



Community Equipment Services report

January 2023

healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire

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Introduction

The Community Equipment Service provides a range of equipment to allow people to remain in their own home for as long as possible and to support them when being discharged from hospital. The range of equipment includes profiling beds, pressure care mattresses, chair and bed raisers, and commodes. The equipment is delivered free of charge following an assessment by a health or social care professional and is provided on loan for as long as it is required to meet their needs.

Currently there are two Community Equipment Services in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) – one providing equipment to residents in Bedfordshire and Luton, and the other providing equipment to residents of Milton Keynes. It is proposed that from April 2024, these services will combine to provide one seamless service across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB), an independent organisation that exists to ensure health and care services work for the local people that use them, were asked by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to undertake an independent review, on their behalf, to determine local residents experience of receiving equipment from the Community Equipment Service, or comments from those who felt that they may need to access the service in the future.

The feedback given will help Central Bedfordshire Council to address any concerns about provision of equipment and delivery, and to help inform a new service to be delivered across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes.





Methodology

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) developed a survey, jointly with Central Bedfordshire Council in November 2022, to gather the views and experiences of people who may have received equipment from the Community Equipment Service in Bedfordshire, Luton or Milton Keynes, or who feel they may need to use the service in the future.

The survey was widely distributed and shared by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) via Smart Survey, social media and our website, between 12th November 2022 and 6th January 2023. We also promoted the survey via our weekly Ebulletins, as direct mail to all on our distribution list, and as an Email footer on all our communications. Information was also sent to Central Bedfordshire Council Communications Team to help promote the survey to local residents. Physical copies were also available on request. To reach as many service users, and future users, as possible across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK), HWCB also asked colleagues in local Healthwatch across Milton Keynes, Luton and Bedford Borough to share the survey using the same methods.

People were encouraged to complete the survey if they were a service user. A Carer, relative or friend, could also complete the survey on behalf of the service user.

In the survey people were asked if they had ever received equipment from Millbrook Healthcare, the current provider of community equipment, and how they would rate their experience of the service.

They were also asked about returning the equipment, repairs to the equipment, and whether they would find it helpful to have the option of assessing their own needs for small items of equipment through an online assessment, and about delivery of the equipment. The survey questions also included an option for any additional comments they wished to make.

This was a snapshot survey and in total 32 responses were received; 31 fully completed and one partially completed. 24 respondents were currently using equipment provided by Millbrook Community Equipment Services with seven (25%) respondents not currently using equipment supplied by them. A few additional comments about their experience was also received, plus observations from Healthwatch Milton Keynes (HWMK) following a series of 'Enter and View' visits they recently conducted across Care Homes in Milton Keynes, and the feedback this generated relating to community equipment stored in the homes.

HWCB gathered and analysed the survey results; a summary of the questions and analysis of the responses are included in the following sections. Any additional comments provided by respondents have been included throughout the report.

Key Summary

of survey results

As a result of the snapshot survey, a total of 32 responses were received; 31 fully completed and one partially completed. 24 respondents were currently using equipment provided by Millbrook Community Equipment Services with seven (25%) respondents not currently using equipment supplied by them.

A total of 16 questions were asked which included four demographic questions. Although the survey was shared across BLMK, unfortunately we did not receive any responses from people living in the area of Bedford Borough. The majority of respondents were within the 65–79 age category and just over 80% indicated they lived in Central Bedfordshire. Just over half of respondents were women (61%) and at least 35% indicated they were Carers.

The vast majority of respondents to the survey, receiving equipment from Millbrook, were very satisfied with their experience (87%). The equipment usually arrived on time, the service was helpful and friendly, the technicians explained how to use the equipment, and customers said they were treated with dignity and respect. However, only half of the respondents who completed the survey said they found the equipment instructions easy to follow, one respondent said, *'The leaflet containing the instructions would be better in larger print'*.

Just over half (62%) of respondents said they *had* been told the equipment needed to be returned when it was no longer needed, and the process for doing this. However, over a third of respondents (37%) answered *'no'* to this question, which would indicate they were not informed of how to return the equipment.

38.7% of respondents said it would be very helpful to have the option to assess their own needs for small items of equipment via an online assessment, although a similar percentage (38.4%) said they were *'not sure'*, and a quarter of respondents (25%) said they would *'prefer someone to visit them in person to discuss their needs'*.

Unsurprisingly the majority of respondents felt that it was either *'quite important'* or *'very important'*, (96.7%) to know what time their equipment was due to be delivered to them. A very small minority (3.2%) said it was *'not very important'*.

Once again, 90% of equipment users thought that it was *'quite important'* or *'very important'* for the technician to show them how to use the equipment when they visit their home, with 83% who also thought that it was *'quite important'* or *'very important'* for the technician to be wearing a branded uniform.

