

ADVICE STRATEGY

FOR BEDFORD BOROUGH

DRAFT

May 2010

This Strategy has been prepared by Bedford Borough's **Advice Strategy Planning Group** consisting of representatives from the advice and information sector, Bedford Borough Council, and other interested parties.

The work of the **Advice Strategy Planning Group** has been

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The Advice Strategy has been developed on behalf of the **Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership**, which is a working group of the **Bedford Borough Partnership**.

Insert BBP logo

NB The draft Strategy will need to be taken back to BAF, the Thematic Partnership and the BBP for approval before being finalised

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1 Introduction to the Advice Strategy

1.1 Vision, principles and aims

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**.

Our vision is to have easily accessible, well-publicised, and high quality social welfare advice, information and advocacy services which meet the needs of the citizens of Bedford Borough

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

- Available to the whole community and underpinned by a commitment to equality of opportunity
- Planned in a coordinated manner to meet local needs, using collaboration and partnership working across the voluntary and statutory sectors
- Used to support vulnerable, marginalized 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 in

The **strategic aims** of the Advice Strategy are:

1. To identify the advice, information and advocacy needs in Bedford Borough
2. To develop co-ordinated advice, information and advocacy services across the voluntary and statutory advice sectors to ensure that all available resources are effectively used to meet the identified needs in Bedford Borough
3. To support continual improvement in the quality of advice-giving by encouraging the development of quality marked advice provision across Bedford Borough
4. To develop a strategic approach to the management, commissioning and funding of advice and information services in the Borough

1.2 Background

Social welfare advice, information and advocacy services in Bedford Borough are provided by a wide range of providers including:

- Bedford Borough Council and other public sector providers
- voluntary and community sector organisations
- solicitors and other private sector providers

The development of this Advice Strategy provides an opportunity for partnership working across the range of providers to identify local advice needs and strategically decide how to best use resources to help people in the community address their social welfare advice needs.

The lead body in proposing that an Advice Strategy be developed was **Bedfordshire Advice Forum**, the network for independent, not-for-profit organisations in Bedfordshire who provide advice or information on social welfare issues.



The members of Bedfordshire Advice Forum are listed at **Appendix 1**. Further information on BAF can be found on the Forum's website: www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

BAF felt there was a need for a strategic approach to the provision of advice services in the Borough because:

- The current provision, and funding, of advice services is disjointed and uncoordinated
- Advice is a cross-cutting issue that is a key tool in tackling poverty and social exclusion
- An Advice Strategy would ensure that essential advice services are provided to meet the needs of the local community.

1.3 The importance of advice

Various studies have shown the importance of advice services.

Research by the Legal Services Research Centre¹ illustrates that while all sections of the population experience problems, such problems are not randomly distributed. The evidence demonstrates that those who are vulnerable to 'social exclusion' are especially vulnerable to civil justice problems.

In addition to their role in tackling social exclusion, advice services help mitigate the social and economic impact of civil justice problems. The first quantitative evidence of its kind suggests that the cost to the public of such problems is substantial, amounting to some £13 billion in a three and a half year period.² Evidence suggests that over one-third of problems result in deterioration of health and other adverse consequences of problem experience include loss of income, loss of confidence, home, employment or family.

The problems that people experience involve costs, not only to themselves, but also to public services. Early and effective advice services help mitigate these costs. In addition to its mainstream advice giving functions, the advice sector also fulfils an important role in addressing the wider issues that contribute to social exclusion through feeding in statistics and policy work to local and national policy objectives and formal and informal legal education to communities. This Advice Strategy plans to strengthen this public legal empowerment.

Insert reference to "Case for Advice " - Advice Services Alliance

Insert reference to "Someone on my side" - Advice Services Alliance

Insert reference to BAF research - advice and children's centres

Insert reference to TPT research - benefits advice

¹ P. Pleasance (2006) Causes of Action: Civil Law and Social Justice, second edition, Legal Services Commission, p.2

² P. Pleasance (2006) Causes of Action: Civil Law and Social Justice, second edition, Legal Services Commission, p.2

1.4 The need for an Advice Strategy

A changing environment

A number of factors, both local and national, have combined to make this an ideal time to develop an Advice Strategy in Bedford Borough. These factors are:

- Bedford Borough is a **new unitary authority area** following Local Government Reorganisation in April 2009, and a range of new strategies are being developed to reflect the area's changing status
- There have been increasing demands on advice services during the **recession** because of rising unemployment, personal debt and associated problems
- Ensuring that marginalised and vulnerable people receive effective support, advice and advocacy is a strategic aim in the Borough's new **Sustainable Community Strategy**
- Advice services can play an important role in achieving some of the indicators in Bedford Borough's **Local Area Agreement** - such as NI 116 (Proportion of children in poverty)
- Advice services will be an important tool in tackling inequality which is a key element in the Borough's **Comprehensive Area Assessment**
- Effective advice services will help Bedford Borough Council, and its statutory partners, meet some of its new duties under the **Child Poverty Act 2010**, which will require partnership action to tackle child poverty, and under the **Equality Act 2010**, which will require local authorities to address social inequality
- Under the **Putting People First** (Transforming Adult Social Care) Bedford Borough Council is developing an Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy for its Adult Social care Services

