

ADVICE MANAGEMENT GROUP

Bedford Borough

2.00 pm, Thursday 2nd February 2012
Room 631, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford

Present:

Lorraine Gunther (Chair)	Bedford & District Citizens Advice Bureau (and BAF)
Mags Brady	Polish British Integration Centre (and BAF)
David Brewer	Bedford Borough Council
Nicky Dahl	Bpha
Jackie Golding	NHS Bedfordshire
Jo Hawthorne	Bedford Borough Council
Lee Phanco	Bedford Borough Council
Sharon Simpson	Bedford Borough Council
Susannah Rastall (Minutes)	Infotrain

Apologies:

Wendy Anderson-Welsh	Bedfordshire Race and Equalities Council (and BAF)
Len Simkins	Infotrain

<i>Item</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Action</i>
1	Welcome and Introductions	Lorraine Gunther welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2	Minutes of last meeting (23/11/11) and matters arising	<p>Amendment to last minutes – Item 6.1 Lee pointed out that the AMG should be included by the statutory sector in any <i>consultations</i> on advice related issues not <i>discussions</i>.</p> <p>Matters arising</p> <p>Item 4 – Employment Hub - David confirmed that the Hub will now be located in the Connexions Centre in Greyfriars and is on target to open in June 2012.</p> <p>BAF's Steering Group has discussed the possible links between the advice sector and the new Employment Hub. Len contacted Lindsay Mitton to discuss this further and she has agreed to arrange a meeting with advice agencies when arrangements for the Hub are finalised.</p> <p>Item 6.3 – Welfare Reform - BAF will be running a benefits update course in March which will cover the benefit changes being introduced in April. Lee said he would give a brief update of the latest changes at the end of today's meeting.</p>	

3	Advice Management Group		
3.1	Terms of reference (final version)	The suggested amendments from last meeting have been made. These were accepted by the AMG Group.	
3.2	Report on priority advice needs and gaps (draft 2)	<p>Sharon confirmed that she would track her comments on the document and send it back to Len.</p> <p>Jo confirmed she would update the information taken from the Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy 2010-2013.</p> <p>Jo queried how the information collated would be used in the future and to what benefit.</p> <p>Jo also asked if the AMG had heard from Age UK and Advocacy Alliance, two members from Bedford Borough's Personalisation Working Group, who wished to join the AMG. Lorraine confirmed that this had been discussed at the last BAF Steering Group meeting and it was suggested that, as they were BAF members, their route to join the AMG should be through BAF. BAF currently has one place vacant and this will be offered to Age UK or Advocacy Alliance at the next BAF meeting on 22nd February.</p>	LS
3.3	AMG update report to BBPB (December 2011)	This report, which had been submitted to the BBPB, was noted.	
4	BAF's contribution to the Advice Strategy	<p>A progress report on the practical recommendations in the Strategy that are being undertaken by BAF was distributed to the AMG prior to the meeting.</p> <p>These recommendations had been reviewed by BAF's Steering Group at its meeting on 26/1/12 and all the recommended action is moving ahead as planned.</p>	
5	Flow of Advice clients in Bedford Borough	<p>At the last meeting it was agreed to try to develop a functional map showing the flow of clients in the local advice network. A report of the pilot work, including a draft "map", had been produced by Len and this had been distributed to the AMG.</p> <p>This pilot work highlighted the problems in trying to analyse this type of data as each agency records data in a different way.</p> <p>In his report Len suggested that a recommendation from this work might be to encourage local advice agencies in Bedford Borough to develop a standard way of recording data so that global information about local advice services can easily be collected.</p>	

Nicky also pointed out that it is unclear what is defined as an “enquiry” in each agency – is it a direct advice enquiry about an issue or simply any type of incoming telephone call.

Jo suggested that a methodology could be developed for collecting data in future. At Adult Social Services one methodology used was the collection of the same data for a short period of time on the same day of each week. This enabled a sample analysis of the calls received – a similar methodology could be used for advice agencies and would be relatively easy to implement.

Lee asked about the purpose of this information and what we hoped to achieve.

David felt that knowing where each referral is made would enable us to understand more fully a client’s experience of the advice sector and whether the sector is working effectively.

David also pointed out that the Employment Hub aspires to track each customer’s journey through the agency – the system used for this could be used by other agencies.

The possibility of a web-based referral system was also discussed. However, it was agreed that this may be too sensitive and complex in terms of confidentiality and data protection to implement across a wide range of agencies.

Mags confirmed that PBIC has now amended their data recording system, following this mapping exercise, to include information on referrals. Lorraine also confirmed that the CAB is developing the way they record referrals.

Jo suggested that members of the Adult Services Users and Carers Support Group could come and share their experiences of going through the local information and advice network. This feedback could then be mapped and would be a direct example of how members of the public are dealt with by the advice sector. After discussion it was felt that this would be an extremely useful exercise. Len will liaise with Jo regarding the date, venue and how this will be managed.

LS / JH

After this work has been completed the AMG will discuss the possibility of a sample methodology being used within the advice sector to map referrals – possibly using a selection of key agencies.

6	AOB		
6.1	Bedford Borough Health and Wellbeing Strategy	It was agreed that BAF should submit a response in the consultation on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.	
6.2	Centralised telephone access point for advice	As the resources needed for a centralised telephone access point are potentially huge it was agreed to postpone discussion of this until a future meeting.	
6.3	Careers advice	Mags felt that careers advice should be recognised in the Advice Strategy as an important part of information and advice services. As careers advice will be part of the Employment Hub's remit, the AMG agreed that the scope of the Strategy does not also need to cover this. The Strategy will be more effective if it is limited. However, a footnote to the Strategy's priority needs and gaps should be added recognising the importance of careers advice.	LS
6.4	Welfare Reform	<p>Lee gave an update on the latest developments regarding benefit changes. These changes will start to have an impact on the public after April.</p> <p>Lee also confirmed that Council Tax Benefit, in its current, national form, would end in March 2013. How this, and the replacement local system, will affect the Council is not yet clear.</p> <p>David suggested that Lee forward a generic script regarding the benefit changes to BAF. This would mean that the same information would be relayed throughout the advice sector. Susannah suggested that Lee send a copy of this script, when available, to Len for inclusion in the benefits update page in the new edition of <i>Poverty News</i>.</p>	LP
7	Next Meeting	<p>David requested that Len circulate to the group a proposal for facilitation and delivery of action for the AMG in 2012/13 by end of February. David will then forward a paper to the Bedford Borough Partnership Board (BBBP) at their next meeting on 14th March, with a request for future funding.</p> <p>The next AMG meeting will take place in late March/early April. Len will liaise with Jo regarding a suitable date for selected members of the Users and Carers Support Group to talk to the AMG.</p>	LS / JH

This AMG meeting has been:

