

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire



Annual Report
2014/15





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Note from the Chair



During this first full year of our operations, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has seen continual development as the team of staff, volunteers and the Board of Trustees have worked together to extend the reach and impact of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire across many areas of health and social care.

In this Annual Report we outline just some of the extensive range of activities we have undertaken - concentrating on our primary task of implementing a variety of engagement processes, supplemented by a wide range of research and survey work, so that we can take forward the authentic views and experiences of service users and through these help to shape the plans of commissioners and providers of health and social care services in Central Bedfordshire.

As elsewhere, the health and care landscape in Central Bedfordshire is complex and challenging. We have contributed to the many strategic developments aimed at securing more integrated healthcare, provided closer to home, and at the wider integration of care services to include social care. We also contributed to the major procurement exercise for mental health services in Bedfordshire in both determining the specification and in evaluating potential suppliers.

During the year we undertook a review of our governance arrangements. One key outcome was to broaden the membership of our Board of Trustees so that their responsibility for setting strategic direction and monitoring implementation can be

better delivered. Trustees bring depth of knowledge and skills from a range of health and social care environments and also provide personal leadership in specific major developments. We are fortunate in having two members of the Youth Parliament on our Board, and their perspective and contribution is important in our discussions on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's development plans.

Our staff resources comprise a Chief Executive and two members of staff, and inevitably the demands on them have been high. We have significantly enhanced our resources by building a group of trained and dedicated volunteers. Without their commitment and support we could achieve little; for example, our extensive Enter & View programme has been largely delivered by appropriately trained volunteers.

I am confident that we can continue to build further on our impressive achievements of this year and make a significant contribution to improvements in health and social care services for people living and working in Central Bedfordshire.



Note from the Chief Executive



Welcome to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Annual Report 2014/15. We have had a very busy, exciting and productive year and I am pleased to be able to highlight the progress we have made to establish an effective local Healthwatch in Central Bedfordshire. Our staff and wonderful volunteers have worked very hard to gather local resident's experiences to ensure their voice is heard.

Over the past year we have continued to develop positive working relationships with the local authority, Central Bedfordshire Council, the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and the many commissioners and providers of health and social care services across Central Bedfordshire to ensure that, by working together, we can improve services for local residents.

We were delighted to be able to establish a new, improved and innovative website designed to collect data directly from the public called the 'feedback centre'. The website was developed to encourage more people, including the younger generation, to tell us about their experience of a health or social care service, which can be directly shared with the public and our partners, to influence change. Our new website also helped to build much needed awareness of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire amongst local people, provide them with a voice and was another way to effectively signpost people to information they may need.

With the help of our volunteers and partner organisations we continued our outreach project 'Just Ask' in 2014/15, visiting many towns across Central Bedfordshire using a community bus.

Over 800 people visited the bus and we were on hand to provide a wealth of information and advice on care services, including support services available. Due to such a successful footfall we were also able to conduct surveys to research local resident's experience of services in their area. The results were published in our detailed report; Accessing Health and Social Care - The Public Opinion, which was shared with relevant Providers and Commissioners.

Following a very rigorous training programme, 'Enter & View' volunteers, led by our E & V Champion, recently completed an extensive series of visits to care homes across Central Bedfordshire. Our findings were shared with the local authority, CQC and Healthwatch England and we were very pleased to hear that our reports are used as an example of good practice by HW England.

More examples of our exciting activities are detailed in this report. We are continuing to gather public opinion on local health and social care services to influence service provision, and more importantly, to ensure service delivery is a reflection of local needs.



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 well being services for all across Central Bedfordshire.

We have 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.

We 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.

Our vision/mission

The vision for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is to be known as the local voice for health and social care services in Central Bedfordshire.

Our mission is for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to be the independent consumer champion providing a strong voice for all local people to influence the way health and social care services are planned, provided and delivered.

Our Values and Principles

The following values and principles underpin everything that we do:

Independent and impartial: To maintain our independence in our decision making and be transparent, accountable and trusted, to represent residents of Central Bedfordshire.

Critical Friend: To be constructive as well as challenging with service providers and commissioners, ensuring that we provide evidence to support what we say and do.

Inclusive: To support communities and social groups that are seldom heard to enable them to have a voice and challenge inequality.

Accountable: To be proactive in accounting to all our stakeholders, including volunteers and members of HWCB and to take responsibility for our actions.

Integrity: To ensure that all we do is for the benefit of local residents and service users.

Proportionate: HWCB actions, procedures and culture are proportionate to the degree of risk involved and to the potential impact within the resources available to us.

Representative: To represent local residents, service users and carers through the delivery of our statutory functions.

Value for money: To make the best use of our resources; avoid duplication by working closely with our stakeholders and neighbouring Healthwatch.



“It is with great pleasure that here in Central Bedfordshire we have witnessed our local Healthwatch grow from strength to strength. The growing effectiveness of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is clearly evidenced in all the information collected from our customers about their experience of services. We are actively using this important evidence to improve all the services we commission. The voice of our customers is coming through very strongly thanks to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. We welcome the approach that HWCB has taken in gaining this often sensitive feedback from our customers. We care very much about the experience of local people and through HWCB we are able to capture resident’s experiences, both positive and negative.

The partnership relationship we are building with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is becoming more robust and we are increasingly impressed by the current performance of our local Healthwatch and its achievements to date.”

Elizabeth Saunders, Assistant Director Strategic Commissioning, Central Bedfordshire Council

Our Strategic Priorities

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire have identified our priority areas of work through feedback and intelligence received from local residents, engagement and consultation with HWCB volunteers and community groups and input from the Board.

To deliver our vision, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire’s strategic priorities are:

- To find out local peoples experience of health and social care services using a wide range of methods, to include existing community groups and representatives from all diverse communities.
- To ensure that consumer views are known to health and social care decision makers and those views are able to influence service delivery and relevant policies in Central Bedfordshire.
- To promote public awareness of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to increase the quantity and quality of consumer experiences available to HWCB.
- To work proactively with the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Groups and all health and social care providers, to develop and maintain collaborative relationships.

- To target research and insight studies into defined areas of concern, report on the quality of local services and make recommendations about how local services could and should be improved.
- To build an effective evidence base to enable us to influence local service delivery and development on behalf of local residents.
- To continue to develop our volunteer programme, to include recruitment, training, engagement and project activities.



Our Healthwatch Team (from left to right): Steve Nash, Diana Blackmun and Barbara Moran



A New Website for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) was set up to improve health and social care services for today and shape them for tomorrow.

HWCB therefore need to work with the public to capture patient experience and build data that's accurate, useful and relevant to its partners, services and the community and voluntary sector.

To help us do this HWCB launched a new, improved and innovative website designed to collect data directly from the public relating to their experience of health and/or social care services in their local area, which is then shared with the public and our partners.

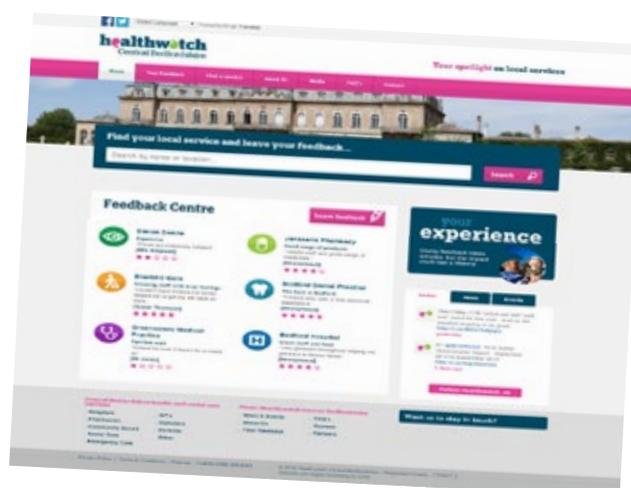
This new website, launched in November 2014 provides better accessibility and the latest technology that the public can use quite easily to find a local health or social care service, including support services and partner organisations. Through our new website the public are able to review and comment on the service they have received. Many local services are listed such as GP surgeries, care homes and pharmacies plus voluntary organisations that provide local support services. New services can be added at any time. For people, young or old, there is something for everyone.