Local issues

An advice can help address some of the following issues affecting the delivery of advice in Bedford Borough that have already been identified by BAF members:

- A lack of advice provision in a number of locations, particularly in the rural wards which include pockets of significant need
- Unmet need in responding to needs of specific client groups
- A lack of workforce development that has led to recruitment and staffing difficulties for organisations, particularly recruitment of specialists in areas of civil law such as welfare benefits, debt and employment.
- A lack of effective referral between providers
- An absence of co-ordination and planning mechanisms between statutory, not-for-profit and private practice providers
- Inconsistent and incomplete collection of data on the outputs and outcomes from advice provision
- A lack of co-ordination of social policy issues to enable advice providers to influence strategic objectives or contribute to the development of effective public services.
- A variety of funding formats for advice services, and lack of long term funding commitment to voluntary groups by the local authority

1.5 Developing this Strategy

Immediately following the Local Government Reorganisation in Bedfordshire in April 2009, BAF wrote a **letter to the Chief Executives** of the two new unitary authorities in the county (Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council) setting out the need for an advice strategy in each area.

Following positive meetings with senior representatives from both Councils in June 2009, BAF then arranged a joint workshop to discuss the development of advice strategies. This first, **countywide workshop** was held on 6th October 2009 and was attended by 23 representatives from BAF members, the two local authorities and other interested bodies. At the workshop there was general support for developing local advice strategies and the next steps were agreed - including the need to draft a Statement of Intent to present to the Local Strategic Partnerships in the two local area. A full report on the workshop can be found on BAF's website: www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

A **follow-up workshop** was then held on 11th November 2009, which was attended by 13 people. At this meeting the overall vision and strategic aims of the strategies were agreed and a Proposal was drafted for submission to the thematic partnerships responsible for social inclusion issues in the two local areas. A full report on this workshop can also be found on BAF's website: www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

Draft Proposals, for Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire, were then drafted and sent to BAF members and those people on the workshop mailing list for comments. The final Proposal for Bedford Borough was presented to the **Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership** on 30th November 2009. A copy of this Proposal can be found on BAF's website: www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

The Proposal for Bedford Borough was endorsed by the Thematic Partnership on 30th November and was then presented to the **Bedford Borough Partnership Board** on 9th December 2009. Formal agreement to move ahead with the Advice Strategy in Bedford Borough was then reported back to the Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership on 18th January 2010. At this meeting BAF was requested to form an **Advice Strategy Planning Group** to take forward the work of developing the Strategy.

Insert structural diagram - BPB, SISCCTP, ASPG, BAF

The first **Advice Strategy Planning Group** meeting for Bedford Borough took place on 25th February 2010. The list of organisations in the Planning Group is given in **Appendix 2**. At the meeting the Planning Group confirmed the remit of the Strategy and agreed an action plan for developing the Strategy. The minutes of the meeting, and the action plan, can be found on BAF's website: www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

The second **Planning Group meeting** was held on 13th May 2010. **The first draft of this Strategy was discussed and plans were agreed for finalising the Strategy. The minutes of the meeting can be found on BAF's website:** www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

Need to also insert details of any follow-up meetings and details of consultation on the Strategy (summer 2010?)

2. The Advice Strategy

2.1 Introduction

This Advice Strategy has been developed by the Advice Strategy Planning Group on behalf of the Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership, which is a working group of the Bedford Borough Partnership Board.

The members of the Advice Strategy Planning Group are listed in **Appendix 2**.

Further details on the need for this Strategy and how the Strategy has been developed can be found in **Section 1** of this document.

The vision, principles and aims of the Strategy can also be found in **Section 1**.

In this part of the document (**Section 2**) the elements of the Strategy are broken down as follows:

- Key definitions
- Scope of the Strategy
- Links with other strategies
- Current provision of advice services in the Borough
- Funding and staffing of current services
- Drivers for change
- The local need for advice services
- Priority advice needs
- Proposals for future advice provision
- Resource requirements
- Management, commissioning and funding of advice services
- Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

Section 3 of this document then goes on to give an action plan for implementing the Strategy.

2.2 Key definitions

This Strategy is concerned with social welfare advice, information and advocacy services. To clarify the remit of this Strategy, it is very important to confirm the meaning of these words.

