

## Minutes of Forum Meeting

1<sup>st</sup> November 2018

Bunyan Meeting Rooms, Bedford

### Present:

Sarah Broughton  
Paulette Rennie  
Len Simkins  
Samantha Conder  
Sylvia MacDowell  
Gordon Angus  
Tabitha Park  
Charlotte Day  
Martin Trinder  
Brian Cunningham  
Chantel Sutherland  
David Verney

Bedford Foodbank  
Bedford Community Self-Help Group  
Autism Bedfordshire  
Macmillan Welfare Rights – Central Bedfordshire Council  
Money Advice at St Andrews  
Advice Central  
Citizens Advice Leighton Linlade  
IPAG/Bedford Women's Centre  
CVS Beds  
BRASS  
Grand Union Housing Group  
Advice Bedfordshire

### Apologies

Jon Howton  
Elliott Stephenson  
Carol Madden  
Trevor Moisey  
Jenny Hedges  
Hayley Lucas  
Helen Turney

BRASS  
Grand Union Housing Group  
Money Advice at St Andrews  
Three Rivers Church, Bedford  
Citizen Advice Mid Bedfordshire  
Mind BLMK  
BCHA

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### Action

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- 1 Len Simkins chaired the meeting on behalf of BAF's Steering Group.

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### 2 Minutes of last Forum meeting (28-6-18) and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last Forum meeting were agreed.

There were no matters arising that were not on the agenda.

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### 3 Presentation – Poverty in Bedfordshire

Charlotte Day from IPAG gave a presentation on local poverty and the work of the Bedford Independent Poverty Action Group. A copy of the presentation can be found on the BAF website.

BAF members agreed that BAF should fully support the work of IPAG, and individual organisations that wish to, can join IPAG by emailing [charlotteday@bedfordwomenscentre.org.uk](mailto:charlotteday@bedfordwomenscentre.org.uk)

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### 4 Information Exchange

**Sam – Macmillan Welfare Rights** – The demand on the service is increasing, with some additional capacity elsewhere in the region helping locally.

**Sarah – Bedford Foodbank** – The Harvest Festival season has replenished the reserves a little. A number of the uniformed organisations (scouts, etc) have been helping with organising supplies. A reverse advent calendar campaign is being planned to help with further donations.

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**Brian - BRASS** – A new ‘Life in the UK’ course is starting up, alongside other courses, including Maths. There are now 14 Syrian families within the Borough. The BRASS Christmas party is on 16 December (all welcome), and donations of new and nearly new educational books are being sought to be given out as presents.

**Gordon – Advice Central / Disability Resource Centre** – Gordon provided an overview, as the project lead, of the Advice Central service which is a telephone and online signposting service, primarily for Central Bedfordshire residents. Two new staff appointments have improved the services capacity to deal with telephone enquiries.

- DRC now also operate a telephone helpline for the Disabled Living Foundation
- The health, learning and work team at DRC are also revamping the money matters course.

**Chantel - Grand Union Housing Group** – the team are focusing on preparing for the November roll-out of full service Universal Credit in parts of Central Bedfordshire.

**Tabitha – Citizens Advice Leighton Linlade** – Tabitha provided an update from the three CA’s in Central Bedfordshire.

- All CAs are preparing for Universal Credit
- CA Dunstable are moving into new and slightly bigger premises in the joint leisure/library complex.
- CA Leighton Linlade has a new Debt project, funded by Money Matters
- The number of volunteers at CA Leighton Linlade has gone over 50.

**Sylvia - Money Advice** - The service continues to support a small number of people, but with a highly personalised service.

**Pauline – Bedford Community Self Help Group** – The Lunch club at Mount Zion church on Midland Road is ongoing, with lots of preparation for the Christmas period.

**Charlotte – Bedford Women’s Centre** – Charlotte provided an update on the service:

- A Ladies only lunch club meets on a Tuesday (normally with health theme).
- 3 Domestic Abuse groups are operating
- A range of other learning schemes are on offer.
- The centre is also highly engaged with the Probation Service and is in contact with most women that come through the probation system.

