

Advice UK

Age UK Bedfordshire

Aldwyck Housing Group

Amphill & Biggleswade CAB

Aragon Housing Association

Asian Women Foundation

Bedford and District Citizens Advice Bureau

Bedford Borough Council - Business Support Unit

Bedford Borough Council - Housing Options

Bedford Borough Council - The Jobs Hub

Bedford Borough Council - Trading Standards

Bedford Borough Libraries

Bedford Community Self-Help Group

Bedford Credit Union Ltd

Bedfordshire Child Poverty Action Group

Bedfordshire Housing Link

Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

bpha - Money Advice Team

BRASS

Bromford

CAN

Carers in Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire Council - Customer Finance Team

Central Bedfordshire Council - Libraries

Disability Resource Centre

Dunstable and District CAB

Hospice at Home Volunteers

Langley House Trust

Leighton Linlade Citizens Advice Bureau

Luton Law Centre

Money Advice at St Andrews

One Housing Group - One Support

PoHwer

Polish-British Integration Centre Ltd

Richmond Fellowship Bedfordshire

Rutland Road Church

Sight Concern Bedfordshire

SSAFA Forces Help

St Mark's Church

Tax Help for Older People

The Harpur Trust

The Learning Partnership

The Salvation Army

Voluntary and Community Action

BAF Steering Group 2014/15

The Steering Group is elected at the AGM and normally meets three times a year to plan and oversee BAF's work. The members of the Steering Group in 2014/15 were:

Fiona McLeod (Chair)

Brian Cunningham (Deputy Chair)

Annette Pacey (Treasurer)

Elliot Stephenson

David Verney

Paulette Rennie

Money Advice at St Andrews

BRASS

BPHA - Money Advice

Aragon Housing Association

Advice Bedfordshire

Bedford Community Self-help Group

Bedfordshire Advice Forum is supported by:



Working in partnership



About BAF

Bedfordshire Advice Forum is the network of social welfare information and advice providers in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire. All members of BAF are not-for-profit organisations from the voluntary and public sectors that provide advice or information on civil legal matters.

Aims of BAF

- to promote and support the provision of social welfare advice and information services in Bedfordshire
- to provide a forum for exchanging information on the provision, gaps and resource requirements of advice and information services in Bedfordshire
- to deliver and support training, in collaboration with BAF member agencies
- to seek funding for projects to develop advice services relevant to local needs

For more information on the work of BAF contact:

Email: baf@yourcvs.org

Website: www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk



Advice Bedfordshire is BAF's trading company. The company, which is a community interest company, oversees all of BAF's projects and trading activities.

BEDFORDSHIRE ADVICE FORUM - REVIEW OF THE YEAR

From the Chair

Welcome to Bedfordshire Advice Forum's 2015 Annual Report. I hope that you will find something of interest in it. Please share it with your colleagues. BAF is an effective way of advice-giving agencies across Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire sharing information and getting to know each other's services, so that they can refer and signpost their clients to the most appropriate service. Its Benefits Advice Network has been particularly well supported and the work that Len Simpkins has done to support the development of the Advice strategy for Central Bedfordshire has also been commended.

BAF operates on a modest budget and is reliant on its members to make it what it is. 2014-2015 has been, in some ways, a difficult year for the Forum, although I hope this was not too apparent to the members. Along with many other voluntary organisations, we have been finding it particularly difficult to access funding - not just for specific projects but for the everyday running of BAF. In the autumn of 2013 the steering group spent some time deciding how we could cut down on expenses and at the same time Len Simpkins announced that he would no longer be the Secretary of BAF, having been with it soon after it was first set up in the late 1990s. As a result, we circulated a tender document inviting others to take on the work of administering BAF. CVS was the only positive response and it has agreed to continue for another year for a budget which we hope we can afford.

We have been particularly grateful for Central Bedfordshire Council who have contributed £1000 both last year and this towards our general running costs and to Len Simpkins who contributes 10% of his fees earned from BAF generated work. My thanks go to Martin Trinder and his team at the CVS for supporting us by managing the administration. We are very reliant on members' subscriptions and I do urge you to pay your annual subscription as soon as you receive an invoice in the next month, so that we don't have to spend time chasing organisations. Although we increased the subscriptions last year, it does not appear to have deterred anyone.

Please continue to participate in the forums and remember to promote any training on offer.

This coming year will see more changes to welfare benefits and all of us will need to know what is happening in order to support our clients in the most effective way. By attending training and by knowing what other organisations are doing can only help this process.

Have a good year!

Fiona McLeod (chair)
Money Advice at St Andrews

**Bedfordshire
Advice Forum**

Our activities

Bedfordshire Advice Forum has been involved in a number of initiatives over the past year, including:

- facilitating three Forum Meetings for BAF members to network and discuss the issues affecting their service users, and receive presentations from different organisations
- leading the Bedfordshire Benefit Network, a network of over 70 contacts and agencies, to discuss the specific issues relating to benefits and the roll-out of Universal Credit
- leading the work of the Central Bedfordshire Advice Planning Board, overseeing the implementation of the Advice Strategy in Central Bedfordshire. This year the Board oversaw a campaign to recruit more volunteers for advice agencies
- updating members and the wider sector on Welfare Reform and arranging briefings on Universal Credit for advisors and other local organisations
- training courses for members. Four advice skills courses trained 25 people with 5 going on to obtain an NOCN qualification (Information, Advice and Guidance - Level 1). A further four courses on issues such as Welfare Reform and Debt Advice attracted 42 people
- developing better links with solicitors and advice agencies, including hosting a webinar for Central Bedfordshire organisations
- involvement in the Development of the Bedford Borough Community Network

BAF Website

Documents from BAF's meetings, training courses and projects can be found on the BAF website. There are also links between the BAF website and the online Advice Directory.

Thanks to David Wood for maintaining the website during 2014-15.

www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

Bedfordshire Advice Directory

The online Directory, provides an opportunity for BAF members to publicise their agencies and their services.

The Directory also has links to other useful advice-related websites and contacts. The Directory is regularly updated.



www.bedsadvisedirectory.org.uk