

DIRECTION FOR BEDFORDSHIRE NOVEMBER 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 have been hosting two forums to cover the North and South areas of Bedfordshire since April 2020. Over the last 7 months we have received a wide range of interest with 20+ different services and organisations attending across the two forums. This initiative has given 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 have received consistently positive feedback and are really proud of what has been achieved during these difficult times. Collaborative working has been enhanced as a result of the forums, and new partnerships have continually been formed.

The final forums for 2020 are taking place on 26th November for North Bedfordshire, and 2nd December for South Bedfordshire. These will resume in January 2021 to bring partners together after the Christmas period.

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 November 2020.

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Throughout this month, Lockdown 2.0 has brought about its own challenges and additional barriers. The winter months will further isolate the most vulnerable in our communities, and may adversely affect the wellbeing of individuals in Bedfordshire as a whole. We must have wellbeing at the forefront of the of all our practices to ensure that people are aware of the support available, and feel confident enough to access it. We must also take care of one another as professionals to ensure that we are delivering the best service possible to those who need our help. We must work together and share the responsibility of our service users to address all their pathway needs. It is still uncertain as to when community services will be able to fully return to pre-COVID-19 service delivery, but *Direction for Bedfordshire* want to lend our support in any way that we can to help our communities.

So, what have we been up to:

- YouTurn Futures are happy to welcome our **newest team member, Lucy Whitwham!** She will be the third Direction for Bedfordshire coordinator and brings a knowledge base and professional background of substance misuse to the service. It is great to see how *Direction for Bedfordshire* has grown in its first 18 months, and how YouTurn Futures has progressed since it's start in 2014.
- **Direction+ Conditional Caution** completed the first session this month on behalf of Bedfordshire Police. We hope to continue to grow this service which aims to help people consider the impact of their crime on the victim, whilst finding them the right support to move forward with their lives and ultimately reduce reoffending.
- We have liaised with **NOAH Academy** to find out more about their current course delivery across the county. They are running face to face courses in Bedford and Luton, and these include improving confidence, moving towards work, ESOL, IT skills, and wellbeing through creative confidence. For any further information or to make a referral, please contact: academy@noahenterprise.org.
- We went back to visit the **Groundwork Green Team** for their celebration day at the end of the programme. This was a good way to have face to face contact with the guys who were open referrals to us, and to also remind the other group members of *Direction for Bedfordshire's* support as they move onto the next part of their journey. We want individuals to feel comfortable to get in touch with us at point if they require information or guidance. We want to offer this type of interaction to other course groups across Bedfordshire to extend our reach and inform individuals of what support is available to them. Prior to COVID-19 we were always keen to get out into the community and increase the personal quality of our service. The pandemic has restricted this initiative slightly, but we are always open to speak with partners to organise safe and socially distanced meetings with clients if it will benefit them.
- We attended the **Link to Change Conference** this month. The varied keynote speakers throughout the day informed attendees about the picture of child exploitation in Bedfordshire and across the UK. This included the affect of COVID-19, the experiences of young people with learning difficulties, trauma, and the work of parents and young people themselves to tackle exploitation.

CASE STUDIES

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

"Jack is wanting to set up his own gardening business and has been accessing an enterprise support service in order to help him. He is moving forward with his plans but needed to do some training courses in specific aspects of gardening services. A referral was made to us to see if he could access a course for pesticide application. Whilst we could find him courses for this, funding was not available through the colleges or training providers. Direction for Bedfordshire did our research and found a little known fund called the **Professional Gardeners Trust** who agreed to consider his application for full funding for his course. The PGT provides gardeners with the opportunity to acquire skills and gain qualifications through part-time courses and work placements. This enhances their careers and benefits the horticulture profession as a whole. Jack is continuing in his endeavours and we wish him every success!"

"Nick is facing an immigration case which could lead to deportation, and means that he has no recourse to public funds. Immigration cases can last for a long period of time and Nick was struggling financially, with a partner and child to support while receiving no income. His Probation Officer contacted us to see if there was any financial support available to him. To make matters worse, he had also been told that his doctor would no longer provide Nick with his essential daily medication which had run out. His medical needs made him extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 and needed to be addressed immediately. Direction for Bedfordshire have a good relationship with **Lea Vale Medical Practice**, so we asked for their expertise on the matter. We were thankful to receive a swift response which confirmed that the previous information Nick was given was in-fact incorrect, and no recourse to public funds does not mean that medication stops. We were able to liaise with the Probation Officer to get Nick's details over to the surgery so he could be registered, and within a few days he was able to collect his medication. In regard to Nick's financial situation, we were able to link him with **The Level Trust** who can help support the family with uniform, coat, shoes and even breakfast supplies for the child. This service can alleviate some of the financial strain on the family while Nick awaits assessment from other support services."

"Thank you so much for all of the information, this is absolutely brilliant...WOW-you ladies are the best!!"
BeNCH CRC

"You've done so much for me and took the time to listen to me."
Service User

- The **Luton Homeless Partnership** is made up of a variety of community and statutory services that work together to reduce rough sleeping and homelessness in the town. We have recently joined the partnership to give any support we can to both professionals and clients. They are looking to hire a **Homeless Health Participation Coordinator** to encourage the involvement of those with lived experience through a peer advocacy service. The appointed team of peer advocates with help improve the health experiences of those facing homelessness, and enhance the already amazing efforts of the homeless charities in Luton by approaching the issue from a personal, informed perspective. The partnership also want to address the exploitation experienced as a result of homelessness. There is a high Eastern European homeless population in Luton and the partnership are working to safeguard these already extremely vulnerable individuals from threat of deportation due to new Home Office immigration rules. These threats could lead to higher risks of exploitation and health crises, and a reluctance to engage with services.

A Public Health representative gave a COVID-19 update during the partnership meeting and explained that generally people want to be compliant with the Government rules, but they do not always fully understand them. Many people are delaying going into self-isolation when they need to through fear that they will be without food or essentials while being stuck at home. We need to make sure that all members of the community are aware of the support that is available so they can keep themselves and other safe, and support the efforts to reduce COVID numbers.

- **Re-Track** is a brand new and exciting employment service in Bedford offering one to one support to help people in the area find a job. The service has been created as a response to the wide spread unemployment caused by COVID-19. They can support with CV writing, completing job applications, and interview skills. They offer a friendly service, with a warm welcome with a cup of tea or coffee, and food parcels for those in need. Service users will be able to access this service on an appointment basis. *Direction for Bedfordshire* will be meeting with Re-Track next week so further information will follow. Alternatively, please email re-track@kingsarms.org to find out more.
- **Langley House Trust** have received funding from the Ministry of Justice to provide enhanced support workers that engage residents, supervised under the National Probation Service or MAPPA, in a certain amount of meaningful activities each week. The support workers cover properties across Bedfordshire so we met with them to introduce *Direction for Bedfordshire* and begin a working relationship. We always encourage professionals to make contact if they have any general or case specific questions about services across the county. We will either be able to give a quick answer straight away and save the professionals time, or use our capacity to find out the answer or pass on a contact that may know.
- For Christmas 2019 we put together an **emergency services document** detailing the organisation contact details available for housing, substance misuse and medical help across the county – this document can be found on our website under 'Latest Updates'. We would like to produce a similar document this year to also include mental health services and places providing food. Please get in touch with any relevant information that we could include. We want to include contact details, opening times, etc. Christmas is already a tough time for many, and this year will have its added difficulties, so we want to make information readily available to ease the situation. We will circulate this in mid-December so that it can be distributed in plenty of time to service users.

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Restore, Reform & Reintegrate