Social welfare

"The provision of information, advocacy, representation and support to enable people to claim their rights and entitlements as governed by **social welfare legislation**."³

"Social welfare advice - these are the areas of law eg housing and debt that have a significant impact on individual's lives and their ability to participate in the social and economic life".⁴

³ To insert
⁴ To insert

To become a member of Bedfordshire Advice Forum agencies need to show that they provide advice or information on **civil legal issues**. This covers advice and information on:

- Civil liberties
- Challenging statutory bodies
- Community care
- Consumer rights
- Debt and money advice
- Disability rights
- Educational rights
- Employment rights
- Environmental rights
- Equality rights
- Family issues
- Health rights
- Housing rights
- Immigration, nationality and asylum rights
- Welfare benefits

Information provision

This is the giving of basic factual details provided without any personal context via eg leaflets or websites. For example, information on how to access JobCentre Plus services, and information on the range of benefits available, but with no attempt to advise which benefits, or calculate at what level, a particular client might expect to receive.⁵

Information providers can act as initial point of contact and refer/signpost clients elsewhere for advice specific to the client's circumstances.

Advice

*An opinion about what could or should be done about a situation or problem.*⁶

*A proposal for an appropriate course of action.*⁷

Advice provision involves the giving of information but tailoring this information to a client's particular circumstances. This can comprise some or all of the following elements:

- Listening to clients
- Diagnosing the problem
- Giving information
- Advising on the options available
- Taking action on behalf of clients
- Negotiating on their behalf

⁵ To insert

⁶ Wordnet - online dictionary

⁷ The Free Dictionary - online dictionary

- Representing clients' cases at tribunals and courts
- Referral where appropriate
- Enabling or empowering the individual to take informed action on his or her own behalf
- Undertaking social policy work and highlighting the need for specific changes in law or practice⁸

Quality advice is accurate, timely and appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the client.

Advocacy

“The provision of support and encouragement or representation of individuals’ views, needs or rights. It is fundamental that advocacy recognise the centrality of the service user”⁹

2.3 Scope of the Advice Strategy

This Advice Strategy covers social welfare advice, information and advocacy services that come under the definitions given above. It is recognised, however, that this Strategy does not cover every aspect of information, advice and advocacy that is provided to the community. For example it does not include things like:

- Information, advice and guidance (IAG) services provided to help people find learning or work
- Simple information on specific local services eg health services, sports facilities, local clubs and societies
- Safety information and advice eg fire alarms, personal safety
- Medical advice - provided by doctors and health professionals
- Financial advice - provided by accountants, financial advisers, tax advisers
- Criminal legal advice - provided by solicitors

It may be that separate strategies need to be developed for some of the above - or in fact already exist.

It is also possible that, in the future, some of the above wider elements of information and advice need to be brought together with this Advice Strategy to provide an over-arching and fully comprehensive community information and advice strategy for the Borough

Insert diagram?

⁸ To insert

⁹ Margiotta et al, 2003:9? (check)

2.4 Links with other strategies

At present this Advice Strategy clearly links in with other key strategies that have been produced in Bedford Borough. These are:

- Sustainable Community Strategy (Bedford Borough Partnership)
- Universal Information and Advice Strategy (Bedford Borough Council - Adult Services)
- Child Poverty Strategy (Bedford Borough Council - Children's Services)

2.5 Advice services currently provided in the Borough

(1) Services from BAF members

(a) Bedford Borough Council

The Council currently provides in-house advice services in three of the main civil legal advice categories

- **Benefits** – Welfare Rights Team (Adult Services) and Customer Advisory Team
- **Consumer** - Trading Standards
- **Homelessness and Housing** – Housing Options

The above 4 sections/departments in the Borough Council are all members of **Bedfordshire Advice Forum**.

(b) Voluntary and community sector services

Currently over **xx** voluntary sector organisations are known to deliver social welfare advice services in the Borough.

Most of these organisations that give are members of **Bedfordshire Advice Forum**. A full list of BAF members is in **Appendix 1**.

These services have grown up in local areas on an historical basis, designed to meet the needs of their local communities. They provide a range of services in terms of categories and levels of advice across the area.

Some of the services are grant-funded by the local authority, others are funded in a variety of ways including Big Lottery Fund, Capacitybuilders, Equalities and Human Rights Commission. In some cases organisations are funded through contracts to provide specific services to enable local authority and public sector bodies to deliver statutory duties.

BAF Members - Services in Bedford Borough

19 member organisations provide advice, information and advocacy services in the Borough, including 4 sections of the Borough Council.

Of these members, 6 organisations offer help to the general public (including 3 Council sections). The rest of the organisations offer their services to specific target groups, such as the elderly or disabled.