The new website is easier to navigate and also contains a variety of local news and articles on health and social care and how to access additional information and

advice. The website also has links to our community partners and local voluntary organisations with details of the services they provide and news stories they want to share.

Through use of this new website Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire have been able to enhance our work as an effective consumer champion and be patient focused. In addition we have been able to build awareness of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire amongst local people and more importantly, provide them with a voice in addition to effectively signposting people to information about local health and social care services.

This new website will help us achieve our mission together with the opportunity to inform, share and review local health and social care services.



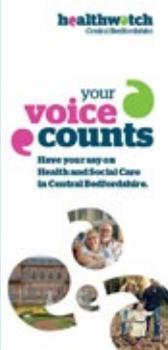


Communications

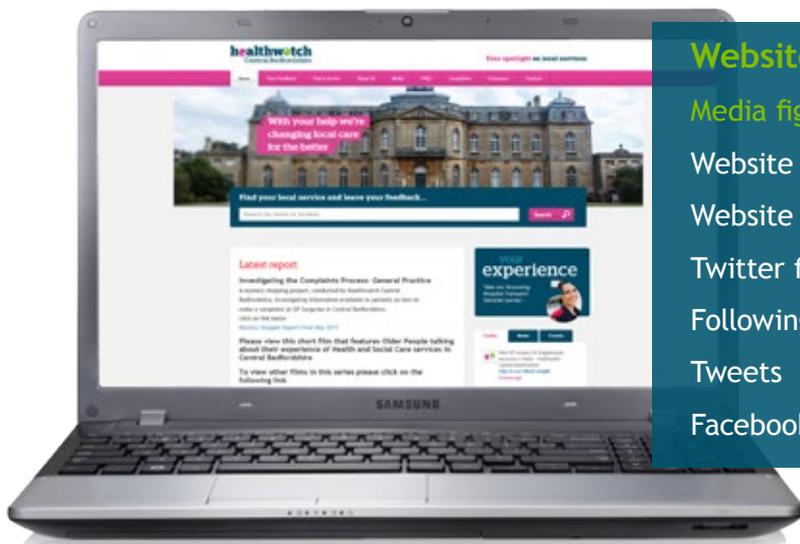
Printed Newsletters

5 Issues

393 Subscribers



Website and Social Media



Website facts & figures

Media figures from April 1st 2014 - June 17th 2015

Website sessions	13275
Website Service Review Feedback	103
Twitter followers up to June 2015	850
Following	736
Tweets	612
Facebook Likes	107



Understanding People's Experiences

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has engaged with various different communities during this past year, including children and young people, older people, people with learning and physical disabilities, carers, people experiencing mental health issues, people affected by dementia, D/deaf people, voluntary and community sector organisations, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities and health and social care professionals.

We have worked in partnership with key stakeholders including Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Aragon Housing Association, South Essex Partnership Trust, East London Foundation Trust, The Older Peoples Reference Group and many other voluntary, community and social groups working across Central Bedfordshire.

Our engagement activities over the past year have included the following:

Visits to Children's Centres

In April 2015 we began a series of visits to Children's Centres within Central Bedfordshire. These Centres offer all families and children under five a range of services, information and support, available in their local community including advice during pregnancy, home visiting and parental support.

HWCB visited eight Children's Centres across Central Bedfordshire and spoke to 133 parents and young children.

HWCB staff, with the support of our volunteers, visited the Centres to talk with parents about their experience of health and social care services and to promote the work of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. We also used the opportunity to demonstrate our new website to encourage parents to leave their feedback and/or review local health and social care services.

Visits to MIND Local Recovery Groups

In February 2015 HWCB staff and volunteers visited four Local Recovery groups facilitated and managed by MIND BLMK in Central Bedfordshire. MIND BLMK offer a range of services aimed at meeting individual needs and promoting mental health recovery, wellbeing and independence.

The visits were designed to raise awareness of HWCB and inform MIND service users of our work. More importantly, after introducing our new rate and review website, many service users took the opportunity to review a service they had recently used at the time of the visit and gave valuable feedback to HWCB. This information, along with feedback we had recently received from attendance at local Mental Health Stakeholder Forums, was shared with the Providers and Commissioners of Mental Health services in Central Bedfordshire to help inform their work. This was particularly valuable in highlighting anxieties raised with regard to the procurement process of a new mental health provider across Bedfordshire.



A short film of Older Peoples Experience



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire previously produced a short film about young people's experience of health and social care which we shared with the providers and commissioners of children's services.

We continued to gather the views of service users, patients and the public and recently produced the second film in this series to detail the experiences of older people. A variety of local residents over the age of 65 agreed to talk on film about their experience of hospital services, GP Practices and social care. Filming took place in May 2015 and a wealth of information was gathered.

This short film can be viewed by the public on our website and we also shared the film with the providers and commissioners of services for older people and other interested groups in Central Bedfordshire. By listening to first hand experiences this will help them to better understand the needs of older people when experiencing health and social care services and enable them to gain an understanding of older people's perspective of health and social care services, to inform their work.



Bedford River Festival

Working in partnership with Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, HWCB were invited to join Healthwatch Bedford Borough in managing an information stand at Bedford River Festival. This community biennial event is held in July and attracts over 300,000 visitors from all over Bedfordshire, many of whom live within Central Bedfordshire. HWCB staff were joined by our volunteers who engaged with local residents to listen to their experiences of health and social care services delivered locally. We were also able to promote HWCB and signpost visitors to support services available in their local area.

Carers Forums



Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is invited on a regular basis to attend and present at Central Bedfordshire Carers Forums. This gives us the opportunity to present recent activities of HWCB and detail future engagement plans that Carers may wish to be involved in. We are also able to talk to many carers and their family members to promote HWCB and encourage them to share their experiences, to help us influence and improve the support services currently available.

In total, HWCB attended 12 Carers Forums, Carers Cafés and meetings held across Central Bedfordshire and talked to over 200 Carers and their families.



Visits to GP Surgeries

To engage with more people who visit their local GP surgery and learn of their experiences we developed a series of visits to GP Practices in Central Bedfordshire. This also gave us an opportunity to raise awareness of HWCB to Practice staff and GP's.

By visiting each surgery individually we were able to listen to the patients experience and also signpost to additional support services. We also encouraged patients to take part in our current surveys about access to health and social care services, a local transport survey and finding information about health and social care services.

Joint Partnership Events

In November 2014 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's staff and Board Members attended a joint partnership event hosted by Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Central Bedfordshire Council called 'Making a Difference and Improving Outcomes for Older People in Leighton Buzzard & Linslade'.

The event was held at Astral Park Sports & Community Centre in Leighton Buzzard and was designed specifically for the Leighton Buzzard and Linslade area of Central Bedfordshire. The aim of the event was to explore what the residents of the local area, including representatives of voluntary, community and social groups, could do to prevent older people becoming frail and vulnerable and to ensure they

remain independent and at home for as long as possible and to improve the health and care experience for older people.

The event included exploring the challenges, sharing aspirations, connecting to opportunities and taking action to make a difference to the health and wellbeing of older people in the area. This event formed part of the plans for the 'Better Care Fund' which sets out a shared vision for health and social care in Central Bedfordshire, rooted in a locality-based delivery model.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire were pleased to work in joint partnership to ensure the objectives set out were achievable. By the end of the event a strong picture of what was happening in the area and what was required to fill the gaps in service provision were made clear. These objectives are now being addressed and we look forward to hearing about the next steps to take forward the ideas created and shaped at the event.





Visits to Community & Social Groups

Throughout the year Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire have visited various community and social groups to promote HWCB and to listen to local resident's experience of health and social care services delivered in their area. Listed below is a selection of groups we visited during 2014/15:

The Avenue - support families living with a child with Autism. The Avenue holds relaxed, informal support groups in Biggleswade. Families can drop in and chat to other families who understand the highs and lows of living with a child with Autism.

HWCB representatives visited the group in June 2015 to engage with families during a Friday drop in session. HWCB promoted our signposting service and asked the families to feedback their experience of looking after a child with Autism, both positive and negative. Families were also shown a live demonstration of HWCB's interactive website to encourage families to review a service delivered locally. The session was very positive and individuals signed up to receive HWCB Newsletters and E-bulletins.

