

Minutes of Forum meeting

**17th June 2015
CVS Offices, Bedford**

Present:

Annette Pacey (Treasurer)
Michael Ghulam-Qadir
Brian Cunningham (Vice-Chair)
Dean Crofts
Elliott Stephenson
Fiona McLeod (Chair)
Len Simkins
Anu Rajput
Jason Tsiricos
Jon Clingan
David Verney
Martin Trinder
Zara Hamer
Sarah Broughton
Simon Daize

BPHA
BPHA
BRASS
Bedford & District Citizens Advice Bureau
Aragon Housing Association
Money Advice at St Andrew's
Beds CPAG
Bromford Support
PBIC
Carers in Bedfordshire
Advice Bedfordshire
CVS
CAN
Bedford Foodbank
Disability Resource Centre

Apologies

Jenny Hedges
David Wood
Zoe Cox
Mike Palmer
Lorraine Gunther
Noor D'Agostino
Georgia Bowers
Peter Rayner
Trevor Moisey
Sarah Dove
Ann Whitmore
Wendy Waters
Peter Doyle
Daniela Vuolo
Paulette Rennie

Mid Beds CAB
Leighton Linslade CAB
Aragon Housing Association
SSAFA
Bedford & District Citizens Advice Bureau
Aldwyck Housing
Bedford Borough Council – Libraries
BPHA
Rutland Road Church
Bromford
Bedford Salvation Army - Debt Advice Service
St Mark's Church
Bedford Credit Union Ltd
Central Bedfordshire Libraries
Bedford Community Self-Help Group

<i>Item</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Action</i>
2	Minutes of last Forum meeting (25th February 2015) and Matters Arising	<p>The minutes of the last Forum meeting were agreed.</p> <p>Martin had circulated information on the Bedford Borough Advice Strategy. There followed a discussion about BAF and Bedford Advice Network's involvement in developing an information, advice and guidance. It was agreed that the situation is not clear and the steering group should look at the issue further. Len offered to prepare a paper setting out the issue.</p> <p>Brian updated colleagues that the 'right to remain' form had now been updated, going from 76 pages to 126 pages.</p> <p>Universal Credit - CAB have had only three referrals for personal budgeting support, but others have 'walked in' to the service requesting support.</p>	LS

3 Information Exchange

Aragon - Elliott is currently seconded to cover his Manger's role, creating some capacity issues. A Digital Inclusion Officer is now in post to support any Aragon clients with getting on the internet and making better use of it. referrals are welcome

PBIC - Jason has joined PBIC following a successful Big Lottery Fund application that will see the service offered to more than just Polish migrants. A new leaflet on the service will be circulated

CAN - Most of the Bedfordshire drug and alcohol service is being transferred to ELFT in September, so a great deal of work is being undertaken to ensure that it is business as usual for the clients.

Bromford - There have been some changes and reductions in the drop-in sessions on offer across Central Bedfordshire. A new flyer will be sent round.

DRC - Simon has joined DRC as Partnerships Liaison Officer to promote the work of the DRC in Northamptonshire.

BPHA - To celebrate their 25th anniversary, BPHA staff are being given some time off to volunteer in local communities. Anybody with suitable project should contact Nicky Dahl. The Customer Contact Centre in River Street will shortly relocate to the old tourist information centre in St Pauls Square.

Carers in Bedfordshire - Jon outlined the various services on offer to carers

CAB - Dean updated colleagues on a number of the CAB services, including Debt Advice and Welfare Benefits Advice.

- The reception area at CAB will be undergoing a refurbishment and will cause some disruption but the service will be generally unaffected.
- CABs are seeing increasing problems with migrants who have been here for a number of years claiming benefits - other organisations at the meeting reported similar problems, so Elliott agreed to raise the issue at the next Bedfordshire Benefits Networks meeting.
- Bedford Advice Network is coming to an end, so there will still be some meeting space at St Pauls Square for organisations to use. Interested parties should contact the CAB.
- Dean highlighted some funding from British Gas that is available for organisations to develop energy efficiency related projects.

BRASS - Brian explained that it is Refugee Week and there is a programme of activities that people can attend and get involved in, including a football tournament on Sunday.

Money Advice at St Andrews - A new manager has been found for the service, which has around 11 advisors and a steady stream of advisors. Fiona has been invited to meet the Archbishop of Canterbury during his visit to Bedford.

CVS - Martin highlighted that he had circulated an email regarding the ESIF funding relating to Financial Inclusion that might interest some organisations.

4 Update on current BAF activities

Len provided a brief update:

- Advice Bedfordshire has had its AGM - the Annual Report is now available.
 - The advice skills training courses went well and 5 people went on to obtain a qualification.
 - The Universal Credit sessions were well received and may need to be repeated when Central Bedfordshire moves to Universal Credit.
 - Bedfordshire Benefits Network - the next meeting is on the
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16th September. The issues around welfare claims and long term migrants can be discussed further at that meeting

5 **Any other business** None

7 **Date of next Forum meeting** 24th September 2015 - 2pm - Venue to be confirmed.

Documents discussed at this meeting can be found at www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk