



**Bedford Council of Faiths**

Registered Charity No 1104910

Dear friend,

Welcome to our January newsletter. We learn about a new source of funding and how to obtain a free defibrillator which could save someone's life. Also, we discover great plans for local commemorations of Holocaust Memorial Day. Among other things discover how the Pope says British intelligence foiled a suicide bombing plot against him. Also, we learn about growing corn in the desert with no irrigation required. Among other things we discover surprising facts about Crossover Night.

**BBC civic carol service at Wotton on December 8th.**

Storm Darragh was at its height. It was very windy, raining heavily and dark but I was determined to attend this event, to represent Bedford Council of Faiths [BCoF]. On arrival my wife and I were received very warmly and taken to our seats. It was well organised with prayers, carols, readings and blessings. The lessons were read by: the mayor, chief executive of the council [ Laura Church], the Mid Beds MP [ Blake Stephenson], teachers, the speaker of Bedford Borough Council and Vice Lord Lieutenant. The Beds PCC [police and Crimes commissioner] John Tizard also attended. The music and singing were excellent. I met all the dignitaries as the representative of BCoF. It was a joyous event.



**Thank you to Virendra for the report and for the photo which shows: Mayor Tom Wotton, our chair Dr Virendra Soni and Mrs Wotton (wife of Mayor)**

## **Holocaust Memorial Day [HMD] events on Monday January 27<sup>th</sup>**

Holocaust Memorial Day provides the chance to remember the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions of people murdered under Nazi persecution of other groups, and in more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The theme for HMD 2025 is 'For a better future'. Find out more here <https://hmd.org.uk/>

Some BCoF members and Lydia [from The Higgins] have met to plan local events to commemorate HMD in Bedford.

Commemorations will start on January 27<sup>th</sup>, at 12.30 pm, at the Anne Frank Tree in Russell Park, near Bower Street, shown on a map here <https://maps.app.goo.gl/3mJPwWofCz5Hq9zH7>

It is likely to be similar to what has happened in previous years. We would like to thank the Jewish community for offering to participate. Several members of Bedford Borough Council and other dignitaries have been invited. We would like to thank everyone who has confirmed they will attend. So far, they include: the vice Lord Lieutenant [Christopher Hugh Sharwood-Smith MBE], members of Bedford Police and the High Sheriff [Bav Shah]. We hope to be able update this shortly

After the commemoration at the Anne Frank tree everyone is welcome to join us at The Higgins where the commemorations will continue.

**Thank you to Lydia for the following and in other ways [We are pleased to have worked together with The Higgins this year]:**

Holocaust Memorial Day January 2025 display and workshops at The Higgins Bedford  
Lydia Saul, Keeper of Social History at The Higgins Bedford is in the process of planning some workshops and a display in The Higgins Bedford reception foyer that will be available to view from Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January to Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025. This will include a short overview for the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp complex, and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. See <https://hmd.org.uk/>

HMD 2025 is an opportunity to come together, learn from and about the past, and take action to make a better future. The display about the HMD 2025 anniversaries will share responses from our local community. There will be a display of hand-crafted memorial candle-holders representing responses from our local community in memory of the victims. For more information about the display and other events please see the website <https://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Home.aspx> or email [lydia.saul@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:lydia.saul@bedford.gov.uk).

Lydia will tell us more, at the Higgins, on 27<sup>th</sup> January.

There will be a speaker at the Higgins on Friday January 31<sup>st</sup>. Details of this will be confirmed nearer the time. The talk may be given to a specified group of people.

There is more about the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust here <https://www.hmd.org.uk/>

King Charles will visit Auschwitz for the 80th anniversary of liberation. For more see <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/king-charles-to-visit-auschwitz-for-80th-anniversary-of-liberation/>

More information about local events may be circulated nearer to January 27th.

The Government has announced additional funding to support Holocaust Memorial Day 2025.

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-funding-committed-to-support-holocaust-memorial-day>

Also see <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/chancellor-pledges-2m-for-holocaust-education-as-she-praises-lily-ebert-in-budget-speech/>

To learn about HMD 2025 resources, click on this link

**[Learn about our resources launch](#)**

You can learn more about the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and can hear remarkable stories from survivors of the Holocaust by signing up for the newsletter here <https://www.hmd.org.uk/>

### **Bedford Borough Council urges residents to look out for vulnerable neighbours during Cold weather health alert**

Bedford Borough Council's Public Health team is encouraging residents to check on vulnerable people after a Cold weather Alert was issued.

See <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/news/2025/bedford-borough-council-urges-residents-look-out-vulnerable-neighbours-during-amber-cold>

One local NHS service is urging people to avoid going out early in the morning when the frost is thick

It has been reported that flu is rising sharply in England's hospitals.

See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c047ky5qv4ro>

See the related item below headed: **Help people with their health this winter**

### **Tell Streetlink about people sleeping rough**

StreetLink can be used by anyone in England and Wales to send an alert about someone who is sleeping or preparing to sleep rough. This may be especially useful in this cold weather. For more see <https://thestreetlink.org.uk/start>

### **Community Defibrillator Scheme - potentially receive a free defibrillator**

#### **We are pleased to share this**

We wanted to highlight to you that the British Heart Foundation (BHF) has recently reopened their community defibrillator scheme. Having a defibrillator and knowing how to do CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) will give members of your community a better chance of surviving a cardiac arrest.

This scheme allows local community groups to apply for and potentially receive a free defibrillator and cabinet which must then be made accessible for use within the local community. Examples of community groups that are eligible to apply include: church organisations and other places of worship, social clubs, parish councils, local social enterprise organisations and community centres.

A limited number of funded defibrillators are available in each annual funding cycle.

Applications will be reviewed monthly against a set of criteria so awards can be made

to communities that need them most. Areas prioritised include those with fewer registered defibrillators and communities where local health needs indicate a higher risk of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

For further information follow the British Heart Foundation

link: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/defibrillators/apply-for-a-free-defibrillator-for-your-community>

**Anona Hoyle**

**Email: [blmkicb.communications@nhs.net](mailto:blmkicb.communications@nhs.net)**

### **Congratulations to the five Bedfordians on King's New Year's Honours list**

Find out more here

<https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/everyday-heroes-award-winner-amongst-five-bedfordians-on-kings-new-years-honours-list/>

We would like to pass on our congratulations to all including Jaswinder Kumar who is on our mailing list.

Cass has sent congratulations to our Chief Constable, on behalf of BCoF, who has been recognised in New Year's Honours list as mentioned here:

<https://www.beds.police.uk/news/bedfordshire/news/2024/12-december/bedfordshire-chief-constable-recognised-in-new-years-honours-list/>

### **Holocaust educators recognised in New Year Honours**

This is mentioned in Jewish News. It reports that Stephen Fry was knighted for his role as president of MIND, the mental health charity. He receives his honour for his services to mental health awareness, the environment and to charity. It goes on to say that Stephen's mother Marianne was the daughter of Hungarian Jewish immigrants to the UK, and who lost a number of relatives in Auschwitz See

<https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/frying-high-stephen-knighted-and-holocaust-educators-recognised-in-new-year-honours/>

### **103-year-old Holocaust survivor and Olympic champion has died**

Ágnes Klein was World's oldest living Olympic gold medallist Find out more about her remarkable story here <https://www.thejc.com/news/world/jewish-olympic-legend-agnes-keleti-dies-at-103-bfuh6nwz>

### **Does life feel like it's speeding up? How to slow down time in 2025**

There is an interesting article in the Guardian with this title [dated Sun 29 Dec 2024]

Among other things it suggests being more attentive and mindful of our surroundings – such as the changing colours of trees or even changes in roadworks. It suggests spending time in nature is particularly effective. It mentions that volunteering and helping others can be beneficial.

[The value of helping others is also stressed by the Dalai Lama in his brilliant book: The Art of Happiness]

### **The Pope revealed that British intelligence saved him from an Iraqi suicide bomber.**

It was reported in The Times that Pope Francis was targeted by suicide bombers during a visit to Iraq in 2021. The story is in the Pope's autobiography that was

published on his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday. He said British intelligence discovered and prevented the plot.

We learned about this through the news briefing circulated by the Religion Media Centre.