Age Concern – over 49s, Case work - Benefits, Community Care, Consumer, Debt, Housing (Discrimination, Employment – info only), Drop in Mon – Fri + HV

Anchor Staying Put - General advice and information on benefits, housing advice with casework service. Over 60s and disabled, but will help any vulnerable person. Drop in Mon-Fri + HV

Bedford CAB – general advice and info on Benefits, Community Care, Consumer, Debt, Discrimination, Employment, Family Law, Housing, Immigration. Casework – debt, WB (legal help only). Drop in Mon – Fri

Borough Council – Welfare Rights Team – open to service users only by referral from relevant social work team. WB – casework and representation

Borough Council – Housing Options – open to all members of the public, Mon-Fri drop in. Housing advice with casework and representation

Borough Council – Trading Standards – open to all members of public, Mon to Fri. Consumer – general advice and casework

Borough Council – Benefits and Community Welfare – open to all members of public Mon – Sat. Advice on benefits including Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit, and HVs for DLA and AA

BREC - open to all members of public. Casework service for Employment Discrimination. Drop in Mon – Weds for advice on welfare benefits, passports, visas, forced marriage, domestic abuse, hate crime, disability issues, care services, education, equality and human rights issues

BPHA – for BPHA tenants only. Debt advice with casework, WB with casework and representation.

BRASS – for refugees and asylum seekers only. Drop in Tues and Weds. Information and advice on immigration.

BRCC – Carers Support Bureau – for carers only. Information and advice on benefits and community care

BAF Members - Services in Bedford Borough (continued)

Homestart – for families with at least one child under 5. Information only on Benefits, Community Care, Debt, Discrimination, Employment, Housing, Immigration

King's Arms Project – for homeless people. Information only on debts and benefits

Polish British Integration Centre – for Polish migrants. Advice surgery offering information and advice on benefits, debt and housing

Sight Concern Bedfordshire – for visually impaired people. General advice on Community Care, Debt, Discrimination, Employment, Housing. Benefits casework. Information only on Immigration.

Thai 3 Counties – for women from South East Asia. Information only on Benefits, Consumer, Employment, Family Law, Housing

Disability Resource Centre – for disabled people, their relatives, friends and carers. Information and advice on Benefits, Community Care, Consumer, Discrimination, Employment. Open Mon – Fri

The Salvation Army – offer specialist support to homeless, families and the elderly. Debt with casework, by appointment

Voices for All (Advocacy Alliance) – offer advocacy service to all members of public

Further information on the services provided by BAF members, and full contact details, can be found on the online **Bedfordshire Advice Directory**: www.bedsadvisedirectory.org.uk

Bedfordshire Advice Directory

**BEDFORDSHIRE
ADVICE FORUM**
Promoting and supporting
advice and information
services in Bedfordshire

Helping you get access to advice and information services in Bedfordshire

www.bedsadvisedirectory.org.uk



Bedfordshire Advice Forum is pleased to announce the launch of the new online **Bedfordshire Advice Directory**

You can use this Directory to:

- Signpost or refer clients to local advice agencies in Bedford Borough or Central Bedfordshire
- Find out more about the services provided by BAF members
- Find links to other useful contacts

Action to take

- 1) Bookmark the Directory
www.bedsadvisedirectory.org.uk
- 2) Use the Directory
- 3) Tell other people about the Directory

Want an entry in the Directory? Contact baf@infotrain.co.uk

We will be continually improving and updating the Directory and your feedback regarding accessibility and usefulness is appreciated. Please contact BAF with any comments you may have.

(2) Services from non-BAF members

(a) Bedford Borough Council (and partners)

At the Borough Council as well as the recognised advice providers (see section above on BAF members) there are also various staff and in-house services that provide information (and sometimes basic advice) on social welfare issues as part of their wider work. Examples are:

- Inform 0-19 staff
- Social workers - Adult Services
- Social workers - Children's Services
- Education Welfare staff
- Children's Centres staff

In terms of Children's Centres, research was carried out by Bedfordshire Advice Forum in 2009/10 to identify the links between the centres and advice agencies - see **Section 2.6** for further details.

There is also an argument that many staff in other statutory agencies, especially in the NHS, give information (and sometimes basic advice) on social welfare issues as part of their wider work. An example of this could be health visitors.

(b) Other advice providers

There are some other advice providers in the Borough. These include:

Immigration & Advisory Service, Bedford

IAS offers free (means-tested) advice and assistance on all immigration, asylum and nationality issues. They also provide representation at refusal appeal hearings for all those with a right of appeal. Operate a non-profit making service for those ineligible for free legal help – example charges £120 (+VAT) per hour for advice, £295(+ VAT) for standard immigration application, £360(+VAT) for lodging an appeal.

Any others??

???

(c) Small community groups

In addition to the recognised "advice providers" operating in the Borough, there are many community groups providing more informal information and advice to specific communities.