The Avenue has asked HWCB to maintain contact with the Group to develop a regular working relationship.



The Parkside 50 Club - a group of older people, who meet weekly in Houghton Regis to socialise, discuss local issues and who also invite speakers offering information and advice about support services available to older people.

We were invited by a Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Volunteer who felt the group would benefit from a presentation about HWCB.

HWCB representatives and some of our volunteers met with the group to promote HWCB and the volunteer talked about their role with HWCB and encouraged other members to attend a forthcoming HWCB volunteering event. Several members of the group are now actively involved with HWCB.

The Horizon Club - a group of older people, who meet weekly in Biggleswade to socialise, arrange local trips and visits to places of interest. HWCB representatives visited the group twice during 2015, initially to promote HWCB new website and encourage older people to comment on service provision. The subsequent visit was designed to request their assistance in developing a film about older people's experience of local health and social care services. This proved to be an invaluable session with club members providing insightful feedback.

Recycled Teenagers - A group of older people who meet in their local Community Centre in the south of Central Bedfordshire. Part funded by Houghton Regis Town Council and local traders, this enables the group to organise trips and hold events in the area.





HWCB representatives were invited to a weekly meeting to give group members the opportunity to feedback any issues or concerns relating to health and social care services in their area. The group were also invited to join HWCB as volunteers.

STAG - Sheltered Tenants Action Group, represented by Central Bedfordshire Council tenants. STAG meet to discuss housing accommodation issues and conditions plus the latest government legislation and directives.

HWCB representatives were invited to a STAG meeting to detail our current projects, to encourage STAG members to become involved in their local Healthwatch and to feedback their experiences of health and social care issues and concerns.

Aragon Housing Association Sheltered Schemes - social housing provider tenants. To compliment visits to the STAG group who represent sheltered social housing tenants in the South of Central Bedfordshire, HWCB representatives visited a series of sheltered housing schemes run by Aragon Housing Association based mainly in the Mid and East of Central Bedfordshire.

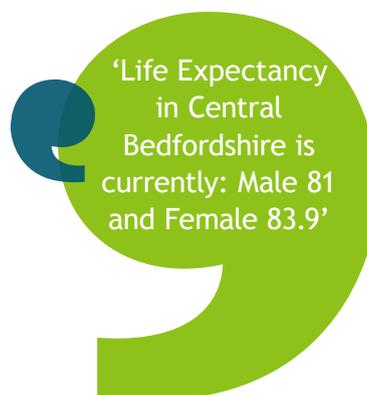
HWCB representatives visited various coffee mornings and afternoon tea meetings to talk to residents about HWCB, our current projects and how they can get involved in HWCB. Many residents completed a survey about access to local Hospital Transport services

Mental Health in Schools Forum

In April 2015, HWCB were pleased to be able to attend a Mental Health in Schools Forum, organised by parents of a young girl who had committed suicide. Their daughter was a campaigner for Mind and Time to Change and was posthumously named as a Mental Health Hero by Nick Clegg in February 2015. The family became closely involved with Papyrus (Prevention of Young Suicides), and the forum resulted from those meetings.

Their aim was to seek advice from as many interested parties as possible, so that action taken in the future is well-informed. Over 70 people joined the event including representatives from key stakeholders, HWCB, CHUMS, CAMHS, Youth Offending Team, Schools and Student Councils, Youth Parliament members, Youth Workers, Mental Health Providers, Commissioners and Voluntary Organisations, POPYRUS and many parents of young people experiencing mental health issues.

The outcome of the forum was an agreement to detail focused objectives and a mission statement, greater involvement of young people and collaboration and information sharing between those present. A steering group committee will be established to take this work forward and HWCB have agreed to be part of the Committee.





Enter and View Programme

One of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's functions is to conduct 'Enter & View' visits to any publicly funded Health and Social Care premises.

Fully trained HWCB representatives (volunteers) see and hear for themselves how services are provided and collect the views of service users, patients and staff at the point of service delivery. This is to identify what good practice is and/or should look like and to make recommendations to change services for the better or highlight services that are working well.

Following concerns we heard about care homes in our area, we appointed an 'Enter & View' Volunteer Lead in October 2014 who, together with a group of six additional volunteers, began a programme of visits to Residential and Nursing Care homes within Central Bedfordshire.

"Having the support of a dedicated team of volunteers and staff, with guidance from the CEO, meant that we were able to achieve positive outcomes as a result of our Enter & View visits"

Dave Simpson, Enter & View Lead

We wanted to listen to the independent views of residents, relatives and members of staff about the quality of care within the homes. We also wanted to include care homes that were effectively 'under the radar' (homes where no concerns had been reported), to ensure that we captured a balanced view, to feed back to Providers, Commissioners and the Care Quality Commission.



In total we visited 33 residential and nursing care homes across Central Bedfordshire between October 2014 and May 2015, (plus one re-visit). We spoke to 141 members of staff, 165 relatives and 76 residents. In many of the care homes, residents could not talk to us due to their complex needs however, to help us understand the quality of care delivered, the authorised representatives observed how residents engaged with staff and their surroundings.

In total, HWCB representatives spoke to 141 care staff, 165 relatives and 76 residents

Authorised volunteers were asked to review the environment of the home, the promotion of privacy, dignity, respect and independence, the interaction between residents and staff, the daily food menu, recreational activities, residents and relative's involvement in key decisions, the complaints procedure, staff training plus any additional findings.

Variations in the level and quality of care were found within the 33 homes visited and, in total, HWCB representatives made over 90 recommendations, which included the following:

- An increase in permanent staffing levels with less reliance on agency staff (to ensure consistency of staff for residents);



- Family members to be given an opportunity to contribute concerns or suggestions in writing by utilising a particular section of the residents care plan;
- The introduction of Wi-Fi or Skype to improve residents access and interaction with relatives;
- The engagement of a dedicated Activities Co-ordinator to relieve pressure on caring staff;
- Redecoration of particular areas of the home to improve the living environment and atmosphere for residents and family members;
- The introduction of an information/ induction pack for new residents and their relatives;
- The installation of powerful extractor fans in the residents smoking room to prevent the smell permeating adjacent corridors;
- Food menus to be made available in pictorial format for the benefit of residents suffering with memory loss;
- Staff to be attentive to potential hazards, such as abandoned wheelchairs blocking a fire exit;
- A review of staffing levels at mealtimes;
- The introduction of a residents/ relatives forum and/or Newsletter;
- A review of staff training methods to avoid reliance on E Learning which is not suited to all staff;
- The management of the home to act on staff suggestions for a mini bus to improve and widen possible activities for residents and their family members;
- The introduction of staff name badges for the benefit of residents with memory loss;



- Inadequate WC cubicles in bedrooms to be removed to improve access for residents, particularly those needing hoists, to address issues of dignity and respect.

We received over 25 positive replies as a direct response to our recommendations; these included the following from Care Home Managers:

- Staffing levels were considered sufficient however the Manager agreed to look at how they could utilise staff to ensure they are being efficient;
- All living spaces will be assessed and a programme of redecoration put in place;
- Two new carers have now been recruited and the process will continue to ensure carers are employed who will help to deliver a high standard of care to residents and promote their wellbeing;
- Care Home Manager was disappointed to hear a wheelchair was blocking the exit during the visit and reported that staff have been very vigilant since this was reported and it has not occurred again;
- Manager reported they are in the process of appointing an Activities Co-ordinator;



- Confirmation received that all staff are issued with name badges that they are required to wear. The Manager will remind all staff to do so and undertake spot checks to ensure compliance;
- Confirmation that an extractor fan is currently being installed and will turn on automatically when the door to the smoking room is opened;
- Confirmation the home is currently in the process of recruiting permanent staff which will eliminate the need for agency staff;
- Confirmation that a contractor has been engaged to attend the home to look at replacing the current WC's with disabled height WC's;
- Confirmation that the Deputy Manager will be providing support at meal times so those residents needing assistance with meals do not experience any delays;
- Confirmation of an improvement plan initiated in all bedrooms for redecoration;
- The possibility of Wi-Fi and Skype within the home is being discussed at a senior management level.

