

# **ADVICE STRATEGY**

## **Bedford Borough**

### **Planning Group Meeting**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford

## **NOTES OF MEETING**

### **Present**

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Karen Cook        | Bedford Borough Council - Benefits and Community Welfare |
| Lorraine Gunther  | Bedford and District CAB                                 |
| Charnjeet Dhillon | Bedford Borough Council - Family Information Service     |
| Diane Hoare       | Advocacy Alliance  |
| Amanda Ryan       | BPHA   |
| Anjila Sinha      | AdviceUK   |
| Len Simkins       | Infotrain / BAF  |

### **1. Apologies**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Gillian Abbott       | Bedford Borough Council - Adult Services                 |
| Wendy Anderson-Welsh | Bedford Race Equality Council                            |
| Sue Audin            | Bedford Borough Council - Benefits and Community Welfare |
| Alexandra Austin     | Bedford Borough Council - Trading Standards              |
| Nicky Dahl           | BPHA   |
| Carl Davies          | Disability Resource Centre, Dunstable                    |
| Jo Hawthorne         | Bedford Borough Council - Adult Services                 |
| George Hunt          | Bedford Borough Council - Adult Services                 |
| Liz Morgan           | Disability Resource Centre                               |
| Patricia O'Malley    | The Regency Training Foundation                          |
| Kerry O'Neill        | Bedford Borough Council - Library Service                |
| Annette Pacey        | BPHA   |
| Dawn Parker          | Bedford Borough Council - Housing Options                |
| Janet Ridge          | Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity                   |
| Irene Tindall        | Age Concern Bedfordshire                                 |
| Linda Wood           | Infotrain / BAF  |

## 2. Update from last meeting (25th February 2010)

Len recapped on the issues discussed at the first Planning Group meeting.

Len also gave an update on activities since the last meeting:

- BAF had managed to retain some funds to continue with the initial advice strategy work in 2010/11. However, these funds were very limited and had to be split between the work in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire. For Bedford Borough a further 2 days' work is available.
- A Planning Group had been set up in Central Bedfordshire to develop its Advice Strategy. The Group had its first meeting on 21 April. The work in Central Beds will run roughly parallel to the work in Bedford Borough but will be about a month behind.
- Len had met with Jo Hawthorne and Gillian Abbott (Bedford Borough Council) to discuss their work on the Universal Information and Advice Strategy for Adult Social Care. Vicki Airs (Advocacy Alliance) had also attended the meeting. There was now a 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of the UIA Strategy. It was agreed to share information to help in the development of both strategies.

## 3. Advice Strategy – review of 1<sup>st</sup> draft

Len presented the first draft of the initial part of the Strategy which he and Linda had been working on. The structure of the Strategy was:

- **Introduction**
  - Vision, principles and aims
  - Background
  - The importance of advice
  - The need for an Advice Strategy
  - Developing the Strategy
- **The Advice Strategy**
  - 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
- **Implementation Plan**
  - Overview
  - Action Plan

Anjila then facilitated a discussion on the draft document.

Various comments are made. Key points were:

- An immediate message needs to come out sooner in the document
- An Executive Summary should be inserted at the beginning of the document - when the Strategy is completed, it might also be a good idea to produce a summary version as a separate document, which would be more likely to be read in full
- Bullet point 3 should be combined with bullet point 1 in the principles (on page 2)
- The full details of BAF providers and services is not needed (in the current advice services section) - just a list of BAF members in Bedford Borough would be sufficient
- The importance of independent advice services needs to be stressed (in the drivers for change section)
- Links to websites and documents for all the information used in the advice needs sector should be inserted
- The section on gaps in services should be moved and appear after the advice needs section
- Some names of representatives and organisations need to be changed (in Appendix 2)

Len will make the above amendments to the draft Strategy

#### **4. Advice Strategy – discussions on plans for 2<sup>nd</sup> draft**

To gather more information for the mapping of current services, the needs for advice, and the gaps in services, Len and Linda were proposing that a questionnaire should be sent to BAF members.

An initial short version of the questionnaire had been produced. A longer version with step-by-step instructions had also been designed. Both versions were distributed. It was generally agreed that, although the short version was appealing, it might lead to some confusion when completed. The longer version would, in the end, probably be easier to complete.

A major part of the questionnaire included detailed questions about the funding of agencies. Although it will be important for details of funding for advice work to be gathered at some stage in the future, there were concerns that it may be too early in the process to begin collecting these details - especially using a questionnaire. It was also felt that given the limited resources available to produce the Strategy, collecting and analysing lots of financial information may take too long.

It was therefore agreed that the questionnaire should concentrate on staffing levels (paid and voluntary) in advice agencies, the number of enquiries/cases, and gaps in services. The Strategy could then suggest that the mapping of funding of advice services is something that could be done in the future.

## 5. Advice Strategy – next steps

Len presented the updated action plan for developing the Strategy. Work was on schedule.

The next step will be to distribute the amended questionnaire to BAF members.

Len and Linda will then include the results of the survey in a 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of the Strategy, which will be brought to the next meeting of the Planning Group.

Len will also report back to the Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership on 17 May. As funding for future development work is limited, Len will enquire about the possibility of support from the Bedford Borough Partnership.

## 6. Next meeting

10.00am on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July. Venue to be confirmed.

This will enable us to provide an update to the Social Inclusion Thematic Partnership meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> July.

**NB** All the documents relating to the work on the Advice Strategy for Bedford Borough can be found on BAF's website at: [www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk](http://www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk)

**Meeting facilitator** - Len Simkins (Infotrain)

**The Planning Group meeting was:**

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

**Facilitated by**  **infotrain**  
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