A list of community groups known to be offering information and advice services within their own communities is given in Appendix 3

In 2006 Bedford Race Equality Council undertook a mapping exercise of BME groups in Bedfordshire as part of the Government's Change Up initiative.¹⁰

In the course of the research, 86 groups were consulted and a high proportion of these were involved in the provision of advice and information to members of their community. Some of the groups consulted for the research have since gone on to develop their skills in advice provision and some, such as the Polish British Integration Centre and Bangladeshi Women's Group took part in a pilot project to develop a quality system (Q-cas) for groups providing advice and information.

It is also interesting to note that in the State of the Sector report published by ?? in ?? over ?? local groups said they gave information and advice. This made the "information and advice" sector the biggest sub-sector in the local voluntary and community sector.¹¹

However, the figures from both the BREC and the CVS research reports must be approached with some caution, as far as this Advice Strategy is concerned, because they did not use the specific definition of "information and advice" that has been used in this Strategy. Therefore it is not clear if all the agencies that said they gave information and advice are actually giving information and advice on social welfare issues. Some further research would be needed to obtain more details on this.

(d) Private sector providers

While local solicitors were not directly involved in the development of this Strategy it is important to acknowledge the work done by them and to highlight gaps in provision of certain specialist areas of law, such as immigration.

There are currently 17 solicitors in the Borough providing civil legal advice, mainly in the area of family law. Ten of these provide advice under the Legal Help scheme, one of them runs a free drop-in session on a Wednesday morning for advice on family law and another has a free evening surgery once a week on family law. A further 4 firms offer an initial interview free – ranging from 15 to 30 minutes, but again these are all in the area of family law.

According to the Law Society website, 11 local firms offer advice on employment law, 6 offer debt and money advice, 2 offer Welfare benefits advice and 2 immigration advice.

A list of local solicitors and their specialist provision can be found in **Appendix 4**

¹⁰ To insert
¹¹ To insert

2.6 Gaps in services

The basic mapping of advice services given in Section 2.5 immediately shows obvious gaps in service. The main one are:

- Immigration advice - there is no provider of immigration advice above Level 1 (which is restricted to the provision of information only). **Check**
- Rural gaps?
- Other gaps?

As part of the development of this Strategy, a questionnaire was also sent to BAF members to ask about gaps in services. The main gaps identified were:

- ???
- ???
- ???

2.7 Funding and staffing of current advice services

As part of the development of this Strategy, a questionnaire was sent to BAF members to ask about the funding and staffing of current advice services.

The full analysis of the results of the survey can be found in **Appendix 5**.

A summary is given below.

2.8 Drivers for change

Increase in demand for services

A comprehensive survey of the advice sector in England and Wales highlighted that demand for advice services has grown in recent years.¹²

Demand for local advice services continues to increase (insert statistics from BAF members on the number of clients helped over past 3 years?) and organisations expect ongoing increases over the next three years.

Insert - extra demand because of recession and also increase in personal debt

The increase in demand for services is set against the limitations of a funding environment that tends to be based on a range of time-limited contracts, many of which are targeted at specific client groups as opposed to long-term core funding for advice delivery.

Examples of funding streams include the Big Lottery "Advice Plus" Fund. Whilst notable, these are singular and time-limited programmes. Responding to the demand for services created by these funding streams and sustaining these services in the long-term will pose a significant challenge to the advice sector in the future.

This Advice Strategy therefore takes as its starting point for 2010/11 that current advice service levels need to be sustained and funding increased to ensure access to advice for the most vulnerable in the Borough.

Legal requirements

Insert reference to Child Poverty Act 2010 - and Child Poverty Task Force in Bedford

In terms of Children's Centres, research carried out by Bedfordshire Advice Forum in 2009/10 found that many local Children's Centres would welcome closer links with advice agencies. Centre family workers are increasingly being called upon to provide advice and information on issues such as benefits and relationship breakdown to the parents who use the centres. They are not trained to provide such advice, but recognised that the provision of accurate and timely advice can be of great benefit in tackling child poverty. The Centres were therefore keen to set up outreach and referral systems with local agencies.¹³

Insert reference to Equality Act 2010

¹² Advice Forward: developing skills for the future, workforce development plan for the legal advice sector, 2006 ADP Consultancy, p.15

¹³ To insert

Other drivers

The advice sector provides information and advice to members of the public about their rights, entitlements and responsibilities under law. Advice services are part of the infrastructure of civil justice and play a pivotal role in tackling social exclusion.

Insert reference to social justice

Insert other drivers

- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Local Area Agreement
- Comprehensive Area Assessment

Also insert

- DoH - Personalisation - UIA Strategy (Health and Social Care)
- Quality agenda - new Quality Mark and Q-cas
- New migrants (New Migrant Partnership)
- Manifestos from advice sector - ASA, LCF, AdviceUK (Smart Advice)
- Other research - I&DeA/LGA, Systems Thinking

2.9 Advice needs in the Borough

The need for advice services is closely linked to levels of deprivation and poverty.