Reports of each visit were sent initially to each Provider for their response to the recommendations. The final report was sent to the Local Authority, Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission.

Authorised Enter & View representatives are also keen to identify good practice during their visits. One example witnessed was a group of three homes who co-ordinated a Christmas Carol Sing-off via Skype. This was highlighted in our report and mentioned to other homes as an example of good practice when discussing activities provided within the home.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire were very pleased with the prompt response to our recommendations, received from the majority of service providers, which included actions taken as a result of our visit and report.

85% of Care Home Providers responded positively to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Enter & View reports

We are continuing our Enter & View visits into 2015 and following recent local and national research and insight into primary care services, in addition to concerns heard from local residents, we have organised a programme of visits to all GP surgeries across Central Bedfordshire. Our reports will be shared with GP Practices, the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission.

"I really enjoy being part of an Enter & View team who can make recommendations to change services for the better"

Linda Grant, HWCB Volunteer





Providing information and signposting for people who use health and social care services

Helping people get what they need from local health and social care services

In addition to gathering the views and understanding the experiences of patients and the public, one of HWCB's key roles and priorities is to signpost people to local health and social care services and to support people who may need to make a complaint.

It is important that local residents have access to the information they need at the time they need it. There are many occasions when people are unaware of help and support services available to them and HWCB are here to help.

In addition to enquiries received via telephone, email and face to face, listed below are just some of the ways in which HWCB also provide information and signposting for people who use health and care services:

The Festival for Older People:

In October 2014 we held a Festival for Older People to celebrate National Older People's Day. Joined by colleagues from our partner organisations we invited many voluntary, social and community groups to exhibit at the event to offer information, advice and guidance on health and social care services, including support services available to local people.

Organisations that joined us on the day to exhibit included Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Aragon Housing

Association and many organisations from the voluntary sector including:

- The Older Peoples Reference Group
- Age UK Bedfordshire
- Carers in Beds
- Beds Rural Communities Charity
- POhWER (Advocacy Support)
- Alzheimers Society
- The Community Dental service
- MIND BLMK

Over 260 people visited the Festival for Older People in October 2014 and over 40 organisations exhibited information, advice and guidance

Visitors to the event were able to have a free health check with Horizon Health, join in the belly dancing, dance mat activities and chair based exercises. Music was played throughout the day and homemade cupcakes were available to those wishing to make a donation to the Macmillan Coffee morning.

All visitors to the event were given a wealth of information about services for older people including support for carers, advocacy support, welfare benefits, personal budgets, support for long term conditions plus much more.





“Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire plays a key part in ensuring we are accountable to local people as healthcare commissioners. We value its role as an independent sounding board and observer of our work and are particularly grateful for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire’s help in assuring our open and transparent approach to informing people about our current financial position.”

Steve Hone, Chairman, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

Just Ask 2015:

During 2014/15 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has been visiting towns across Central Bedfordshire, using the RAVE Bus, with our outreach project called ‘Just Ask’.

During the outreach project we were joined by various health and social care organisations including colleagues from Central Bedfordshire Council and the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group plus representatives from Age UK, Sight Concern, the Disability Resource Centre and Carers in Beds plus many more.

We engaged with a wealth of people who received valuable information and advice on health and social care services available in their local area.

We also used this opportunity to conduct snapshot surveys of health and social care services in the towns we visited. The results of the survey were detailed in our report ‘Accessing Health and Social Care - The Public Opinion’.

During our outreach project we visited eight towns across Central Bedfordshire and spoke to over 820 local residents.

In October 2014, HWCB extended invitations to the Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme

Team, who were delighted to be a part of HWCB’s outreach project.

Staff from the AAA team discussed the programme with local residents and offered them a referral to be screened at a health Centre of their choice which did not need to be the Hospital where the team were based. Many people who visited the bus at the venue in Dunstable were unaware of this service or that they could have a free screening.

One gentleman (Mr Y), who saw the banners showing ‘Just Ask’ and after speaking to HWCB staff, was directed to speak to staff from the AAA team. Mr Y subsequently took up their offer of a free screening which he thought was an important option to his existing health treatment.

“A well delivered service by two pleasant operatives. If I hadn’t happened to have seen the Healthwatch event I wouldn’t even have known about the 3As programme; I will certainly keep my eyes open for next year’s event - you never know what you are going to learn about next”

Mr Y, visitor to ‘Just Ask’, Dunstable

Some further examples of how HWCB helped individuals, families and carers, who visited the Rave Bus, asking for information about local services and how to access them, are as follows:





Example 1: Dementia and Carers

Doreen, a lady in her 80's approached the Just Ask Bus in Houghton Regis (1st May 2015) and asked for information on dementia and support services available. HWCB staff established that she is caring for her husband who has vascular dementia following a number of TIA's. His condition had deteriorated to the point where Doreen could not leave him alone. This led to the admission that she has to leave him locked in the car while she does the shopping. HWCB staff were able to immediately refer Doreen for an urgent Carers assessment with Central Bedfordshire Council and also signpost her to Carers in Beds, a local support organisation for Carers and their families. A number of leaflets about Carers breaks, Carers allowance, Carers cafés, respite care, Telecare aids and adaptations and support for Carers were given to Doreen along with a Care Directory.

"I am so glad I visited the Healthwatch people today, I was at the end of my tether and really grateful for all the information about carers"

Doreen, visitor to 'Just Ask', Shefford

Example 2: Direct Payments

Carol approached the Just Ask Bus in Houghton Regis (1st May 2015) as she was looking for information about direct payments. Although Carol does not see herself as a carer, she is effectively caring for her elderly mother and her 24 year old son.

Carol stated that she had made contact with someone regarding direct payments but had not heard back. Our colleague from Central Bedfordshire Council, who had joined HWCB's Just Ask event, was able to reassure Carol, after enquiring directly with her colleagues in the office, that her case was awaiting allocation.

Carol also stated that her mother has a care package but is near to crisis. This was also referred back to the Council office and a re-assessment arranged. Carol was also referred for a Carers assessment and signposted to Carers in Beds.



Example 3: Carers

Derek, a gentleman in his 40's approached the Just Ask bus in Shefford (31st May 2015) and picked up a general leaflet on dementia. After speaking with him, HWCB staff established that Derek is caring for his father after his mother recently passed away. Derek is well supported by social services but was looking for more information. Derek was concerned that, the day before for the first time, his father who has dementia, had walked out of the house. HWCB staff were able to signpost Derek to the Telecare Service. The Telecare Service is also known as assistive technology which has many benefits and is designed to help vulnerable older people be cared for in their own homes for longer.

"I am OK at the moment but only just keeping my head above water looking after my father who has dementia"

Derek, visitor to 'Just Ask', Shefford

HWCB were also able to signpost Derek to Carers in Beds for additional support and the Alzheimer's Society to improve his father's access to social activities.



Influencing decision makers with evidence from local people

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire have worked proactively with the public to capture service user and patient experience and build data that is accurate, useful and relevant to the Providers and commissioners of health and social care services.

To enable HWCB to effectively assess patient and public experience, part of our role includes evaluating health and social care services that an organisation provides. HWCB's current projects have included research to explore local resident's experience of access to health and social care services available in their local area and a Mystery Shopper project to investigate information available to patients should they need to make a complaint at their GP Surgery. These projects help us to influence decision makers with evidence from local people.

Research Project: Accessing Health and Social Care - The Public Opinion:

Spanning an eight month period between March to October 2014, HWCB staff, with the support of our volunteers, began a research project to explore local resident's experience of health and social care delivered in their area, specifically GP, hospital and social care services and whether people viewed their experience as positive or negative.

