

# Bedfordshire Advice Forum

Promoting and supporting advice and information services in Bedfordshire

## Annual Report 2023-2024

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.

### BAF aims to:

- Promote and support the provision of social welfare advice and information services in Bedfordshire.
- Provide a forum for exchanging information on the provision, gaps and resource requirements of advice and information services in Bedfordshire.
- Deliver and support training, in collaboration with BAF member agencies.
- Seek funding for projects to develop advice services relevant to local needs.

### Financial Summary 2023-24

**Opening Balance (01/04/23):** £1,597

#### Income

BAF Membership Fees 1,106

Management Fees 150

**Total Income** £1,256

#### Expenditure

BAF Facilitation Fees 1,000

Meeting Costs 34

**Total Expenditure** £1,034

**Profit/loss (for 23-24):** £222

**Closing Balance (31/03/24):** £ 1,819

### Our activities this year

**BAF meetings** are an opportunity for BAF members to network and discuss the issues affecting their services. The meetings remain popular, with approximately 20 representatives coming together three times during the year. The cost of living crisis continued to dominate discussions at meetings this year. At the BAF AGM in June 2023 we had presentations from Project 229 and CAP about their vital work, and housing and homelessness was the main topic for the November meeting.

Three **training courses** were organised in the summer of 2023, attended by 38 people:

- Introduction to Benefits
  - Universal Credit
  - Personal Independence Payment
- A larger programme is planned for 2024.

The **Bedfordshire Benefit Network** (BBN) brings together BAF members, the DWP and the Housing Benefit offices from Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council, to discuss benefits issues, such as Universal Credit and disability benefits, and to give an update on any benefit changes. The meetings are popular, with approximately 20 representatives coming together twice a year.

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## Meeting dates for 2024-25

### BAF Meetings

All 10.30am start:

- Wednesday 26th June 2024
- Tuesday 12th November 2024
- Thursday 27th February 2025

### Bedfordshire Benefit Network

All 10am start:

- Wednesday 18th September 2024
- Wednesday 19th March 2025

If you would like to attend future meetings email [baf@cvsbeds.org.uk](mailto:baf@cvsbeds.org.uk)

## BAF Steering Group

Elected at the AGM, the steering group meet and liaise throughout the year to oversee the work of BAF:

**Amanda Ryan (Chair) - to Nov 23**

*BPHA*

**Fran Marriot (Chair) - from Nov 23**

*Citizens Advice Bedford*

**Brian Cunningham**

*BRASS*

**Paulette Rennie**

*Bedford Community Self Help Group*

**Elliott Stephenson**

*Grand Union Housing Group*

**Martin Trinder**

*CVS/ BAF Secretariat*

## Advice Bedfordshire

Advice Bedfordshire is BAF's trading company. The company, which is a community interest company, oversees all of BAF's projects and trading activities. In 2023/24 the company raised £150 for BAF in management fees, and saved BAF £770 by paying for the facilitation costs of the Benefits Network from its surplus funds.



## CVS Bedfordshire

CVS provides secretarial support to BAF, and holds funds on its behalf.



## Contact BAF

Documents from BAF's meetings, training courses and projects can all be found at:

[www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk](http://www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk)

Email: [baf@cvsbeds.org.uk](mailto:baf@cvsbeds.org.uk)

## BAF Members 2023-24

Age UK Bedfordshire  
Bedford Borough Council - Hospital Welfare Rights Service  
Bedford Community Self Help Group  
Bedford Foodbank  
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity  
BRASS  
Central Bedfordshire Council - Macmillan Welfare Rights Team  
Central Bedfordshire Council - Housing Team  
Citizens Advice Bedford  
Citizens Advice Dunstable  
Citizens Advice Leighton Linlade  
Citizens Advice Mid Bedfordshire  
Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire (CVS)  
Grand Union Housing Group  
Lidlington Church  
MIND BLMK  
Project 229  
Queens Park Community Organisation  
Sight Concern Bedfordshire  
The Disability Resource Centre  
The Salvation Army Debt Advice Service  
You Turn Futures

**22 Member Organisations**