Equipment users were given several options of how they would like the equipment provider to communicate with them and were asked to tick all their preferred options. *'E-mail'* was the most popular at 68%, followed by *'telephone'* (55%), *'mobile text'* (48%), with *'letter'* being the least preferable at 23%.



When asked what was a suitable time for equipment to be repaired if it broke down, interestingly, the majority of respondents (45%) said it would depend on the type of equipment. Only a quarter of respondents (25%) said 'next day', with 16% who thought it should be 'within a week' and a very small percentage (9%) who thought it should be the 'same day'. This question would probably need to be drilled down further with options for the type of equipment to get a more accurate recording of the response.

Just under half of respondents (42%) indicated they would like to make additional comments about the service they receive; a full list of all comments is included under Question 12, page 13.

Additional feedback to the survey was also received from colleagues at Healthwatch Milton Keynes (HWMK) who were conducting 'Enter and View' visits across Care Homes in Milton Keynes towards the end of 2022. Their feedback related to community equipment, and what the care homes described as the 'clutter' in their homes.

A number of care homes reported to HWMK that the equipment is delivered fairly promptly and safely but issues arose when the person no longer needed the equipment – it is very difficult to get it picked up again.

They were given to understand that the reason for this is partly due to Covid safety/ infection control policies which is understandable. They added that the van delivers the clean equipment and cannot take the 'dirty' equipment back in the same trip as they generally have other clean deliveries to make. This means that the homes are having to find storage spaces for unused equipment (often large and bulky pieces) – because there is usually not a lot of spare space, the equipment is then 'stacked' in the lounge or other communal areas as these are the only large open spaces available.

HWMK added that a visiting OT/Physio at one care home also mentioned this is something they see on a fairly regular basis. At that care home, one of the Milton Keynes Council (MKC) compliance officers noted they had completed an audit of equipment some time ago, and they had been horrified at how much equipment was 'floating around' in the community. HWMK said they are hearing this from many people, specifically more during COVID times than now, but getting equipment collected seems to be the major theme.

Full analysis of

survey results

As a result of the snapshot survey, a total of 32 responses were received; 31 fully completed and one partially completed. 24 respondents were currently using equipment provided by Millbrook Community Equipment Services with seven (25%) respondents not currently using equipment supplied by them.

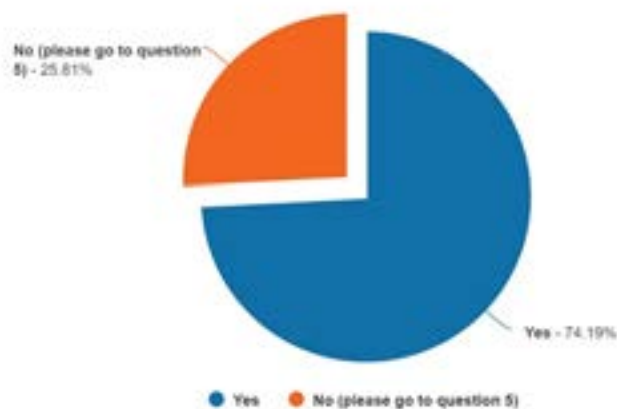
A summary of the questions and analysis of the responses are included in the following section. Any additional comments provided by respondents has been included throughout the report.

A full copy of the survey questions can be found in **Appendix A**.

Question 1 asked if they had ever received any equipment from Millbrook Healthcare, current provider of community equipment.

Three quarters of respondents (74%) said, 'yes' to receiving equipment from the current provider, and 25% said, 'no'. If the answer was 'no' then respondents were directed to Question 5.

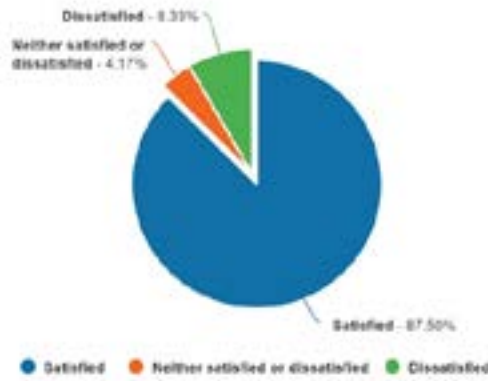
Have you ever received any equipment from Millbrook Healthcare, current provider of community equipment? (tick one)



Question 2 asked how they would rate their experience of receiving equipment from Millbrook.

The majority of respondents were 'satisfied' with their experience (87.5%) with only a very small number who were 'dissatisfied' (approx. 8%) and an even smaller percentage who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4%). Seven respondents skipped this question. Additional comments received included, *'overall a pretty good service'* and *'service is excellent as it is'*.