Other items recently mentioned include: one about Faith and Football and another about how the Community Security Trust is reflecting on 30 years of keeping the Jewish community safe.

The newsletter is free and You can sign up here <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/>

### **Rise in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic hate crimes**

The Religion Media Centre, mentioned above, sadly, reports that police have recorded a large rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crimes and refers to this article: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cp83p4v4leno>

### **New Year message from Mayor**

This can be read here: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/news/2025/new-year-message-mayor>

### **New Year Resolutions**

I learned several new things from this received from the Baha'i faith:

It turns out that just about every religion and ancient culture has some form of New Year's resolutions. In fact, that's why we call it January – because at the dawn of each Gregorian year the ancient Romans made promises of self-improvement to Janus, their god of beginnings and passages.

That practice probably came originally from the even more ancient Babylonians, who had to promise to their gods at the beginning of each year that they would pay their debts and return the things they'd borrowed throughout the past year.

### **Family Hubs**

These are a one-stop-shop for parents and carers to find information, ideas and support for your family, no matter what the age of your children. Find out more here <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/children-and-families/family-hubs-and-childrens-centres>

### **Bedford Street Angels**

They do valuable work keeping the streets safe for our young people while the rest of us are tucked up in bed. I was lucky enough to meet the couple who started the organisation. I enjoy reading the weekly reports. Find out more and how you can help here

[http://www.bedfordstreetangels.org.uk/?page\\_id=189](http://www.bedfordstreetangels.org.uk/?page_id=189)

### **Opening Doors**

UNICEF has launched a new report together with the NSPCC called **Opening Doors**. This suggests that families living in poverty face significant barriers in accessing early childhood services. Find out more

here <https://www.unicef.org.uk/policy/opening-doors/>

### **Dine With Us Community Larder**

Find out more about this remarkable local charity

here <https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=XLidFbOV4K4>

The charity was mentioned in the newsletter of St Paul's Church which can be signed up for via the website <https://www.stpaulschurchbedford.org.uk/>

The article [from December 15<sup>th</sup>] made a good point. It said that the charity [which provides food and clothing to homeless and others in need] planned to use the church nave. They aimed to feed around 100 folks with a full Christmas dinner. The dinner is a reminder that the season is not all about beautifully decorated trees and finely sung carols (very nice though they are).

### **Bedford Winter Night Shelter**

Volunteers are needed see

<https://kingsarmsproject.org/volunteer/>

There is more information here: [Bedford Winter Night Shelter](#)

### **Smart**

This is another local charity that helps the homeless. They support people whatever their housing situation and have certainly developed in recent years. Find out more here <https://smartcjs.org.uk/our-services/> The charity is currently holding their Winter Appeal. All the money raised will pay for the costs of keeping Prebend Street open. If you'd like to contribute, please visit <https://smartcjs.org.uk/donate-2>

### **Text message and other scams**

These are getting more sophisticated. You may find it helpful to Follow these tips:

<https://www.saga.co.uk/saga-money-news/latest-text-message-scams>

I completed the following free course which was excellent:

<https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/interactive-version>

### **Newsletter with useful information from reliable sources**

The Community Connector E-newsletter has a wealth of useful information which is all from trusted sources such as: NHS, Public Health and local health providers. The latest edition includes information such as: who's at most risk from the cold weather and: "9 out of 10 children can catch measles if someone in their class has it." If you know of anyone who would be happy to receive this newsletter, please email [connectors@bedsrcc.org.uk](mailto:connectors@bedsrcc.org.uk) and their name will be added to the distribution list.

### **Show Racism the Red Card**

This is an anti-racism education charity, established in England in January 1996 to harness the high-profile nature of footballers as anti-racist role models to educate against racism throughout society in the United Kingdom. Find out more here <https://www.theredcard.org/>

### **Funding for Bedfordshire Police**

A letter from the Police and Crime Commissioner John Tizard can be read and you can have your say on the PCC's planned increase in council tax by clicking here: [Complete the survey here](#)

### **Change NHS: Help build a health service fit for the future**

**Change NHS** has been launched to hear your views, experiences, and ideas which will shape a new 10 Year Health Plan for England. This will run until spring 2025. Find out more here <https://change.nhs.uk/en-GB/>