**Martin - CVS**

- If organisations have any festive volunteering opportunities, can they let [paul@cvsbeds.org.uk](mailto:paul@cvsbeds.org.uk) know so potential volunteers can be signposted.
- CVS are hosting two courses relevant for voluntary organisations - [Trust Fundraising](#) (12 November) and [Health and Safety](#) (6 December)

**Len - Autism Bedfordshire**

- The charity has a new charity shop on Bedford High Street.
- AB are becoming a registered NOCN centre to be able to offer qualification to clients. Other organisations might be able to offer accredited courses to their clients by working with AB.

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## 5 Update on current BAF activities

Len provided verbal report on the work of BAF – see attached for a written report.

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## 6 Any other business

- **BAF membership** – Martin thanked those who have already completed the membership form, and reminded others to do it as soon as possible.
- **BAF Steering Group** – Len asked if other BAF members would consider joining the Steering Group, which meets three times a year to plan the BAF meetings and oversee other activities.

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## 7 Dates of future Forum meetings (all 2pm)

- 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019 – Grand Union Housing Group Offices, Ampthill

# Bedford Independent Poverty Action Group


Chair Charlotte Day  
(C.O. Bedford Women's Centre)



## What is the role of IPAG?

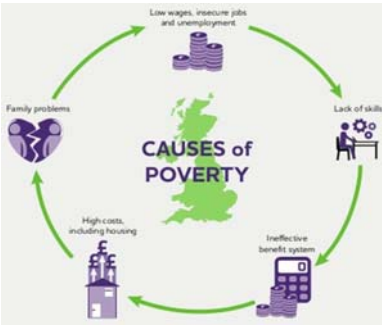
- **Forum** for VCS agencies in Bedford Borough to discuss poverty issues
- **Raise awareness** of poverty issues
- **Share expertise** on poverty issues
- **Central resource** on poverty issues
- **Advise and support** organisations working with people in poverty





## Why do we need IPAG?

- Poverty is on the increase
- There needs to be coordinated anti-poverty approach in Bedford Borough