How would you rate your experience of receiving equipment from Millbrook? (tick one)



Question 3 asked, if they had received equipment from the service, what would they say was good about their experience.

Respondents were given seven options (see full list in Appendix A) and could tick as many as they felt applied to them.

Overall, respondents ticked a minimum of five boxes each. 'A helpful and friendly service' received the highest percentage at 79%. This was closely followed by 'Equipment arrived on time' at 75%. The same percentage of respondents (66%) said 'Technicians explained everything very well' and 'treated with dignity and respect'. Only 50% of respondents said that the instructions were easy to follow.

Only 8% said 'none of the above' and a further 8% of respondents indicated 'other' although they did not elaborate further. Once again, seven respondents skipped this question. Additional comments included, *'made life a little better'*.

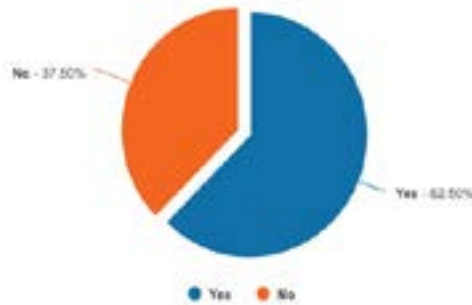
If you have received equipment from the service, what would you say was good about your experience? (tick all that apply)



Question 4 asked if the provider had informed them that the equipment should be returned when they no longer need it and the process for doing this, to ensure that it can be cleaned and reallocated to another service user.

Just over half of respondents (61.5%) said, 'yes' they had been informed, although 37.5 % said, 'no' they had not been informed. Seven respondents skipped this question.

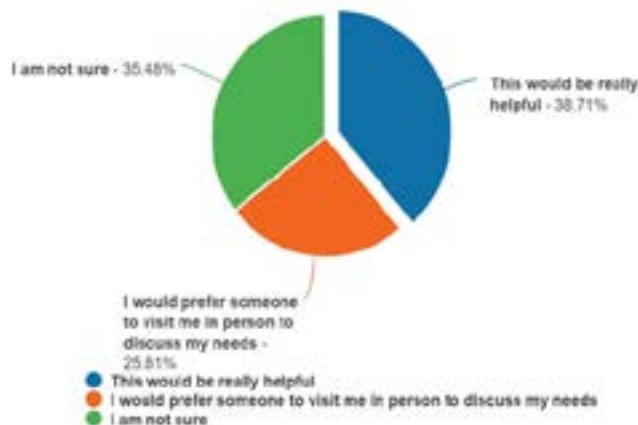
Did the provider inform you that the equipment should be returned when you no longer need it and the process for doing this, to ensure that it can be cleaned and reallocated to another service user?



Question 5 asked if it would be helpful to have the option to assess their own needs for small items of equipment through an online assessment.

Just over a third of respondents (38.7%) said it would be *'very helpful to have the option to assess their own needs'* for small items of equipment via an online assessment, although a similar percentage (38.4%) said they were 'not sure', and a quarter of respondents (25%) said they would *'prefer someone to visit them in person to discuss their needs'*.

Would it be helpful to have the option to assess your own needs for small items of equipment through an online assessment?



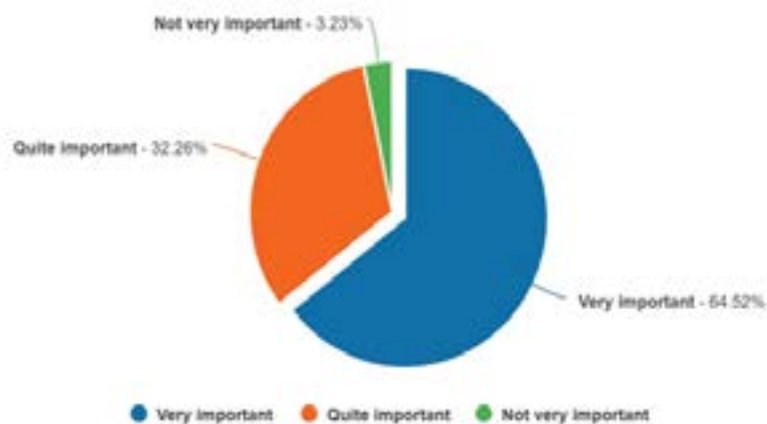
Question 6 asked if, when organising the delivery of their equipment, how important is it for them to know what time their equipment will be delivered.

An overwhelming percentage of respondents (97%) said that it was either 'Quite important' or 'Very important' to know what time their equipment was being delivered. Only 3% said it was 'Not very important'.

One respondent commented, *'I have always been called about 20-30 mins before delivery, which is great – if I would suggest anything to improve the service it would just be when given the delivery date if it could just say am or pm – rather than given just the date but fully understand with the workload this may not be easy. Just appreciate the service'*.

Another respondent, who commented about an updated request for equipment said, *'We were very pleased with the process last time. Would be nice to know timescales from adult care and delivery of items, but so far it is only days since my doctor put in an updated request. We have found them very reliable and work of fitting was done carefully so as to not damage walls yet making sure that the walls hold the part correctly. So far happy with previous experience'*.

When organising the delivery of your equipment, how important is it for you to know what time your equipment will be delivered?
(tick one)

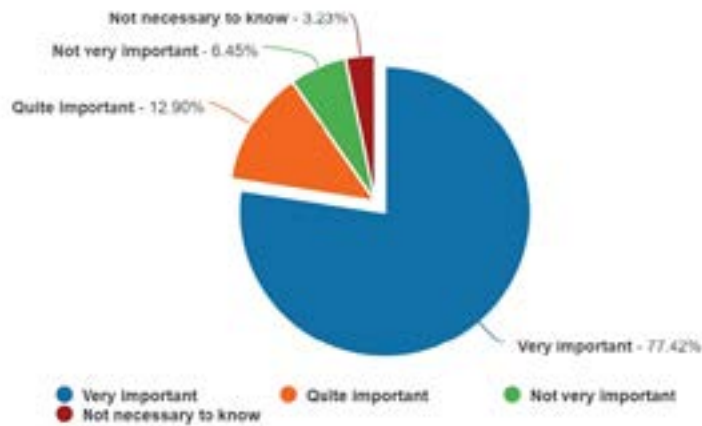


Question 7 asked, when a technician visits their home, how important is it that they showed them how the equipment works.

The majority of respondents (90%) thought it was either 'very important' or 'quite important' to be shown how their equipment works. Only 6% said they felt it was 'not very important', and a very small 3% said it was 'not necessary to know'. We can only assume that the small percentage of people had equipment for which they would need very little instruction in how to use, or they had previously received similar equipment that they knew how to use.

With regard to using the equipment, one respondent said, *'The leaflet containing the instructions would be better in larger print'*.

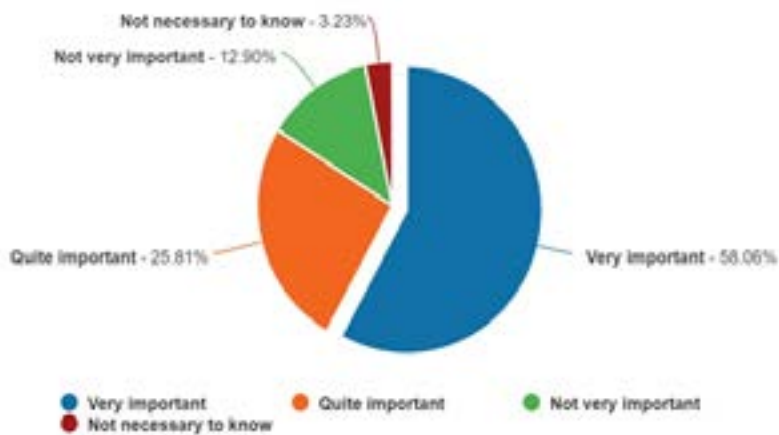
When a technician visits your home, how important is it that they show you how the equipment works? (tick one)



Question 8 asked how important is it for the technician to be wearing a branded uniform (company logo) so they know who they work for.

83% of respondents said that it was either 'quite important' or 'very important' for a technician to be wearing a branded uniform, The remainder thought that it was either 'not very important' (13%) or was 'not necessary to know' (3%).

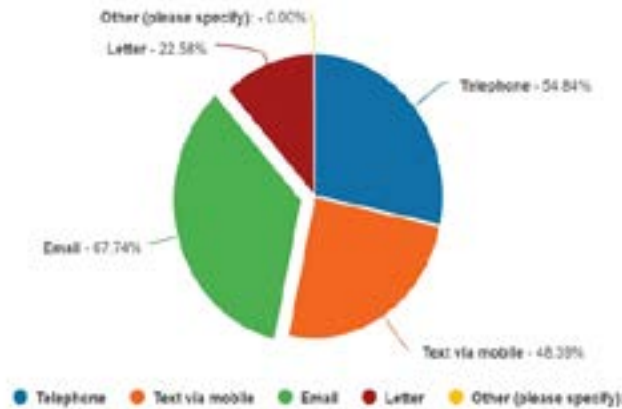
How important is it for the technician to be wearing a branded uniform (company logo) so you know who they work for? (tick one)



Question 9 asked how they would like the Community Equipment Service provider to communicate with them.