### **Local news provided by the council**

This can be found here <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/news>

### **Information about Welcoming Spaces**

You may find it helpful to know about this <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/welcoming-spaces/welcoming-spaces>

### **Useful to know**

There is a lot that is useful to know in the newsletter for Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire. Click here [Sign up for your very own free copy](#)

### **Bedford Kindness**

This group has been overwhelmed by generosity. Find out more here <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/bedford-kindness-group-overwhelmed-by-generosity-as-advent-calendar-appeal-launches/>

### **Foodbanks**

Your help would be very welcome see: <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>  
Also please remember our ethnic Foodbank <https://ethnicfoodbank.org/>

### **Know anyone who needs digital help?**

The council is offering free help for people to learn more about computers. Find out more here <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/your-council/website-information/digital-help>

### **Growing corn in the desert, no irrigation required**

This is one of the stories in 'Reasons to be Cheerful' described as a: 'Tonic for tumultuous times.' It describes how the practice of dry farming continues to this day. Emails are free and can be subscribed to here

### **What went right in 2024**

There were 'mind-blowing' medical advances, species came back from the brink, renewables defied naysayers, cities became more liveable, and scientists showed how to slow time. **Find out more here:** <https://www.positive.news/society/what-went-right-in-2024-the-good-news-that-mattered/> **[The Positive News newsletter subscription is free]**

## **Share The Upbeat**

People who feel they may like to receive cheerful news more often may also like this provided by the BBC:

[sign up here .](#)

## **Happy Chanukah**

We received this message from Jewish Small Communities Network

Find out more

here [https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article\\_cdo/aid/102911/jewish/What-Is-Hanukkah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article_cdo/aid/102911/jewish/What-Is-Hanukkah.htm)

and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zj446v4#z3wws82>

## **Faith in Queens Park**

This charity does excellent work as shown

here <https://faithinqueenspark.org.uk/faith-tours/>

You can take a tour of three places of worship [a gurdwara [Sikh temple], mosque and a church] which are only a short walk from each other. I have been on a similar tour a few years ago and found it interesting and enlightening

## **New Year Greetings from MK Peace Pagoda**

We have received greetings from the MK Peace Pagoda. It is a lovely place to visit and you can call into the nearby temple and sign up for the newsletter as I did. Find out more here

<https://www.theparkstrust.com/our-work/public-art/peace-pagoda>

## **Crossover Night**

A friend told me that in Nigeria [ her country of origin] services on December 31<sup>st</sup> are considered very important and are attended by Christians and non-Christians. It is called: 'Crossover Night' and you have to arrive very early to get a seat. It may also be important to people of other faiths according to

this: <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-55483422>

Some services in Bedford are also well attended such as at Ss Philip &

James <https://www.northbedfordcatholics.org.uk/?s=2>

## **What is TellMAMA?**

This is a secure and reliable service that allows people from across England to report any form of Anti-Muslim abuse. MAMA stands for: Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks



They provide a platform for reporting incidents, offer emotional support, casework, legal referrals, and counselling services. Their website [ <https://tellmamauk.org/>] provides helpful information and invites you to subscribe to their newsletter. It recently included the following item about social media which includes several wise suggestions Click here: [some tips](#)

### **Time to mend some fences?**

This suggestion is made by the Methodist Church They say the quiet days after Christmas can be a good time to reach out to someone you've had a disagreement with or simply drifted away from. The Methodist Church is offering 13 daily mindfulness moments via email

In another email they suggest we should not look back on 2024 with a list of what needs fixing - but with an acknowledgment of what has been good. They suggest that being thankful for our blessings is an important practice that can help change and shift how we see the world around us.

Later they suggest that perhaps real self-care is about kindness to ourselves? Another suggestion is to take five minutes to sit quietly and do absolutely nothing. Breathe deeply, close your eyes, and let the calm settle in.

Their final suggestion is to reach out to someone with a kind note.

