

Championing what matters to you

Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our Chair

Despite ongoing COVID-19 restrictions limiting what we were able to do, we've enjoyed another good year. Staff supported by our volunteer Board have worked hard to ensure Healthwatch Bedford Borough (HBB) continued to represent the health and social care interests of people living and working in the borough.


Happily, life is slowly returning to normal. As we learn to live with COVID-19 and return to a life free from restriction, we expect over the next twelve months to return to our full range of activities, including the revival of our Enter and View programme this July. On the plus side, the pandemic has shown the benefits of remote working and virtual meetings. We would be foolish not to continue to take advantage of these when appropriate.

One highlight of our year was unquestionably our virtual Mental Health Forum. This online forum was a first for us and was well supported by residents of the borough, with notable attendees being the Mayor, Dave Hodgson, our local MP Mohammad Yasin and Cllr Louise Jackson, the borough portfolio holder for Health.

The Health and Care Act 2022 will, in July, see the replacement of the BLMK Clinical Commissioning Group with the BLMK Integrated Care Board and the establishment of an Integrated Care Partnership, in which local Healthwatch will be active participants, along with the full range of Commissioners and providers of health and social care services. (continued pg. 4)



“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities.”



Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

With this in mind, the past twelve months have seen the development of stronger links between the four local Healthwatch (LHW) and the development of a memorandum of understanding to enable one LHW to represent the other three when appropriate. The ability of LHW to speak with one voice and take advantage of the economies of scale to represent each other in meetings is already proving to be a huge advantage. None of this, it should be emphasised, has, or will remove the ability of HBB to represent the individual needs of the residents of our borough, where they differ from those of the other three local authority areas.

Towards the end of last year, we welcomed two new Directors to the HBB Board and have a third joining us shortly to bring the Board strength up to seven.

September 2022 marks the end of our current contract to provide local Healthwatch and signposting services in the borough. We are looking forward to receiving from the Council an invitation to tender for a new contract and would welcome the opportunity to continue to represent and support our fellow residents in the borough.

All in all, another exciting and challenging year to look forward to!



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized letters and a horizontal line.

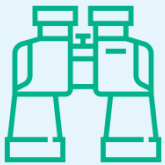
John Wright

Chair
Healthwatch Bedford Borough

About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Bedford Borough is your local health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care and we can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



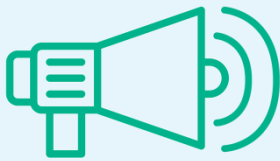
Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



445 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

5,968 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19. (including via social media platforms)

Making a difference to care



We published

4 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

'Voice of the People'

which looked at the care people received during March to May 2021.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

6

outstanding volunteers, who gave up 300 hours of their time..

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£94,760

Which is the same as the previous year.

We also currently employ

4 members of staff

who help us carry out this work. (one full and one part time)

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring

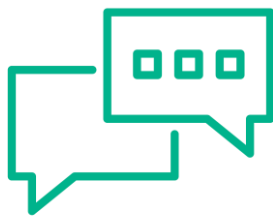


During this quarter we responded to limited opportunities for face-to-face engagement, due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, by increasing our social media presence. In doing this we reached out into local communities to maintain a continued presence and encourage growth in terms of our engagement with individuals and community groups.



We brought the voices and lived experiences of over 100 Bedford Borough residents to the attention of Commissioners and service providers (Voice of the People report) to influence decision making on health and care, as services sought to reset and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summer



We worked with the Clinical Commissioning Group, East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) local authority and voluntary sector partners to bring together Commissioners, service providers, elected representatives, and people with lived experience of mental health to share views and make recommendations on the transformation of mental health services.



We supported Bedford's first Disability Awareness Week by having a stand to raise the visibility and profile of Healthwatch Bedford Borough, share information on our services, hear the views of local people and encourage feedback on health and social care from residents of Bedford Borough.

How we've made a difference throughout the year continued

Autumn

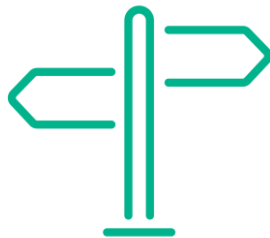


We produced an Executive Summary of the Seen & Heard report with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and made this into a British Sign Language (BSL) video. This met the communication needs of the local Deaf community and was promoted as best practice to service providers and Commissioners.



We worked with local authority and health colleagues on the Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough and Milton Keynes Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) to consider the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion needs of the local population. By sharing a survey, we encouraged a considerable number of Bedford Borough residents to have their say.

Winter



We collected, organised and analysed feedback from our signposting and engagement activities to update the CCG on trends brought to us by residents of Bedford Borough and to use their experiences to inform our strategic priorities and operational plans for 2022/23.



An observational study found that just over half of the dental practices in Bedford had no information available on the NHS website on whether they were taking on NHS patients. We called on local dentists to update their information to help patients struggling to access dental services.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve.



Dentistry

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, dental care was bewildering for members of the public. Some minor pain after dental work is normal but if pain endures it can be difficult to pinpoint what has gone wrong or been missed. Pre-pandemic, NHS dental provision was occasionally difficult to source but we found that we were usually able to point people in the right direction.

Now two years on from the start of the pandemic, the Association of Dental Groups say only a third of the population have seen an NHS dentist in the last two years and England currently has the lowest number of NHS dentists for a decade. Within England's NHS regions, our region has one of the lowest figures in the country. This has meant that some people are travelling miles to see a regular dentist and others without access to transport are without dental care and treatment altogether. It is an issue that many people feel very strongly about, particularly as private dental treatment can be accessed within a week.

Only a third

of the population have seen an NHS dentist in the last two years



Dentistry in England is a patch-work of both NHS and private dentistry with most dentists opting to provide both. The NHS commissioned service provision works on a target-based system for the financial year and is useful for most dentists, as it gives them a steady income.

When Healthwatch Bedford Borough was contacted by members of the public during the early months of the pandemic, we noticed how people put others first. Aware that some were in a worse position than themselves, people were aware that those in pain should be treated first. We urged people to ring NHS 111 if they did experience pain especially if it affected their sleep.



“Healthwatch Bedford Borough are a great team, although not as great as Man United! They met me in midfield, gave me just the right information I needed and helped me to get a result. I’ve since had a wisdom tooth extracted. A big thanks to them for their contribution. They helped me get dental help when I needed it.

Service User



Access to Dental Care

From September 2020, we received our first call relating to a local resident being 'deregistered' from a dentist. Contracts for NHS dental care are set up so that people have the 'freedom' to move from one dentist to another. This is in direct contrast to the arrangement with GPs. Members of the public were appalled to find out that they had been removed from lists without a reasonable explanation being given.

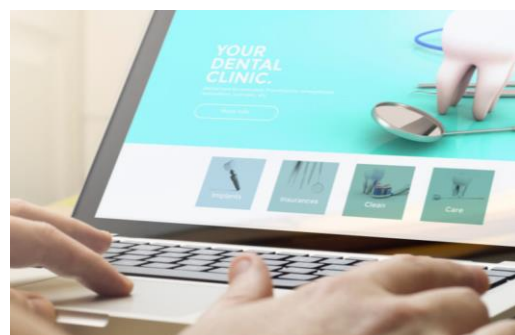
We became aware that there were a group of people who had been 'deregistered' or not registered at the beginning of COVID-19. This meant they now had no access to routine NHS dental care without journeys out of area. The information available to them on the NHS website was often out of date and people were phoning 20 or 30 dentists in the hope of finding regular dental care. For this reason, we carried out an observational review of publicly accessible information. One of the main issues we heard was the eligibility criteria for this service was vague and applied inconsistently across England. Patients and families were often left unclear about whether they could get help, leading to confusion, and missed appointments.

Over half

of the dental practices had no information available on the NHS website



Our audit found that just over half of the dental practices had no information available on the NHS website. Thus, it was 'not known' if they were accepting NHS patients or not. The entries available to the public for these practices only gave a date on which information had last been supplied, ranging from 2011 to 2021. Of these dentists, only one of the dentists had further information on their practice website regarding NHS patients.



What was wrong

Members of the public looking for a dentist are currently directed to NHS 111. Those who do not meet the criteria for urgent treatment are then directed to 'Find a Dentist' on the NHS website. It is unhelpful for advice to be given to the public asking them to use this facility, when the information provided on the site is not regularly updated. We made recommendations so that people with emergency dentistry needs find help quickly and people who need a regular dentist get the information they need.



What to do now

1. We have recommended improvements are made to the NHS 'Find a Dentist' website section.

- Local dentists recognise the need for accurate and timely information on the NHS website and commit to updating their profiles every three months
- Regular email prompts are sent to Practice Managers, autogenerated to remind practices to update their information

2. We've recommended dental practices regularly update their own websites to provide information that is consistent with their profile on the NHS website.