Over 800 local residents living in Central Bedfordshire were spoken to and 334

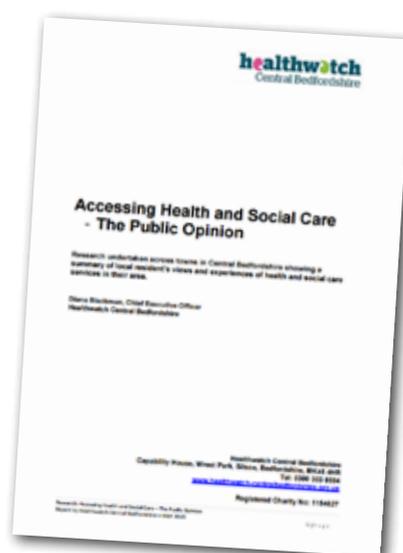
people completed our survey either in person or via survey monkey. The age range of participants spanned 14 - 95 years.

The largest response of people who completed the survey came from the 65 - 74 age range.

While a similar number of males to females were approached to complete the survey, it was found that males were more likely to decline to participate.

As a result of our research there were a number of issues and concerns identified in our final report 'Accessing Health and Social Care - The Public Opinion' which was shared with Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS England, Bedford Hospital NHS Trust, the Luton and Dunstable University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Healthwatch England.

77% of females completed the survey and only 23% males.





Concerns related to the underuse of on-line booking systems, waiting times in relation to hospital appointments and the provision of information about alternate venues for treatment, plus initial difficulties in accessing social care and support, specifically care at home and how to contact a social worker. Our research also showed a correlation between those who found it easy to make an appointment with their GP who then had a positive experience during their visit, to those that experienced difficulties making an appointment who were subsequently less than satisfied with their visit.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire made nine recommendations in the report which included the following:

GP Practices:

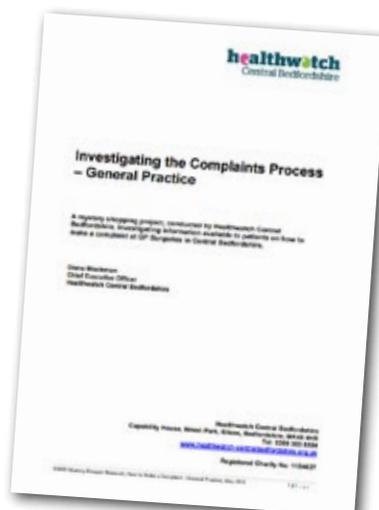
- Promote their on-line booking system and investigate possible barriers to use;
- Improve the patient experience when making an appointment, which may potentially help to increase their overall satisfaction with the service.

Hospital Trusts:

- To ensure patients are informed of options for treatment at another facility as soon as possible if treatment times fall outside of the 18 week target;
- Inform patients of changes made in response to complaints, to improve the level and quality of care.

Local Authority:

- Improve access to information, advice and guidance about social care services and how they can be accessed more easily;
- Allocate one point of contact to those known to social services



to enable service users to easily discuss any issues or concerns relating to their social care needs.

Whilst waiting for a response to our recommendations outlined in the report, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will continue to work with Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, local GP Practices, the Local Authority and Hospital Trusts to help improve the patient experience. We are also looking at other ways in which we can highlight local residents concerns to the providers and commissioners of health and social care services.

Mystery Shopper Report: Investigating the Complaints Process - General Practice

HW England published a report entitled 'Suffering in Silence' in October 2014 in which they outlined the estimated number of incidents that went unreported last year. HW England attributed this to the *'overly complex and largely ineffective complaints system in health and social care'*.

As general practice is one of the most used services provided by the NHS, HWCB aimed to determine, at a local level, what the procedure or process currently is for making a complaint at a GP surgery in Central Bedfordshire and what information is available to local residents.



79% of Practice websites displayed information about their complaints process although 21% did not display any information for patients

HWCB began a Mystery Shopping project in February 2015. The aim of the project was to investigate information available to patients should they need to make a complaint at their GP Surgery. The Mystery Shopping team consisted of HWCB staff and seven volunteers who visited 29 GP surgeries in Central Bedfordshire.

The Mystery Shoppers were looking for complaints information displayed in the waiting room and on the surgery website, information about their complaints procedure and/or an information leaflet about their complaints process.

Key findings from the final report indicated that the majority of surgeries provided good, accessible information about their complaints procedure. However only one practice met all of the criteria for a complaints procedure; a further eight met four of the criteria.

Our recommendations to help improve the complaints process at GP surgeries were designed to enable patients to more easily register their concerns and complaints and to know how they will be managed. These included the following for each GP Practice:

- To ensure details of their complaints procedure is clearly available to patients visiting the surgery;
- Full and detailed information is available including a form to download on their website;
- To conduct their own internal review to determine how easy it is to navigate to the complaints information on their website;
- Front line staff to receive regular training and updates about their complaints procedure;
- To identify a timeline for acknowledgement and investigation of complaints.

HWCB report and our recommendations have been shared with the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) and all 29 Practices in Central Bedfordshire.

We have also presented the report at the BCCG's Public Engagement Forum of which HWCB is a member. The majority of practices within Central Bedfordshire have agreed to review their complaints procedure in light of our report.

'A predicted rise of 3% to 19% (54,400) of people are forecast to be over 65 years old by 2021 in Central Bedfordshire, compared to 16% (40,300) in 2011'





Working with others to improve local services

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire are committed to working with our key partners and stakeholders to improve local services. Recent examples of HWCB joint working are detailed below.

Working with the Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has an active role in a number of Boards, Committee's and Forums which includes the Health and Wellbeing Board which is made up of lead Councillors and Commissioners of health, social care and children's services.

Their vision is to ensure that Central Bedfordshire is a place where everyone can enjoy a healthy, safe and fulfilling life which is recognised for its outstanding and sustainable quality of life. The Health and Wellbeing Board aim to do this by working in partnership with communities and residents to enhance the opportunities open to them to improve their health and wellbeing.

The health and wellbeing needs in Central Bedfordshire have been captured in the Council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which has been used to identify the Health and Wellbeing Board priorities which include the following; Improved outcomes for those who are vulnerable; Early intervention and prevention and Improved mental health and wellbeing.

HWCB regularly report to the Health and Wellbeing Board on HWCB activities, research reports and health inequalities in the locality. HWCB also highlight

areas of concern such as the recent decommissioning of the Telehealth service by the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) and the closure of the short stay medical unit in Houghton Regis, which was initially set up as a pilot project to provide medical accommodation to the more vulnerable and elderly.

HWCB were able to receive reassurance from Board members that as Telehealth did not offer value for money, the BCCG were considering alternative services that were more beneficial for patients whilst also proving economical. The idea behind the pilot project for the Short Stay Medical Unit was to reduce emergency admissions of people aged 75 years and over. The BCCG confirmed that the pilot had failed to deliver against most of the Key Performance Indicators, including rising costs, and the occupancy level had not met the targets set.

HWCB received reassurance from representatives of the BCCG at the Board meeting that they are planning to implement their 'Hospital at Home' service to mitigate against the closure, which is currently being piloted at Bedford Hospital locality with satisfactory outcomes.





Working with other local Healthwatch:

Research Project, D/deaf services

After receiving information from local residents, suffering with hearing loss, on their recent experience of accessing health and social care services, HWCB have recently begun to plan a research project to learn more about the experiences of the D/deaf community.

D/deaf people may be more likely to have poorer health than the general population, given their difficulties in accessing healthcare, although this has never been fully investigated. D/deaf people can face barriers in accessing health and social care services and both D/deaf people and health and social care professionals may have difficulties communicating in consultations.



HWCB are currently in the process of contacting people with hearing loss to better understand their experience of accessing health and social care services. Current services for D/deaf people are provided jointly across Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire by the Deaf and Hearing Impairment Team who work with people of all ages who are profoundly Deaf or have an acquired hearing loss. To support our research project we are therefore working with Access Bedford (a Deaf support group) and Healthwatch Bedford Borough.

Working with the Local Authority: Sustaining Quality in Care Homes

The CQC, acting on concerns raised during an inspection at a residential care home within Central Bedfordshire in 2013, recommended that the independent Provider of the home do not accept any new admissions. As the Provider failed to make any improvements, Central Bedfordshire Council subsequently closed the home and residents were moved to other homes in the area.

