

Present:

Elliott Stephenson
Sylvia MacDowell
Jenny Hedges
Tabitha Park
Sarah Hughes
Samantha Conder
Sarah Broughton
Jenny Harris
Len Simkins
Sherone Phillips
Noor D'Agostino
Helen Turney
Karen Lister
Martin Trinder
Rachel Harper
Lila Begum

Aragon Housing Association
Money Advice at St Andrews
Citizen Advice Mid Bedfordshire
Citizen Advice Leighton Linlade
Central Bedfordshire Council
Macmillan Welfare Rights - Central Bedfordshire Council
Bedford Foodbank
Carers in Bedfordshire
Autism Bedfordshire
Disability Resource Centre
Aldwyck Housing Group
Bedford Citizens Housing Association
Salvation Army - Bedford
CVS Beds
Unseen UK
Unseen UK

Apologies

Georgia Bowers
Trevor Moisey
Wendy Bird
Brian Cunningham
Lucy Bardner
Paulette Rennie

Bedford Borough Libraries
Three Rivers Church - West
Bedfordshire Police
BRASS
The Harpur Trust
Community Self-Help Project

Action

Elliott Stephenson chaired the meeting on behalf of BAF's Steering Group.

2 Minutes of last Forum meeting (6/7/17) and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last Forum meeting were agreed.

There were no matters arising that were not on the agenda.

Len has prepared a short '20 year history' document for BAF, which will be circulated and put on the BAF website.

3. Themed Presentation and Group Discussion

Rachel Harper from Unseen gave a presentation on Modern Day Slavery. The key points were:

- The Modern Slavery Helpline is available 24/7, 365 days a week – 08000 121 700
- The helpline is also there for frontline advisers/professionals.
- A programme of training sessions are on offer in Bedfordshire.
- A directory of services is available on the website. Organisations are encouraged to register on the system. <https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/directory>
- Lila Begum has been appointed as the Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator for Bedfordshire for 12 months and she can be contacted at l.begum@unseenuk.org

Elliott thanked Rachel and Lila for the presentation.

4 Information Exchange

Sylvia - Money Advice at St Andrews - The service continues, with an increasing number of self-referrals.

<http://www.standrewsbedford.org/st-andrews-groups/money-advice/>

Jenny - Citizens Advice Mid-Bedfordshire - The service has offices in Ampthill and Biggleswade, and satellite locations in Sandy and Stotfold. More volunteers and a Treasurer in particular are required.

<http://www.midbedscab.org.uk/>

Tabitha - Citizens Advice Leighton Linlade - The service continues, with the addition of outreach at Bassett Road Surgery. Nationally, Citizens Advice has been undertaking a big campaign on Universal Credit, which has received national coverage.

<http://www.leightonlinladecab.org.uk/>

Sarah - Central Bedfordshire Council - The Community Engagement Team's role is a broad one, and includes advice and volunteering:

- A workshop is planned for 15th January to discuss the advice strategy with stakeholders.
- The Cheering Volunteering awards will open in January, with a large event in June.
<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council/stronger-communities/creating.aspx>

Sherone

- **Advice Central** – Helpline and online support for Central Bedfordshire, signposting/referring people as appropriate to specialist services.
<http://advicecentral.org.uk/>
- **DRC** - Free Help & Advice for Disabled People in Bedfordshire, Luton and Northamptonshire, including Carers & Families of Disabled People, Older People & People Affected by Long-Term Health Conditions.
<http://drcbeds.org/>

Jenny Harris - Carers in Bedfordshire - Carers Lounges at both Bedford and Luton/Dunstable Hospitals offer a place for carers to receive advice and support.

<https://www.carersinbeds.org.uk/>

Helen - Bedford Citizens Housing Association - BCHA has new development in the form of an extra-care scheme, Oak Way House, which is located at 1A Kimbolton Road, Bedford.

<http://www.bchal.org/services/extra-care-housing.aspx>

Karen Lister - Salvation Army debt advice - Support is available in Luton, Dunstable and Bedford. The Bedford service is looking for more volunteer advisors.

<http://www.bedfordsalvationarmy.org.uk/debt-advice.html>

Sam - Macmillan Welfare Rights - The service offers outreach provision at number of locations, but are struggling to recruit paid advisors.

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/health-social-care/macmillan/contact.aspx>

Len - Autism Bedfordshire - The charity covers Bedfordshire and Luton, providing services for children, young people and adults.

<https://www.autismbedfordshire.net/>

Noor - Aldwyck Housing - Income Maximisation Advisers can offer Aldwyck customers free confidential advice to help maximise income, whether they are currently at work, receiving benefits or both. Universal Credit is currently the biggest challenge.

<https://www.aldwycck.co.uk/income-maximisation-advisers>

Sarah - Bedford Foodbank - The service has seen another month of increased demand, particularly from families, which is thought to be partly as a result of Universal Credit.

<https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>

Rachel/Lila – Unseen Uk/Modern Day Slavery Helpline - The service is currently recruiting for a helpline supervisor and a helpline advisor. <https://www.unseenuk.org/about/jobs>

Martin - CVS – 13th - 17th November is Trustees Week and a great opportunity to promote trustee vacancies. Contact Paul at CVS for more information – paul@cvsbeds.org.uk
<http://www.cvsbeds.org.uk/>

Elliott - Aragon Housing - The Benefits and Money Advice Service is open for new and existing customers living in Aragon accommodation.
https://www.aragon-housing.co.uk/help-advice/benefit_and_money_advice-services/

Brian - BRASS - A Christmas party is being organised, so donations of any toys for presents for the children would be most welcome.
<https://www.brassbedford.org.uk/>

5 Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy

Len gave a presentation on the strategy and a copy of the slides are attached to these minutes.

A workshop for stakeholders is being held on 15th January 2018 to review the delivery plan.

6 Update on current BAF activities

- Further training is being planned for the new year, but suggestions of topics from members are welcome.
- Benefits Network – the meetings are six-monthly and the next meeting is on 7th March 2018.

7 Any other business

Elliott asked all members to consider whether they would be prepared to join the steering committee and become chair of BAF. Currently the steering group are rotating the chairing of meetings.

8 Dates of future Forum meetings (all 2pm)

- 8th February 2018, Bedford

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



STRATEGY

2016 – 2019

Update

BAF meeting – 2nd November 2017



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy Background

- 2011** Launch of **original Advice Strategy** (2011-2014) – covering social welfare advice
- 2014** Extension of Advice Strategy
- 2016** Launch of **revised Advice Strategy** (2016-2019) – covering the full range of community information and advice needs
- 2016** Development of **Delivery Plan** to support the Advice Strategy



Advice Strategy and latest edition of Delivery Plan are available at:
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council/stronger-communities/advice.asp



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy BEST Vision

The overall quality of life of local residents will be enhanced by people being able to get the **BEST** quality information and advice that they want, when they want it, and how they want it



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy BEST Principles (and Services)

- **Built up** and planned in a **coordinated manner**
- **Embedded** with a **commitment to equalities**
- **Supplied free** at the point of delivery
- **Tailored** to meet the **diverse needs in the community**



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy BEST Aims (and Outcomes)

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Aim 1 | Better access to information and advice services |
| Aim 2 | Excellent quality of information and advice services |
| Aim 3 | Stronger collaboration in planning, funding and delivering information and advice services |
| Aim 4 | Targeted prevention of problems through increased use of early stage information and advice |



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy

| AIM 1 Better access to information and advice services | |
|---|--|
| Key Requirements | |
| 1(a) Good publicity Making sure people know where and how to get advice | |
| 1(b) Flexible access Making sure people are able to access information and advice services through a multi-channel approach | |
| 1(c) Easy access points Making sure people have alternative entry routes to information and advice services, if required | |



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy

| AIM 2 | | Excellent quality of information and advice |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Key Requirements | | |
| 2(a) | Commitment to helping people Making sure people receive the excellent quality information and advice services that they need |  |
| 2(b) | Meeting quality standards Making sure that all information and advice services are provided at a recognised quality standard |  |
| 2(c) | Quality support services Making sure that information and advice providers are given effective infrastructure support services |  |



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy

| AIM 3 | | Stronger collaboration in planning, funding, and delivering information and advice services |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Key Requirements | | |
| 3(a) | Commitment to advice Making sure that all community frontline workers consider the wider advice needs of their clients |  |
| 3(b) | Professional partnerships Making sure that all information and advice providers, and other partners and stakeholders, work together effectively to provide a seamless service for users |  |
| 3(c) | Supportive funding Making sure that decisions made by local funders and commissioners help to deliver the Advice Strategy |  |



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy

| AIM 4 | | Targeted prevention of problems through increased use of early stage information and advice |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Key Requirements | | |
| 4(a) | Developing life skills Making sure that people have the skills and resilience to help them make informed life choices |  |
| 4(b) | Assisted early intervention Making sure that people get information and advice at an early stage |  |
| 4(c) | Preventative focus Making sure that adequate resources are provided to support preventative services |  |



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy Delivery Plan – Priority Action

- 1. Develop AdviceCentral** into a “catch all” point of access
- 2. Provide easy access to up-to-date details** about current advice and information providers
- 3. Promote the strategic themes** of “Everybody’s got a role in advice” and “No wrong door for advice”
- 4. Encourage early intervention** to make sure that people get information and advice at an early stage
- 5. Facilitate appropriate support and training** to organisations covered by the Advice Strategy
- 6. Discuss the Advice Strategy** with budget holders, decision makers and managers in Central Bedfordshire Council and other key stakeholders



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy Delivery Plan – Update

1. Re-launch of **AdviceCentral** with new CBC funding
2. Updating of **BAF's online Advice Directory** – with plans to transfer directory of CB agencies to **AdviceCentral website**
3. Development of **Toolkit** to support Delivery Plan – and design of **"Top Tips" flyer** for frontline staff to promote "Everybody's got a role in advice"



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy Delivery Plan – Update

4. Discussions on how to use **Mosaic data intelligence system** to support early intervention for advice
5. BAF arranging **support for advice agencies** (BAF and BBN meetings, and training courses) – and development of **equalities checklist** for advice agencies
6. Design of **flyer to promote the Advice Strategy** with stakeholders



Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy Next steps

- Regular meetings of multi-agency **Advice Strategy Management Group** to oversee the Strategy and monitor/update the Delivery Plan
- **Workshop for stakeholders** to review Delivery Plan on 15th January 2018

