

ADVICE STRATEGY

BEDFORD BOROUGH

ACTION PLAN 2011 – 2012



June 2011

Background

This Action Plan for 2011-12 will help to implement the Advice Strategy 2011-14 that will be launched in April 2011.

The Action Plan has been produced by the **Advice Strategy Planning Group** on behalf of the **Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership**, which is a thematic working group of the **Bedford Borough Partnership Board**.

NB All the costs given in this Action Plan are based on £35 an hour, which is the voluntary sector consultancy rate agreed in Bedfordshire and Luton by **VoluntaryWorks**.

Vision and principles

This Advice Strategy aims to make a real difference to people's lives and contribute to the reduction of poverty and social exclusion in Bedford Borough. This Strategy sets out a plan to achieve the following **vision**.

Bedford Borough will be an area where people experience less poverty and social exclusion, because their needs are being met effectively through easily accessible, well-publicised and high-quality social welfare information, advice and advocacy services across the voluntary and statutory sectors

The **principles** of the Advice Strategy are that social welfare information, advice and advocacy services in Bedford Borough should be:

- Planned in a coordinated manner to meet local needs, using collaboration and partnership working across the voluntary and statutory sectors
- Available to the whole community and, underpinned by a commitment to equality of opportunity, should also be used to support vulnerable, marginalised or disadvantaged people and communities
- Provided at different levels, using a diversity of well publicised, easy accessible delivery methods to meet the diverse needs in the community
- Quality services that local people will have confidence to use

Strategic aims and recommended action

Aim 1	To develop a strategic approach to the planning, funding and provision of information, advice and advocacy services in Bedford Borough
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Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
Develop a robust planning framework for local advice provision	1. Set up an Advice Management Group for Bedford Borough	<p>The Advice Management Group will be responsible for implementing the Advice Strategy.</p> <p>Suggested membership = 4 BAF members; 2 senior representatives from Bedford Borough Council; and 2 representatives from BBPB.</p> <p>BAF will also report back on AMG work to the Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership meetings</p>	<p>First meeting of AMG to be held in July 2011 – after election of BAF representatives at BAF AGM in June</p> <p>2 further meetings to be held in 2011/12</p> <p>4 SICCCTP meetings to be held in 2011/12</p>	<p>BBPB to oversee AMG.</p> <p>BAF to set up and facilitate 3 AMG meetings</p> <p>BAF to also report back to the SICCCTP</p>	<p>£2,265</p> <p>Annual cost of facilitation, administration and expenses for 3 meetings in 2011/12 (and also reports to SICCCTP).</p> <p>Cost is based on 3 days work for each AMG meeting (1 day before the meeting, 1 day on day of the meeting, and 1 day after)</p>	<p>Yes – from BBPB</p> <p>NB This money has already been awarded by BBPB</p>
	2. Appoint a Champion for Advice	<p>The Advice Champion will chair the Advice Management Group, and will act as the voice for local advice services.</p> <p>The Champion will report to, and ideally have a place on, BBPB.</p>	<p>Champion to be appointed at the first meeting of Advice Management Group in May 2011</p>	<p>Advice Management Group</p>	<p>£0</p>	<p>No</p>

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
Develop a collaborative approach to the funding and resourcing of local advice services	3. Develop a funding plan for advice provision in Bedford Borough	<p>Plan will map the current funding of advice services in Bedford Borough and look at ways of improving funding</p> <p>Will need some research and meetings to gather evidence and discuss findings and plans.</p>	Plan to be produced by the end of 2011/12	Advice Management Group	<p>Possible cost of £2,500 for research and development of plan</p> <p>Advice Management Group would need to commission this development work, if required</p>	<p>Yes – possibly from BBPB</p> <p>NB Any funding identified in the plan as being needed for advice services will need to be raised from other sources</p>
	4. Develop a plan for sharing resources between advice providers in Bedford Borough	<p>Plan will map the current use of resources and will look at ways of reducing costs</p> <p>Will need some basic research and possibly an event or meetings to gather evidence and make recommendations</p>	Plan to be produced by the end of 2011/12	BAF	<p>£0</p> <p>Resources to enable this work to be completed will need to be provided by BAF members</p>	No

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
<p>Ensure that there are strong links between the Advice Strategy and other relevant community strategies</p>	<p>5. Develop methods for linking advice work and the Advice Strategy to other relevant community strategies</p>	<p>Bedford Borough Council and other public bodies should be encouraged to “advice proof” new strategies and plans</p>	<p>As and when required</p>	<p>BBPB and Advice Management Group should endorse this proposal in principle – but decisions will need to be made by individual public bodies</p> <p>BAF can provide “advice proofing” services, if required</p>	<p>Cost of advice proofing an individual strategy or plan.</p> <p>The cost will depend on the amount of work involved but is likely to be £300 - £500 per strategy/plan</p>	<p>No funding as such but advice proofing service would need to be paid for by individual public body, if service is required</p> <p>Alternatively BBPB could contribute £1,000 to cover the cost of advice proofing 2 BBPB strategies, plans or projects</p>
	<p>6. Support the development of a comprehensive information and advice strategy for Bedford Borough</p>	<p>The social welfare Advice Strategy will be expanded to include other aspects of information and advice in the Borough - initially information/advice on health and social care needs</p>	<p>To be In place by the end of 2011/12</p>	<p>Bedford Borough Council (Adult Services) and BAF to work on expanding the Advice Strategy</p>	<p>£0 if development work is done in-house at BBC.</p> <p>Some costs would be needed if the work is commissioned externally.</p>	<p>No, if work is done in-house at BBC.</p> <p>Yes, if work is commissioned externally. This could be paid for by BBC or possibly by BBPB.</p>

Aim 2**To respond effectively to the changing needs for information, advice and advocacy in Bedford Borough advocacy services in Bedford Borough**

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
Regularly collect and analyse evidence about changing local advice needs	7. Conduct a regular review of advice needs in Bedford Borough	Initial review will take place towards the end of 2011/12	Report to be produced for early 2012	Advice Management Group	£1,500 to update current report on advice needs in the Borough Advice Management Group would need to commission this review, when required	Yes – possibly from BBPB

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
Regularly discuss and analyse the effects of government policy and new legislation on local advice needs	8. Produce regular briefing papers on the effects of government policy and new legislation on local advice services in Bedford Borough	Briefing papers, or reports, will be produced to estimate, or evaluate, the effects of new policy on local advice needs, and to monitor the trends in demand for advice services.	Production of briefing papers / reports would need to coincide with Advice Management Group meetings – 3 times a year	<p>Briefing papers / reports will be presented to Advice Management Group</p> <p>Briefing papers / reports could be produced by BAF members</p>	<p>£245 per briefing paper / report</p> <p>Cost in 2011/12 will be £735</p>	<p>Yes – from BBPB</p> <p>NB This money has already been awarded by BBPB</p>
	9. Provide responses to proposed central and local government changes that will affect the advice sector	<p>Training courses will need to be arranged to keep advisers up-to-date – especially on changes in benefits</p> <p>Benefit advisers will also meet regularly to discuss benefit changes</p> <p>BAF may need to respond to consultations on different issues</p>	<p>Ongoing during 2011/12</p> <p>3 benefit update courses are currently planned for late March/ early April. Further training will be necessary</p> <p>Meetings of BAF's new benefits network are planned for March and October</p>	<p>BAF</p> <p>BAF runs regular training courses for members and has just formed a new network for benefit advisers</p>	<p>Cost will depend on the number of future courses and meetings.</p> <p>Training courses and meetings will either be self-financing or subsidised through specific funding</p> <p>A short training programme of courses would cost £3,000</p>	<p>Some extra funding may be required.</p> <p>Funding for recent work has come from Redundancy Support Group and VoluntaryWorks</p> <p>BPPB could contribute towards a short training programme for local advisers (£3,000)</p>

