

DIRECTION FOR BEDFORDSHIRE

MAY 2021



Direction
for Bedfordshire

DIGITAL NETWORKING FORUMS

We have been delivering our Digital Networking Forums since April 2020 as a reactive resource to COVID-19 forcing professionals to be isolated from one another and work remotely. Direction for Bedfordshire's vision is to enhance collaborative working and we have achieved this time and time again through the forums. We have received consistent positive feedback from new and returning forum attendees spanning a wide variety of sectors.

We are always keen for new services to join the forums to contribute to the discussions and to give updates on their current service delivery. This is an open space designed with our partners at the heart to ensure that everyone gets the most out of this platform.

The next forum dates are as follows:

North (covering Bedford and surrounding areas): **Tuesday 15th June 2021, 2-3:30pm via Zoom**

South (covering Luton and surrounding areas): **Wednesday 23rd June 2021, 2-3:30pm via Zoom**

Please do share these dates within your team and get in touch if someone can represent your organisation. Also please share these details with other partner agencies that you feel would benefit from attending!

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 May 2021.

Direction for Bedfordshire Coordinators: **Lauren Cox, Emma Freeman & Tommy McCollin**

This month marked another step forward on the road map to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and we hope that this positive progression out of social isolation can continue without obstructions. We acknowledge that Bedfordshire is still not out of the woods with infection rates, so we continue to stress to clients and partners to take care and look after each other. We look forward to getting back into the community and building new relationships with service users and strengthening current ones that have been built through remote and digital resources. We are keen to take advantage of face-to-face meetings with partners in the coming months who we have only so far conversed with through everyone's new lifelines of Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

We would also like to welcome **Festus Akinbusoye** in his new role as **Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner!** All of the team at YouTurn Futures look forward to meeting you and supporting your mission and goals for reducing crime.

So, what have we been up to:

- Our team has grown once again and we welcome **Tommy McCollin** as the latest addition to YouTurn Futures. Tommy previously worked within the prison service in many guises including resettlement and IAG. He also taught young people in a pupil referral unit up to GCSE level, both providing learning and support for these vulnerable young people in difficult situations. He will primarily be working in the south of the county delivering a Supported Pathway service in collaboration with Luton Youth Offending Service and contributing to the work of *Direction for Bedfordshire*.
- As a charity we have updated our IT system and within that we are looking to restructure our **case management systems**. Please do get in touch if there are any suitable system programmes or packages that you would recommend.
- Bereavement and loss have been an unfortunate common theme affecting all sections of the community over the last year. **Homeless Link** delivered a national **Community of Practice** session on **Life and Death in the Homeless Community** which raised various discussion points around the disproportionately high premature death rate amongst rough sleepers, the effect of the 'Everyone In' scheme as a reaction to COVID-19, and the views of professionals across the sector of the barriers in place that limit the prevention of these deaths. Many professionals raised that they want to prevent these deaths and increased rates of suicides amongst the homeless community, but service eligibility criteria's delay interventions until an individual is at such a high risk that it is sometimes too late to give substantial support. It was widely recognised that if homelessness were to be treated as a health issue, as it was during the pandemic, there could be serious improvements made as the resources can be found when needed.
- **NOAH Working Solutions Hubs** launched this month to deliver jobs clubs every weekday in locations in Luton, Central Bedfordshire, and Bedford. We visited the Bedford base next to the Amalfi Bakery on Tavistock Street and it was great to see they work they are delivering in CV writing workshops and employment support. Nicky Manix-Hall at the helm in Bedford is a breath of fresh air with a clear commitment and passion to make a difference.
- We reconnected with **Companions Real Bread CIC** in Bedford this month who offer volunteering opportunities to ex-offenders. They are currently open to new referrals so please share this information with anyone interested or complete their [referral form](#) for one of your clients.

CASE STUDIES

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

Justin has been floating between warehouse and factory jobs since leaving prison. He needed some help to identify and gain a trade so he could progress his life in a positive direction. Without knowing what help was out there for him and what funding he could get, we contacted **JCP Bedford** who highlighted their **Kick Start Programme** which helps under 25s find training and apprenticeships. Justin was contacted by a Kickstart co-ordinator and now has an assessment interview in early June. If successful, the service will enable him to access training in the plumbing trade and give help finding a suitable apprenticeship or training programme so he can move forward with his goal of becoming a plumber and gas fitter. We wish Justin all the best with his goals.

