

DIRECTION FOR BEDFORDSHIRE

FEBRUARY 2021



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. Since then, 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 been overwhelmed by the positive response and 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 continue to invite professionals to come along and get 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 February 2021.

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The recent government roadmap plan for transitioning out of lockdown and restrictive measures may be a light at the end of the tunnel for some, and others may be sceptical or anxious about returning to normal life. From previous experience professionals know that restrictions being lifted means that there will be an increase in service users coming forward for support and disclosing information. Therefore, Bedfordshire partners across the different community pathways need to be working together to cope with this influx and provide the best service possible to those who have been made vulnerable, or had their vulnerabilities exacerbated, by the pandemic. Collaborative working means that we can all use our different skills and expertise to move people forward in their lives.

So, what have we been up to:

- We have been supporting **Bedford Borough Council** with the **Safer Streets Project** in the Midland Road area. We have attended the operational meetings throughout the project, offering our support for any residents who may have convictions that need help to make positive changes to their lives. We have also aided surveying by knocking on doors in the area with Council representatives and partner agencies to find out what residents think about their area, and supporting them with some crime prevention initiatives such as Smart Water and Ring Doorbells.
- We met with **Penrose Synergy** this month to discuss their new **CATE project** for women across Bedfordshire with complex needs, including offending histories or risks of criminality. There will be a Specialist Women's Support Coordinator who will tailor the service to each individual's needs; whether this be advocating, accompanying to appointments or meetings, signposting etc. We discussed how the *Direction+ Conditional Cautioning* scheme could be a useful referral route so that women who present in custody can be made aware of this new support.
- Central Bedfordshire Council now have Jayne Richards as their **Community Champion for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller families**. Jayne is working to increase engagement with these families and communities to offer support for their individual needs. We met with Jayne to give more information about *Direction* and the Supported Pathway for young people work that YouTurn Futures is delivering in the local authority.
- There has been some great training opportunities offered this month: Central Bedfordshire Council offered training around **Working with Challenging Families** and **Working Together to Safeguard Adults at Risk**. These were extremely valuable for professional development and refreshing our knowledge. Although training has had to move online, these gave us an opportunity to connect with professionals to share experiences and ideas. Similarly, the **Trans Awareness** training delivered by the Recovery College gave a good insight into this community and a safe space to ask questions.
- We joined nearly 200 other professionals and parents of those affected by exploitation for the **VERU Conference 'Exploitation Life through the Lens of Parents'**. The VERU are keen for communities and multi-agency partnerships to work together to tackle this issue.

CASE STUDIES

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

"Kelvin's probation officer referred him to *Direction* asking if there were any courses that he could be signposted to. We contacted him directly and discussed his situation. It was clear that rather than a training course for the purposes of finding work, Kelvin was really looking for a positive use of his time to support his recovery from substance misuse and mental health issues. *Direction* suggested the **Recovery College** who have a wealth of workshops and groups available at the moment online. We passed on the prospectus and contact number and within a week, Kelvin was signed up to some groups that he was really enjoying."

"Jamie was in temporary employment and applied for a permanent role with his employer. He had verbally disclosed that he had some convictions but needed support with completing a written disclosure with the necessary details required from his employer. We were able to support him with how to complete the disclosure; what convictions he was required to disclose and ensured that he did not disclose more than he legally had to. We followed up by sending him the information from the **Unlock Information Hub** that details everything you need to know about the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, and provides examples of how to write disclosure letters or statements. We were so pleased that Jamie completed his disclosure to explain his unspent convictions to his employer, and as a result was successful in gaining a permanent contract.

- **Luton Homeless Partnership** have hired a Homeless Health Participation Coordinator to work on improving the health outcomes for rough sleepers and those facing homelessness in the town. To support this role, they are also looking to take on **Volunteer Homeless Health Peer Supporters** to enhance this initiative and the engagement of service users. They are looking for volunteers who have lived experience of being homeless to support those who currently find themselves in that situation, in order to help them access healthcare. This is a great experience for people in the community to have their voices heard, influence support and services, and gain skills and experience that can be added to their CV. Please see the [poster](#) and [information pamphlet](#) for more details and circulate this information to colleagues and clients who would be interested in getting involved!
- **Digital poverty and exclusion** has been a persistent problem during this pandemic period, and it has been difficult to find solutions to cover all the different types of individuals in need. **High Sherriff of Bedfordshire Susan Lousada** has been working tirelessly throughout her year in post to get nearly 1700 young people a digital device to stay connected and engage with home schooling. Sue has provided a detailed [statement](#) about her great work – thank you Sue for all your hard work in not only this initiative, but also for all the support you've given to the voluntary sector. Sue has been a valuable regular attendee at our Digital Networking Forums and has collaborated with many services as a result!
- **International Women's Day** is coming up on Monday 8th March and this year's theme is 'Choose to Challenge'. In support of the day there is a social media campaign where individuals are taking a picture of themselves with their hands raised pledging to challenge inequality. At our recent Bedfordshire North Forum, the group got a picture of everyone raising their hands in support. Please keep an eye out for various partner events and campaigns happening in March in honour of this day.
- **WE'RE HIRING!** We're looking for two passionate and dedicated individuals to join our evolving *Direction* for Bedfordshire service and brand. If you're adaptable, have great customer service skills, and an understanding of criminal justice and rehabilitation then please follow this [link](#) to find out more about the role.

"The forums are one of the most brilliant things to come out of the last year"
Penrose Synergy

"This information will be extremely useful for not only this service user but others in the future. I really appreciate your guidance with this."
National Probation Service

"A massive thank you for putting us in touch with the probation service, we have a meeting booked in the diary. Also, you have been amazing providing us with all the other information. Thanks so much!"
Community Led Initiatives

"This forum is a fantastic medium to connect and work with other people. I can't speak highly of it enough!"
Project NOVA

Service Shout Out!

Need to get back into work or build your personal & professional confidence? **SSG Training** have free accredited **courses and CPD support programmes** for everyone aged 16-65. If you're struggling with lockdown, maybe build your confidence with **Wellbeing, Maths & English, Digital Media, Business Admin, Health & Social Care** qualifications and pathway to success. If you just need a chance for an interview, join a programme that will link you with employers and vacancies such as **NHS, Civil Service, Amazon, Active Luton, teaching, sales, admin, cleaning, hospitality and lots more!** Since the start of the pandemic over 98% of candidates either achieved or progressed onto further education or work. At SSG, we're proud to help individuals of all abilities no matter what their background. **No laptops or ICT required with programmes having 1:1 and group based tuition to support next steps.**

Express your interest by contacting courses@ssgservices.co.uk OR www.ssgservices.co.uk OR (01234) 340782 (opt. 3).

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YouTurn
Restore, Reform & Reintegrate