What to do in the future

1. We have recommended GP Practices receive a Professional Development update to support them in working with people who fall within a priority groups for dental care.

2. We have recommended that once the new NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) has taken over dentistry contracting, they identify areas and communities with lower rates of access to the full range of NHS provision and ensure sufficient capacity to meet the needs of their population.



Seen and Heard Deaf Focus Group

The project brief

During the Summer of 2021, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) commissioned Healthwatch Bedford Borough (HBB) and Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) to work with a seldom heard community whose members face barriers when trying to access health and care services. The main aim of the project was to help improve systemic behaviours by highlighting health and social care challenges, issues and concerns, specifically raised by local residents who are seldom heard.

We chose to engage with the Deaf community and expand the relationship with the community that had been built up over many years. The term 'Deaf' or 'D/deaf' has been adopted culturally to represent a shared identity for people with serious hearing loss, often from birth, who use communication methods including lip reading and British Sign Language (BSL).

What we hoped to achieve through partnership working

The intended outcomes of this project were as follows:

- to publish a comprehensive report of findings to key stakeholders.
- raise confidence within the Deaf community that their involvement has had an impact.
- improve understanding of the challenges, issues and concerns for Deaf people accessing health and social care services.
- improve health and social care staff understanding of the needs of Deaf people accessing health and care services.
- promote quality in healthcare for Deaf people through our networks.
- use feedback gathered to instruct the CQC, which in turn empowers individuals from the Deaf community to engage with them.
- highlight issues and inform the Integrated Care System (ICS) for BLMK of the need to commission services that the Deaf community can easily access.

Healthwatch Bedford Borough and Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, worked together to organise and promote a focus group for members of the Deaf community to attend, and give feedback, on their experience of accessing health and care services. The focus group was held on 20th November 2021 at a venue in Bedford that had suitable communication tools, for example, hearing loop systems. It was set up and co-produced by staff, together with local charity 'Access Bedford'. Access Bedford coordinates a range of local events and activities across Bedford Borough to improve access for the Deaf community. They also work with other services and providers to look at how to improve accessibility so that the Deaf community can get the information they need.

How we achieved it

In total, ten members of the Deaf community were in attendance: five men and five women in the age bracket of 30-70 years. Attendees included those who do not have English as their primary language and others who are hard of hearing. Communication needs ranged from those needing BSL interpretation, lip reading, participants with cochlea ear implants and those requiring a hearing loop.

A structured questionnaire was developed, appropriate for focus group attendees, and in line with CQC priorities. In total, 13 questions were proposed, and initially reviewed by Access Bedford for suitability. In addition, attendees were asked about their knowledge of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Healthwatch. Two qualified BSL Interpreters supported this event; alternately communicating each question and participants responses.

What we learned



GP practice

Accessing a GP appointment was a key challenge for most participants. Feedback suggested that all staff, especially Receptionists and General Practitioners (GPs), lack Deaf awareness. They felt very strongly that Receptionists were not reading a patient's notes accurately, prior to offering an appointment, to determine what needs the patient may have and/or if a patient is Deaf. The consensus was they all felt more training was required for all healthcare staff in this respect.



“I have to constantly repeat to the Receptionist that I am Deaf and have to explain how to book an Interpreter”



When asked what improvements could be made to GP practices for Deaf people, suggestions included the following:

- **text message appointments and reply service via text.**
- **interpreters clearly seen on a screen in the surgery.**
- **GPs should be able to communicate in BSL.**
- **increased use of email.**
- **for a person’s Deaf status to be displayed more prominently on the screen with instructions for the Receptionist on what to do (instead of a footnote at the bottom of the patient records which is easily overlooked).**



Hospitals

Heightened concerns were expressed about the lack of provision of suitable services for Deaf people by the local hospital in Bedford compared to hospital services in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. Participants said staff at Bedford Hospital ‘rarely booked Interpreters’, ‘did not make provision for Deaf patients’, and added that there are ‘no regular meetings’, ‘no staff training’, ‘no actions taking place’ and ‘no equality for Deaf people’ who visit there.



“Peterborough and Cambridgeshire seem to have good Deaf awareness, lots of actions, more awareness. They have ‘SignLive’. It’s not just for me, it’s for the Deaf community”



It was very clear from the focus group that communication is still a major challenge and a huge barrier for the Deaf community when trying to access and use health and social care services. All too often it is presumed that every Deaf persons first language is English. Written English is completely different and, therefore, not always readily understood by those who have British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language.