There is an abundance of data showing deprivation and poverty in the Borough.

Research from the **Child Poverty in Bedfordshire Report**, published June 2009, shows that:

- 9 Local Super Output Areas in Bedford are ranked in the top 10% in England for child poverty. These LSOAs are in the wards of Castle, Harpur, Kingsbrook, Goldington, Queens Park, Cauldwell and Kempston North
- 19% of children (over 6,500 children) live in workless families. In the wards of Kingsbrook, Queens Park, Cauldwell and Goldington this figure rises to over 30%
- 39% of children (over 13,600) live in low income families. In the wards of Queens Park, Cauldwell, Kingsbrook and Goldington this figure rises to over 50%

The **Bedfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy** states the following:¹⁴

“Priority groups suffering most from multiple deprivation are:

- Young people, poorly skilled and unemployed (aged 18-25);
- Bangladeshi and Pakistani;
- Black African and Black Caribbean groups;
- Incapacity Benefit claimants;
- Lone parents; and Older people.”

The **Bedfordshire County Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** published June 2008 states:

For the purposes of Bedfordshire’s JSNA and tackling inequalities in health and social care, partners have defined the following groups of concern (these are in no particular order):

- Homeless and rough sleepers*
- Bedford prisoners*
- Gypsies and travellers*
- Looked after children
- Pregnant teenagers
- People who misuse drugs/other substances
- Young offenders
- People with mental ill-health including dementia
- People with the following long-term conditions: HIV, diabetes, Ischaemic Heart Disease and stroke
- People from Black and Minority Communities
- People with disabilities including visual and hearing impairments

¹⁴ Page 27, Evidence Base, Bedfordshire’s Sustainable Community Strategy, 2007

Households accepted as Homeless in Q1 and Q2 2007

Households	Total accepted as homeless Q1	Rate per 1,000 households	Total accepted as homeless Q2	Rate per 1,000 households
Bedford	82	1.3	76	1.2
East of England	1,610	0.7	1,520	0.7
England	17,230	0.8	15,960	0.8

Prisoners

In 2006/07 there were 481 prisoners in Bedford prison, on average.¹⁵ Bedford CAB currently provide a fortnightly outreach session, advising between 5 and 10 prisoners at each session but this falls well short of meeting the demand.

Gypsies and Travellers

Gypsies and Travellers probably have the lowest life expectancy of any group in the UK, with health problems linked to poor environmental conditions and poor access to services.¹⁶ A local study of Gypsy and Traveller housing needs highlighted the need for consideration of access to services alongside provision of accommodation. High levels of illiteracy create difficulties regarding access to information and completion of official forms¹⁷.

In July 2007, there were 22 Gypsy and Traveller caravans in Bedford Borough, 16 of which were on authorised sites (either privately owned, or rented through Local Authorities or Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)).

Funding has just been obtained (Feb 2010) to create two more permanent pitches in the borough and nine emergency stopping pitches for families passing through the Borough

Any outreach advice provision for gypsies and travelers in Bedford Borough?

Specific areas of need within Bedford Borough

Shortstown in Eastcotts ward is among the 10% most deprived areas in the region but also has many households without a car, placing a greater reliance on public transport to access services¹⁸

¹⁵ HMPS, Annual Report and Accounts 2006-2007

¹⁶ *Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, 2006, DCA*

¹⁷ *Bedfordshire Black and Minority Ethnic Accommodation Needs Study, 2004, Richard Tomlins, De Montfort University*

¹⁸ *Census 2001, ONS, and ODPM, Indices of Deprivation, 2004*

From Bedford Borough Area Profile Key Statistics May 2009¹⁹

Index of multiple deprivation average score – rank 183

Income scale – rank 107

Employment scale – rank 122

Note: Rank is for Bedford in comparison with all English district level local authority areas (354 in total), where 1 = most deprived, 354 = least deprived

Ethnicity

	Bedford	East of England	E & W
BME Population Non 'white British'	19.2%	8.6%	12.5%

Job Seekers' Allowance claimants

	Bedford (numbers)	Bedford (%)	East (%)	E & W (%)
All	3,935	4.1	3.4	4.0
Male	2,918	5.8	4.8	5.7
Female	1,017	2.2	1.9	2.2

Indices of deprivation

Bedford Borough has 102 Super Output Areas, each of which equates to approximately 1,000 homes in size. When compared against SOAs throughout England & Wales (32,482), we have 3 SOAs in the top 10% deprived and 9 in the top 20% deprived (both of these have fallen by one SOA each from 2004). In terms of population (154,700 mid year estimate 2006), this accounts for 4,088 residents (2.6%) in the top 10% and 12,908 residents (8.3%) in the top 20%. When compared to 2004 this has fallen by 1.4% and 1.7%, respectively. The intensity of this deprivation at neighbourhood level is fairly high. Detailed analysis each SOA in each domain highlight the contrasts between and even within ward boundaries.