We wanted to highlight a case study from a Bedford Probation Officer that we work closely with who was faced with an issue when one of her service users had been given a 28-day recall to prison and his landlord gave a 7 day notice for his belongings to be removed from the temporary accommodation. The Probation Officer initially contacted **Shelter** who advised that they liaise with the **National Homeless Advice Service** who underlined some legal advice that suggested that the council or subsequent letting agent were not in a legal position to remove or destroy his belongings. We wanted to share this information with our wide network as many services users face housing issues and it is essential that when prison recalls are ordered that the individual is able to keep their accommodation and limited belongings to not completely derail their resettlement. If you have any housing queries or are not happy with the decisions made by the local authority it is always worth seeking a second opinion! We will be adding them to our directory of services thanks to this being shared with us. Please follow this [link](#) to the **National Homeless Advice Service** website!

- **Bedford Jobcentre Plus** attending our digital networking forum this month and kindly shared a valuable update that there has been a High Court ruling regarding **deductions from benefits payments for court fines**. Previously deductions could be up to 30% of an individual's benefits payments and now this has significantly reduced to **just 5%**. This will be a huge relief for many clients who were being crippled by fine repayments formerly taking such a high percentage of their benefits allowance, with many being left with very little to live on each month and having to enter a cycle of borrowing money from others or relying on foodbanks. Please follow this [link](#) to an article from **Shelter** which gives further detail. They also reiterated that the **DWP Flexible Support Fund** can support customers with funding petrol or travel payments when starting a new role. Customers will need to provide their Work Coach with the necessary information and in return they will be given a certain amount per mile or they will be given funding for the easiest mode of travel to the workplace. They can also support with funding for items that can sustain employment such as bicycles, clothes, uniform, mobile phones etc.
- The **Ameina Centre** in Luton have been a registered CIC since 2012 and were primarily working with young people who had issues in mainstream schooling and also gave support to their parents. They have used the lockdown period to rethink and restructure their work, and now keen to put their planning into action. They have qualified onto the **MOJ Dynamic Framework** so are eager to deliver work with schools and the local prisons – please [email](#) Rose for more information. They are also currently delivering an online employability course for 19–25-year-olds, with the ability to offer face to face, 1-2-1 support at the centre if needed. They offer taster sessions for vocational courses and help young people to decide a career path.
- The **Bedfordshire Family Law Clinic** launched on 19th May 2021 to bridge the gap of increased numbers of people seeking legal advice and many who cannot afford it. Gita Duggal has over 10 years' experience as a family solicitor and she wants to give back to the community by offering **FREE 30-minute appointments** to people in Bedfordshire and the surrounding areas in need of advice and guidance on all family matters, including divorce, separation, domestic violence etc. She can signpost people to further resources and Legal Aid lawyers for an assessment. Please see the [flyer](#) for more information.

"I am grateful, that you have reached out to the suspect".
Bedfordshire Police Community Safety Team

"Thank you for this information – very useful".
Healthwatch Luton

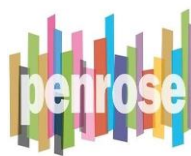
"Thank you so much for your help with my cases".
BeNCH CRC

"Thank you again for your great support in this case".
Liaison and Diversion

"Thank you for all of your advice and guidance so far!"
National Probation Service

"I have been informing the Bedfordshire police officers of the good work your service does".
Att10tive Social Enterprise

Service Shout Out!



Penrose has secured funding from the Bedfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner to deliver **The CATE Project (Community Action to Thrive & Enable)** - a 12-month pilot service to provide pan-Bedfordshire specialist outreach work in collaboration with wider partners and as part of the Conditional Caution Pathway. Its purpose is to help bridge the current gap in accessing much needed support and sustaining the engagement of **complex and hard to reach, vulnerable women**. The **Specialist Women's Support Coordinator (SWSC)** will receive referrals from various partners including **YouTurn Futures** to offer additional **trauma-informed wraparound support**, coordination and all the expertise and specialist knowledge of Penrose in supporting vulnerable women aged 18 or over, with a history of substance misuse, a history of offending or who are at risk of offending, and/or are at risk more widely from exploitation, violence, control, and coercion. The SWSC will have the capability to assist women as and when crisis or immediate support is required as well as within structured pre-planned appointments. Partner agencies can also benefit from this as they will be able to conduct joint visits, provide vital information on locations and share improved outcomes resulting from increased engagement. For more information, or to discuss a referral, please contact: **Lisa Sullivan – Specialist Women's Support Coordinator:** Lisa.sullivan@penrose.org.uk Mob: 07393012279 Office number: 01582 343230 Email: CATE@Penrose.org.uk

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YouTurn
Restore, Reform & Reintegrate