Following this experience and as a prevention measure, Central Bedfordshire Council wanted to better understand the qualities people look for in a residential or nursing care home and to learn how they ensured those qualities are sustained once the choice is made.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire were pleased to be able to work with Central Bedfordshire Council on this significant issue and held a series of focus groups during July 2014 with the aim of understanding the important decisions taken when choosing a care home and how people ensure quality is sustained.

In total, eight focus groups were held across Central Bedfordshire. Many people talked of their experience of either looking for a care home for their family member or placing a relative in a care home and their understanding of the process. We heard many ideas for sustaining quality in care homes and how relatives can support this process.





In total, eight focus groups were held and over 90 people were listened to

HWCB's research identified the following key issues for consideration by the Local Authority:

- Encourage and support local residents, service users and carers to explore care home options by providing a range of information in order to meet diverse needs and choice;
- Review the accessibility, suitability and delivery of information, advice and guidance about care homes to local residents and carers to assist them in making difficult decisions when considering a move to a care home for themselves or a family member;
- Support relatives and family members in ensuring good quality care is sustained in care homes by providing a check list of 'what to be aware of / what to pay attention to' in a care home on behalf of their relative;
- Encourage the design and development of regular residents and relatives groups with providers of care homes as this may not be provided across all care homes;
- Encourage all care home providers to conduct a detailed induction for all family members new to the care home including details of 'how to comment or complain'.

HWCB full report and key issues for consideration supported Central Bedfordshire Council in commissioning residential and nursing care homes for the future that are better suited to the needs of the local population.

Working with the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group:

Mental Health Service Procurement

Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) recently undertook a re-commissioning programme of mental health services, including learning disabilities and child and adolescent mental health services in Bedfordshire. This was a major and high profile commissioning exercise in a key area of Central Bedfordshire's healthcare priorities.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire worked very closely with the commissioners and service users in identifying the needs in the locality and required outcomes, in order to help develop the contract specifications and also the user / carer evaluation criteria, for the subsequent providers' assessment process.

HWCB personnel chaired several service user panels which interviewed and assessed potential providers from a user perspective. HWCB's role helped to ensure that the voice of service users was expressed cogently to maximise their contribution to the contract awarding decision.

The Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes Healthcare Review

HWCB staff, Directors and volunteers attended the majority of the Healthcare Review stakeholder events and engagement forums in 2014, organised as part of this review, and were pleased to be a part of the process and able to feedback their experience of the NHS today and their ambitions for developing high quality services over the next decade.

The Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes Healthcare Review published a progress report in October 2014 setting out recommendations, which reflected the engagement work that the review



undertook, to secure the future of health services across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes.

Following our involvement in the review HWCB were invited to comment on the Progress Report. After consultation with Board Members and Volunteers, our comments were fed back to the BCCG, which included highlighting the areas of further or more in-depth work for the BCCG. We felt that the Report was helpful in identifying similar areas of work that HWCB has also identified and HWCB clearly outlined a need to develop a health and social care system that can successfully integrate different preventative approaches around individuals, their families and local communities.

IVF Consultation

Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) is responsible for funding healthcare for Bedfordshire patients. Late last year the BCCG re-visited its eligibility criteria for specialist fertility services, including IVF, due to changes in who is responsible for the funding of these services and new guidance.

The BCCG wanted to take the views of the public into consideration when making a decision about future service provision. Along with other partner organisations, HWCB were invited to be part of a small stakeholder group to consult on the future provision of IVF services in Bedfordshire. The formal consultation took place between August and October 2014.

The BCCG presented the consultation group with three options for the future of IVF services in Bedfordshire. Although the BCCG had a preferred option, they were keen to hear the views of local residents to take into consideration when making a decision.

HWCB welcomed the opportunity to work in partnership with the BCCG to ensure that the consultation was meaningful and truly added value to the process.

The Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat

The Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat is a national agreement between services and agencies involved in the care and support of people in crisis. It sets out how organisations will work together better to make sure that people get the help they need when they are having a mental health crisis.

In February 2014, 22 national bodies involved in health, policing, social care, housing, local government and the third sector came together and signed the Crisis Care Concordat. In December 2014 The Bedfordshire and Luton Crisis Concordat brought together all their local partners to agree the Crisis Declaration.

HWCB were very pleased to be part of, and able to sign, the Concordat along with other local Healthwatch from Bedford and Luton plus Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Central Bedfordshire Council, the mental health charity MIND and many more voluntary and community groups.





Working with the Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent health and adult social care regulator. Their purpose is to make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate and high quality care.

Their role is to monitor, inspect and regulate services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety and to publish what they find, including their performance ratings, to help people choose care. These include hospitals, care homes, dental and GP surgeries.

Throughout the year Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has been establishing good working relationships with the CQC.

HWCB representatives regularly attend CQC information sharing meetings facilitated by the Local Authority where we highlight areas of concern, focusing on specific themes such as delivery of care services. We share findings detailed in our reports of recent 'Enter & View' visits, which include our recommendations, to add to their intelligence prior to their inspections.

HWCB representatives attended the CQC's Local Advisory Conference in September 2014 in Birmingham. This conference was devised of workshops where delegates were able to review working relationships between local Healthwatch and the CQC. HWCB representatives helped to develop a set of simple working procedures for all local Healthwatch.

In March 2015, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire were asked by the CQC to feedback information received from local residents who had shared their experience of community or mental health services provided by South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT), prior to their forthcoming inspection. HWCB were able to feedback

incidents and concerns reported to us and also advise of our recommendations to improve the service user experience.

HWCB regularly advise the CQC of local intelligence when notified of upcoming inspections and include recommendations in our feedback to improve quality of care.

By adopting a co-ordinated approach, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire are able to discuss 'Enter & View' findings and work with our named contact at the CQC to ensure quality is maintained and services are safe.

Through our reports and regular feedback HWCB has informed the CQC of the local picture and shared local issues.

Working with other local Healthwatch and Healthwatch England

Healthwatch Peterborough wanted to offer training to the Healthwatch network on their method of engagement with prisoners following their successful engagement in this area.

HWCB representatives attended a regional meeting in January 2015 of the South Midlands and Herts Healthwatch where it was established that a training programme to enable and empower the network to engage with those in prisons, Immigration Removal/Detention Centres and even Youth Offender Institutes should be explored. A proposal was subsequently put forward





for Healthwatch England to support a productive and practical development to deliver this type of training.

HWCB were pleased to be able to support this proposal and a joint letter, prepared by Healthwatch Peterborough and co-signed by local Healthwatch in Central Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Luton, Bedford Borough and Hertfordshire, was sent to Healthwatch England to consider the proposal.

Healthwatch England has since agreed to support the training to enable Healthwatch staff and volunteers, with training experience, to deliver the project directly in local prisons. The first training sessions have been scheduled to start in July 2015. This will enable local Healthwatch, including HWCB to explore meaningful engagement with prisoners in their area.

Working with the local Voluntary Sector

Working in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG), Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) facilitated a Voluntary Sector Health and Social Care event to ensure that the voluntary sector, working across Bedfordshire, is informed about planned changes for the commissioning and delivery of health and social care services across Central Bedfordshire. Recent changes to the health and social care landscape across Bedfordshire include The Care Act 2014, The Better Care Fund and the Healthcare Review.

HWCB and our partners wanted to hear from the sector about their role and what needs to happen to make sure the sector is an equal and involved partner in any planned changes.

Speakers at the event included officers from Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. The event included an interactive session, round table discussions and a question and

answer panel consisting of main speakers and the Chair of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

A wealth of colleagues from the voluntary and community sector, across Bedfordshire, were invited to attend. In total, 72 delegates participated including Council Members. Of the 72 who attended, 46 represented third sector organisations. Results from the interactive sessions were fed back to the Local Authority and the BCCG to inform their work and to act on suggestions from the sector to support planned changes in the way health and social care services are commissioned and provided in the future.

This event was very well received by the Voluntary Sector with a request for more events like this in the future.

Working with the Youth Parliament

HWCB representatives supported HWCB Youth Board Members, Steven Dawkins and Chloe Gray, who are also members of the Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament (CBYP), at the CBYP manifesto launch in March 2015.

The event was held to launch Central Bedfordshire's Youth Parliament manifesto to key stakeholders, including local councillors, partner organisations and members of the public. The CBYP introduced their priorities for the coming year 2015/16.