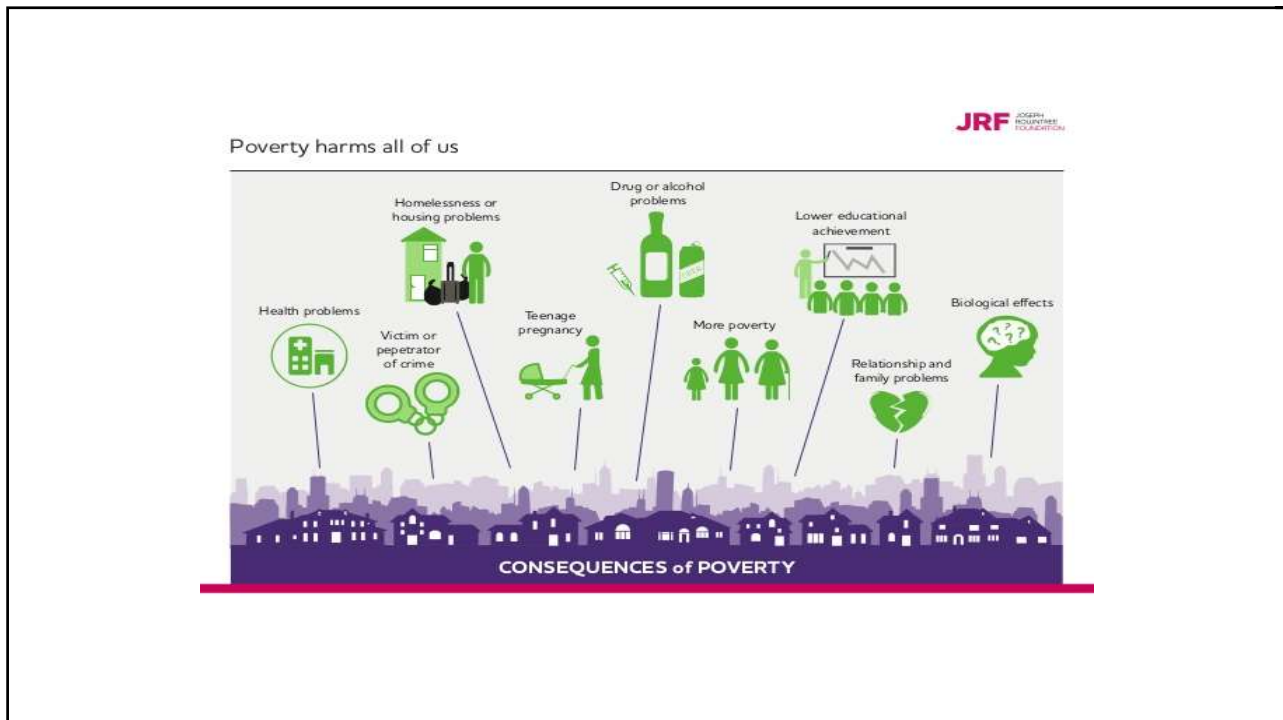


“UK Poverty 2017 highlights that overall, **14 million people** live in poverty in the UK – over 1 in 5 of the population.

This is made up of 8 million working-age adults, 4 million children and 1.9 million pensioners.

8 million live in families where at least one person is in work. “

Joseph Rowntree foundation Dec 2017



## Actions To Date.....



- Brought together local organisations working with families and vulnerable adults
- The Uniform Drive
- Putting together information to help signpost people to services for Christmas.




The  
ReUse  
Centre  
ReUse Together



Bedford  
Women's  
Centre




ageUK  
Love later life



Bedford  
foodbank



mind  
for better mental health



Aldwyck  
HOUSING GROUP



emmaus



FfB Families First  
Bedfordshire



Justus



BRCC

Some of the organisations that have already signed up.

## How to join IPAG?

You can sign up your organisation  
today.

Or

Email me your contact information

[charlotteday@bedfordwomenscentre.org.uk](mailto:charlotteday@bedfordwomenscentre.org.uk)



BedIPAG  
WORKING TOGETHER TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY

# Questions?



# BAF PROJECTS - UPDATE REPORT

(for BAF meeting on 1/11/18)

## BAF training

BAF organised a training programme in the autumn. This has just been completed (with 42 attendees).

- **Introduction to Benefits** –13/9/18 – Bedford – 8 attendees
- **Disability benefits** –26/9/18 – Bedford – 16 attendees
- **Universal Credit** – 31/10/18 – Dunstable – 18 attendees

Feedback for the training was very good. A report on the programme will be available soon.

## Bedfordshire Benefits Network

These network meetings continue to be well received and well attended. Two BBN meetings are being arranged in 2018/19

The first meeting was held on 5/9/18 and was attend by 23 people. The key, current issue is the roll-out of the full Universal Credit service to the remaining parts of Central Bedfordshire (and Luton)

The next meeting is scheduled for 13/3/19 in Bedford.

## Advice Strategy – Central Bedfordshire

This project work is funded by **Central Bedfordshire Council**, and funding has been renewed for 2018/19

BAF is responsible for facilitating the **Advice Strategy Management Group** which oversees the Advice Strategy. The next meeting is on 6/12/18.

Funding for **AdviceCentral**, which plays a fundamental part in the Strategy's Delivery Plan, has been agreed for 2018/19. An ASMG funding sub-group has been formed to look at securing funding for 2019/20.

BAF's particular aims in the **Delivery Plan** are to: continue to arrange Forum meetings, Benefit Network meetings and training courses for members; make sure that the entries (for agencies working in Central Bedfordshire) are up-to-date on BAF's online Advice Directory; and to encourage BAF members to generally promote the Advice Strategy

You can see copies of the Advice Strategy and the Delivery Plan at:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council/stronger-communities/advice.aspx>

## Building Better Opportunities Project (Financial Inclusion)

BAF is supporting this project managed by **Voluntaryworks Ltd**. The project is helping build confidence in people to help them move into work or training. 201 participants have been supported so far.