

# DIRECTION FOR BEDFORDSHIRE OCTOBER 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 October 2020.**

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As the clocks go back and winter starts to draw in, the lives of all communities in Bedfordshire will be faced with more challenges. With government guidelines and lockdown plans seemingly uncertain, we must all work together to continue the high standard of support that has already been evidenced throughout this year. Collaboration and communication is key to ensure that vulnerable individuals are able to access services appropriate for their needs, and to manage expectations of partner organisations. As professionals we must always consider each other's wellbeing so that we can deliver the best service for our clients with a holistic approach. *Direction for Bedfordshire* always wants to use our capacity, knowledge and contacts to both support our partners in problem solving, and empower our clients to engage with services that understand their needs.

## So, what have we been up to:

- YouTurn Futures is broadening the *Direction* brand and services offered by teaming up with Bedfordshire Police to offer **Direction+ Conditional Cautioning**. This will be offered as an alternative to being charged with a minor offence, where a Conditional Caution is applicable. Individuals that are considered suitable for this service will meet with a *Direction* professional for one hour to have a confidential discussion about their circumstances; so that we can understand the reasons behind their crime, increase their awareness of the impact on the victim, and ensure that they are put in touch with the right support services to reduce their risk of reoffending.
- We have also now been commissioned by **Central Bedfordshire Council** to offer a **Supported Pathway** for their 16-25 year old residents. We will be offering a more intensive support service for young people who are on the periphery of gangs and youth violence; to help them find a positive pathway for their future, and steer them away from being entrenched in a high-risk lifestyle. [If you would like more information about this service or how to refer a young person, please contact us.](#)
- **Groundwork** deliver their 12-week Green Team horticultural course and we visited the team this month to introduce our service to the participants. We engaged with 3 different men who have had experience of the Criminal Justice System. They had varying needs and this face to face meeting allowed us to take some time out to understand their situations. We have continued to support these men so that they can successfully connect with services and professionals to address their pathway needs. 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.](#)
- **Boxing Saves Lives** is a new initiative created by JP Smith to offer boxing to the community as a way of improving mental health, deterring people from crime and violence, building self-worth and learning discipline. *Direction* has been involved in talks with JP and BeNCH Probation Services in Luton to see if there could be a pilot scheme for IOM service users to engage in some boxing sessions. Boxing Saves Lives has huge aspirations to use boxing as an initial engagement tool to then progress individuals to be ready to address some other pathway needs in their lives.

# CASE STUDIES

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

"We had some great news for one of our clients who unfortunately had to leave his home suddenly after receiving threats that made him feel unsafe to return home. He was **struggling with how to deal with his housing situation**, and as he had served his previous sentence, there was no involvement from Probation or other agencies. He was struggling financially as a result and at risk re-offending after having turned his life around. We advocated for him with the local authority about the risk to his mental health if he was to return home, gave him the appropriate advice, and gathered the correct information from his GP to support his housing application. We are so glad to hear that finally he is going to be allowed to move to a new property and will be **safely housed** so that he can move on with his life."

"*Direction for Bedfordshire* has joined the **Online Centres Network** to add extra value to our service. Our membership to this national network allows us access '**Learn My Way**' online training materials to help clients upskill themselves in using the internet, ranging from training on writing an email to accessing the Universal Credit online system. Partner agencies are welcome to get in touch with us if they have any clients that would benefit from this kind of training.

Joining this network also made us aware of the '**English My Way**' resources that can help centres across the country deliver ESOL courses, which was a massive help for a referral we received this month. We were contacted by a Probation Officer who has a service user currently based in the North who is awaiting to be transferred to Bedfordshire. His English language skills were little to none which made him vulnerable to criminal exploitation in the past, so part of his sentence plan was to engage him in an ESOL programme. His transfer date was uncertain so we were asked to see what online ESOL courses would be available to him. With our new knowledge of the Online Centres Network and 'English My Way', we contacted all the centres offering this course in his current area. We received information from a local service called **Community Revival** who offer Zoom sessions on Monday to Wednesday each week. With the support of **Luton Adult Learning**, we also contacted the Adult Learning services in the service user's current area who also offered information about a weekly session. By connecting with these local resources, we are able to signpost him to services that can make positive use of his time while he is away from Bedfordshire, and then we can link him in with Luton Adult Learning to continue his ESOL education once his transfer is complete."

- **BPHA's Community Engagement Team** are delivering a **High-Rise Blocks Project** for their properties near Tavistock Street, Bedford. There have been significant issues with anti-social behaviour which affects the residents in many ways. BPHA are keen to improve the lives of residents by listening to their concerns and making positive changes to their environment and safety. *Direction* is offering to support housing officers when identifying where the issues are and who is causing them. We will engage with those individuals to see what their needs are and how they can access the right support to encourage positive changes to their own lives and those around them.
- **Bedford Borough Council** and the **OPCC** are working together on a **Safer Streets Project** which is targeted at specific streets in the Midland Road area to reduce the high levels of crime - Please see the information leaflet circulated with this newsletter to see which residents will be included. They have delivered information leaflets to 900 homes in the area, and have approached local businesses to get them onboard. They will be offering Smart Water packs and 'Ring' doorbells to residents as a minimum, and extra safety measures will be applied to properties where needed. The next step will be carrying out home visits to residents to put these measures in place. The Community Safety Partnership are keen to hear from partners operating in the targeted area to see how they can get involved. *Direction* has provided information to be included in the packs given during home visits so we can engage more closely with the locality.
- The national **Illegal Money Lending Team** delivered a training session about **Credit Unions**. During a worldwide time of financial uncertainty, it is so important to educate ourselves on Credit Unions and how they can be one kind of financial solution for our clients. 1 in 10 people in Britain have no savings at all, and typically people are taking out loans for everyday purchases. Credit Unions are authorised to lend money and often the cost of repayments are much lower than other lending options. Credit Unions can be used when individuals need intervention for possible rising debt, and to prevent individuals getting into debt altogether. They are working to get individuals back into a savings culture that was prominent in previous generations. They are educating individuals of the importance of savings so that they are prepared for any financial shocks.
- We attended the **Central Bedfordshire Council Safer Communities Seminar**. These monthly meetings are set to have different themes each time: this month's theme was **Hate Crime**. Sgt Carl Perri from Bedfordshire Police presented information about how lockdown has sadly caused an increase in the number of hate crime reports, and how the Police are tackling this issue. Next month the theme will be **Friends Against Scams** - if you would like an invite to this session on 9th November, please let us know.
- **Jobcentre Plus** have implemented a range of employment support and programmes to tackle widespread and long-term unemployment. There is a particular drive towards support for young people to ensure that they are given a fair chance at starting their career; including their specialist Youth Offer of a 13 week intensive programme to upskill individuals to be ready for a Traineeship, Apprenticeship, KickStart Vacancy or Job. The KickStart programme offers 6 months paid work with a local employer which is funded by the government. The scheme will be running until June 2022 to give young people experience in the work environment, and the possible opportunity of a job offer afterwards. They are also offering various training opportunities to their customers so please encourage your clients to contact their Work Coach via their online journal to find out what support is available.

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