

DIRECTION FOR BEDFORDSHIRE JANUARY 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 January 2021.

Written and Edited by: Lauren Cox (Offender Hub Coordinator, YouTurn Futures)

Direction for Bedfordshire Coordinators: Lauren Cox, Emma Freeman and Lucy Whitwham

2021 has definitely hit us all with a bang and unfortunately it has not yet offered the hope or positivity we wanted. However, we are now one month down and hopefully closer to better, more normal times. The collaborative and partnership working in Bedfordshire continues to stand strong and that is most certainly a positive we can take from this pandemic period. This period has seen existing services continue to adapt to meet the needs of their clients, and even new services born as a reaction to the emerging needs of the community during these difficult times. *Direction for Bedfordshire* always welcome new opportunities to enhance the work of our partners and offer extra value to the community.

So, what have we been up to:

- **The Courtney Foundation** is a social inclusion and poverty charity who set up the **Luton Clothing Bank** in November 2020. The setting up of this project has shown how much need is out there and how much of that need is hidden within the community. They primarily give out adult, child and baby clothing to those who are facing financial difficulties; they can also provide shoes, towels and bedding in if needed. Since their launch they have provided **744 items directly to 84 individuals**, and **409 items given to other services**. They have created a [website](#) to direct clients to and if you represent a local service you can place orders for beneficiaries through our online shop. If you don't yet have the shop details, please email melissa@thecourtneyfoundation.org. If someone is in need of clothes or shoes and are experiencing financial difficulty, whatever their situation, please **call 07311063676 or email info@thecourtneyfoundation.org**. Please encourage your colleagues, family, friends, neighbours etc. to donate any unwanted items to this great cause – the drop off points are TOKKO and Discover Islam both located in Luton Town Centre.
- We met with the **Disability Resource Centre** to learn more about their **'Support Into Employment'** programme. This support is available to those with long term health conditions, mental health issues, aged over 50 and unpaid carers to help them build their confidence and get back out into society. This personalised and service user led support covers CVs, applications, navigating online job tools, interview skills and cover letters etc. They also encourage individuals to engage in volunteering to build up their experience and therefore want to create links with local employers and services to find these opportunities, so please get in touch if you know of a service/employer that could get help. They also provide wellbeing programmes and Working in Care programmes. Please take a look at their [website](#) to see how to get involved.
- **Samaritans Bedford** hosted a training session called **'Learn to Listen'** on Blue Monday. They shared a number of really helpful tips to enhance listening skills in both professional and personal settings. We must not include our personal opinions or views, and often we do not need to tell someone what to do, but rather give them a listening ear to work things out for themselves. It is also OK to not always know what to say but we must always convey that we're listening and validate someone's courage to disclose.

CASE STUDIES

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

"We received a referral from the **Liaison and Diversion** team for James who wanted some support in getting back to work. An interpreter was needed to converse with James as English is not his first language, so we had to liaise with his wife to signpost them to employment resources. When speaking to James' wife we passed on some advice that it would enhance his chances of getting employment if he engaged with an ESOL Course. We contacted **NOAH** whose ESOL course is specifically designed to get people ready for work; for which James' wife was really grateful. We also made them aware of the **Luton Jobs Facebook Page** where James could see what new opportunities are being posted, and also some information for **local recruitment agencies**."

"We work closely with **Luton Approved Premises** who have had a number of new residents having been released from prison recently, and unfortunately they have come back into the community without any clothing. Prior to lockdown, we were able to access support from the **Salvation Army** who could provide a clothing voucher to be redeemed in the local charity shop. This is a really valuable resource but it is unfortunately restricted during the lockdown period. However, we have been able to access the support of **The Courtney Foundation's Clothing Bank** and also the coat scheme being delivered by **Discover Islam**. These vital resources have been so helpful during the winter months to provide those in need with appropriate clothing."

"The Forum was really useful, thank you so much for the invite"
Disability Resource Centre

"Direction have been smashing it with what they have achieved"
Office of Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner

"You are an absolute gem thank you. I didn't even think of contacting [that service], should hopefully save me tons of time"
Link to Change

- We had a meeting with **Community Led Initiatives'** coordinators to have a catch up about how we are both working. They support individuals in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford in recovery from substance misuse whose usage is controlled and who have the drive to keep moving forward in their progress. They offer workshops and peer support to sustain and enhance people's recovery. They also take on volunteers into their community. They have been able to continue delivering their groups online for those who have access to the necessary technology. Unfortunately, their clients who do not have these facilities are only able to receive one to one calls which can be difficult as you need connection to combat addiction. The continued barrier of digital poverty was discussed and both services continue to find a solution to this problem for our service users that make up a section of the community that are lacking in statutory support for devices. The meeting however did highlight that there is a sim card **deal by VOXI** aimed at jobseekers which **offers unlimited calls, texts and data for £10 a month for 6 months** - <https://www.voxi.co.uk/for-now>.
- **Keystage Housing** in Luton are looking to restructure their housing process and are currently refurbishing some of their properties to create an **Assessment Hub**. This will be a structured 8-12 week process which encourages new residents to work towards goals and get them prepared to be placed into one of their other HMO properties. This will give individuals the opportunity to start their housing placement positively and give Keystage time to place individuals into an environment that will fit their needs. *Direction for Bedfordshire* will be supporting this initiative when it launches by opening up conversations with residents and helping them engage with meaningful activities.
- We have recently **updated our directory website** and added a number of valuable services. There are new services covering wellbeing such as *NHS 111-Mental Health Crisis, NHS Every Mind Matters, Young Minds* and *Boxing Saves Lives*. There are some new pathways to employment like *Re-Track, Wenta* and *SPS Training*, and there are youth services like *Shout, Student Space, Rise Above* and *Brook*. Please take a look at our [website](#) to find out about all the services and resources available in Bedfordshire. We have a search facility and also our website can be translated into various different languages.

Service Shout Out!

Bedfordshire and Luton Recovery College are doing amazing work to provide sessions and workshops that enhance wellbeing. In February for **Valentine's Day** there are a series of workshops to talk about **relationships** in various ways. As part of **National HIV Testing Week**, they are running a one off workshop with a speaker who was diagnosed in 1982 who will be highlighting the **progress** and how far treatment has come **over the last 40 years for HIV treatment**. Finally, as it is also **LGBTQ+ History month** they have some knowledge building sessions teaming up with Penrose and Terrence Higgins Trust. This service is available to **anyone over the age of 18 who lives or works in Bedfordshire**. There are many more sessions and workshops on offer in their **Prospectus**. If you are already registered with the Recovery College then please email elft.recoverycollege@nhs.net to sign up to a workshop, or please follow this [link](#) to register with Recovery College.



PHONE:

0800 917 5579

WEBSITE:

<https://directionforbedfordshire.co.uk/>

EMAIL:

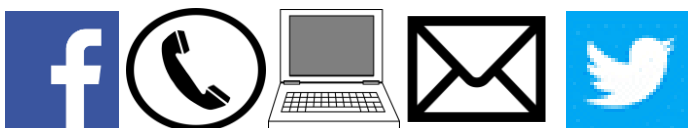
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YouTurn
Restore, Reform & Reintegrate