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 201/12	Funding required
<p>Ensure that priority advice needs in the Borough are met</p>	<p>10. Ensure that local advice services are planned to meet the priority advice needs in the Borough</p>	<p>The funding plan (see Action Point 3) will need to link in with the advice needs identified for the Borough (see Advice Point 7)</p> <p>The plans should ensure that services are available to the whole community and meet the needs of vulnerable, marginalised or disadvantaged people and communities.</p>	<p>Plans to be confirmed by the end of 2011/12</p>	<p>Advice Management Group</p>	<p>£0</p> <p>This planning will be part of the role of Advice Management Group</p>	<p>No</p> <p>NB Any funding identified in the plan as being needed for advice services will need to be raised from other sources</p>

Aim 3**To enhance collaboration between agencies in the information, advice and advocacy sector in Bedford Borough**

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
Develop ideas for collaborative working between local providers in the information, advice and advocacy sector	11. Provide ongoing opportunities for local advice providers to discuss and develop ideas for collaborative working	An event will be held for BAF members to discuss collaborative working	Autumn 2011	BAF	Resources to enable an event to take place could be provided by BAF members. Commissioned externally this event would cost about £1,000 plus venue costs	No – if BAF members are able to commit resources Funding would be required if BAF members cannot provide resources (due to current pressures on voluntary groups)
		An input will also be made into the development volunteering project that is being considered by BBPB. The project could help BAF look at collaborative use of volunteers in the advice sector.	Summer 2011	BAF	Will be dependent on results of volunteering project bid	
	12. Develop closer links between the not-for-profit advice sector and other advice providers	BAF will arrange a meeting with local solicitors to discuss developing better cross-referrals	Summer 2011	BAF	£0 Resources to enable this event to take place will need to be provided by BAF members and/or local solicitors	No

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
Support the provision of infrastructure support services to local information, advice and advocacy providers	13. Maintain the Bedfordshire Advice Directory	The online Advice Directory needs to be updated in 2011/12	Ongoing	BAF	£1,500	No – BAF already has funds for this work in 2011/12
	14. Provide support for Bedfordshire Advice Forum	<p>BAF will arrange forum meetings for members, meetings for its Steering Group, and will update its website, and will represent the advice sector in strategic and consultative meetings eg SICCC Thematic Partnership meetings, Bedford Assembly meetings etc.</p> <p>For the Advice Strategy to be a success, it will be essential to have a successful and sustainable advice forum</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>BAF will hold 3 forum meetings in 2011/12 and 3 meetings for its Steering Group</p> <p>BAF's website will be updated each month</p> <p>BAF will send a representative to strategic and consultative meetings as and when required</p>	BAF	<p>£4,500</p> <p>£3,000 is needed for the BAF meetings, and £1,500 for other work.</p> <p>BAF hopes to raise about £1,000 in membership fees in 2011/12, so the net cost should be about £3,500</p>	<p>No – BAF will pay for this work from its own funds.</p> <p>However, possible support from BBPB, or from other funding bids, could be provided</p>

Aim 4**To ensure the quality of advice services by supporting the development of quality marked advice provision across Bedford Borough**

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
Provide support to local providers to ensure that high quality information and advice is provided in Bedford Borough	15. Identify information and advice providers in Bedford Borough that need support to enhance the quality of their service	Survey will be conducted in the voluntary and community sector to identify groups that need support	Spring 2011	BAF BAF will undertake this work – although support could be provided by BREC and the CVS Agencies requiring support could enrol on BREC's Q-cas training programme in 2011/12	£0 BAF will arrange survey There is no cost for agencies to enrol on BREC's Q-cas training programme	No – BREC's Q-cas training programme is funded by the Big Lottery in 2011/12 through Voluntary Works
	16. Provide training programmes to help agencies improve quality	A series of skills based training courses will be provided to BAF members to help improve quality	Autumn 2011	BAF	Cost will depend on the number of courses arranged. The courses will either be self-financing or subsidised through specific funding	Some extra funding may be required for this training.

