

Volunteering Newsletter



Welcome to the 10th edition of our volunteer's newsletter

Within this edition, we will be sharing information on the Bedfordshire Resilience Network.

We will also sharing the usual volunteer opportunities and information on training and events within Central Bedfordshire

Who are the Bedfordshire Resilience Network? Before, during and after an emergency we all need to work together to make our communities resilient.

In Bedfordshire we have a group known as **BLEVEC**. In an emergency such as infections disease, refugees, flooding, explosions, utility outages, modern day slavery, terrorism etc we all work together as a community with the emergency services, health organisations and local authorities to respond and help those affected.

Organisations involved in BLEVEC can offer things like 4x4 support, aircraft, boat rescue, search and rescue, first-aid, food provision, transport, emotional and practical support, specialist equipment, helping specific groups of vulnerable people, managing volunteers and donated items and much much more. Please see in detail below some more information in detail, volunteers are always needed for this network.

A huge thank you to everyone who volunteers to help our communities in Central Bedfordshire over the holiday period and all year round. We wish you a safe and enjoyable time over Christmas and New Year.

DECEMBER 2021

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Bedfordshire Resilience Network- Working together to make Bedfordshire the most resilient place

BLEVEC is a unique network of community, council, businesses, and emergency organisations linking up to support each other and the wider community in an emergency.

The network includes:

- Highly trained and competent BLEVEC Commanders and Duty Officers that represent and coordinate the BLEVEC response on the statutory command and control groups – currently trained 34 trained and equipped commanders
- Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations that offer specialist services, equipment, and capabilities – currently 55 member organisations



- Independent emergency volunteers that can deploy anywhere in Bedfordshire to help deliver many general roles in emergency response and recovery – currently 43 independent emergency volunteers
- Local town or village Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) that provide critical local information, intelligence, advice, and support – currently 27 CERTs
- Businesses that want to be involved in emergency response and recovery through their corporate social responsibilities offering services either free or more specialist services at a cost – this is a new initiative due to launch soon
- Emergency Faith Advisors – currently 10 emergency faith advisors

Aims

- To develop a large network of **VCS** (Voluntary and Community Sector) organisations that are willing to help in an emergency
- To develop a large network of businesses that are willing to help in an emergency
- To have a **CERT** (Community Emergency Response Team) setup in every village/town/parish area in Bedfordshire
- To have a large cadre of trained independent emergency volunteers that are available to help in an emergency
- To have a group of highly trained and equipped Commanders to coordinate the BLEVEC response effort and be leaders on multi-agency command and control groups
- To develop a network of faith leaders within Bedfordshire that can provide advice, expertise, and support to respondents and those affected by an emergency

Could you help to set up a local group of people willing to help their community in an emergency? (a Community Emergency Response Team)

In essence this is a WhatsApp group with local people and organisations that can help and would like to be involved. The CERT WhatsApp Group will link directly with BLEVEC and Central Bedfordshire Council Emergency Planning Team and provide important information, intelligence and a quick form of communication should an incident occur in your area.

There are no set hours and there is no expectation that you need to put yourself in danger or do the job of the emergency services; but there are things that volunteers can do to help depending on the emergency and instruction provided; for example:

- Link into the official emergency management structure
- Share information, impacts, intelligence, pictures, videos in an emergency
- Ask for resources to be deployed
- Provide essential local knowledge
- Support the most vulnerable
- Find resources and facilities that could help in an emergency
- Deploy any equipment that you have available e.g., if you have a community flood kit
- Helping to warn and inform your community if required
- Help each other
- door knocking to warn or inform people
- checking on the most vulnerable in the community and passing on any concerns or letting us know who would need extra support
- opening up a place of safety where people could go if there was an evacuation required e.g., the village hall
- passing information, pictures, videos to responders via the WhatsApp group showing impacts of potential problems

Want to find out more?

To find out more about becoming an emergency volunteer and whether a CERT already exists in your area please email Mark.Conway@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

The team can arrange a free training session to cover the basics of emergency management and there are regular training sessions which run in the evenings (all virtually at the moment 19:00 - 21:00 2nd Tuesday of every month) and are open for anyone to attend.

Have you got a skill you can share? Volunteers Required for the Online Daily Activity Programme

Central Bedfordshire Council delivers an online day activity programme for specifically for elderly, learning disabled, vulnerable, or isolated customers. The service provides a multitude of online activities and customers are welcome and supported to join in.

We are seeking volunteers to support us in our virtual day service by offering 40 minutes of their time per week to help to deliver an online activity. If you could share a hobby, skill, or interest which would be engaging for our customers, we would value your support. Currently we have a variety of activities running such as historical talks, news, music, exercise, bingo, storytelling, quizzes and more but we would welcome some variety and more activities which would be engaging, fun, educational and inclusive.

The Online Virtual team would be more than happy to work with volunteers' availability and would support volunteers with presentations and session delivery.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with one of the team for more information about times and our programme. We can be reached at oda@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Further Volunteering Opportunities

Community Voluntary Service host and support volunteers and voluntary organisations in Central Bedfordshire. You can register, search, and apply for volunteering opportunities, putting you directly in touch with the organisation. The Volunteer Centres can offer advice on the different volunteering opportunities that are currently available and may be of interest to you. To find out more, and look into local volunteering opportunities, visit their websites:



Community
Voluntary Service
Strengthening local social action

[Community and Voluntary Service](#)

Surplus Christmas and New Year Food

Surplus Christmas & New Year food is likely to be available from Aldi stores which are set to close on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day to organisations who support families who might otherwise miss out this Christmas. Organisations do not need to be a registered charity to apply but must:

- Have a level two hygiene certificate gained in the last two years
- Be able to transport and store chilled food products after collecting them on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve at 5pm

Get in touch through aldichristmas@neighbourly.com to register before 5 December.

Funding Opportunities

Reach Fund Grant Programme

The Foundation for Social Investment (Access) and Social Investment Business (SIB) have put a further £10million into the Reach Fund grant programme supporting charities and social enterprises to increase their resilience by taking on social investment. Funding can be accessed through social investors nominated as Access Points, who work with charities and social enterprises using small grants to provide support around issues such as business planning, financial modelling, and forecasting. Average grant is around £13,000. [Details here.](#)

NEW - The Helplines Fund

The fund 'will be used to provide grants of up to £5,000 to support the sustainability of mental health voluntary, community, and social enterprise helpline provider organisations, who have been operational/registered for 2 years+ with turnover of less than £250,000.'

Deadline: 3 December. [Details here.](#)

Central Bedfordshire: COVID-19 Increasing Vaccinations Fund

One-off grants of up to £2,000 are available to groups across Central Bedfordshire to help tackle vaccine hesitancy. These grants, which don't need to be match-funded, can be used to support a range of activities including, but not limited to:

- costs relating to community meetings (online or in person)
- production and distribution of information/printed materials, including signage
- translation services
- volunteer expenses or additional staff costs directly related to:
 - overcoming vaccine hesitancy
 - website modifications
 - information sharing and befriending services
 - transport to vaccination services

The scheme runs until 13 December. [Details here.](#)

Asda Foundation - Investing in Spaces and Places Grant

This grant is available for local grassroots organisations for the improvement of community spaces where the community can come together and thrive, this includes building repairs, building improvement/development or outdoor improvement/development. Grants between £5,000 and £25,000 are available, with matched funding required. Applications must be submitted to a Community Champion from an Asda superstore.

Deadline: 9 January. [Details here.](#)



Training and Events

Dates available - 23 Nov, 25 Nov, 7 Dec, 9 Dec, all at 9.30am.

The Gas Safe Charity is offering free carbon monoxide (CO) Zoom workshops this Autumn to help launch Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week on the 22 November. The workshops last about an hour and are a mix of practical information and interaction. They are aimed at staff and volunteers from any organisation that delivers a service in the home of a vulnerable person. This could be face to face or telephone support. The focus is on the sources, signs and symptoms of CO poisoning and the risks around low level poisoning and

what actions to take if you suspect this.

[Book here.](#)

Useful information

Green Homes Grant for cavity and loft insulation

Homeowners living in **Central Bedfordshire** can now apply for grant funding to pay for loft and cavity wall insulation from the government's Green Homes Grant Scheme. Terms and conditions apply and only private homeowners with a combined annual income of up to £30,000 will be eligible to apply.

[Details here.](#)

Share your stories

Every day we are hearing more and more stories of truly wonderful acts of kindness and goodwill gestures across our communities from individuals, groups, or organisations. Tell us who your heroes are and share your stories with us so we can share with others - let's spread the positivity!

Contact the [Community Engagement Team](#) or share stories with us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#)