One of CBYP's priorities for 2015/16 will be working on improving mental health services for young people and implementing a living wage for all, regardless of age. HWCB will be working with CBYP, through our Youth Parliament, members to support their priorities.





Impact Stories

Case Study One

New Mums concerned about the cancellation of six week postnatal checks

In April 2015 we began a series of visits to Children's Centres within Central Bedfordshire. These Centres offer all families and children under five a range of services, information and support, available in their local community including advice during pregnancy, home visiting and parental support.



Six week postnatal check

During our visits to the Children's Centres we invited parents to share their experiences of health and social care services in their local area.

A number of new mums voiced concerns that their surgery no longer offered a six week postnatal check. Postnatal checks are important for new mums to make sure that they feel well and are recovering properly.

Parents were very anxious that this decision was a result of NHS cost savings. HWCB identified which surgeries the new Mums were registered with and contacted the Practice Manager at each surgery to share their concerns and clarify the situation with regard to postnatal checks.

The Practice Managers confirmed that while their surgery no longer routinely offered these appointments, they could still be booked on request. HWCB were advised that a few surgeries had made this change following evidence suggesting these appointments were not an effective method to diagnose post-natal depression. The Practice Manager confirmed that all new parents can contact the surgery direct to request a postnatal check and an appointment would be arranged.

"We have not been offered a postnatal check at our surgery, is this about cutting costs?"

Susan, new mum from Biggleswade, Beds

HWCB were able to reassure the new Mums that they would need to contact their GP and arrange an appointment for the postnatal check, particularly if they had any concerns or anxieties. We also informed all the Children's Centres we visited to advise parents to check with their surgery to determine the protocol with regard to postnatal checks.





Case Study Two

Translation Services in Bedfordshire: confusion amongst GP surgeries booking interpreters

In February 2015, during research into D/deaf people's experience of health and social care it became clear there was genuine confusion amongst GP surgeries with regard to booking interpreters, particularly for those using British Sign Language (BSL).



British Sign Language

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, working in partnership with Healthwatch Bedford Borough (HWBB) and Access Bedford, on a project researching D/deaf people's experience of health and social care services, recognised it was unclear how interpreters, should they be needed, are funded and who GP surgeries should approach for funding.

Current research indicates that the majority of D/deaf people would prefer to communicate with health and social care professionals using BSL and an interpreter, although this is not always possible. Many D/deaf people resort to writing things down. This clearly creates difficulties for D/deaf people during visits to their GP and also presents barriers which can lead to health inequalities for D/deaf people.

Acting on this information, HWCB directly contacted the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) for clarity regarding funding for interpreters.

After several discussions between NHS England and the BCCG, who were each under the impression that the other was responsible for funding this service, it was finally confirmed, that NHS England are responsible for this specific budget and GP surgeries can access translator funds directly from NHS England.

"Thank you for bringing this to our attention, the BCCG are pleased that this issue has now been resolved and all our practices know how to claim back the costs of translation services they provide to their patients".

Susi Clarke, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

HWCB requested and was able to gain confirmation, that the BCCG and NHS England would be contacting all GP surgeries in Bedfordshire to confirm this arrangement. HWCB also contacted HWBB and Access Bedford to ensure they advised their service users and wider groups that NHS England has the responsibility for funding interpreters, and to encourage them to utilise this service to support their health and social care needs.





Case Study Three

Mum felt her son's health was put at risk due to poor advice from Health Visitor

The Health Visiting Service in Bedfordshire is provided by South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT). This universal service is for children and families and aims to support parents, promote child development, improve child health outcomes and ensure that families that need additional support are identified at the earliest opportunity.



Health visits include monitoring baby weight.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire were contacted by Natalie who was very concerned about her baby son's weight gain over a very short period of time. Natalie had met with the health visitor on numerous occasions and discussed her son's weight gain but felt that her concerns were not being listened to.

Natalie contacted HWCB to explain that she had written to SEPT's local health visiting team to complain and copied HWCB into the correspondence. The complaint outlined where she felt the service had let her and her son down and how the health visiting team had failed in the care they should have provided. Her son had put on considerable weight in a very short time period and had issues with feeding. Natalie felt the advice she was given and the lack of referral to a specialist had put her son's health at risk.

Acting on Natalie's concerns, HWCB were able to meet directly with the service provider (SEPT) to discuss Natalie's complaint and in particular to outline areas where the service could be improved to prevent this issue from reoccurring.

"I had real concerns about my son's weight gain and issues with feeding and I felt that I was not being listened to".

Natalie B, Leighton Buzzard

HWCB were given reassurance by SEPT that as a result of Natalie's complaint and our enquiries, the health visiting team will be refreshing their training on growth monitoring and referral pathways. HWCB were also assured that the care pathway into nutrition and dietetics would be strengthened.

SEPT replied promptly to Natalie's complaint and fully addressed all her concerns. SEPT has reassured Natalie and Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire that the above steps would be put in place to improve relationships and communication to support continuity for service users.





Our plans for 2015/16

Opportunities and challenges for the future

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will continue to promote and support the involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of health and social care services. Specific priorities for 2015/16 are as follows:

Priority One:

Support the establishment of further processes for involving people in planning the emerging models in Central Bedfordshire, for introducing integrated healthcare. This will include the implications of the Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes Healthcare Review, re-commissioning of Community Health Services, Better Care Fund Plans and the provision of specialist services closer to home through locality / hub facilities and other primary, acute and intermediate healthcare.

Specific actions will include new consultative vehicles and listening events in different areas of Central Bedfordshire. One particular aim will be to include the hard to reach or seldom heard groups and younger people. The latter will be through a Youth Conference, subject to successful external funding. Other specific actions will include a review of care pathways in acute settings and research into patient hospital transport.

HWCB will monitor developments moving towards integrating social care into healthcare, when actioned, with the aim of ensuring the user voice is heard and listened to in future planning.

HWCB will also continue to monitor the introduction of the Social Care Act 2014. We will seek external funding to establish an evidence base of needs expressed by particular groups, such as the 'pre-vulnerable' in order to assess the impact of the Act on these groups.



Priority Two:

Obtain the views of people about their needs for, and experiences of, health and social care services, and make these views known to commissioners, providers, and those managing or scrutinising these services.

Develop the scope of current consultative and engagement structures that provide a voice to consumers. For example, influence work to link Patient Participation Groups to other structures in each locality area.

Conduct further targeted surveys and research in specific matters arising from Priority One and continue to develop volunteer representatives' skills and reporting.

Continue our programme of recruitment of volunteers across Central Bedfordshire to increase our volunteer base into 2015/16 to ensure we have a variety of experienced and well trained volunteers to support



and represent HWCB going forward. We will also position volunteers into areas of change to services, as and when these happen, for example, commissioning of new or existing health and social care contracts or de-commissioning.

Priority Three:

Prepare and deliver reports and recommendations about how health and social care services could be improved, to the people responsible for providing, commissioning and delivering those services.

Improve the analytical capability of HWCB processes for receiving the views and experiences of consumers to ensure these are fed back to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner.

Recruit additional volunteers to HWCB 'Enter & View' task and finish group, offer appropriate training and maintain Enter & View programmes in areas of public concern, such as primary and acute care and other service areas identified by local residents.

Maintain the momentum of publishing reports identified in Priority Two.

Priority Four:

Continue and improve HWCB outreach project 'Just Ask' into 2015/16 to maximise coverage across Central Bedfordshire and widen invitations to include other care and support services available within Central Bedfordshire.

Continue to visit local community and social groups, children and young people forums, including carers, and healthcare settings to promote the work of HWCB and encourage more residents to share their experience of health and social care services.

Priority Five

Undertake a 360 evaluation of HWCB work and core functions using a reflective audit process. Our partner organisations, volunteers, members and staff will be invited to provide anonymous feed back using an online questionnaire. The aim is for HWCB to assess our effectiveness in delivering our core functions, to know what is working well and what needs to be improved.





