

ADVICE STRATEGY

Central Bedfordshire

Planning Group Meeting

Monday 7th June 2010

Melbourne House, Kingsway, Bedford

NOTES OF MEETING

Present

Nicola Avery	Central Bedfordshire Council - Library Service
Barry George	Central Bedfordshire Council - Library Service
Diane Hoare	Advocacy Alliance
Becky Kirby	Dunstable CAB
Philip McCusker	Central Bedfordshire Council - Adult Services
Giles Probert	Central Bedfordshire Council - Office of the Chief Executive
Irene Tindall	Age Concern Bedfordshire
David Wood	Leighton Linslade CAB
Len Simkins	Infotrain / BAF

1. Apologies

Carl Davies	Disability Resource Centre
Peter Fraser	Central Bedfordshire Council
Jenny Hedges	Mid Beds CAB
Liz Morgan	Disability Resource Centre
Glenis Orkisz	Bedford Race Equality Council
Gillie Sharp	Luton Law Centre
Anjila Sinha	Advice UK
Linda Wood	Infotrain / BAF

2. Update from last meeting (21st April 2010)

Len recapped on the issues discussed at the last meeting.

Giles reported that:

- **Comprehensive Area Assessments** had been frozen nationally. Although the issues identified in the Central Bedfordshire CAA are important and need to be addressed, the CAA framework will not be used for this.
- The current **Local Area Agreement** has one year to run but it is not certain what will happen after that.
- The **Sustainable Community Strategy** will be the key local strategy - this contains an aim relating to advice services
- **Place Surveys**, to get the views of the public, should continue.

Philip gave an update on the **Universal Information and Advice Strategy** covering adult social care issues. The Central Bedfordshire UIA Strategy is focussing on the provision of information at the moment - especially web-based information. It is hoped that the UIA Strategy will be signed off in the Autumn. Action from the Strategy needs to be put into place by April 2011. Philip agreed that it seems logical that the UIA Strategy and the Advice Strategy (on civil legal issues) need to be joined together at some stage.

Len also reported that the Advice Strategy Planning Group in **Bedford Borough** had met again in May to discuss a draft Advice Strategy for the Borough.

3. Advice Strategy – review of 1st 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:

- **Executive Summary**
- **Introduction**
 - Background
 - The importance of advice
 - The need for an Advice Strategy
 - Developing the Strategy
- **The Advice Strategy**
 - Vision, principles and aims
 - 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

Various comments were made. Key points were:

- The structure of the document was good
- A diagram will be added to show the LSP structure (page 7). Giles will send a diagram
- The principle that advice services should be "free at the point of delivery" needs to be added in the principles (page 10)

- Principle 1 had been slightly amended. This change was agreed (page 10)
- The Council's Web Strategy needs to be added to the list of linked strategies (page 13)
- The Library Service needs to be added as a BAF member service at Central Bedfordshire Council (page 13)
- The Council's Customer Service Centre should be encouraged to join BAF. Barry will follow this up
- Luton Law Centre should be added to the table of BAF members (page 14).
- GP surgeries, MIND, Mencap, Headway, Village Agents (BRCC), and trade unions should be added to the list of other providers (page 16).
- The NHS should be approached (through Julie Ridge) to see if they want to have an input into the development of the Strategy. Giles will follow this up.
- The CAA should be deleted and the UIA should be given more prominence in the list of drivers (page 20)

Len will make the above amendments to the draft Strategy

Len will then circulate the draft Strategy for further comments.

4. Advice Strategy – discussions on plans for 2nd draft

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

Len circulated a draft of a questionnaire. A major part of the questionnaire included detailed questions about the funding of agencies. Len reported that at the Bedford Borough Planning Group concerns had been expressed about the questions on funding and it had been agreed to delete these from the questionnaire.

After discussion, it was also agreed that the detailed questions about funding should be deleted from the Central Bedfordshire questionnaire. However, it was agreed to add some general questions about the sources of funding.

Although it will be important for details of funding for advice work to be gathered at some stage in the future, it was agreed 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.

It was also agreed that the introduction to the questionnaire should make the scope and purpose of the survey clearer.

5. Advice Strategy – next steps

Len presented the updated action plan for developing the Strategy. Work was generally on schedule although the questionnaire will now be distributed in June rather than May.

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

Len will also report back to the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership on 15th June. As funding for future development work is now very limited, Len will enquire about the possibility of support from the Thematic Partnership or from Central Bedfordshire Together.

It may also be possible to try to get some funding from the Transformation Budget - if the Advice Strategy and the UIA Strategy are going to be amalgamated in the future. Philip will send Len a copy of the draft UIA Strategy to begin to identify where the links can be made.

6. Next meeting

10.00am on Thursday 15th July. Venue to be confirmed.

NB All the documents relating to the work on the Advice Strategy for Central Bedfordshire can be found on BAF's website at: www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

Meeting facilitator - Len Simkins (Infotrain)

The Planning Group meeting was:

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