

DIRECTION FOR BEDFORDSHIRE

AUGUST 2021



Direction
for Bedfordshire

DIGITAL NETWORKING FORUMS

Our Digital Networking Forums have been ongoing since April 2020 as a reactive resource to COVID-19 forcing professionals to be isolated 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. 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 forums will take place on:

South Forum: Thursday 2nd
September 2021, 2-3:30pm via
Zoom

North Forum: Thursday 9th
September 2021, 2-3:30pm via
Zoom

Please promote the forums amongst your team, wider network, and anyone you feel would benefit from attending!

We have designed a **short feedback survey** to gather the thoughts and views of forum attendees, so please follow this **link** to share your opinions.

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 August 2021.

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

This month has finally felt like some sort of normality has started to return. While the weather has not been quite the warm sunny delight we experienced last year, it is great to see service delivery across the community slowly restoring over the spring and summer to support the most vulnerable in our community. The COVID-19 recovery period will be with us for quite some time, and there will certainly be enhanced service user needs as a result. However, the goodwill and united front of professionals and organisations across Bedfordshire will also continue during this period and beyond, which will benefit all areas of the community.

So, what have we been up to:

- From the outset of the *Direction for Bedfordshire* service, we have continually faced **the issue of prison leavers and other vulnerable adults not being able to access a bank account due to a lack of formal identification**. This was massively amplified by the pandemic as typically individuals without formal ID could present at the local credit union with alternative forms of ID, such as a tenancy agreement, to open an account. Access to an account is key for people to successfully integrate into the community, as without one you cannot receive benefits and have independent control of them and cannot obtain housing or employment. *Direction for Bedfordshire* have been working tirelessly trying to rectify this issue to give service users a real chance at rehabilitating themselves and not be forced back into criminality due to desperation. In Luton we coordinated discussions with **The Probation Service and Money Matters Credit Union** to see if a partnership could be built to allow prison ID cards as an acceptable form of identification to open an account. These discussions are in the early stages, but we will be sure to keep partners fully updated. In Bedford, please advise clients to head down to **Bedford Credit Union** at 6 St Paul's Square who can support in opening accounts with alternative types of identification.
- We attended a **National Careers Service Event** at Shuttleworth College to speak to 17- and 18-year-olds about the work we do to educate them on possible career options available to them for the future. Many of the young people were very interested in this sector and took away our leaflets to find out more. This was also a great networking opportunity where we were able to catch up with **Tokko** and **Link to Change**, and also make new connections with **Rotary** and **Transitions UK**.
- As COVID-19 restrictions reduce, **HMP Bedford** have relaunched their **Departure Lounge** which gives prisoners an opportunity to speak with support services upon release to ensure that they have their needs met in the community. They have also adapted their **Discharge Boards** to now allow prisoners to informally speak to services prior to release to ask questions, seek advice and raise any issues that need to be addressed, so that these can be actioned in good time before the individual returns to the community. As well as us, **Bedford Jobcentre Plus, Community Led Initiatives**, and internal prison services are supporting these projects. We attend these events when anyone is being released to reside in Bedfordshire.
- We had a chat with **CPJ** who support people to get the needed tickets for infrastructure and civil engineering roles. They work directly with the DWP and Jobcentres nationally so that local people can be linked with local work. We have linked them with Bedfordshire Jobcentres for hopeful future opportunities.

"Thank you for all your help and professionalism, you have made a massive change to people's lives and made ours more worthwhile in our jobs knowing that we can progress with the hurdles of life people get stuck on"

Groundwork

Thank you both for organising the forums, they were incredibly helpful, and I've met some really fantastic people and organisations through them!

The Disability Resource Centre

"You know everything going on!"

The Probation Service

"Some really useful information here. I have passed this all onto my team."

Total Wellbeing Luton

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YouTurn

Restore, Reform & Reintegrate



**Bedfordshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner**

- We caught up with **Free2Learn** to find out that they are slowly opening up once again in delivering face to face support and courses from The Hat Factory in Luton Town Centre. We have relied heavily on Free2Learn's online courses throughout the pandemic to keep service users engaged with their learning and as an outlet to positively spend their time. As well as their vocational course offer, all course attendees will receive employability support. Free2Learn have links with employers to ensure that attendees can put their new qualifications to actual use. They hold open sessions on Tuesdays 11am-5pm so that people can discuss with the team about the various courses on offer.
- YouTurn Futures has joined **Criminal Justice Secure Mail (CJSM)** which enables people working in the justice system including public, private, and voluntary organisations to send emails in a secure way. If you are also registered with CJSM then please be assured that you can now send anyone within YouTurn Futures secure emails to '...@youturnfutures.com.cjasm.net'.
- **Lauren has been with Direction for Bedfordshire from the outset, and she will unfortunately be leaving the service to start a new venture on Friday 3rd September.** She would like to thank all the individuals and organisations that have shaped and enhanced her time in this role. She is extremely grateful for the warm welcome that both her and the new *Direction for Bedfordshire* service has received over the last two and a half years across the county. She has highly valued the partnership working and positive influences from key partners and will be taking all the skills that she has learnt along the way to her new role. Lauren will be sorely missed, and we can't thank her enough for her effort driving Direction.

CASE STUDIES

All names have been changed for confidentiality

Richard was looking for work and had a prospective job, but he needed a CSCS card to work on site. He was a new benefit claimant, and his claim was yet to be processed so he didn't know that he could access the CSCS course available through the Jobcentre. **Bedford Jobcentre** are keen to work in partnership to support our clients and as such were able to liaise directly so that he could enrol on a course prior to even meeting with his Work Coach. Richard is hoping to start work as soon as he has completed this and we wish him all the best!

We receive regular referrals from professionals across the community sector in Bedfordshire for **support with furniture and homeware** for clients. During lockdown many service users were being housed in accommodation with limited home comforts. The general public have been extremely generous in offering donations, as well as some charity organisations. To cater for this vast need, we have put together a document detailing all the different resources we use to source home items. This will be shared with this newsletter and also can be found on our [website](#). We will be updating this document so please let us know if you know of any other resources!

Service Shout Out!



Community Voluntary Service (CVS) Bedfordshire works across the county, including Luton, to **strengthen local social action**. They are a **voluntary and community sector support organisation**, offering a range of services to charities, organisations, and individuals who are looking to support the work of the not-for-profit sector in Bedfordshire. They provide **advice, information, training, and facilities** to organisations in the local voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector. They can support groups to make the right choices as they form and grow, as they look for funding, work collaboratively, address safeguarding responsibilities, develop policies and procedures and finally when it is time for them to close. They **promote volunteering** and match volunteers with local opportunities through their online platform with [Simply Connect](#), offering one to one guidance where needed. So, if you are a group that needs support, wants to make connections, is looking for volunteers, or if you need room hire facilities or office space in Bedford, they would love to hear from you. If you are an individual looking to volunteer or become a trustee of a local group, please do get in touch as they have lots of opportunities waiting for you.

There is a wealth of information on their website at cvsbeds.org.uk, you can call on **01234 354366** or email them at info@cvsbeds.org.uk. Follow them on Twitter [@cvsbeds](#) / Facebook [@volunteerbeds](#).

