

# 25 years of BAF

1997 – 2022

Bedfordshire  
Advice Forum

Promoting and supporting advice and  
information services in Bedfordshire

## Highlights

- Over **85 Forum meetings** held for BAF members to discuss advice sector issues and provide networking opportunities (since 1997)
- Over **130 training courses and information sessions** organised for local advice sector staff and volunteers (since 1997)
- **18 major projects** managed for the local advice sector (since 2000)
- **26 Benefit Network meetings** arranged for local benefit advisers (since 2011)

## History of BAF

BAF was founded in **July 1997** as **Bedford Advice Forum** to provide a support network for not-for-profit organisations giving social welfare advice and information in Bedford Borough. A key, initial focus for BAF was to provide low-cost training programmes for BAF members.

In **2001** BAF expanded to also cover the old Mid Bedfordshire area to tie in with BAF's membership of the new Mid and North Bedfordshire Community Legal Service Partnership.

In **2007** BAF changed its name to **Bedfordshire Advice Forum** and expanded its remit to also cover the old South Bedfordshire area – to promote the advice sector across the whole of Bedfordshire.

Since Local Government Re-organisation in **2009**, **Bedfordshire Advice Forum** has covered the two unitary local authority areas of Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.



Celebrating BAF's  
25<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
at the BAF AGM

June 2022

## Thanks

Thanks go to members of BAF's **Training Sub-Group** (1999-2004), BAF's **Steering Group** (2004-2022), and especially to the **BAF Officers** over 25 years.

### Chairs

**Helen Voce** (1997-2001)

**Diane Wynne-Powell** (2002-2004)

**Linda Wood** (2004-2005)

**David Verney** (2005-2008 and  
2015-2016)

**Wendy Anderson-Welsh**  
(2008-2011)

**Lorraine Gunther** (2011-2013)

**Fiona McLeod** (2013-2015)

**Amanda Ryan** (2020-2022)

### Secretaries

**Annette Pacey** (1998-2001)

**Jennifer Wright** (2001-2003)

**Len Simkins** (2004-2014)

**Martin Trinder** (2015-2022)

### Treasurers / Financial Hosts

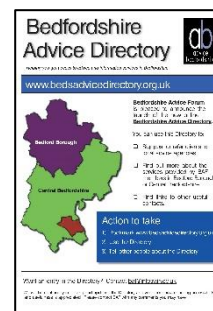
**Mark Boscher** – BHL (1998-2001)

**Annette Pacey** – BPHA (2002-2018)

**Martin Trinder** – CVS (2018-2022)

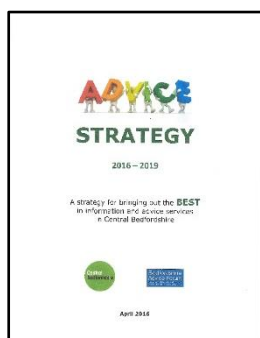
## BAF projects and activities (2000-2010)

- Published 3 editions of the **Bedfordshire Advice Directory** (2000, 2003 and 2005)
- Organised 2-year **BAF-STEP** training and staff development project, funded by the ESF (2002-2004)
- Developed **NVQ training and support programme** for BAF members (2004-2006)
- Launched **3-year BAF Strategy** (2006)
- Set-up **Advice Bedfordshire CIC** as a trading company for BAF (2007)
- BAF joined **Voluntaryworks**, Bedfordshire's VCS infrastructure consortium (2008) – and worked on its Improving Reach, Transforming Local Infrastructure, and Building Better Opportunities (Financial Inclusion) projects (2008-2019)
- Developed and launched **BAF's website** (2008), which is now hosted by the CVS [www.bedfordshireadviceforum.org.uk](http://www.bedfordshireadviceforum.org.uk)
- Managed **Research Project into links between advice agencies and children's centres** (2009)
- Launched the online **Bedfordshire Advice Directory** (2010), which was updated and used until 2017

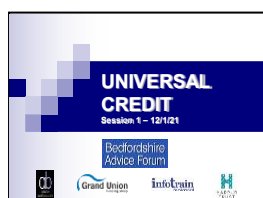


## BAF projects and activities (2010-2022)

- Led on the development of an **Advice Strategy for Bedford Borough** (2010) and managed the Advice Management Group to oversee the strategy (2011-2013)
- Led on the development of an **Advice Strategy for Central Bedfordshire** (2011) and managed the Advice Planning Board to oversee the strategy (2012-2016)
- Launched **Bedfordshire Benefits Network** for local benefit advisers (2011) – with 26 network meetings held (since 2011)
- Organised **Campaign to encourage volunteering in Central Bedfordshire advice agencies**, which built links with the local volunteer centres (2015)
- Developed **Advice Skills Project** offering a programme of training courses and a recognised NOCN qualification (2013-2014)
- Organised **Solicitors Project** to develop links between advice agencies and solicitors – including organising a webinar meeting (2012-2014)
- Led on the refresh of the **Central Bedfordshire Advice Strategy** (2016) and managed a new Advice Strategy Management Group to oversee the Delivery Plan for the new strategy (2016-2021)
- Organised various **Welfare Reform** training courses and other support initiatives (since 2011)
- Managed the **Building Better Opportunities Project** (2018-2019), on behalf of Voluntaryworks, which was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and the ESF
- Introduced **online meetings** for BAF and the Bedfordshire Benefits Network during the Covid pandemic (2020-2021)
- Organised **Online Training Project** to develop a programme of Universal Credit training for advisers during the Covid pandemic (2020-2021) – and then an online Overview of Universal Credit course for other staff (2021)



Bedfordshire  
Advice Forum



## Remembering BAF colleagues

Balbir Dutt (2010) Rob Brady (2017) Annette Pacey (2018) Susannah Rastall (2020)