

Bedfordshire Advice Forum

Promoting and supporting advice and information services in Bedfordshire

Annual Report 2022-2023

Bedfordshire Advice Forum is the network of social welfare information and advice providers in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

All members of BAF are not-for-profit organisations from the voluntary and public sectors that provide advice or information on civil legal matters.

BAF aims to:

- Promote and support the provision of social welfare advice and information services in Bedfordshire.
- Provide a forum for exchanging information on the provision, gaps and resource requirements of advice and information services in Bedfordshire.
- Deliver and support training, in collaboration with BAF member agencies.
- Seek funding for projects to develop advice services relevant to local needs.

BAF celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2022

Financial Summary 2022-23

Opening Balance (01/04/22): £2,208

Income

BAF Membership Fees 1,370

Total Income £1,370

Expenditure

BAF Facilitation Fees 1,000

BBN Facilitation Fees 750

Meeting Costs 27

Other Costs 28

Total Expenditure £1,805

Profit/loss (for 22-23): - £435

Closing Balance (31/03/23): £ 1,773

Our activities this year

BAF meetings are an opportunity for BAF members to network and discuss the issues affecting their services. The cost of living crisis dominated the three meetings this year. At the BAF AGM in June 2022 we had a presentation from PBIC about Supporting Ukrainian guests in Bedford, and we celebrated BAF's 25th anniversary. Last year we continued with online Forum meetings but held a physical AGM for the first time since 2019.

BAF also hosted a '*Financial Help for Families Workshop*' where members shared their tips, links and resources.

The **Bedfordshire Benefit Network (BBN)** brings together BAF members, the DWP and the Housing Benefit offices from Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council, to discuss the specific issues relating to benefits, such as Universal Credit and disability benefits, and to give an update on any benefit changes. In 2022/23 we changed the facilitation arrangements for the BBN meetings. The new Chair is James Hurd (Bedford Borough Council) and the new Facilitator is Elliott Stephenson. Last year we held 2 BBN meetings which were both well attended.

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25 years of BAF

A report was produced for BAF's 25th anniversary.

During the 25 years BAF had arranged:

- over 85 Forum meetings;
- over 130 training courses and information sessions;
- 18 major projects, and;
- 26 Benefits Network meetings



BAF Steering Group

Elected at the AGM, the steering group meet and liaise throughout the year to oversee the work of BAF:

Amanda Ryan (Chair)

BPHA

Brian Cunningham

BRASS

Rawshana Noor

Disability Resource Centre

Paulette Rennie

Bedford Community Self Help Group

Elliott Stephenson

Grand Union Housing Group

Martin Trinder

CVS/ BAF Secretariat

Advice Bedfordshire

Advice Bedfordshire is BAF's trading company. The company, which is a community interest company, oversees all of BAF's projects and trading activities.



CVS Bedfordshire

CVS provides secretarial support to BAF, and holds funds on its behalf.



Contact BAF

Documents from BAF's meetings, training courses and projects can all be found at:

www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

Email: baf@cvsbeds.org.uk

BAF Members 2022-23

Age UK Bedfordshire
Autism Bedfordshire
BDCPS
Bedford Borough Council
Bedford Community Self Help Group
Bedford Foodbank
BPHA
BRASS
Carers in Bedfordshire
Catalyst Housing Limited
CBC Macmillan Welfare Rights Team
Central Bedfordshire Council (Housing)
Christians Against Poverty (CAP)
Citizens Advice Bedford
Citizens Advice Leighton-Linslade
Citizens Advice Mid Bedfordshire
Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire (CVS)
Grand Union Housing Group
Hightown Housing Association
Lidlington Church
MIND BLMK
Money Advice at St Andrew's
NOAH
Project 229
QPCO
The Counselling Foundation
The Salvation Army