There were also concerns expressed about the potential for ineffective or mis-communication leading to delays in diagnosis or inappropriate treatment or care.



“I don’t have good English. It’s difficult, I’m under stress and panicked”



What now

A series of recommendations was made to those commissioning and providing NHS, and local authority services:

- **increased Deaf awareness training is recommended for all health and social care professionals (especially Receptionists as first point of contact) and that a basic BSL Level 1 qualification to be incorporated into Equality & Diversity training modules for medical students.**
- **all service providers to comply with the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) to ensure that Interpreters are readily available, to be more proactive in ensuring that they are available when and where required, for as long as is required. Better access to Interpreters would increase a Deaf person's confidentiality and privacy and reduce their levels of anxiety before and during an appointment with a health and/or social care service.**
- **all service providers and Commissioners to consider the commissioning of local, quality interpretation agencies to provide a personalised service, allowing greater continuity and reliability for the service user and service providers.**
- **each Primary Care Network (PCN), and local hospital, to seriously consider employing an 'in-house' qualified Interpreter, and for each PCN to appoint an AIS dedicated individual to support and enforce the AIS within the Network. This would ensure better identification, recording, flagging up and sharing of a Deaf person's needs when using services.**
- **best practice should be shared between hospitals to improve their services for the Deaf community.**
- **GP practices to make a private space available (where applicable), to be used to enable patients from the Deaf community to communicate their needs in confidence.**
- **ensure that 'SignLive' and other digital solutions are more accessible and readily used.**
- **explore the potential for use of other technological solutions to improve two-way communication, for example, use of video interpreting. It was noted specifically that Bedford Hospital needs a stronger Wi-Fi signal to enable this.**



“We need to do better in the 21st century”



Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

Over the past year, people with mental health problems have been getting in touch with us to tell us how distressing it is for them to have to keep repeating their stories. We have raised with mental health service providers how difficult it is for people with trauma to share their stories and accept that people may not tell their stories at their first, second or even third appointment. We have also called for mandatory mental health awareness training for GP Receptionists so that they are more aware of mental health needs. Crucially, mental health services are now changing. An important part of these changes is that services now recognise trauma, so that people do not need to keep repeating their story and re-traumatise themselves as they do so.



Getting services to involve the public

The government requires all Health and Wellbeing Boards to produce an assessment of pharmaceutical service in its area every three years, under the NHS. The next assessment is due to be completed by the end of September 2022. The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) is used to identify gaps in current services or improvements that can be made to future provision. Healthwatch Bedford Borough have been working proactively with key partners across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes to support this, including the development and release of a survey to gather views from members of the public. Links to the survey have been widely distributed by Healthwatch Bedford Borough across all social media platforms with good effect, ensuring that the needs of Bedford Borough residents will be included in this assessment.



Improving care over time

Previously, Healthwatch Bedford Borough were commissioned by the CCG to engage with gypsies and travellers to ask for their views on new proposals for health services (Sustainability and Transformation Plans). This year HBB, along with other local Healthwatch across BLMK, have worked with the BLMK CCG on a review of health inequalities. The aim of this review is to deepen our knowledge of marginalised or little-understood communities by undertaking an extensive listening exercise. A literature review has identified gypsies and travellers as a group most likely to experience poorer health outcomes. Building on the long-standing trusted relationship established between HBB and the gypsy and traveller community in Bedford, HBB is proposing to work again with them to hear what matters most. Moving forwards, this work will be used to support the development of recommendations which could be made to tackle systemic health inequalities.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Bedford Borough is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we supported 120 people by:

- providing timely, reliable and trusted information.
- helping them to access the services they need.
- supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme.
- helping them to overcome systemic barriers to care.





Healthwatch and Deaf charity support access to primary care issues

Healthwatch and local charity Access Bedford were both approached by a Deaf gentleman who has British Sign Language (BSL) as his primary language. His method of communicating with his GP was either by using a video relay service or by email. Unfortunately, the GP practice didn't understand his needs and replied using his landline telephone number. When this happened, he had to ask his son to take the call or drive to the practice to communicate using written notes. Unsurprisingly, he was getting frustrated at the hoops he was constantly having to jump through. At a time when he and his family needed support from their GP the most, he felt isolated and let down. Access Bedford had previously raised this with the CCG. We then worked with both organisations to set up a lasting solution using the video service which allowed him to communicate in BSL.