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
Provide support to local providers to ensure that high quality information and advice is provided in Bedford Borough (continued)	17. Increase the membership of Bedfordshire Advice Forum	<p>BAF provides support for its members in terms of networking, training and quality development.</p> <p>BAF will aim to increase its membership by 10% in 2011/12 compared to 2010/11.</p>	Ongoing	BAF	£0	No
	18. Increase the number of local information and advice providers that have a quality mark for their services	<p>Small community groups will be encouraged to use the Q-cas quality system.</p> <p>BAF will aim to help 5 groups obtain the Q-cas award in 2011/2.</p>	Ongoing	BAF – and BREC through its Q-cas training programme	<p>£0</p> <p>There is no cost for agencies to enrol on BREC's Q-cas training programme</p>	No – BREC's Q-cas training programme is funded by the Big Lottery Fund in 2011/12 through VoluntaryWorks

Aim 5

To improve access to information, advice and advocacy services in Bedford Borough

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
Ensure that there is a good mix of “face-to-face” advice services at different levels, and in different geographical areas, to meet the needs of local citizens	19. Promote the need for a balanced mix of “face-to-face” information and advice services at different levels	<p>When developing plans and funding for local advice services, the need for a balanced mix of services will be promoted</p> <p>Some survey work will need to be done to monitor current advice provision in the Borough</p>	<p>Plans for advice services and funding to be confirmed by the end of 2011/12</p> <p>Research will be conducted in Autumn 2011</p>	Advice Management Board	<p>£1,500</p> <p>Advice Management Group would need to commission this survey work, if required</p>	<p>Yes – possibly from BBPB</p> <p>NB Any funding identified by the survey work as being needed to change the mix of advice services will need to be raised from other sources</p>
	20. Promote the need for advice services both in urban and rural areas in Bedford Borough	<p>When developing plans and funding for local advice services, the need for services in both urban and rural areas will be promoted</p> <p>Some survey work will need to be done to monitor current advice provision in the Borough (see Action Point 19)</p>	<p>Plans for advice services and funding to be confirmed by the end of 2011/12</p> <p>Research will be conducted in Autumn 2011 (see Action Point 19)</p>	Advice Management Board	<p>£0</p> <p>Cost covered in Action Point 19.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>NB Any funding identified by the survey work as being needed to change the mix of advice services will need to be raised from other sources</p>

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
<p>Develop better telephone access to advice for clients</p>	<p>21. Consider the feasibility of developing a central access point for telephone advice in Bedford Borough</p>	<p>This is a longer term objective and work on this Action Point will be left until 2012/13</p> <p>Work on this could link in with the development of a comprehensive information and advice strategy for Bedford Borough – see Action Point 6</p>	<p>2012/13</p>	<p>BBPB or Advice Management Board</p>	<p>£0</p>	<p>No – not in 2011/12</p>
<p>Develop effective access to written information in Bedford Borough</p>	<p>22. Develop a plan to improve access to written information in Bedford Borough</p>	<p>This is a longer term objective and work on this Action Point will be left until 2012/13</p> <p>Work on this could link in with the development of a comprehensive information and advice strategy for Bedford Borough – see Action Point 6</p>	<p>2012/13</p>	<p>BBPB or Advice Management Board</p>	<p>£0</p>	<p>No – not in 2011/12</p>

Theme	Recommended action	Further details	Timescale	Responsibility	Extra cost in 2011/12	Funding required
<p>Regularly analyse the impact of the Advice Strategy in advancing equality of opportunity and supporting vulnerable, marginalised or disadvantaged people and communities</p>	<p>23. Regularly analyse the impact of the Advice Strategy in advancing equality of opportunity</p>	<p>Against all strategic themes of the Advice Strategy, the equality analysis will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure progress • Identify areas for improvement • Ensure all opportunities to advance equality of opportunity are identified and maximised, within resources 	<p>End of 2011/12</p>	<p>BBPB</p>	<p>£0</p>	<p>This is a statutory duty of all public bodies in the Bedford Borough Partnership</p>