

DIRECTION FOR BEDFORDSHIRE

AUGUST 2020



Direction
for Bedfordshire

DIGITAL NETWORKING FORUMS

Direction for Bedfordshire was created under a two-strand vision: firstly, to connect individuals who engage with/are at risk of criminality with services that can help them get back on track; secondly to promote better partnership working in Bedfordshire and connect services with each other.

COVID-19 limited our face to face engagement with both partners and service users, and one solution to this was to virtually connect our various partners across the county. By using Zoom we are hosting two forums to cover the North and South areas of Bedfordshire. We have received a wide range of interest with 20+ different services and organisations attending across the two forums. This gives partners from across the sector an opportunity to discuss how their service delivery has changed due to COVID-19, what is working well, and what issues or concerns they're facing. We are really pleased with the feedback we have received; with partners feeling how more connected they are at a time where we are all distanced.

As time has gone on, we have changed the frequency of the forums and they currently run every 4-5 weeks. This is constantly reviewed in line with partners transitioning back into more direct service delivery with clients. We want to ensure that the forums stay relevant, effective and useful for all of those involved.

Please get in touch via phone or email if you would like to join the future forums.

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 August 2020.

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August is typically a time of school holidays and plans to jet off to the sun, so this year it has been somewhat of an anomaly for the majority. Services and partners across Bedfordshire have worked tirelessly to support the needs of the most vulnerable people in our communities, under difficult restrictions compared to normal service delivery. *Direction for Bedfordshire* are here to both support professionals and members of the public, and COVID-19 has reinforced this more than ever. Collaboration is key for the best results and we are continually finding new links to services, and are able to create new links between services that would have otherwise not have come into contact with one another.

So, what have we been up to:

- We attended the **NPS North Bedfordshire team meeting** to introduce our service to some new team members and highlighted the support we are able to offer Probation Officers. It is important for us to keep promoting *Direction*, even into nearly 18 months of service, as organisations and professionals are always changing. Our visit was well received and we look forward to working more closely with them.
- *Direction for Bedfordshire* will be hosting a **drop-in session at SMART Prebend, Mercure Hotel in Bedford on 16th September 2020, 2-3pm**. SMART have been supporting everyone who have been temporarily accommodated at the hotel throughout lockdown, in order to prevent homelessness. Drop-in sessions have been a key element of direct, effective engagement with service users for *Direction*, to break down barriers and promote our support to those who need it. Anyone staying at the hotel is welcome to come to this session, so please feel free to contact us for any further details if you're working with any of the residents.
- We attended a meeting at **Penrose Holman House** where we were given a tour round the accommodation and discussed how *Direction* can help their residents. This is a really well-kept building with lots of space and a peaceful garden. Some of the rooms have an en-suite bathroom and residents are assisted in moving towards complete independence throughout their stay. This accommodation typically specialises in helping people with mental health issues; however, they will consider all applications on an individual basis to determine if someone is suitable for Holman House. They have several rooms available at the moment so please get in touch if anyone needs supported accommodation in Bedford!
- **CSCS cards** are required for anyone wanting to work on a building site, and obtaining one is a positive start for individuals interested in that field to get back into employment. There are different routes available to be able to obtain one and *Direction for Bedfordshire* are able to offer advice on the various options, and how to get funding to attend the training course in order to receive the card. Please get in touch if any of your clients would be interested in getting involved.

CASE STUDIES

All names have been changed to protect the service user's identity

"Ezra had a job offer to work on a building site but needed to get a **CSCS card** before he could start. We were able to offer him advice to get the offer in writing, and we approached the Job Centre on his behalf who were happy to fund a one-day Health and Safety Awareness course. This would enable him to take a test to be eligible to get his CSCS card as quickly as possible. **Jobcentre Plus** have a **Flexible Support Fund** to support people with financial barriers that may obstruct them from securing jobs."