The use of SOAs as opposed to ward level indices highlights the more intense pockets of deprivation. For example, one SOA in Castle is in the top 10% most deprived and another is in the bottom 20% least deprived. This gives a more exact picture of what is going on at neighbourhood level.

Deprivation is most intense in the inner urban wards of Castle, Harpur, Cauldwell, and Kingsbrook. There is a cluster of deprivation surrounded by other areas that are fairly deprived.

Deprivation levels are measured for different domains, these being: overall deprivation, income, employment, health and disability, education skills and training, barriers to housing and services, income deprivation affecting older people (IDAOP), income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI)

¹⁹ Source: DCLG, Indices of Deprivation 2007

Each of the wards below score in the top most deprived in more than one domain and in more than one SOA (number of SOAs shown in brackets):

- **Cauldwell (6):** overall IMD, income (2), employment, health deprivation and disability, education skills and training (2), IDAOPI, IDACI (2)
- **Castle (6):** overall IMD, income, employment, health deprivation and disability, crime (3), IPAOPI (2), IDACI
- **Harpur (6):** overall IMD, income, employment, health deprivation and disability, IDAOPI, IDACI
- **Kingsbrook (6):** income (2), education skills and training (2), barriers to housing and services (2), crime (2), IDAOPI, IDACI (2)

In general, the Borough is ranked approximately half way down the list of districts nationally at 183rd out of 354 (also includes London Boroughs and Unitaries) and 15th out of 48 Councils in the East of England Group which is in the top third most deprived. Therefore, we compare better nationally than regionally.

Could include following info from Hackney Advice Strategy - below

The chief survey of advice needs and peoples experience of advice-seeking is the *English and Welsh Civil and Social Justice Survey* carried out in 2004. The focus of this survey is on civil justice matters, and respondents are drawn from across the general population in order to include those people who would like to pursue an action but have not been able to do so.

Whilst these are national studies we can reasonably safely assume that the findings and lessons learnt are broadly representative of Bedford. The Survey's key findings are summarised in the table below:

Social exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People vulnerable to social exclusion are more likely to experience civil justice problems. These groups included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ people with long-term health problems or disabilities ○ lone parents ○ those living in rented or high density accommodation ○ the unemployed and those on very low incomes
Clustering of problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three distinct clusters of problem were identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ family cluster (domestic violence, divorce, relationship breakdown and children) ○ homelessness cluster (rented housing, homelessness, welfare benefits) ○ economic cluster (consumer transactions, money/debt, employment, rented/owned housing and personal injury)
Impact of problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9% of problems which were not health-related led to physical ill-health • 27% of problems led to stress-related illness • 17% of problems affected peoples' confidence • 16% of problems led to a loss of income or employment • 6% of problems led to a loss of home • 4% of problems which were not family-related led to a relationship breakdown
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People gave up trying to resolve 18% of problems
Common reasons for not getting advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief that nothing could be done • Not aware of local services • Overall, 15% of people who tried to get advice failed to do so
Risk of referral fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each time an individual receives a referral, the chance that they will pursue their issue to a conclusion lessens dramatically

The Department for Constitutional Affairs' report *Getting earlier, better advice to vulnerable people* (2006) – sets out a strategy for helping people, especially the vulnerable and socially excluded, to better resolve the problems they face and the disputes in which they become involved.

Its key findings were:

- a third of adults had one or more problems (including housing, debt, disputes with neighbours, discrimination, domestic violence or employment)
- rates of people reporting problems were significantly higher for certain groups: victims of assault (68%), single parents (66%), the unemployed (54%), those living in high-density housing (52%), those on benefits (46%), and the disabled or ill (43%)
- unresolved problems and disputes have negative effects on people's lives (and result in significant costs to public services)
- many people experience more than one problem and problems were seen to "cluster", particularly amongst people who were most vulnerable
- those most at risk of developing problems were also the least able to deal with them due to lack of a support network and difficulties in engaging with the people and services who could help
- people who are unable to resolve their problems end up in a vicious cycle of decline which can result in loss of jobs and income, stress related illness and relationship break downs
- vulnerable people needed greater levels of support to resolve their problems, and expressed a high preference for face-to-face or telephone advice which was independent of the organisation with which they had a difficulty
- advice is often focused on solving issues in isolation; advice is too often hard to access and is focused on problems rather than people
- this has the greatest effect on vulnerable people — those who try but fail to get advice when they need it are left with twice as many unresolved problems than those who get advice
- publicly funded and commissioned advice services are fragmented and uncoordinated.

