

LIVE WELL: ISSUE 3 2023

**Introduction from Dr Rima Makarem and Felicity Cox**

This month, our newsletter looks rather different. With April marking the start of a new financial year, we're taking this opportunity to look back on what we've achieved in 2022/23. Whilst we were only formed as an Integrated Care Board in July last year, in the nine months since we're proud to have made strides in supporting our residents to live longer, healthier lives.

Below you'll read about the launch of the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Integrated Health and Care Strategy in January – a landmark publication setting out our system's ambition for improving health outcomes and reducing inequalities. You'll also see how BLMK is fast becoming one of the foremost places in England to see innovation and technology transforming health and care – work that will only intensify in the year ahead. We're expanding our workforce, working hard to listen to our local population, and – together with an ever-growing community of partners – making a real difference to the lives of our population.

There is, of course, a huge amount more for us to do. But, for now, do take five minutes to reflect on the journey so far. Thank you to everyone who has played their part in delivering for BLMK residents over during 2022/23; we look forward to working with you to meet the big challenges of 2023/24 and beyond.



With best wishes,

**Dr Rima Makarem, Chair**

**Felicity Cox, Chief Executive Officer**

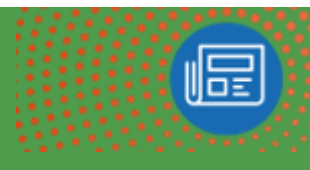
Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care  
Board

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## News and features



### Setting a clear Health and Care Strategy

In January, we published the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Health and Care Strategy. This strategy sets out our ambition for improving health outcomes and reducing inequalities. It shows how we will work with partners, and what this will mean for people and communities, across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes.

Our Health and Care Partnership has five priorities which focus on improving health outcomes and tackling inequalities for people of all ages. They reflect the importance of growth and sustainability in tackling inequalities, both in physical or mental health,

and in social factors such as housing, employment and isolation. These priorities are supported by seven enabler programmes, which will help us to make progress.



You can read the full [Health and Care Strategy](#) or the [summary version](#) on our website.

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### Working with partners to face challenges

This year, we've worked together to manage the busiest NHS winter on record. [The development of 'virtual wards'](#) was an essential part of our Winter Plan. Virtual wards are a national NHS England initiative and are a safe alternative to being treated in a hospital bed. They allow patients to be cared for in their own homes or leave hospital sooner and be treated at home. More than 100 virtual beds are in operation across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. With virtual wards, we're enabling more people with frailty to be cared for in their preferred place of care.

We've also managed periods of industrial action thanks to partnership working, during which [we've proudly supported our whole health and care system](#) to provide safe services to patients.



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### Driving innovation

We're committed to delivering innovative approaches to healthcare. This includes winning the 'Using Data to Connect Services Award' at the prestigious Health Service Journal (HSJ) Awards 2022 for [a children's epilepsy pilot in Luton](#).

The 'Digitising Care for Children with Complex Epilepsy' pilot is a joint project with Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board, Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and Luton children and adults community health services. The inspiring initiative involves a patient-controlled medical record called 'Patients Know Best' (PKB). Parents can use PKB to store their child's medical history and medication regime and to log information about their child's seizures for their clinicians to see.

Two of our digital programmes have also been shortlisted for the HSJ Digital Awards 2023. You can find out more about these programmes [on our website](#).



## Investing across BLMK

We're proud of the diversity of services we fund, including through the voluntary sector. The British Red Cross 'Home Safe' programme, for example, sees volunteers checking in on people who have been discharged from hospital across Bedfordshire and Luton. The programme involves wellbeing check-ups during the discharge process to help prevent re-admission to hospital. This relieves pressure on hospital beds, especially throughout winter when they are in high demand.



We're also developing private sector partnerships. MK Dons is one partner who is helping to turn young lives around. They have joined us by [offering coaching sessions to young people from deprived backgrounds](#), to tackle mental health, anxiety and obesity. The programme offers young people a safe place to talk about their thoughts, feelings and mental health self-management techniques, while playing and developing their football skills.

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## Listening to local people

We've been listening to local people because we're committed to putting their experiences at the heart of decisions. Integrated care is all about wrapping services around people. To do this well, we must listen to and understand our local population.

In the last few months we've been listening to residents who have learning disabilities, visual impairments and speak English as a second language, we made sure that [our information about health and care services is easier to access](#). And after D/deaf people in our local communities told us that simply being D/deaf is a barrier to accessing healthcare, [we rolled out deaf awareness training](#) to staff in GP practices.

We also heard during engagement with trans people that they often experience inappropriate curiosity, and repeated misgendering, from health and care staff, in spaces where they should feel safe. We responded to this by [offering frontline NHS staff transgender awareness and sensitivity training](#) to increase their understanding of transgender issues and help them to better support their patients.

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## Expanding our workforce

We've been expanding our workforce and ensuring we're fit for the future. This includes supporting general practice to access [a new Primary Care Nursing Associate role](#). Nursing Associate is a new healthcare role created to 'bridge the gap' between healthcare assistants and registered nurses, and 22 Primary Care Nursing Associates are now undertaking apprenticeships in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. Our new Nursing Associates were [praised by Will Quince MP](#), Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care, and thanked for making a difference for our residents at an event during National Apprenticeship Week.



Funding secured and allocated by the ICS has also been used to train and equip community first responders (CFRs). CFRs are trained to deliver life-saving skills such as the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), basic airway management and oxygen therapy, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR.

People carrying out this important role have been supporting with the discharge of

residents from Milton Keynes Hospital, which helped to reduce the pressures faced during winter.





### **Tackling health inequalities**

As we set out in our Health and Care Strategy, we are committed to tackling inequalities in outcomes, experience and access, and we're working with partners to do just that.



Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Health & Care Partnership is [collaborating](#)

[with the University of Bedfordshire to develop a research and innovation centre](#), which will focus on ways to improve health and social care inequalities across the region.

We have been [delivering training on how to use quality improvement to tackle inequity](#), with more than 86% of participants agreeing that they had gained an understanding of how to tackle inequities in their work.

With more people experiencing poverty because of increases in the cost of living, we provided inequalities funding to all four Places to enable the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VSCE) sector to help the most vulnerable. Funding was used for several programmes, including the [Cost of Living Grant Fund](#) and the [Warm Homes Bedford Borough programme](#), which supported residents with long term health to keep their households warm during the winter.

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### **Bringing decisions closer to residents**

We know that decisions about health and care are best made by people who know their communities best and have worked with local authorities to create place-based partnerships to address local issues and shape health and care services for local people.

In Milton Keynes, we have developed the MK Deal, which is focused on improving the mental health of children and young people, improving system flow, tackling obesity and supporting residents with complex care needs. We are working with Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton councils to support the establishment of their place based partnerships, so we can best focus on what's important for residents in those places.

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**We want to hear from you**

We'd love to hear about and share your news, initiatives and innovations in our newsletter. If you have any stories to share, please email: [blmkiqb.communications@nhs.net](mailto:blmkiqb.communications@nhs.net)