All respondents were invited to tick more than one option. The majority of respondents preferred 'email' which received 68% of the votes, 'telephone' was popular at 55%, and 'text via mobile' was the next most popular with 48% of the votes. The least preferred method of communication was 'letter' at 23%.

How would you like the Community Equipment Service provider to communicate with you? (tick all that apply)

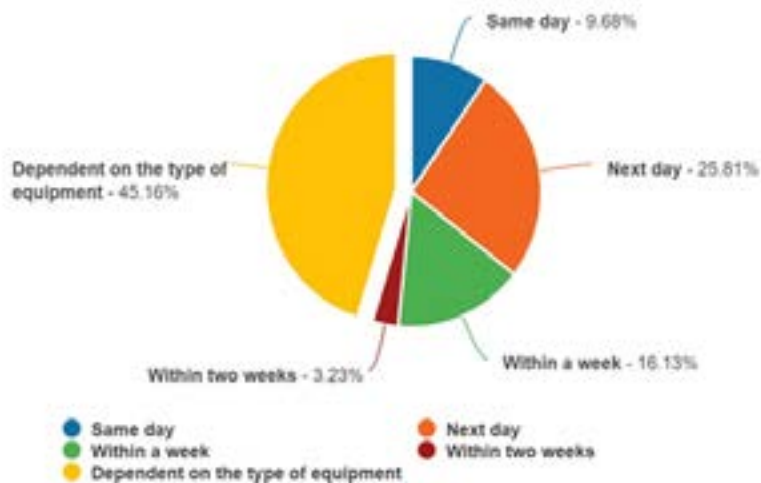


Question 10 asked if their equipment were to breakdown, how quickly did they think it was acceptable for it to be repaired.

Interestingly, the majority of respondents (45%) said it would depend on the type of equipment. Only a quarter of respondents (26%) said 'next day', with 16% who thought it should be 'within a week', and a very small percentage (10%) who thought it should be the 'same day'. A small minority (3%) indicated 'within two weeks' as an acceptable period.

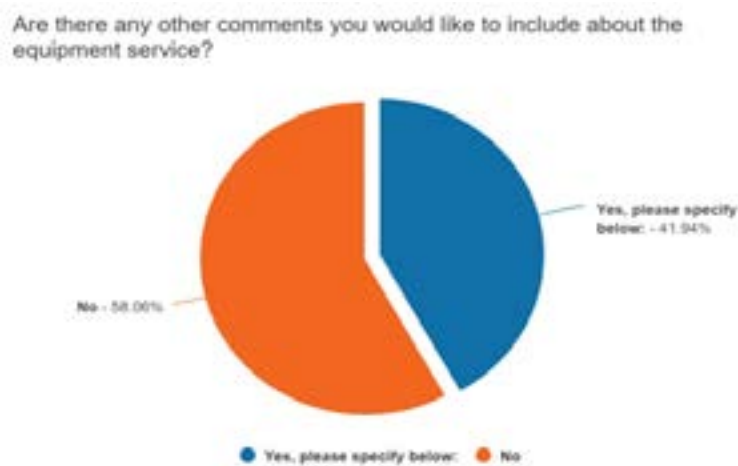
This question would probably need to be drilled down further with options for the type of equipment to get a more accurate recording of the response.

If your equipment were to breakdown, how quickly do you think it is acceptable for it to be repaired? (tick one)



Question 11 asked if they had any other comments they would like to include about the equipment service.

42% of respondents had additional comments to add about the equipment service, but 58% did not. Additional comments were added to **Question 12**, see next section.



Question 12 asked, if they had received equipment from the service, what could have been done to improve their experience.

Additional comments received were mainly positive (some included in body of report) which also includes suggestions for improvement to the service, detailed below:

'Follow through on providing the extra equipment needed'

'We were very pleased with the process last time. Would be nice to know timescales from adult care and delivery of items, but so far it is only days since my doctor put in an updated request. We have found them very reliable and work of fitting was done carefully so as to not damage walls yet making sure that the walls hold the part correctly. So far happy with previous experience'

'Never received any, sadly' (We assume they mean the equipment, which either did not arrive or was not needed)

'Generally regular follow ups'

'We had a very positive experience, so no improvements required'

'More spares should be available in stock, especially since we have now left the EU. Times for deliveries are much longer than they used to be. The chairs that are adapted for an individual's needs are generally stock items that are then adapted. For example, what was required for my husband's chair was a tilt in space mechanisms, required for feeding purposes and for resting his head from neck droop!!'

'Overall, a pretty good service'

'It was excellent'

'I can't think of anything'

'Service is excellent as it is'

'Nothing. Very satisfied'

'The leaflet containing the instructions would be better in larger print'

'I have always been called about 20-30 mins before delivery, which is great - if I would suggest anything to improve the service it would be when given the delivery date if it could just say am or pm - rather than given just the date but fully understand with the workload this may not be easy. Just appreciate the service'

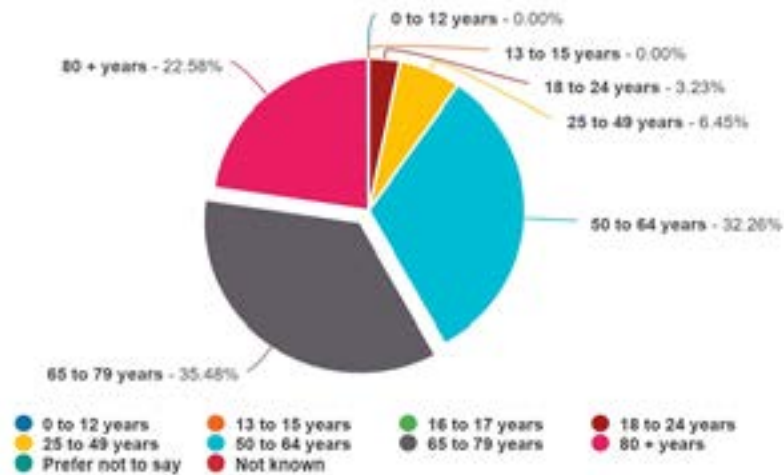
'Made life a little better'

The remaining questions were demographic relating to their age, gender, ethnicity and area lived. People were also asked to indicate if they had completed the form as the service user, patient, Carer, friend, relative or parent.

Question 1 asked their age category.

The majority of respondents were in the 65–79 age category (35%). A third of respondents were in the 50–64 years category (32%) with nearly a quarter of respondents being in the 80+ category (22%). Only 10% were in the two categories between 18–49 years.

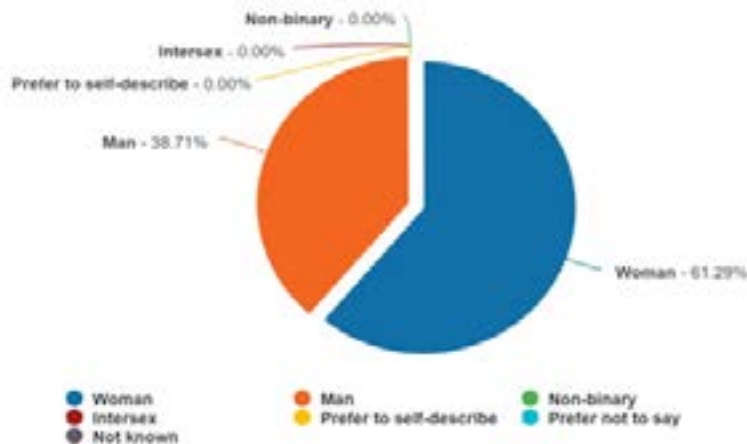
What is your age category?



Question 2 asked how they would describe their gender.

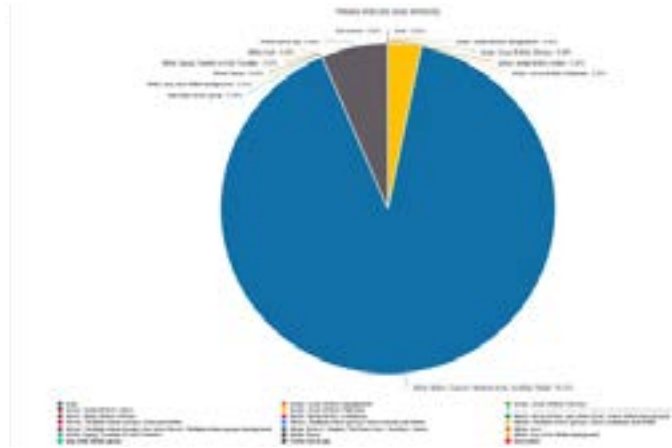
61% of respondents were ‘women’ with the remainder (38%) indicating ‘men’. No one identified in any other category.

How would you describe your gender?