The report by the Department for Constitutional Affairs (2006) suggests that the problems that people experience are often found in 'clusters'. These clusters of difficulties are often combined; for example – housing, debt, and health. It is not unusual that when a person presents to an advice agency for one problem, other difficulties are also present. The challenge for advice providers is to develop services which are aimed at addressing complex needs of the individual because meeting those needs is likely to require very well integrated and accessible provision of a wide range of diverse advice.

2.10 Priority advice needs for Bedford Borough

From the needs analysis in **Section 2.9** the following priority needs were identified:

- ??
- ??
- ??

As part of the development of this Strategy, a questionnaire was also sent to BAF members to ask about their views on local needs. The main needs identified were:

Priority advice need identified	Evidence – why this should be a priority	Impact – what difference can we make to local people?
Welfare benefits		
Debt		
Housing		
Employment		
Immigration		
Discrimination		
Mental health		

2.11 Proposals for future provision of advice services

To complete

2.12 Resources

To complete

2.13 Management, commissioning and funding of advice services

To complete

2.14 Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

To complete

3. Implementation Plan

3.1 Overview

To complete

3.2 Action Plan

To complete

APPENDIX 1

Members of Bedfordshire Advice Forum

There are currently 41 members of Bedfordshire Advice Forum

- Advice UK
- Advocacy Alliance
- Age Concern Bedfordshire
- Anchor Staying Put
- Aragon Housing Association – Housing Department
- Bedford and District CAB
- Bedford Borough Council – Care Standards Review and Welfare Rights Service
- Bedford Borough Council - Customer Advisory Team
- Bedford Borough Council - Housing Options
- Bedford Borough Council – Trading Standards
- Bedford Credit Union
- Bedford Housing Link
- Bedfordshire Child Poverty Action Group
- Bedfordshire Police
- Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (BRASS)
- BPHA – Community Development
- Bedford Race Equality Council
- Central Bedfordshire Council – Trading Standards
- Central Bedfordshire Council – Welfare Rights Service
- Central Bedfordshire Libraries
- Disability Resource Centre
- Dunstable and District Citizens Advice Bureau
- Home Start North and Mid Beds
- Hospice at Home Volunteers – Leighton Buzzard
- Kings Arms Project
- Langley House Trust
- Leighton Linslade CAB
- Luton Irish Forum
- Luton Law Centre
- Luton Rights
- Mayday Trust
- Mid Bedfordshire CAB
- Polish-British Integration Centre
- Rutland Road Church
- Salvation Army
- Sight Concern
- Surestart – Cauldwell
- Thai3Counties
- The Bedford Charity
- USEA
- YMCA Bedfordshire



APPENDIX 2

Members of Bedford Borough Advice Strategy Planning Group

The following groups are represented on the Planning Group

Organisation

Advice UK
Advocacy Alliance
Age Concern Bedfordshire
Bedford and District CAB
Bedford Borough Council - Adult Services
Bedford Borough Council - Customer Advisory Team
Bedford Borough Council - Housing Options
Bedford Borough Council – Inform 0-19
Bedford Borough Council - Library Service
Bedford Borough Council - Policy and Partnerships
Bedford Borough Council – Trading Standards
Bedford Borough Council - Transformation Team
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
BPHA – Community Development
Bedford Race Equality Council
Disability Resource Centre
Home Start North and Mid Beds
Luton Irish Forum
Polish-British Integration Centre
The Regency Training Foundation

Representative(s)

Anjila Sinha
Vicki Airs, Barnaby McConnell
Steve Perry, Irene Tindall
Lorraine Gunther
George Hunt
Sue Audin, Karen Cook
Dawn Parker
Charnjeet Dhillon
Kerry O'Neil
Mark Barnett, David Brewer
Alexandra Austin, Lynn Gell
Gillian Abbott, Jo Hawthorne
Janet Ridge*
Nicky Dahl, Annette Pacey
Glenis Orkisz, Wendy Anderson-Welsh
Carl Davies, Liz Morgan
Wendie Lovatt
Noelette Hanley
Mags Brady, Robert Brady
Patricia O'Malley

* Janet Ridge is also the Chair of the **Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership**, which instructed the Planning Group to develop the Advice Strategy on behalf of the **Bedford Borough Partnership**.

The Planning Group has been facilitated by Len Simkins and Linda Wood (**Infotrain**) on behalf of **Bedfordshire Advice Forum**.

Funding for the work of the Planning Group in 2009/10 was provided by **Capacitybuilders** through **Voluntary Works**.



APPENDIX 3

Other community groups giving information and advice in Bedford Borough

To complete

APPENDIX 4

Solicitors giving civil legal advice in Bedford Borough

To complete

APPENDIX 5

Funding and staffing of advice services in Bedford Borough

To complete