Afghanistani family seeking refuge helped by Healthwatch Bedford Borough

We met this family from Afghanistan at an outreach event. They were getting to know Bedford and getting used to their new lives. As they were not sure how to fill in immigration forms, we signposted them to the Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Service (BRASS). We asked about their access to healthcare. They were not sure which GP to approach so we located a practice which covered their area. We then liaised with the practice who found a social prescriber to help them with the registration forms. One of the family was also suffering from dental pain. We helped her to get emergency dental care, which involved travelling out of the area, then signposted her to a local dentist for further urgent care treatment. Because they had had very little dental care in the past and no access to routine appointments, we then referred the family to a Community Dental Service.



Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch Bedford Borough. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers helped by:

- holding public services to account for their decisions and actions.
- identifying our strategic priorities and areas for development.
- sharing lived experiences with Commissioners and service providers.





"I volunteered to support Healthwatch Bedford Borough's Mental Health Forum by describing my experiences of using mental health services over the past 12 years. By sharing my mental health journey, I hoped to show some insight into what I had found helpful and what I had not. Everyone has their own personal journey, but I hoped that by speaking up I would be helping others who are currently fighting their corner and pushing for treatment that's right for them."



"Having worked in senior primary care roles I am able to impart my knowledge and experience to enhance the brilliant work of Healthwatch Bedford Borough. The organisations I have worked for constantly put the needs of patients first and this sums up my ethos as a Director of Healthwatch. I feel it is my role to access my substantial network of the key people who work within Bedford, allowing me to question and challenge their actions."



"I volunteer as a Director of Healthwatch Bedford Borough, having joined the Board in 2021. My experience of health and social care services comes from a career in social work and senior roles within the voluntary sector. I also volunteer for the RSPB and other organisations dedicated to protecting our environment. I am Chair of Trustees for Carers in Bedfordshire and believe that the voice of carers should be of great importance when commissioning and delivering services."



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch with Shanice today.



www.healthwatchbedfordborough.co.uk



01234 718018



shanice.d@healthwatchbedfordborough.co.uk

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch Board consists of six members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. They ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2021/22 the Board met eleven times and made decisions on matters such as:

- **going ahead with our virtual mental health conference, held online in response to concerns about risk of COVID-19 infection.**
- **proceeding with closer working relationships with other local Healthwatch partners across BLMK, leading to the signing of an MoU to enable us to represent each other, when appropriate, at system level within the BLMK Integrated Care Partnership (ICP).**

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We do this by using the insight we gain from members of the public who contact us:

- **with information and signposting enquiries.**
- **to give us their feedback on health and social care services.**
- **by participating in forums, discussions or surveys designed or facilitated by us.**

Methods and systems used across the years work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experiences of health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, email, website feedback portal, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, hosted our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through our multiple social media platforms.

(continued)

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds and those with sensory impairments and disabilities who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example;

- **making our events accessible by providing BSL to support members of the Deaf community.**
- **providing information in Easy Read format.**
- **using WhatsApp voice notes and video calling as a means of communicating with those who do not use written English.**
- **providing BrowseAloud Plus software on our website for both written and oral translation for those to whom English is a secondary language.**

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We do this by:

- **publishing it on our website.**
- **posting a link on all our social media platforms.**
- **mailing a link to all our stakeholders.**
- **adding the link to our email signature blocks.**
- **making printed copies available on request to anyone unable to access this report online.**

Responses to recommendations and requests

This past year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Enter and View activities were postponed. This was to mitigate infection risk to our staff and volunteers, staff within health and care settings and members of the public. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to the Healthwatch England Committee that have resulted in the need for special reviews or investigations. We continue to work closely with our local NHS and local authority Commissioners and service providers in the spirit of honesty and transparency to ensure first class care for the people of Bedford Borough is at the heart of all we do.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Bedford Borough is represented on the Bedford Borough Health and Wellbeing Board by Ashok Khandelwal, Director. During 2021/22 HBB have effectively supported this Board by ensuring that the needs of the local population are known. This is made possible by our insight work which gives a strong voice to members of the public, and intelligence gathered from local stakeholders.

Between March and May 2021, over 100 people shared with us their experiences of accessing services for non-COVID specific activity and care during the pandemic by responding to our 'Voice of the People' survey. The insight gained from this was shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board and enabled us to act as a critical friend not only to this Board, but also with service providers and Commissioners as they planned and prepared to roll out more face-to-face service delivery in primary care, social care, mental health, hospital and community-based services in the aftermath of 2020.

Local data told us that people who suffered from higher levels of stress and isolation were more prone to catching the virus. As the COVID-19 position improved, it became necessary to consider how HBB might support services to improve the emotional resilience of residents.

In December 2020, Bedford Borough's Health and Wellbeing Board made recommendations on improving mental health services, including:

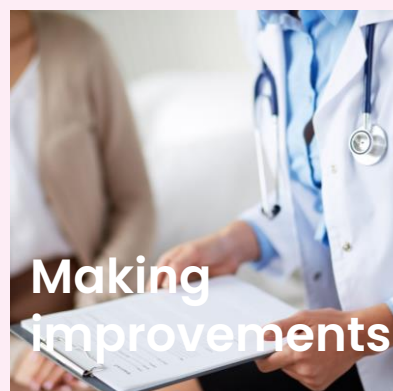
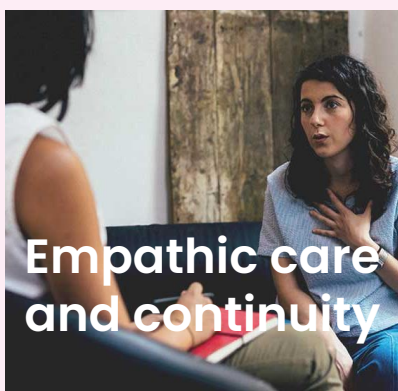
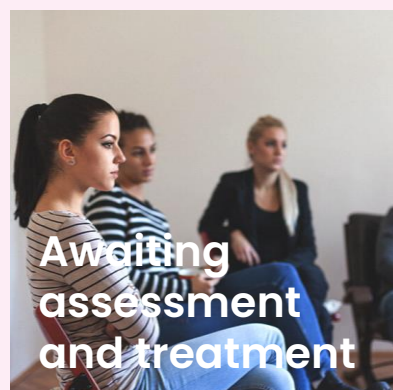
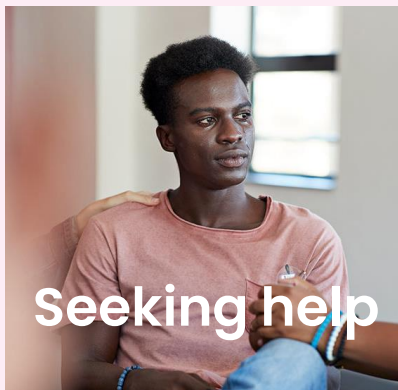
- **the need to improve mental health literacy across the system.**
- **raising awareness and breaking the stigma.**
- **appropriate support for those nearing their 18th birthday.**

HBB agreed that this needed to be a shared priority across all system partners and took this forward in 2021 by planning a Mental Health Forum.

With Mayor Dave Hodgson, Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and other key strategic partners, HBB invited mental health service users and residents to an online forum to share their ideas, views and experiences on access to mental health services, the Mental Health Transformation Programme and gaps in care.

Chaired by HBB Director Ashok Khandelwal, this well attended Forum delved into the needs of local residents and service users.

Results from this event were analysed and presented under the four themes identified from within the data, these being:



A series of recommendations were made, mapped against the *NICE Quality Standard – Service User Experience in Adult Mental Health Services*. Mental health care continues to remain a key priority area for Healthwatch Bedford Borough, and we encourage anyone to raise issues or areas of concern with us so that these can be logged and monitored for trends suggesting a need for further attention.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Bedford Borough uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

Community Interest Company No. 8385413



Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income		Income	
Funding received from local authority	£94,760.00	Staff costs	£82,351.61
Additional funding	£144.84	Operational costs	£2,727.89
		Support and administration	£4,254.45
Total income	£94,904.84	Total expenditure	£89,333.95

Top five priorities for 2022–23



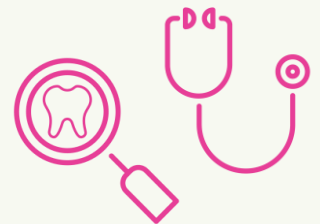
1. Access to primary care

2. Lack of NHS dental care

3. Mental health support for young people

4. Access to social care

5. Reducing inequalities



Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.



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