Find out more here:

[Hush the Noise - The Methodist Church](#)

### **Museum of the Moon**

St Albans Cathedral sent us this: "We are excited to be starting 2025 with the opening of the Museum of the Moon" It is 7 metres in diameter and features detailed NASA imagery of the moon's surface. Many activities will take place in the moonlight until February 15th. See <https://www.stalbanscathedral.org>

### **Check the long-term flood risk where you live**

You can check by clicking here:

[https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk?es\\_c=9A4F5BECE010DA1C83E8DF33A7D34A1B&es\\_cl=5712C89441A1E053CE85A84E34856C22&es\\_id=p48%c2%a340](https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk?es_c=9A4F5BECE010DA1C83E8DF33A7D34A1B&es_cl=5712C89441A1E053CE85A84E34856C22&es_id=p48%c2%a340)

### **Interfaith calendars**

You may find these useful. Click on these links to find out more:

[https://www.uwl.ac.uk/sites/uwl/files/2024-07/UWL%20Interfaith%20Awareness%20Calendar%202024-2025%20%5BWeb\\_2%5D.pdf](https://www.uwl.ac.uk/sites/uwl/files/2024-07/UWL%20Interfaith%20Awareness%20Calendar%202024-2025%20%5BWeb_2%5D.pdf)

<http://oldhaminterfaith.org.uk/if-calendar-2024-2025/>

<https://cedu3a.org.uk/calendar-2025/>

### **Bedford Council of Faiths [BCoF] upcoming events**

### **Wednesday February 12th 2025 at 7.30pm: BCoF AGM**

Our speaker is Simone Mingay [Clinical Nurse Manager, Health Equalities Service]. She writes: I work for Services for People who have a Learning Disability. We are a specialist service which covers Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton and we support people over the age of 18. Part of the work we are doing involves us reaching out to different areas within local communities, to raise awareness of the work we do as well as to try and support reduction of health-related inequalities.

Simone said the talk will aim to create a better understanding of the work that takes place to help people who have learning difficulties. It will outline the challenges they face.

Our venue is: **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
187A Bedford Rd, Kempston, Bedford MK42 8DG**

**For more information**

see <https://local.churchofjesuschrist.org/en/gb/england/bedford/187a-bedford-road>

**To attend by Zoom please use this link**

Topic: Bedford Council of Faiths AGM 2025  
Time: Feb 12, 2025 07:30 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93417315299?pwd=mCkN67r1QRLEsPApluZGFbHqCUwOUF.1>

Meeting ID: 934 1731 5299

Passcode: 783609

### **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 7.30pm**

Our speaker, Gabriela Pascari, will talk about her work as a Maternity Social Prescriber. Gabriela says: “Specifically, my focus is on supporting BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) communities where health inequalities were reported. Whether it's guiding individuals to the right services or personally assisting them in making contact and accessing, I am here to help. Also, part of my role is to interact with expecting mothers who may be missing out on the benefits of regular medical checks due to not being registered or not in contact with midwives, to identify barriers that they encounter in engaging with medical services. We work, together with other professionals, on accessibility and reducing the barriers.”

Find out more on the attached poster

**The talk will start at 7.30 pm and will be followed by an opportunity for questions. Our Venue will be Transfiguration Church in Kempston <https://www.transfiguration.org.uk/contact-us>**

**A Zoom link will be provided nearer the time**

### **Thank you to all who have offered a venue for BCoF meetings**

We would like to thank everyone who has provided a venue for our BCoF meetings. Offers for future meetings are very welcome.

## **BCoF Programme 2025**

It has been agreed that our next programme of events in 2025 will be on the theme of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We are approaching the following speakers:

1. Lloyd Denny - author of the Denny Review
2. Lila Begum. Senior EDI (Equality, Diversity Inclusion) officer at Bedford Borough Council
3. Simone Mingay (already booked for the AGM) Clinical Nurse Manager East London Foundation Trust - ELFT /NHS
4. Maureen Drummond - former EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) Officer Luton Borough Council, now working for the NHS
5. Healthwatch [ <https://www.healthwatchbedfordborough.co.uk/> ]

## **Other upcoming events**

### **Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings**

There are plans to open a: 'Library of Things' at Bedford Central library. A wide range of gadgets may be available.

**Find out more here** [Share Bedford – Share Bedford – a library of things](#)

## **Police hub at Bedford bus station will offer Cop Stop Surgeries**

For more about the location see <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/police-hub-opens-at-bedford-bus-station-amidst-arguments-about-who-should-take-credit/>

See also

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/news/2024/cross-organisational-collaboration-improves-safety-bedford-town-centre>

This will be open at a variety of times for people to come in and discuss any issues they may have. Please look out for surgery times and dates which will be sent via **Beds connected**.

**Beds Connected is the community messaging system for the whole of Bedfordshire.**

By registering, which is completely free, you can receive news and appeals, local crime information and prevention advice direct to your email address. Also, you can take part in a quarterly survey, getting your voice heard in what's important to you in your local area. You can sign up here <https://www.bedsconnected.co.uk/>

I signed up a while ago and have found it useful and informative.

## **From Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January**

There are several other festivals coming up including these:

**6 January 2025** Guru Gobind Singh Gurburab (Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh) – Sikh

**6 January 2025: Epiphany [Christian]**

See <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/epiphany>

Note that this is different from the 12<sup>th</sup> night:

[Twelfth Night 2025 in the United Kingdom](#)

**7 January 2025** Christmas Day (Birth of Jesus) – Orthodox Christian

See <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/common/orthodox-christmas-day>

For more dates see

<https://cedu3a.org.uk/calendar-2025/>

and <http://oldhaminterfaith.org.uk/if-calendar-2024-2025/>

**From Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January; Recycle your Christmas tree**

Sign up for Sue Ryder's Christmas 'Treecycling' collection service in and around Bedfordshire from **Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January to**

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025.**

<https://www.sueryder.org/get-involved/sue-ryder-christmas-treecycling/bedfordshire/>

The council is also offering a recycling scheme. You can contact them to find out more and perhaps sign up for their newsletter on their

website <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/your-council/about-council/contact-us>

**Friday, January 10: Action For Happiness is running an online course on Fridays.**

Find out more here [https://actionforhappiness.org/course/happiness-habits-zambia-0?utm=EM-3&mc\\_cid=8c70cdf42a&mc\\_eid=4bacfd4f8a](https://actionforhappiness.org/course/happiness-habits-zambia-0?utm=EM-3&mc_cid=8c70cdf42a&mc_eid=4bacfd4f8a)

**Saturday January 11: Human Trafficking Awareness Day**

**Find out more here <https://nationaltoday.com/national-human-trafficking-awareness-day/>**

**January 14<sup>th</sup>: Mahayana New Year**

A time of renewal and reflection for Buddhists around the world, this celebration is marked with meditation, offerings, and acts of kindness.

**January 14<sup>th</sup>: Orthodox New Year 2025**

See <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/orthodox-new-year>

**January 18<sup>th</sup> Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Starts**

To find out more visit <https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2025/>

**A Workshop for Carers on Tuesday 28 January 2025 from 9.30-11.30am**

**We are pleased to share this.**

Have you or are you caring for someone with a life-limiting illness or who is at the end of life?

We would love to hear from you to help partners shape services to help carers of children and adults at such a difficult time.

We are holding a workshop for carers on Tuesday 28 January 2025 from 9.30-11.30am for you to share your experiences. Join us online or in-person at The Cancer Wellbeing Service, The Robert Horrell Macmillan Centre (car park H), Peterborough City Hospital, Peterborough, PE8 9GX. If you would like to attend, please visit <https://forms.office.com/e/ext5e5XGwE> to complete a form or call us on 01480 499090, to confirm your attendance.

See also the attached poster.

If you are unable to attend you can still contribute by emailing your thoughts to [hello@caringtogether.org](mailto:hello@caringtogether.org) to let us know what would make a difference to you.

Best wishes,

Adwoa

**Ms Adwoa (pronounced Ajua) Date-Bah**

**Sue Ryder St John's Hospice**

**Community Engagement and Involvement Coordinator**

**Sunday, January 19, 2025: World religions Day**

The third Sunday in January is annually celebrated as World Religion Day. It was established by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States in 1950 as a way to encourage interfaith understanding.

For more see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/articles/zs6fsk7>

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January: International Day of Education**

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 January as International Day of Education, in celebration of the role of education for peace and development.

**See:** <https://unesco.org.uk/events/international-days/international-day-of-education/>

**Sat, 25 Jan 2025: Burns Night**

Burns Night, annually celebrated in Scotland around January 25 commemorates the life of the poet Robert Burns.

See: <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/burns-night>

**Monday 27<sup>th</sup> Jan : Al Isra' & Al Miraj [ Muslim ]**

For more information see <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/isra-miraj>

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January: Chinese New Year.**

Chinese communities across the UK celebrate Lunar New Year

See <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/lunar-new-year>

**Friday January 31<sup>st</sup> :Inspire Your Heart with Art Day**

See: <https://nationaltoday.com/inspire-your-heart-with-art-day/>

**Saturday February 1<sup>st</sup> Imbolc**

Festival: Pagan/Druid

Greeting: Happy Imbolc

[From Inter Faith Network Calendar]

Find out more by clicking on the following links:

<https://www.thereisadayforthat.com/holidays/ireland/imbolc>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imbolc>

[Factsheet: the Festival of Imbolc - Religion Media Centre](#)

**Help people with their health this winter**

**We are pleased to share this.**

Dear faith and community leaders,

As we continue with our winter communications and engagement campaign, we're pleased to share the next edition of our [toolkit](#) which covers the period 16 December 2024 through to 10 January 2025. In a change to the previous toolkits we have shared, this is a 4-week period – to take into account the festive period. As before, all assets including social media posts, videos, and press releases are available in the toolkit, which can be accessed on our website. You can easily select the materials that best suit your needs and share them with your communities to help amplify the messages.

Included in the toolkit is useful information including pharmacy opening times across the holiday period, advice for parents on common childhood illnesses and where to go for help if residents are suffering from poor mental health.

<https://blmkhealthandcarepartnership.org/winter-health/>

We'll be posting these videos on our social media channels, so you may find it easier to share the posts we put out on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. As usual, if you are able to share any of our messages, please include the hashtag: #BLMKWinter

We are also pleased to announce that we have launched a 'NHS BLMK Healthcare' WhatsApp channel – the link is available within the pack.

As part of our ongoing campaign to help local people access the right care this winter, our engagement team will continue visiting community groups to share important health tips and messages. If you are involved with any local groups or know of any upcoming community events that would benefit from a visit from our team, please don't hesitate to reach out to Anona Hoyle at [anona.hoyle@nhs.net](mailto:anona.hoyle@nhs.net) with the details. We'd love to hear from you and will be happy to arrange a visit.

We are always happy to hear your thoughts, so please feel free to share any feedback on how we can make our winter campaign even more impactful.

The toolkit and supporting documentation can be found on our website, which uses the accessibility software 'Recite', allowing translation in over 50 languages and formats.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sarah Frisby

Senior System Engagement Manager

Email: [s.frisby@nhs.net](mailto:s.frisby@nhs.net)

[bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk](https://bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk)

[blmkhealthandcarepartnership.org](https://blmkhealthandcarepartnership.org)

Twitter - @BLMKHealthCare

**Find out about a WhatsApp channel and other social media [linked to the above]**

Want to keep up to date with the latest health news this winter?

We're delighted to launch our new WhatsApp channel, where we'll be posting videos and information to help people stay well through the winter.

Through the Denny Review, we heard that some people prefer to receive information via video and audio messaging so we hope this channel will go some way towards responding to what we've heard and helping people understand where to get help through NHS services.

Register by clicking the link below and follow our channel.

WhatsApp: <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Vatq6V211ulQFUq0Dy1X>

WhatsApp channels can be found in the 'Updates' section on the menu bar at the bottom of your WhatsApp screen.

Please share and encourage everyone to follow our channel.

Many thanks,

**The Communications and Engagement Team**

Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board

[blmkicb.communications@nhs.net](mailto:blmkicb.communications@nhs.net)

[bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk](http://bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk)

[blmkhealthandcarepartnership.org](http://blmkhealthandcarepartnership.org)

X (Twitter) - [@BLMKHealthCare](https://twitter.com/BLMKHealthCare)

Facebook - [BLMKHealthCare](https://www.facebook.com/BLMKHealthCare)

**Monday 20 January 2025 : Move-It Monday**

Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board are looking for partner organisations in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes to join us on **Monday 20**

**January 2025** for our first Move-It Monday, a celebration of physical activity in all its forms

With Christmas and the New Year just a distant memory by the middle of January, it's the ideal time to shake off the cold mornings and get active.

We'll spend a whole day across our region working alongside community groups, churches, social clubs, charities and village halls to show local residents how to stay active and have fun while doing it.

Would your community or group like to join in? It could be a regular physical activity you've already planned, or it could be a one-off that you want to run on 20

January. Just drop us a line to tell us what you have going on by email [blmkicb.communications@nhs.net](mailto:blmkicb.communications@nhs.net).

We are also planning to drop in on some of the sessions happening around the area with some special guests to get photos and talk to people joining in with Move-It Monday, so please let us know if you would be interested in receiving a visit (but please note: we can't promise) or if you'd prefer to take your own photos and send them in to us afterwards.

Warmest wishes

**Anona Hoyle on behalf of Communications Team**

System and Assurance Directorate

Email: [blmkicb.communications@nhs.net](mailto:blmkicb.communications@nhs.net)

### **Tuesday 28 January: Identifying barriers to prevent ill health**

We are pleased to pass this on.

In Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) we want to listen to local people and partners so we can put insights at the heart of health and social care services.

On Tuesday 28 January 2025, we'll launch the first of our System Insight Network meetings, which will be held quarterly. The first meeting of the network will be held at the Rufus Centre, Flitwick, Bedfordshire from 2:00-4:00pm and 6:30-8:30pm.

The aim of the first System Insight Network meeting is to bring together a diverse group of partners, residents and stakeholders from across BLMK with a particular focus on prevention, to listen to the experiences of local people, identify barriers to preventing ill health and work together to make improvements/help people to live longer, healthier lives.

To make the meeting accessible to as many partners as possible we will hold 2 sessions on Tuesday 28 January 2025 [Click on the blue writing to find out more]:

- [2:00 to 4:00pm \(registration and refreshments 1:45pm\)](#) and
- [6:30 to 8:30pm \(registration and refreshments 6:15pm\)](#)

Both sessions will be held in person.

Future meetings will be held in locations across BLMK and each meeting will have a different health focus.

Outline Agenda

Arrival and Registration (1:45pm afternoon session)  (6:15pm evening session)	
Welcome and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the System Insight Network</li><li>• What do we want to get from the session</li><li>• Overview of the NHS 10-year Plan and the Prevention focus</li></ul>	
Workshop discussions by place <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the barriers to preventing poor health?</li><li>• What is already working well across our system?</li><li>• What does the Network recommend to support residents in preventing poor health?</li></ul>	
Feedback session	
Summary, thank you and close  (Afternoon session ends at 4pm, Evening session ends at 8:30pm)	

Please complete the short registration form to confirm your attendance,



- Afternoon session, 2:00 to 4:00pm [https://BLMK\\_SIN\\_afternoonJan25.eventbrite.co.uk](https://BLMK_SIN_afternoonJan25.eventbrite.co.uk)
- Evening session, 6:30 to 8:30pm [https://BLMK\\_SIN\\_eveningJan25.eventbrite.co.uk](https://BLMK_SIN_eveningJan25.eventbrite.co.uk)

Please do also let us know if you work with any service users that you feel would like to join the meeting, so we can work with you on making the meeting accessible to them. Please contact [anona.hoyle@nhs.net](mailto:anona.hoyle@nhs.net) .

If you are unable to attend, please do share this invitation with your colleagues as we want to ensure your views are heard. Our aim is to have a broad representation from across all partners and organizations to truly capture a system view and your support in that is appreciated.

### **A few points**

Please feel free to include any of the above in your newsletters.

It is assumed that any emails sent to this email address can be included in our newsletter unless it is stated otherwise – but items may need to be modified to fit the space available. Also, it is assumed that people who email are happy to be included in our contacts list unless they say otherwise.

Thank you for reading our newsletter.

Kind regards.

Peter Gerrish

Secretary of BCoF

For information about BCoF see <https://www.bcof.co.uk/>

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If you would prefer to unsubscribe, please let me know.