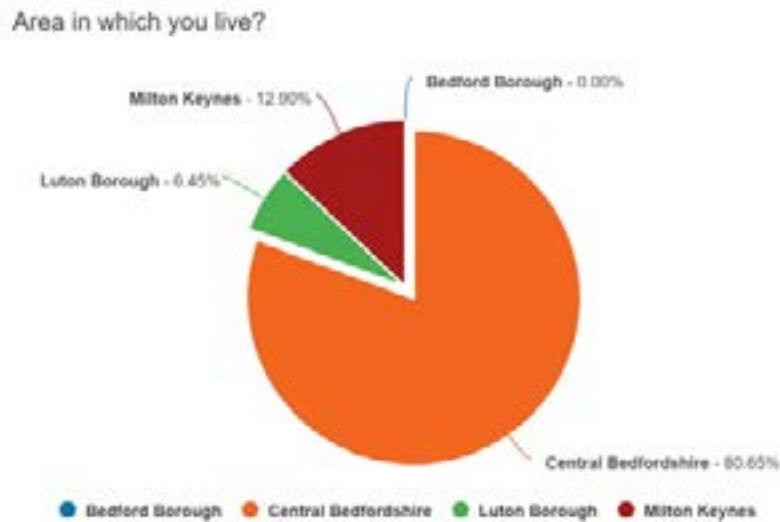
Question 3 asked people to indicate their ethnicity.

The majority of respondents were White British (90%), with 3.2% Asian British: Pakistani, and 6.5% preferred not to say. No other ethnic groups were identified.



Question 4 asked which area of Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) they lived.

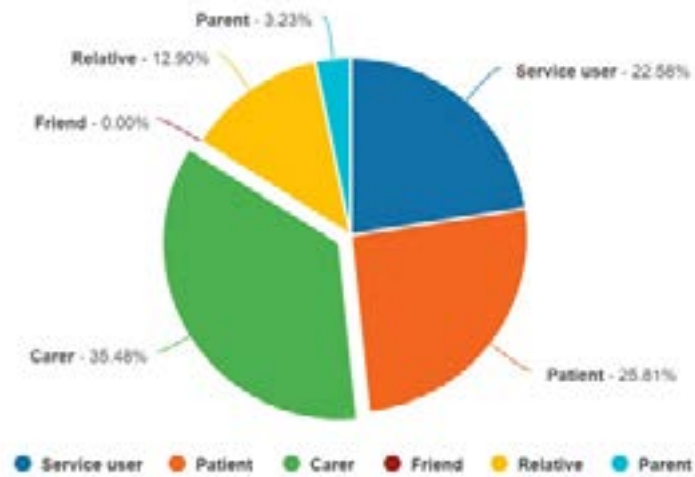
The majority of respondents who completed the survey indicated they live in Central Bedfordshire (80%), with 13% living in Milton Keynes, and 6% from Luton Borough.



Question 5 asked if they were completing the form as a service user, patient, Carer, friend, relative or parent.

The majority of respondents who completed the survey indicated they were a 'Carer' (35%). 26% said they were a 'Patient' and 23% said they were a 'Service User'. Only 13% said they were a 'Relative' and 3% said they were a 'Parent'.

Are you completing this form as a: (tick box)





Conclusions

Of the 31 fully completed surveys 24 of the respondents were currently using equipment provided by Millbrook Community Equipment Services with seven (25%) respondents not currently using equipment supplied by them. This may indicate the possibility they are not using any equipment at all, or are using equipment provided by another supplier.

A total of 16 questions were asked which included four demographic questions. Although the survey was shared across BLMK, unfortunately we did not receive any responses from people living in the area of Bedford Borough. The majority of respondents were within the 65-79 age category, and just over 80% indicated they lived in Central Bedfordshire. Just over half of respondents were women (61%) and at least 35% indicated they were Carers. It is unclear as to the extent of the distribution of the survey across Bedford Borough which may indicate why we did not receive any responses from that area.

The overall service people receive from Millbrook appears to be very good, although one concern was highlighted regarding equipment users who did not find the instructions on using the equipment easy to follow – only half the respondents who answered this question said they did find it easy.

Surprisingly, it was only just over a third of respondents who said it would be *'very helpful to have the option to assess their own needs'* for small items of equipment via an online assessment, and a similar percentage said they were 'not sure'. This could be because many customers do not have internet access, or the confidence to allow them to do this. This would correlate with the quarter of respondents who said they would *'prefer someone to visit them in person to discuss their needs'*.

The majority of equipment users thought that it was important to know what time their equipment was due to be delivered which would also allow for family members/carers to be present if necessary.

It is also important to users and carers to have a technician show them how to use the equipment indicating that they preferred a personal service. It is also quite important for the technician to be wearing a branded uniform which gives reassurance to older, more vulnerable people, who may be concerned about allowing a stranger into their home.

The most preferable forms of communication from equipment providers were via Email and the telephone, letters being the least preferable. Clearly they prefer a faster form of communication.

When asked if their equipment were to breakdown, how quickly did they think it was acceptable for it to be repaired, interestingly, the majority of respondents said it would depend on the type of equipment. This question would probably need to be drilled down further with options for the type of equipment to get a more accurate recording of the response.

Additional comments received as a result of the survey were mainly positive which also included suggestions for improvement to the service.



