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# **The story of our year**

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**Annual  
Report  
Summary  
2023/24**

# A message from Dr Rima Makarem and Felicity Cox

**It's our job to provide the health and care services that are important to you. Like your local doctor, pharmacy, dentist and hospital services.**

We have worked hard to improve local services, increase the number of clinicians to help you stay well and put local people at the centre of decisions about their health.

Every year, we write a report that tells people about the work we have done to deliver the services you want, how we have improved health and care and explain how we have spent public money.

This year, building on what we have heard from local people through the Denny Review, which was a community led review of health and care services, led by a Pastor from Luton, Reverend Lloyd Denny.

The report, which was published last year told us that some people don't have the same experience of using services because of language barriers, how we communicate or because they need additional help. This means people don't always get the care they need.

In the report, Reverend Denny told us that the way we communicate with people can make people feel that our services are not for them. That is why this year, we are making our report as easy as possible to read and understand.

On X and Facebook, you will be able to see videos that we have made with the people we work with. They give information about some of the great projects we have run this year to improve care, and in this report, we will share our story of the year in a way that is easier for everyone.

We are still learning and listening, so if you think there is a better way for us to share this important information with you, then get in touch with us

[blmkicb.communications@nhs.net](mailto:blmkicb.communications@nhs.net).

We are working with all health and care organisations in our area to create a fairer health and care service for everyone.



**Dr Rima Makarem**  
**Chair**

Bedfordshire, Luton  
and Milton Keynes  
Integrated Care Board



**Felicity Cox**  
**Chief Executive**

Bedfordshire, Luton  
and Milton Keynes  
Integrated Care Board

# Who are we and what do we do?

**We are NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board. It is our job is to help people live longer, healthier lives.**

We work with many different organisations in our area including:



## We want to:

-  Help to make our environment clearer so it has less impact on our health
-  Give children the best start in life
-  Work with local organisations and communities so that people have the opportunity for jobs, training and the support they need to thrive
-  Help people to live and age well
-  Make health and care services fair and easy to access for everyone.

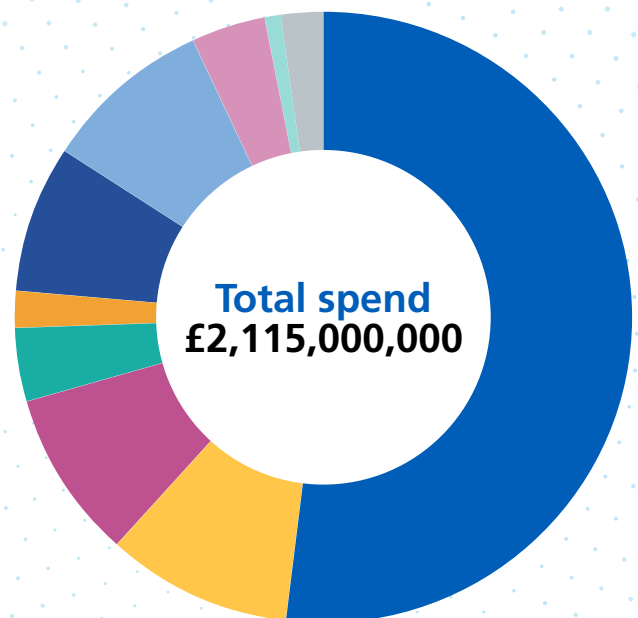
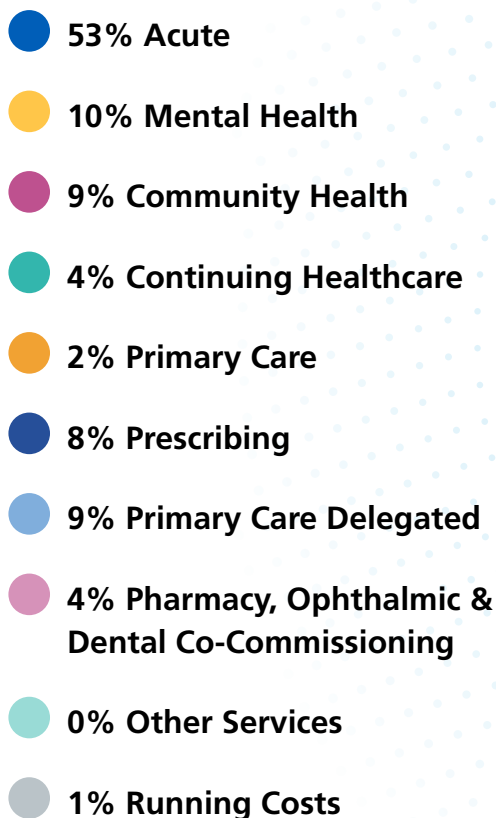
# How do we spend your money?