Our governance and decision-making

Our Board

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. HWCB's Board is comprised of people with a breadth of relevant skills and experiences gained in their working lives. Their primary role is to guide strategy and policy direction and work with staff in reviewing implementation.

The Board meets informally every six weeks and holds a Board meeting in public every quarter. The Board has developed standing sub-committees to manage, in more depth, finance and

volunteer activity and also holds project based Board Committees to consider and develop particular proposals such as grant applications for specific projects.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Board of Directors were appointed following external advertising and a selection process. The Board is made up of local residents and Members of the Youth Parliament. The Board Members for 2014/15 were as follows:

Robin Smith	Chair, Director and Trustee of HWCB
Dave Simpson	Vice Chair, Director, Trustee and 'Enter & View' Lead
Catherine Davies	Director, Trustee and Volunteer Lead
Wendy Toomey	Director / Trustee
Linda Grant	Director / Trustee
Gill Hiscox	Director / Trustee
Helen Hardy	Director / Trustee
Ruth Featherstone	Chair, Director and Trustee (resigned in August 2014)
Norma Bartlett	Director / Trustee (resigned in October 2014)

Youth Parliament Members

Stephen Dawkins	Board Member
Chloe Gray	Board Member

"Directors and Members provide an important perspective and contribution in our discussions on policy development. I should like to offer a personal note of thanks to all Trustees for their support and contribution".

Robin Smith, Chair



How we involve lay people and volunteers

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire value the support and work of all our volunteers. We have continued to actively recruit and train volunteers throughout 2014/15, to be involved in our work and undertake various roles.

To ensure all our volunteers are equipped with the skills they need to support HWCB in our activities we held a number of engagement and training events during 2014/15, as follows:

‘Meet the Team’

HWCB held a Volunteer Event called ‘Meet the Team’ in June 2014 in Flitwick. Many volunteers joined HWCB staff and Board Members to learn more about volunteer roles and future projects. Volunteers shared their skills, interests and talents and signed up for volunteer activities.

This event gave volunteers the opportunity to meet their fellow volunteers, share stories and raise any queries or questions about HWCB and the work we do. This was an informal event which included a quiz to determine volunteer’s knowledge of health and social care services locally and nationally.

An officer from Bedford Community & Voluntary Services (CVS) gave a presentation on his experience as a volunteer and the benefits of volunteering and encouraged friends and families to get involved in their local Healthwatch.

The successful event generated lots of positive feedback. Volunteers were also asked to select their preferred roles, aligned to their skills and experience. This helps the team to clarify and identify task



and finish groups and representative roles including training requirements.

‘Celebrating the work of HWCB Volunteers at Christmas’

To say a big ‘thank you’ to all our hard working volunteers we held a Christmas event in December 2014 in Flitwick.

The event was attended by a wealth of volunteers who all enjoyed a seasonal mince pie and an informative quiz to celebrate the festive season. We also took this opportunity to outline the projects due to begin in 2015 to identify how our volunteers can be involved and continue to support our work.





‘Enter & View Training Sessions’

HWCB authorised volunteers who are part of our ‘Enter & View’ task and finish group completed a series of five pre-requisite training courses during 2014/15, including Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity, Data Protection and Confidentiality and ‘Enter & View’ in-house training sessions. Further training sessions will be organised as additional volunteers join the team.



‘Volunteer Training Sessions’

It is important for all our volunteers to receive appropriate and ongoing training and HWCB recently held an interactive training session in February 2015 in Silsoe.

Over 20 HWCB volunteers took part and training sessions included: Dealing with confrontation and conflict resolution (delivered by one of our volunteers); Confidentiality and Data Protection; Social Media Awareness plus a website workshop.

“This was a really good session, short bursts of information, good variety with lots of opportunity for questions.”

Nicola King, HWCB Volunteer

All the sessions were very interactive and entertaining and included offering volunteers the opportunity to practice their IT skills using HWCB IPADs which had been directly requested by volunteers.

‘HWCB Annual General Meeting 2014’

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire held its first Annual General Meeting on Monday 29th September 2014 where we were joined by many of our members, volunteers and key stakeholders.

Robin Smith, acting as interim Chair, was formally nominated and elected as Chair of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and Dave Simpson was elected Vice Chair. Agenda items included a report from HWCB’s Chief Executive, who presented an update on HWCB’s core functions, current structure, financial information, and recent activities.

HWCB’s financial accounts 2013/14 were approved and the final item on the agenda was a presentation from Martin Lucas of LHM Media, who recently designed and developed HWCB’s new website. Martin’s presentation included details on the benefits of an interactive website and how the feedback received will be used to influence and help improve health and social care services for local residents.





Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire value the support and work of all our volunteers. We have continued to actively recruit and train volunteers throughout 2014/15, to be involved in our work and undertake various roles.

"I volunteer for HWCB because I like to make a difference. Healthcare is so important to us all but I have found being part of local healthcare decision making in a volunteer role has allowed me to know what the actual position is and not whatever the current rumour is. I feel my time and opinions as a non-medical person have been really valued".

Nicola Kidby

"I thoroughly enjoy my role as a HWCB volunteer and representative. The forums in particular are very informative and interesting and present a good opportunity for me to promote HWCB and encourage other people to give their feedback on health and social care services. I am also looking forward to carrying out my role as a member of the enter and view team".

Linda Grant

"I like to do a lot of volunteering, and I chose Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire because of the varied 'tasks' that come up. The training that we receive is comprehensive and up to date, and correct for the jobs we have to do.

Den Fensome

"Being a Volunteer for HWCB has given me a great deal of pleasure and knowledge since I joined the team. I am giving something back to the Community that has supported me in the past and working with a great bunch of people who all support each other".

Linda Harrison

"I have found volunteering a very rewarding activity. This year Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has been out visiting local groups, such as children centres, giving short presentations explaining who we are, and what we do. I have been on a few of these visits and found them thoroughly enjoyable. The engagement when talking to someone and hearing of their concerns or praise of services is most enlightening".

Albert West

"I joined this team because I believe that as a member of the public I can gain insight and experience that otherwise would not be open to me. I can pass on this information to the younger people of Central Bedfordshire who should also have a voice and be able to comment on the service they receive. I would encourage both young and older people to volunteer with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, because we all access health services, so why not be a part of the team that has a say in how those services are delivered".

Nicola King



Thank you from the Board

This Annual Report outlines just a small part of the wide range of activities we have undertaken this year, with the staff, volunteers and Board of Trustees working together to further develop Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

Our staff resources comprise a Chief Executive and two members of staff, and inevitably the demands on them have been high. I should like to put on record the thanks of the Board of Trustees to Diana Blackmun, our Chief Executive, and to Steve Nash and Barbara Moran for their effort and professionalism.

We are able to enhance our capability by utilising the skills of our dedicated volunteers. Without their commitment and support we could achieve little. They help in a variety of ways such as serving on user groups, conducting surveys, acting as mystery shoppers, meeting members

of the public in different settings and locations, supporting office administration, conducting enter and view visits, and in many other ways. Our very sincere thanks go to all our volunteers for their invaluable contribution.

Our Trustees bring depth of knowledge and skills gained in a broad cross-section of health and social care environments, and they also provide personal leadership in specific major developments. Our Board Youth Members provide an important perspective and contribution in our discussions on policy development.

I should like to offer a personal note of thanks to all our staff, Directors, Members and Volunteers for their support and contribution.

Robin Smith, Chair



Financial information

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire receive funding directly from Central Bedfordshire Council to deliver the statutory functions of a local Healthwatch for Central Bedfordshire.

We have been advised by our local authority commissioner that we received all the funding allocated by the secretary of state for health to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

INCOME		£
Funding received from local authority to deliver local Healthwatch statutory activities		140,000
Additional income		6,542
Total income		146,542

EXPENDITURE		£
Office costs		15,310
Staffing costs		96,622
Direct delivery costs		26,936
Other costs		16,249
Total expenditure		155,117

The Directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- (a) Ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- (b) Preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies and with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008).



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Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will be making this annual report publicly available by 30th June 2015 by publishing it on our website and circulating to Healthwatch England, The Care Quality Commission, NHS England, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and CBC's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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 require this report in an alternative format please contact us at the address above.

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