"Lee had been completing his Level 3 Engineering course before custody and he really wanted to find an apprenticeship to continue his learning whilst supporting himself financially. Following a meeting with **Luton Jobcentre Plus** we were able to find out about the **Railway Engineering Apprenticeship** by **PET-xi Training Ltd.** This sounded like a perfect opportunity for Lee and we linked him with the Rail Assessor for a recruitment day. Lee was hesitant to turn up for the recruitment day when he learnt that this role required night shifts, that would not work with his tag conditions. He was really keen to go for the role but did not want to waste anyone's time. We encouraged him to be honest with the employer so that they could accommodate for his tag with his shift rota if he was offered the position. We were delighted to hear an update from Lee on the evening of the recruitment day that he had been successful and was offered the role. When employers give ex-offenders a chance and look past their criminal records, they can really see the true potential that an individual has."

"You've helped me a lot more than anyone else has in the last 18 months"
Service User

"Direction knows everything!"
Luton NPS

"I really appreciate everything you're doing for me"
Service User

"I've not had a single negative experience whilst working with Direction for Bedfordshire to date"

- We had a telephone meeting with the partnership manager, Sam Price at **Signposts** in Luton. They have recently opened their 45-bed accommodation in Guildford Hall, which is also their emergency night shelter. We discussed how *Direction* could support the Signposts staff and residents once they allow external services to enter the various properties. We look forward to working more closely with Signposts in the hopeful near future, and deliver drop-in sessions for the residents. We also discussed the **Rough Sleeping Outreach Team** which have been working in conjunction with Luton Council and other services for the 'Everybody In' scheme, to ensure that rough sleepers are housed for their safety against COVID-19. They will go out onto the streets to locate rough sleepers and find them accommodation. Sam is also part of the Luton Homeless Partnership which works to improve best practice across the sector. *Direction* will be attending the next meeting to support this partnership in any way we can.
- Military service was not something we particularly enquired about during initial conversations with our clients, and our meeting with the **Royal British Legion** emphasised how important it is to gain this information to open extra doors for support. RBL can support anyone who has received one day of pay for service in the Army, Navy and Air Force, as a regular or reservist/territorial army. They can also support (ex)partners of those who have served, as long as they can provide a full name and DOB; RBL can do the rest to find out the service number. This is particularly important for those who are fleeing domestic abuse. Children under 18 who have a parent who have served can also obtain RBL's support. They can provide a number of services including benefits, debts and money advice; financial support; an outreach service; white/brown goods; home adaptations, to name but a few. They have a 7 day a week, 12 hour a day helpline and live chat service.
- **Change Ur Life**, a **new domestic abuse outreach service**, launched in June. They have been funded by the Bedfordshire PCC and will work alongside Signpost Victims Hub. This pan-Bedfordshire service is for both male and female victims aged 16 and over. They support victims of low to medium risk and there are two staff members, male and female, so that clients can work with someone that they feel comfortable with. This service was born out of the noticed gap in support for victims to have people attend important court dates and other meetings that may be distressing to do alone. If any of your clients would benefit from this kind of support, please get in touch and we can link you with Juliet and Mickey.
- We had a really inciteful meeting with **Luton JCP** to see how we could more effectively support each other and our clients. We were able to learn about new training courses being introduced, including the specific fitness course for ex-offenders aged 18-24 which will be starting in October – there is still time to register if you have any clients who would be eligible. We were also notified about new contacts and organisations for local employment opportunities. There are still some details to be confirmed for the new training programmes, and we look forward to getting updates as they are available, to help clients get back into employment.
- We attended the **Bedfordshire Hate Crime Partnership Group** meeting for the first time this month. It was reported that there has been an increase in hate crime during COVID-19, and therefore there were discussions to link promotional messages during Hate Crime week in October to keeping others safe and wearing masks. The way to present these messages in a way that all members of the community can understand and access were a key topic of conversation, and suggestions on the most effective ways to do this for the benefit of the most affected, vulnerable groups are welcome.



YouTurn
Restore, Reform & Reintegrate



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