For the last year we have been working hard to make sure we have enough money in our budget to pay for the things people need including our doctors surgeries, mental and community health services, vaccinations services and hospitals.

The rise in the cost of living has affected us as well and although at times it has been difficult, we managed to spend all the money in our budget during the year without over spending.

In the last year, we spent £2,115,000,000 (just over £2 billion) on health and care services in our area:

We have used the funding we have available to provide services to local people and while we know there is more you would like us to do, and more that we want to do, we have made some real progress.



# Our story in 2023/24

**This year, in primary care - the services provided by your local doctor, dentists, pharmacies and opticians - we have:**



Delivered 5,666,000 appointments, which is 247,564 more appointments than we provided last year.



Employed paramedics, prescribing nurses, physiotherapists and pharmacists to increase the number of appointments available and help us see more people.



Improved the telephone systems in most GP surgeries, to make it easier for people to book an appointment.



Made it possible for people to self-refer into some services like Muscular Skeletal services for back pain and talking therapies, to help people take charge of their own health and wellbeing.



Improved the NHS App, so that people have access to their medical records and can book appointments and order repeat prescriptions when they want to.



Supported 158 pharmacists to offer 157,392 consultations in our area for blood pressure checks, contraception advice and vaccinations, to free up appointments in doctors surgeries for those who need them most.



Delivered 75,182 Influenza vaccines through our pharmacies.



Rolled out Pharmacy First, which allows people to get medicines for some minor illnesses without seeing a doctor first. Pharmacists delivered 20,000 appointments in just five months.



Increased the payment for the work that dentists do, so that they can see more NHS patients.



We have invested an additional £65,000 funding for dentists who are able to see more NHS patients.



We have offered dentists an additional £20,000 over three years to encourage them to stay in the area. This is £200k of extra money for dentistry across BLMK.



As part of a trial, we have paid some dentists in Bedfordshire to open their clinics in evenings, weekends and on bank holidays, so that more people can be seen.



We have worked with local councils to show children how to brush their teeth to stop tooth decay.

We know that local people want to be seen for their hospital appointments quickly. The strike action last year made it difficult for us to make as much progress as we would have liked, but this year, we have:



Set up telephone and video consultations with GPs so that patients can choose their own follow up care which has stopped 32,117 people going to hospital for treatment when they don't want to or need to, helping doctors to see more people.



Worked with local people to understand how they would like services for back pain (musculoskeletal services) to improve. The new improved service will help the 80,000 people who access these services each year.



Worked with private hospitals and dedicated centres where tests like ultrasounds and MRIs can be carried out to speed up the time people are waiting.



Set up virtual wards so that people who have heart or breathing problems can be monitored and treated in their own homes, rather than going into or staying in hospital.



Been given funding to develop three new Community Diagnostic Centres in Bedford and Milton Keynes, where people will be able to have tests close to where they live, without going to hospital.



Worked with ambulance trusts, clinicians and social services to make sure that there is space in our hospitals so that people can be admitted, if they need to be.



Opened our first Community Diagnostic Centre at Whitehouse Park in Milton Keynes in July 2023, and we plan to open Lloyds Court in Milton Keynes in October 2024 and North Bedfordshire Community Diagnostic Centre in January 2025.

One in every two people can expect to be treated for cancer. We want to make sure more people are diagnosed early and have better chances of living a full and happy life after treatment.

### **This year, we have:**

Introduced a new capsule sponge test, which is a small sponge that can be swallowed. It takes pictures of the food pipe and allows doctors to detect cancer easily.

Worked with teams in the hospitals – like those who carry out scans and look at test results to speed up the process so we can spot cancer sooner.

