

# DIRECTION FOR BEDFORDSHIRE DECEMBER 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 8 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.

We would like to thank all the partners and professionals that have contributed to the forums and we look forward to continuing this initiative into the New Year to work together to tackle 2021's challenges.

**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 December 2020.**

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2020 has felt like a never ending story of uncertainty and challenge. It may have been hoped that 2021 would simply eradicate COVID-19 and bring us back to normality and unfortunately, we are instead entering the new year with a vague understanding of this pandemic's duration. However, it must be noted that this year has also been filled with adaptation, innovation and perseverance. The admiral efforts of services and communities to come together to support the most vulnerable in Bedfordshire have been outstanding. While everyone has had to make life changes to keep themselves and loved ones safe, many have gone the extra mile to lend a helping hand to those in need. Christmas celebrations may be restricted this year but we hope that everyone has a safe and relaxing break. *Direction for Bedfordshire* look forward to continuing strong collaborative working with services and building new partnerships.

## **So, what have we been up to:**

- Bedford Borough Council and the Office of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner are working together on the **Safer Streets** Project; this is targeting the residents and businesses in the Midland Road area. The aim is to reduce crime in the area and to make those who frequent there feel safer. We visited the recently opened **Safer Streets Hub** on Prebend Street. The Hub intends to provide a community space where partner agencies can work, offer access to valuable services and support the community long term. This space is accessible to the target community and can offer discretion to those who feel weary about meeting with professionals. *Direction for Bedfordshire* hopes to be able to utilise this space and work alongside our partner agencies with the provision of services.
- We visited **Re-Track**, a brand new, free employment service which helps people write their CVs, complete job applications and get advice on positively approaching interviews. This service is by appointment at Kings House, Amptill Road, Bedford. The friendly volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and experience are trained to assist people on a one to one basis. Clients can also receive a free food parcel if they need it. They would like to receive referrals from professionals only, and these can be sent to: [retrack@kingsarms.org](mailto:retrack@kingsarms.org); or feel free to call on **07754 508648**
- 2020 may have delayed many plans and disrupted many objectives from being achieved; reducing motivation and drive. Why not start the new year with a fresh start and attend **Reactiv8's** free online conference? It's all about goal setting and learning the art of getting what you want. The conference will take place on Saturday 9th January 2021, 10:30-12:30pm. Please follow this link to book: <https://www.facebook.com/events/429352434742387/>
- **Wenta** offer free support to entrepreneurs who may be struggling with kickstarting their business ideas. Free online webinars are available and Bedfordshire residents can also receive one to one support. Our recent contact with Wenta confirmed that were really quick to respond and happy to help. <https://wenta.co.uk/>

# CASE STUDIES

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

"Adam's Community Order was coming to an end and contact with Probation would cease. His Probation Officer made us aware that Adam would benefit from some with budgeting and money management. We raised this query at one of the Digital Networking Forums to get some support from our partner agencies on this matter. **Penrose** raised that they would be able to help Adam on this so we passed their referral form to his Probation Officer. **Luton Adult Learning** also were able to offer an online support programme which covers budgeting, savings and how to deal with a personal financial crisis. 2020 has raised and exacerbated financial issues for many people across Bedfordshire, and this was noted by a number of partners that attend the forum. If there is a distinct need amongst service users for this information and advice, please let us know and partner agencies can work together to provide it."

"William was released from prison back in March 2020 and was struggling to find long term employment. He had managed to secure a couple of temporary roles but he was really keen to get back into work and support himself. Given his clear motivation we highlighted the **Work and Health Programme** provided by **Jobcentre Plus** and **The Shaw Trust**, and advised him to raise this with his Work Coach to be considered for a referral. **NOAH** are also launching their **Rainbow Recruitment** service so we asked the coordinator to get in touch with William to access this service. We also have a good working relationship with **People Plus** so enquired whether they knew of any work available. As William has previously completed his CSCS Card, People Plus were able to review his CV and put it forward with a Construction Company they're due to be working with. We wish him the best of luck in securing the role!"

- We were contacted by **Alice Muzira from Aurex Legal** in Luton to offer free **immigration support** to those in need across Bedfordshire. Alice has over 18 years of practical experience in this field; including matters related to domestic violence or abuse, asylum, FGM, honour based claims, asylum claims based on sexuality, No Recourse to Public Funds Condition, medical condition cases, family life based or private life based applications, including other more complex areas of immigration law such as deportation of those considered to be foreign national offenders, appeals and judicial reviews. She has also been producing a blog containing free immigration information and updates, please follow the link: <https://ukimmigrationjusticewatch.com/> Alice has found that the direct provision of personalised information and advice to individuals with immigration concerns may contribute to their well-being positively and enable them to receive a service vital ultimately to their better integration in the community. Please see the attached information document that details the different kinds of support that Alice can offer and how to get in touch. We have already linked the Luton Homeless Partnership with Alice so that she can support the most vulnerable in the town.
- We attended a **Clinks** webinar this month centred around enhancing **diversity in service user involvement**. We heard a presentation from Maslaha who have been working with Muslim prisoners to hear their voices and experiences of inequality within criminal justice institutions. 16% of the UK prison system are Muslim and there is a lag in recognising the needs of this group, that can only be fully rectified by hearing directly from those who have experienced these disparities first hand. There was a clear message that service users are the key experts for professional's work and therefore they must have a voice contributing to the service. The speakers emphasised that professionals cannot assume the experiences or thoughts of different social groups, and rather they need to seek out these answers from appropriate sources. Difficult questions must be asked to record true experiences and partnership working is key for diversity; we all must know when we're not the expert on a topic and must seek out to collaborate with those who are. Ultimately individuals with lived experience give others hope for the future and make them more comfortable to engage with support, so they must be a key shareholder in the work that we do.
- We have started a new regular partnership drop-in session with **Luton Approved Premises**. We will be engaging every two weeks with residents to offer one to one support. Although COVID-19 has brought our drop-in sessions to an almost halt, we would like to offer this service to partners across Bedfordshire again as soon as we can. Drop-in sessions offer an opportunity to build a rapport with clients and make *Direction for Bedfordshire* accessible to those who may not be so forthcoming in seeking support.

"Super helpful as always!"  
**National Probation Service**

"Told me exactly what needed to be done and took all the hassle out of it!"  
**Survey Feedback**

"I really enjoy the forums. They are so useful for everyone during these difficult times."  
**Project NOVA**

"You have started something that was small at the start but it has been amazing and lovely to be a part of it, so well done and thank you."  
**Central Bedfordshire Children's Services**

"Thank you for bringing everyone together throughout 2020 and opening up so many doors for us."  
**SSG Services**



Merry Christmas

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Restore, Reform & Reintegrate



**Bedfordshire**  
Police & Crime  
Commissioner