

# DIRECTION FOR BEDFORDSHIRE

SEPTEMBER 2019



**Direction**  
for Bedfordshire

## MOVING FORWARD

In our efforts to move our valuable service further into the public sphere, we have secured a number of drop-in sessions within Bedfordshire partner organisations and public spaces. We have already had some really valuable conversations during our sessions in the Approved Premises in Bedford with the female residents, and within the HARRP (Homeless Assessment Rapid Resettlement Pathway) in Luton. This has given us the opportunity to sit down and understand what issues individuals are facing. During our allotted drop in times we can work first-hand and use our knowledge of Bedfordshire services to signpost them to the right organisation. In more challenging circumstances, we can take these referrals away and work on them until we have a suitable contact to pass on to the service user. By increasing our accessibility and visibility within the community we hope to both raise awareness of the work we can offer to vulnerable individuals, and to break down the barriers that we may be facing in helping those who need it most. We have also secured bi-weekly slots at Dunstable and Bedford Central Libraries, and are in discussions with Job Centre Plus in Bedford to be regularly based there in the future. We have also secured monthly attendance at the Kingsbrook and Cauldwell community drop in, which hopes to bring together a number of different agencies under one roof for the community. We will be regularly advertising our drop-ins on our Facebook page so please spread the word and let us know if you would like to discuss organizing a drop-in session within your organisation.

**This newsletter is an overview and update for partners of all that has been going on with regards to the Direction for Bedfordshire Offender Hub in September 2019.**

**Written and Edited by: Lauren Cox (Offender Hub Coordinator, YouTurn Futures)**

This month marks our first big milestone of 6 months in operation! The growth of our service has been amazing during this time and we would like to thank all of the partners, service users, volunteers, professionals and public that have supported us along this journey. These interactions have allowed us to develop how we can work effectively to support vulnerable people in the community. We have learnt so much in this time about all the remarkable work that is going on in Bedfordshire, and have been able to quickly expand our knowledge and contact base. We are constantly striving to help individuals in need, and ultimately to help in reducing crime and reoffending within the county.

## So, what have we been up to?

- We attended a group meeting at **Community Led Initiatives' SAMAS – Support Advocacy Mentoring Advice Service** for those in recovery from substance abuse in Central Beds. and Bedford Borough. We spoke to staff, volunteers and service users to learn about their work to create a positive, supportive community. This service is invaluable as those in recovery find it difficult to move away from the social circles that have previously been a bad influence, and could prohibit their progress.
- **Uprising** are working with 18-25yr olds to encourage professional and personal development through Leadership Programmes in Bedfordshire. This service empowers young people to become responsible, influential individuals in their community through learning and peer support.
- This month we have created a link with **VARAC – Vulnerable Adult Risk Assessment Conference** to further support partnership working; by being an extra resource to the most at risk adults in Bedfordshire. *Direction for Bedfordshire* can act as an aid to those who are accepted by the conference in contributing our service knowledge at these meetings. We also want to be the primary signposting service to those who may not quite meet the criteria of the conference, but are still in a vulnerable position. Individuals who find themselves struggling in helpless situations are susceptible to criminal activity as a means of survival. We want to get involved as a preventative measure to address the pathway issues that have led to a state of vulnerability.
- We have received great support for our emerging service from **Azalea** who are working with those affected by commercial sexual exploitation of women. They create a safe space with food, clothes and contraception, and are working with Beds. Police to address the men who solicit these services. As exploitation is an ever-growing issue this service is a key resource in protecting exposed women in Bedfordshire.



# CASE STUDY

When we have been working with the female residents at the Approved Premises in Bedford, many of them expressed concerns of their situation once moving on from the AP and living independently. They particularly wanted to find where they could get help with furnishing their new homes. Myself and Sasha were able to find a number of providers who could help these women in need to rebuild their lives and make their new properties their own. We were able to direct them towards the 'Home in the Community Grants' from Bedford Borough Council which the staff at the AP were going to look into for the residents to assess their eligibility. If eligible this grant can help with essential furniture, beds and bedding and white goods. **The Salvation Army in Rushden** can offer up to 3 items of furniture to a person in need if they provide a headed letter from a professional to explain their situation. We also contacted **Emmaus Village Carlton** who can offer a furniture starter pack from the vast selection of items in their showroom. **The Re-use Centre** in Bedford can also provide a 25% discount for their members. The residents were extremely grateful for this information and felt reassured that there were services out there that were there to support them during this crucial time. Once their new tenancies are finalised the staff at the AP are going to enhance this support by taking the residents to these organisations to access their services. Another concern was that a couple of the residents wanted to get involved in constructive activities, like mentoring others who have dealt with substance abuse and domestic abuse, once they were living independently. We were able to access our contacts at **SAMAS** and **YMCA Domestic Abuse Outreach Resettlement Project** to help these women create new social circles and get involved in issues that are important to them.

- **The Salvation Army** in Luton act as a port of call for individuals when they are struggling – they can provide food and clothing vouchers, and provide a debt advice service regardless of the amount. Their weekly drop in sessions offers a comfortable environment in which people can open up and share their experiences.
- The Tenancy Sustainment Team at **BPHA** are a useful partnership tool for *Direction for Bedfordshire*. They can support prison leavers, victims of domestic abuse and individuals suffering with poor mental health through their first tenancy with the Housing Association. They can help with setting up utilities, furniture, accessing tenant welfare funds and money advice. This professional relationship will benefit service users as we know that individuals who are trying to turn away from a life of crime will be supported in their tenancy with BPHA, and the staff there can use *Direction for Bedfordshire* for matters that their residents may be facing outside of housing.
- **The Job Centre Plus** in Luton and Bedford have been really supportive of *Direction for Bedfordshire* and are very keen to develop ways that we can share our knowledge with their staff and clients. They want to work closely with us so that together we can better serve those that need it most within the community. Our hopeful drop-in sessions within this setting will allow us to access people who may not instinctively think that *Direction for Bedfordshire* is a service that can help them. We can use this time to further explain that we want to use our contacts and knowledge base for not only those who have been affected by the Criminal Justice System, but also for those who are on the fringes of society and may be forced to criminality to provide for themselves and their families. Our aim of supporting the reduction of re-offending and crime in Bedfordshire means that we need to be vigilant to look beyond those who have already engaged in crime, in order to use our resources to identify key issues that may lead an individual to that position.
- Our meetings with **Luton YOS and Youthscape** have highlighted where *Direction for Bedfordshire* can further support the young people that they are working with; by being a resource for issues that may be facing their families or support system. We can work in partnership to tackle the issues facing young people by addressing the wider vulnerabilities in their lives. We can also be a reassuring means of support for those who may be leaving the YOS and are independently reintegrating back into society.

**We have also been mentioned in the VOCypf Newsletter in their Spotlight Organisations section – take a look here!**

<https://mailchi.mp/vocypf/vocypfnews260919?e=d8a2b6d186>

*“Valuable service that helps join up existing services to individuals so they can get the help they need.”*

Rachel, Job Centre Plus Bedford

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, WANT US TO COME AND SPEAK AT YOUR TEAM MEETING, OR WANT TO MAKE A REFERRAL CONCERNING AN INDIVIDUAL PLEASE GET IN TOUCH THROUGH ONE OF OUR PLATFORMS:**

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