Delivered a new programme in our area to help patients to improve their physical and mental health throughout their treatment and recovery.

Trained 12 personal trainers in Level 4 Cancer Rehab to help improve the quality of life of people living with cancer – meaning more people can access this support.

Worked with our communities to encourage people to go to screening tests for breast, bowel and cervical cancer.

Funded and recruited Cancer Connectors with Macmillan. The connectors have worked in their communities to encourage people to go for screening and support those with cancer.

Worked with GPs to find patients who may be at greater risk of cancer and invite them for tests.

Run a 'Barbershop Live' event for black men in Luton to talk about prostate cancer and encourage them to go for regular screening.

We know that more people than ever experience poor mental health since the pandemic.

### **This year, we have:**

Opened a 24/7 all-age mental health crisis line through NHS 111.

Supported BLMK MIND to provide Crisis Cafes so that people do not need to go to A&E to get the help and support they need.

Worked with voluntary and community organisations, GPs, wellbeing champions (in doctor's surgeries), housing officers, carers and domestic violence advisors to help people manage their wellbeing.

Carried out 4,185 health checks for people with severe mental illness.

Set up a Dementia Diagnosis service to help people who live in care homes, but have not yet been diagnosed with dementia, to better manage their condition.





# What is happening where you live?

**We work with four local authority areas. Each of them is different and the people that live in the areas have different needs.**

We are working with local authorities and other partners to make a difference to the communities that live there.



## **In Bedford Borough, we have:**

Introduced new schemes to help local people including Bedford's Warm Homes programme which identified people with long term health conditions like respiratory diseases COPD and Asthma and provided free support, including energy saving advice, draught excluders, and loft and wall insulation – to keep people warm and well through the winter.

Funded faith and community spaces to run 'Welcoming Spaces' where residents could meet for a coffee and chat when it was very cold. Many groups have continued to run these events throughout the year to reduce loneliness in the community.

## **In Central Bedfordshire, we have:**

Provided funding for support schemes to help local people – this includes a walking buddy scheme to help people exercise and make friends and the development of winter warmth community agents.

Set up a scheme to help young people aged 11-18 from disadvantaged areas to access mental health support when they need more help.

## **In Luton, we have:**

Supported Luton Council's Luton 2040 pledge, which aims to remove poverty from the town, give children the best start in life, help older people to live independently and break down inequalities.

Listened to local people and worked with the council and faith and community leaders to arrange a community bus service to take people to hospital in London for cancer treatment, as part of our award-winning Luton Cancer Outcomes project.

## **In Milton Keynes, we have:**

Set up weight management programmes to help people lose weight and live healthier lifestyles. We have worked with 600 local people with Type 2 Diabetes and given them Apple watches, to help them monitor their activity and food intake.

Delivered neurodiversity training for 60 people who work in health and care and provided more support for young people and their families.

We are working in Bletchley with other organisations that help local people to improve the health of people who live there. This includes work to help people stop smoking and live healthier lives.



# Strengthening our partnership

**We want everybody to live more years in good health. We know that most of our health depends on things like having family and friends, a job and a healthy lifestyle.**

We know that to improve our services to make a difference to people's lives we need to support health and care organisations to work together.

That's why in the last year, we have worked to strengthen our partnerships with other organisations that can help us and the people and communities we serve.

## **We have:**

Formed close relationships with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations in our area, to help us in many ways, for instance helping vulnerable and older people get home safely after a stay in hospital, providing crisis cafes for people who are experiencing a mental health crisis and helping to connect people in rural communities who are lonely.

Worked closer than ever before with four local Healthwatch organisations in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes – who helped us to listen to local people about the experiences they have of using our services and how we can improve care locally.

Set up place-based partnerships, where lots of different organisations come together around neighbourhoods to develop the services that people need.

Worked with people and communities through the Denny Review, which aims to create a fairer health and care system for everyone.



# To the future

**Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board was set up two years ago in July 2022 to improve health and care for the people who live in our area.**

In this time, we have developed positive relationships with the people and organisations who can help us to make a difference.

We have made good progress in the last two years, but there is more to do. We look forward to working with partners in the year ahead to deliver further improvements for local people.