Recommendations

As a result of feedback received about the Community Equipment Service, HWCB would recommend the following:

When developing a new BLMK wide service, all involved in the procurement process to be given a copy of the report, and to use the feedback provided to ensure a service is developed that meets the needs of the people that are, and will be, using the service.

We also recommend that action is taken to address the wealth of unused community equipment that is 'building up' in care homes across BLMK (MK cannot be taken in isolation) who do not have the space to accommodate.

As over half of respondents to the survey did not find the instructions on using the equipment easy to follow we would recommend this is reviewed and 'easy read' instructions are developed and tested with the involvement of a group of service users and Carers.

As over a third of respondents answered 'no' to the question regarding whether they had been informed about how to return their equipment, we would recommend that an investigation and/or assessment is instigated to establish the protocols relating to how people are informed about returning equipment so they are made fully aware.

As the majority of respondents would prefer communication via Email or telephone, we would recommend that this is built into the new contract as a preference for all customers.

If needed, HWCB would also recommend that a further study into what the preferred length of time given to repairs should be, as the majority of respondents said it was dependent on the type of equipment they had.



Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. Have you ever received any equipment from Millbrook Healthcare, current provider of community equipment? (tick one)

Yes (please go to question 2)

No (please go to question 5)

2. How would you rate your experience of receiving equipment from Millbrook? (tick one)

Satisfied

Neither satisfied or dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

3. If you have received equipment from the service, what would you say was good about your experience? (tick all that apply)

Equipment arrived on time (delivery date given)

Helpful and friendly service

Technicians explained everything very well

Easy instructions to follow

Treated with dignity and respect

None of the above

Other, please specify

4. Did the provider inform you that the equipment should be returned when you no longer need it and the process for doing this, to ensure that it can be cleaned and reallocated to another service user?

Yes

No

5. Would it be helpful to have the option to assess your own needs for small items of equipment through an online assessment?

This would be really helpful

I would prefer someone to visit me in person to discuss my needs

I am not sure

6. When organising the delivery of your equipment, how important is it for you to know what time your equipment will be delivered? (tick one)

Very Important

Quite important

Not very important

7. When a technician visits your home, how important is it that they show you how the equipment works? (tick one)

- Very Important
- Quite important
- Not very important
- Not necessary to know

8. How important is it for the technician to be wearing a branded uniform (company logo) so you know who they work for? (tick one)

- Very Important
- Quite important
- Not very important
- Not necessary to know

9. How would you like the Community Equipment Service provider to communicate with you? (tick all that apply)

- Telephone
- Text via mobile
- Email
- Letter
- Other, please specify

10. If your equipment were to breakdown, how quickly do you think it is acceptable for it to be repaired? (tick one)

- Same day
- Next day
- Within a week
- Within two weeks
- Dependent on the type of equipment

11. Are there any other comments you would like to include about the equipment service?

Yes, please specify below:
 No

12. If you have received equipment from the service, what could be done to improve your experience?

Please comment here

About you:

1. What is your age category?

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 0 to 12 years | 13 to 15 years | 16 to 17 years |
| 18 to 24 years | 25 to 49 years | 50 to 64 years |
| 65 to 79 years | 80 + years | Prefer not to say |
| Not known | | |

2. How would you describe your gender?

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Woman | Man | Non-binary |
| Intersex | Prefer to self-describe | Prefer not to say |
| Not known | | |

3. Please indicate your ethnicity

| | |
|---|---|
| Arab | Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi |
| Asian / Asian British: Chinese | Asian / Asian British: Indian |
| Asian / Asian British: Pakistani | Black / Black British: African |
| Asian / Asian British: Any other Asian | Black / Black British: Caribbean |
| Asian British background | Black / Black British: Any other Black / Black British background |
| Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White | |
| Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White | |
| Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Black Caribbean and White | |
| Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups background | |
| White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh | |
| White: Irish | White: Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller |
| White: Roma | White: Any other White background |
| Any other ethnic group | Prefer not to say |
| Not known | |

4. Area in which you live?

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Bedford Borough | Central Bedfordshire |
| Luton Borough | Milton Keynes |

5. Are you completing this form as a: (tick box)

Service user Patient Carer Friend Relative Parent

About Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

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

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

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is one of three local Healthwatch in the County of Bedfordshire and 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

healthwatch

Central Bedfordshire

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

Capability House

tel: 0300 303 8554

Wrest Park

e: info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk

Silsoe



[@Healthwatch_cb](https://twitter.com/Healthwatch_cb)

Bedfordshire



Facebook.com/Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

MK45 4HR



[hw_centralbeds](https://www.instagram.com/hw_centralbeds)

Registered Address: Capability House,
Wrest Park, Silsoe, MK45 4HR
Registered Company No: 08399922
Registered Charity No: 1154627



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire