portray the correct message we are exploring. I have also started to build on my public speaking skills by taking part in online discussions. I can't wait for more activities with Young Healthwatch to see what else I can do to get the voice of young people heard.



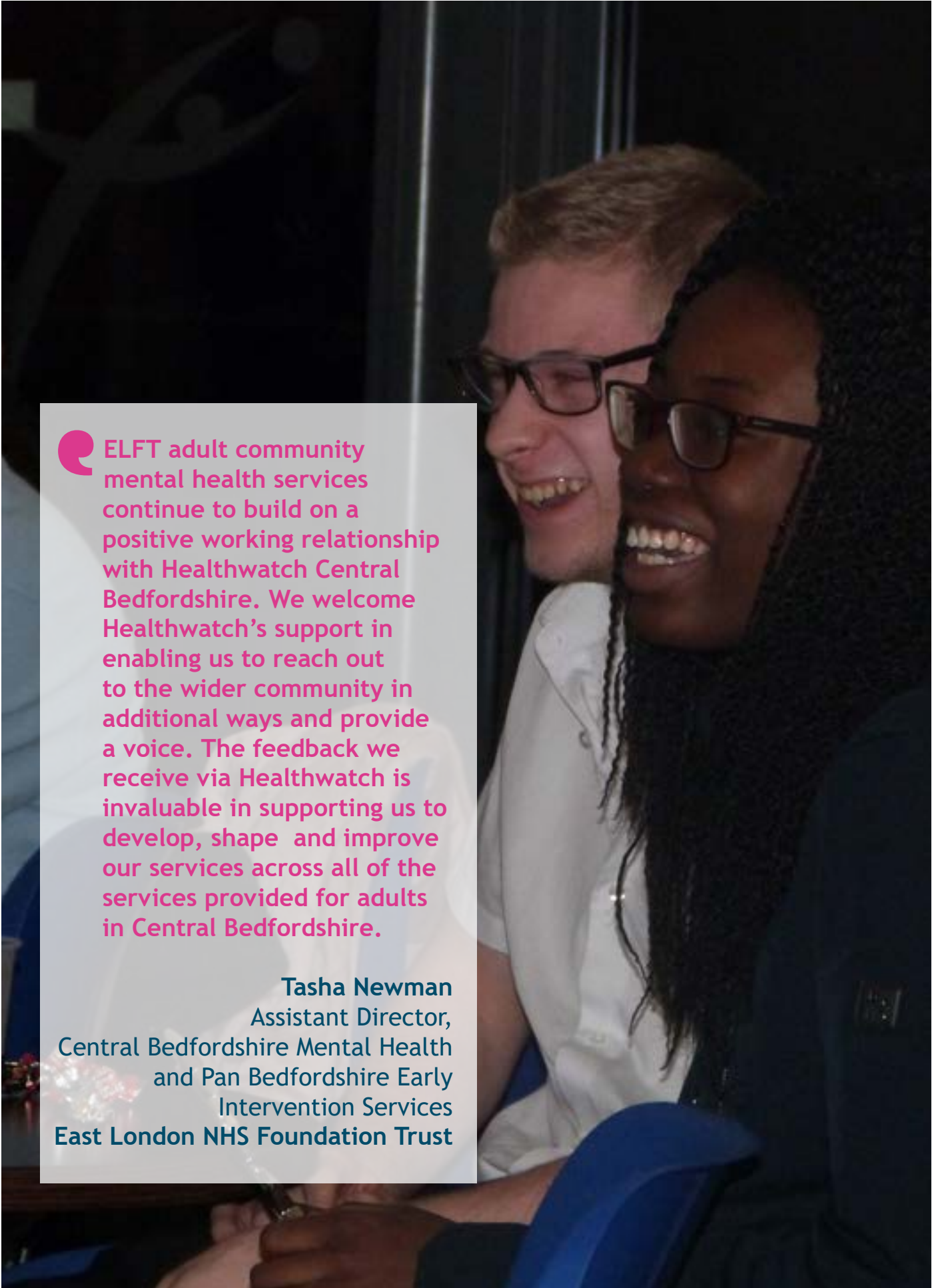
Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch at Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

Website: www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 303 8554

Email: info@Healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk



ELFT adult community mental health services continue to build on a positive working relationship with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. We welcome Healthwatch's support in enabling us to reach out to the wider community in additional ways and provide a voice. The feedback we receive via Healthwatch is invaluable in supporting us to develop, shape and improve our services across all of the services provided for adults in Central Bedfordshire.

Tasha Newman
Assistant Director,
Central Bedfordshire Mental Health
and Pan Bedfordshire Early
Intervention Services
East London NHS Foundation Trust

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

Our Young Healthwatch team have gone from strength to strength in the past twelve months and some of their activities are listed below:

- **The 15 Steps NHS Training Programme** - completed by Young Healthwatch members in September 2019 to help them understand quality from a patient's perspective, when carrying out visits to healthcare settings.
- **The 'READY' Trial** - our young people are part of a research study that aims to find out whether exercise is an effective treatment for young people with depression. They helped design questionnaires and logos for the project.
- **Chat Health** - Bedfordshire Children's Services invited Young Healthwatch Volunteers, in November 2019, to provide feedback on how Chat Health, a wellbeing service for 11-19 year olds which allows students to text the school nurse team for help and advice, is managed, along with putting ideas forward for rebranding the service, which included poster design.
- **The Learner Voice Healthwatch Programme** - young people meeting at a local College, designed a survey relating to the use of online media which generated over 250 responses, and resulted in posters displayed in local schools advising children to think about their online presence.
- **ThinkNinja** - a Young Healthwatch volunteer, aged 15, reviewed an app, designed to bring self-help knowledge and skills, over a 14 day period. Her report was shared with other young people and agencies to promote the positive use of ThinkNinja during lockdown.
- **Pen Pal Scheme** - just prior to lockdown, Young Healthwatch Volunteers reached out to care home residents and those receiving home care, by writing letters and becoming Pen Pals. Many positive responses have been received; excerpts published on our website.



During the lockdown young people have continued to write 'Blogs' detailing how this affects them both emotionally, mentally and physically which have been shared on our website to support other young people who may have similar anxieties.

Bedford Hospital have been so pleased that Young Healthwatch approached them to be their first '15 steps' hospital. We hope that this is the first of many joint ventures.

Deborah Allman, Voluntary Services Manager, Bedford Hospital Fundraising and Donations Team
Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust



For their work in the local community, ensuring young people's voice is heard, the Young Healthwatch Volunteers won individual and group **'High Sheriff Awards'** in February 2020. More recently, Young Healthwatch were successful in their application for the **'Investing in Children Award'**, which gives organisations national recognition for the good practice and active inclusion of children and young people in dialogue that results in change.

Future projects will include focusing on priority seating for disabled young people on public transport to reflect that not every disability is visible, to include designing posters for display on buses, and a project producing workshops, promoting body image for young people.

Young Healthwatch volunteers look forward to continuing their work in the local community, encouraging young people to have a voice.

Because of Covid-19, instead of visiting the care home as planned, we adapted and instead sent letters.

Keira, Young Healthwatch Volunteer

Young Healthwatch has provided me with the opportunity to take a break from constantly looking at textbooks or revision. It has provided me with the skills that are vital for my future and my dreams. Young Healthwatch feels like another family where we can express our views and concerns and really feel like we are making a difference.

Safa, Young Healthwatch Volunteer

I have been part of the Enter & View team that visited the Sexual Health Clinic and Bedford Hospital Paediatric services where I had the opportunity to put forward my ideas for improvements. Being part of these important projects is very important to me as they make me really feel as if my opinions, as a young person, are important and that I'm being able to truly make a difference in my community, which means an immense amount to me.

Kirsty, Young Healthwatch Volunteer



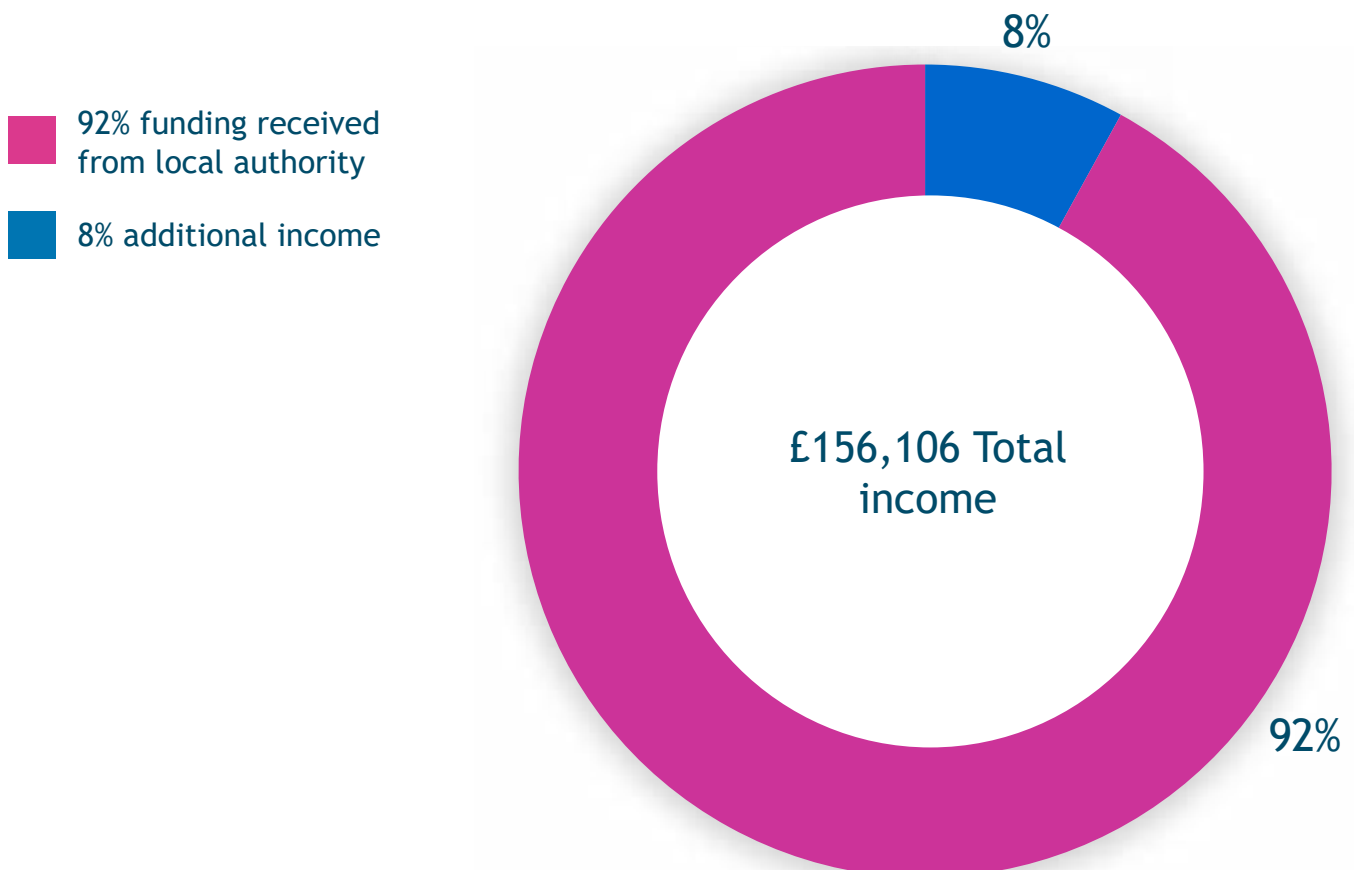
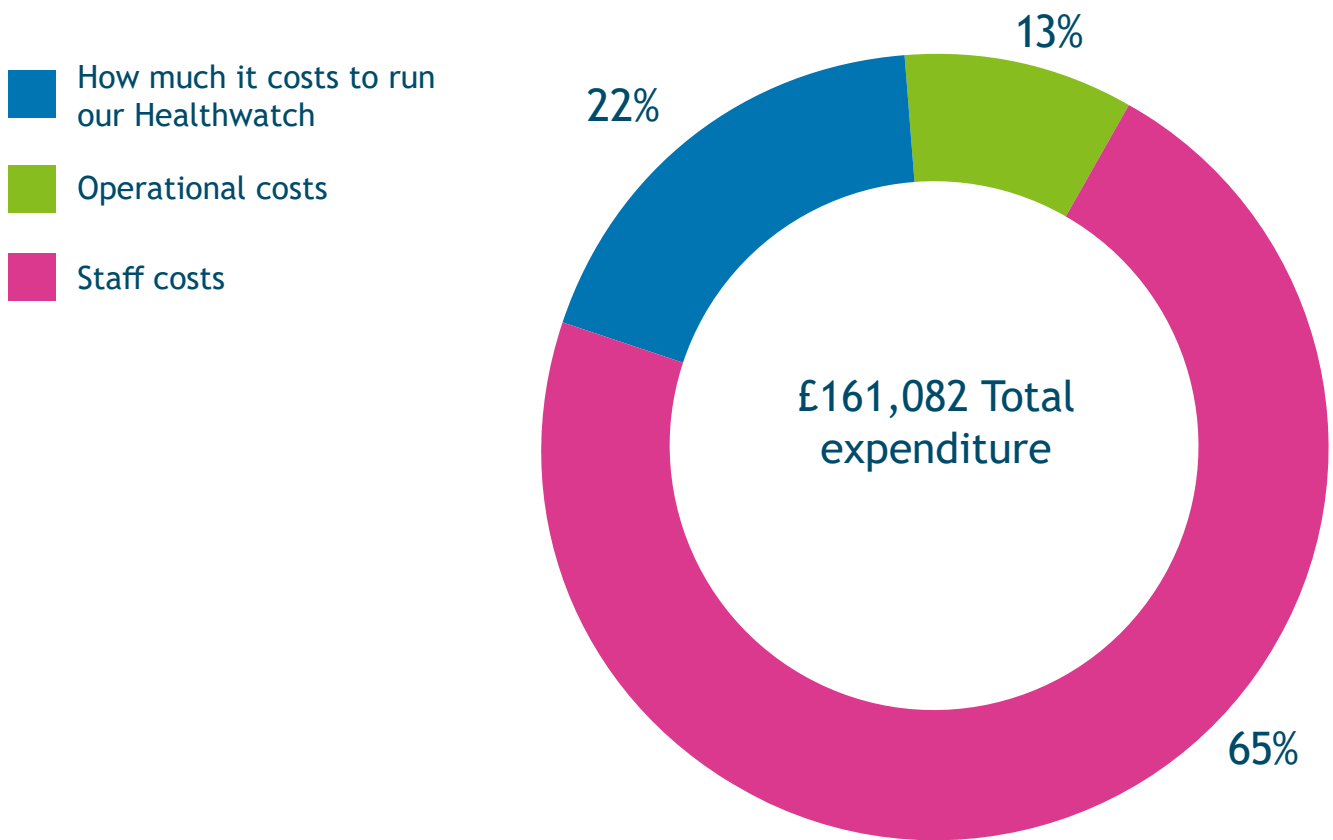
Care home residents benefiting from the Pen Pal Scheme

Finances



*Photograph taken by Heather,
Young Healthwatch volunteer*

We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent £161,082



Our plans for next year



Current and future priorities

Looking ahead

The last few months have been incredibly challenging and we have all had to adapt and change to a new way of working following the lockdown announcement. However, the coronavirus pandemic has also opened up new possibilities and encouraged people to connect in ways they would not otherwise have done.

We have heard from many local residents about how they are adjusting to, or as some have put it, surviving lockdown, including how they are coping living in isolation, and in a multigenerational household with vulnerable people. Their blogs are featured on our website at www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk and we look forward to continuing to post their views.

Just prior to lockdown our Young Healthwatch members reached out to local care home residents, and to people receiving Domiciliary Care, to join a Pen Pal scheme. The project is hugely successful and has had unexpected benefits for both older and younger people, and is set to continue for many years to come.

Future priorities

Delivery of health and social care services will need to change as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and our focus for the future will be to continue to gather valuable feedback from our local community about how they are accessing and receiving services in this new and constantly evolving landscape.



Diana Blackmun, CEO
Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

We may not be able to engage with people in the way we have been in the past so will be looking at new ways to hear people's views, to feed back to the decision makers, and to work with them to ensure that the consumer voice is used to inform a different type of service delivery and design. As we have all learnt in recent months, we can do a lot more together than individually.

Thank you

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my wonderful, flexible team and very supportive Chair and Directors. I am looking forward to continuing to work with them all in the coming year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DBlackmun".

Diana Blackmun, CEO

Our focus for the future will be to continue to gather valuable feedback from our local community in this new and constantly evolving landscape.



Every project we do is based on our own experiences and what we think, as young people, that needs to change within the health and care sector.

Daisy
Young Healthwatch Volunteer

I'm very happy that I have the opportunity to work with Young Healthwatch. Working with the group has really opened my eyes to the power I have as a young person and really helped me understand what I can do to help the community. There is nothing that makes me happier than knowing that me and my peers at Young Healthwatch have managed to change or help a situation simply because we are permitted to get involved.

Valentina
Young Healthwatch Volunteer

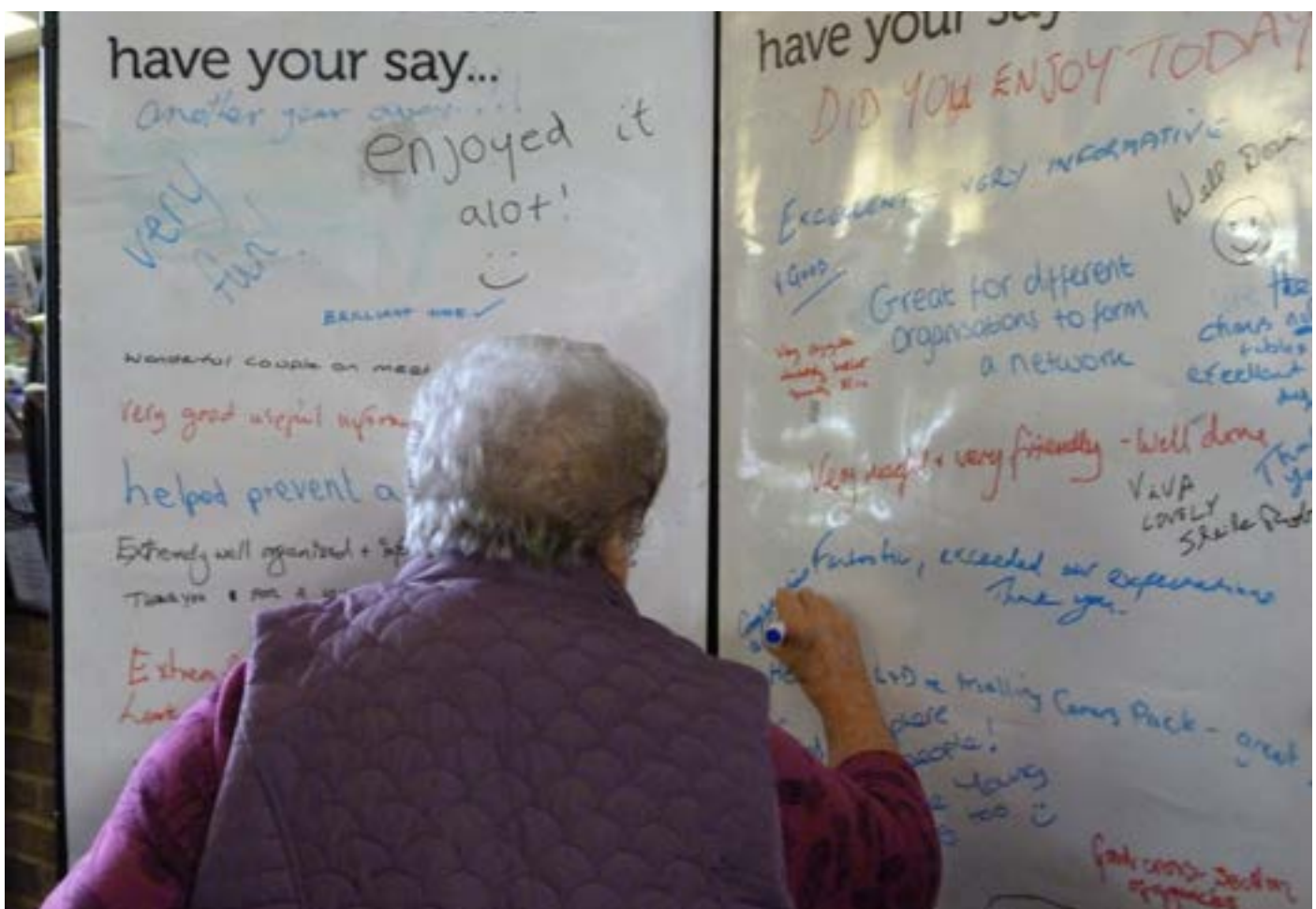
As a volunteer with Young Healthwatch, I participated in the CPR training with the British Heart Foundation - this training has definitely given me much more confidence when it comes to knowing what to do in an emergency.

Emily
Young Healthwatch Volunteer

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.
- The voluntary organisations that have contributed to our work.
- Key stakeholders and partners who have responded to our recommendations for improvements to local services.
- Our Young Healthwatch team for all their outstanding work and projects to highlight the experiences of young people in their community.
- Staff and colleagues at Central Bedfordshire Council.
- East London Foundation Trust.
- 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.



Graffiti wall at the Festival for Older People



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has worked collaboratively and proactively with Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group for the benefit of the local community which is integral to the way we make decisions about local healthcare.

We look forward to a continuing, valuable, open and transparent relationship, as services are redesigned and developed in light of the current coronavirus pandemic, for all our residents.

Jane Meggitt
Director of Communication,
Partnerships and Engagement
BLMK Collaborative Commissioning

Acronym Answers

| | |
|-------|---|
| AIS | Accessible Information Standards |
| BCCG | Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group |
| CCG | Clinical Commissioning Group |
| ELFT | East London NHS Foundation Trust |
| HWCB | Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire |
| Icash | Integrated contraception and sexual health |
| ICS | Integrated Care Systems |
| IVF | In vitro fertilisation |
| LTP | Long Term Plan |
| MSK | Musculoskeletal |
| PALs | Patient Advice and Liaison Service |
| PHSO | Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman |
| READY | Randomised trial of energetic activity for depression in young people |

Contact Us

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire registered office:
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Email: info@Healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk
Twitter: @healthwatch_cb
Facebook: Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
YouTube: Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
Instagram: hw_centralbeds
Website: www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk
Registered in England:
Company No: 08399922
Registered Charity: 1154627

Address and contact details of the organisation holding the local Healthwatch contract as of 31/03/2020:

Address: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Bedfordshire, SG17 5TQ
Contact number: 0300 300 8000
Email address: customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

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.

If you need this in an alternative format please contact us.

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