

Application deadline: Midday – Friday 15 January 2021

## Voluntary Sector Provider Contribution Fund Scheme Application Form

### Details of your Organisation

<b>Name of organisation</b>	Uttlesford Buffy Bus Association – Buffy Playbus
<b>Address:</b>	Little Pen, Littlebury Green, Saffron Walden
<b>Postcode:</b>	CB11 4XB
<b>Contact Person</b>	Rosie Juhl
<b>Position in Organisation</b>	Project Manager
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	01799522130
<b>E-mail address:</b>	rose.juhl@btconnect.com
<b>Website address:</b>	www.buffybus.co.uk
<b>Charity Registration No:</b>	1180905

#### Declaration:

1. I am authorised to make the application on behalf of the above organisation.
2. I certify the information contained in this application is correct.
3. If the information in the application changes in any way I will inform Uttlesford District Council.

Signed: .....  ..... Date: ...14/01/21

Name:.....Rosie Juhl.....

Position:.....Project Manager.....

## Details of Application

### Description of work undertaken by the organisation

Buffy Playbus is a unique mobile service that helps to reduce social isolation and loneliness and to increase the skills needed by pre-school children for early learning which leads to more positive transition to future education. We provide an opportunity for children and carers to come together within their own rural or urban community throughout Uttlesford therefore increasing chances for social interaction and new friendships to form.



**Making Crunchy Vegetable Wraps**

The double decker bus has been sympathetically designed to appeal to children and is bright and welcoming. We offer a wide variety of educational activities and stimulating resources such as painting, playing with sand, mark making, role play, cooking and sensory toys. These are linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and have a broad child focussed approach. We recognise that every child is a unique child and therefore provide an enabling environment which responds to their individual needs with a good balance of practitioner led and freely chosen activities that extend children's learning opportunities.

We measure the effects of our service by asking parents and carers to complete a simple questionnaire in March and November each year. We are then able to compare our impact, track our benefits and develop our service according to the needs of the families and carers. The comments below reflect data collected in March 2020 just before the first Coronavirus Lockdown.

100% of those carers questioned said that they would recommend our service to their friends and 93% said that they had made new friends through coming to Buffy. This is supported by comments such as, "It's a fantastic place to come to, not too frantic and small enough to help friendships form and for children to play safely" "Great activities, great value for money and a wonderful variety of toys"

We also asked parents/carers to comment on whether their child had developed new abilities such as mark making and fine motor skills due to the activities and games available on Buffy and 73% said this was a noticeable outcome. A similar number reported that their child was more confident with their peers and other adults due to the inclusive environment on-board Buffy.

Our specialist sensory area upstairs has proved to be a great addition to the activities that we can offer to children. Comments such as "My kids love the interactive sensory den, it's a magical place for them to play and they can control the effects that they create" help to confirm that this new resource is an important asset to our families. The touch, sound and light panel is popular with children and adults as it allows different sounds to be blended together with sequential lighting effects helping children to coordinate their movements and have fun at the same time.



**Magical mirrors inside the sensory den**



**Grayson and his Mum playing with the light and sound panel**

As a mobile service we are acutely aware of the increasing feelings of loneliness and isolation that many families and carers are experiencing especially now due to the limitations imposed by Covid. In March when we measured this hardship we found that nearly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of those adults questioned had sometimes experienced feelings of loneliness and over 10% said that they felt isolated in their own community. We asked about how a service like ours can improve feelings of loneliness and comments such as, “The friendly staff have helped me to feel less isolated as they are always welcoming and are willing to listen to me” “I look forward to visiting Buffy each week as I don’t drive and it is difficult for me to get out with a toddler and a small baby” help to illustrate the impact of our provision.

Before the Coronavirus crisis began we had been delighted with the growth in families attending our service possibly due to our new bus and analysis of the statistics from October ‘19 to February ‘20 showed an increase of 10% compared with similar months last year.

This would have meant nearly 300 families being registered with our service.

### **Our service since Covid restrictions have been reduced**

On March 20<sup>th</sup> 2020 we followed government guidelines and closed Buffy. We felt very sad to do this however we decided that in order to alleviate some of the loss of social contact that many of our families would experience we would increase our social media presence to support our Buffy families and we continued to do this during the first lockdown and subsequently now during the third lockdown.

As members of the Early Years Alliance we relied on their guidance to restart our project again and finally in mid-October we were able to explore ways that we could reopen safely. We reviewed our policies and implemented a Covid Risk Assessment. Initially we supported families at Carver Barracks so we could build on our understanding of how to keep families and our staff safe. We were very fortunate that we were awarded some “Start back” funding from a local organisation so we were able to buy hand sanitiser, masks, safety signs and additional cleaning products to keep both our staff and service users safe.

The start back was successful and we gradually increased the service to 3 full days supporting 8 different communities. We implemented a remote booking system and a strict limit of 4 families on the bus at any one time. 2 families upstairs and 2 downstairs. All adults have to wear masks on-board the bus, we take their temperature and they are required to check into Buffy using our QR code.

Although this reduced service is not cost effective our management committee felt that the provision of some parental and child support was vital. In order to cover the increased cost of implementing a booking system and a method for receiving payments online we have increased the cost to attend Buffy to £4 per session, however this will be reviewed in due course as we are conscious that we don’t want to exclude families who have limited resources. Our service at Carver Barracks remains free to all families.

We evaluated our new reduced service by asking families to fill in a questionnaire and these are recent comments that we received:

- Families felt safe and the precautions to safeguard everyone were well organised and easy to follow
- The layout and activities were much appreciated
- The staff were commended on their welcoming approach
- Many people said how happy they were to be able to get out of their routines at home and have some normality and fun with their children again
- The increased cost was acceptable to all who have attended the sessions.

**How many paid employees does your organisation have?**

3 at present, once we are back to operating a full five day service we will increase this with 2 more part time employees. We anticipate doing this once restrictions are lifted again in 2021.

**How many volunteers does your organisation have?**

10

**How many members does your organisation have (if applicable)**

Pre-covid we had over 300. At present in order to adhere to government guidelines we are limiting numbers to 4 parent/carers and their respective children per play session. During November and December 2020 we are able to offer 8 sessions over 3 days per week however we anticipate gradually increasing this during 2021.

**Who/what does your organisation support and in what way?**

Families and carers living in rural and isolated communities  
Pre-school children  
Single/ Young parents  
Grandparents who care for their grandchildren  
Families from different ethnic backgrounds  
Service families and families with limited family support nearby  
Families and children with disabilities  
Parents and carers who lack confidence to go to other larger support services  
Families experiencing poverty and financial hardship  
Families that are excluded from services due to geographical distance from larger communities and poor transport infrastructure.

- Regular friendly mobile service that is easily accessible
- Good range of play and educational activities including healthy eating awareness
- Well publicised timetable
- Collaborative working with organisations like Spangles Family hub, Homestart and Accuro
- Wide range of resources suitable for families from all ethnicities
- Disabled ramp and toilet facilities
- Welcoming and non-judgemental service that does not appear like a statutory service
- Provision for families on low incomes to have discreet financial support to attend our service
- Service available during school holidays

**How much money is your organisation requesting?**

**2021/22**  
**£5709**

**Please give full details of the use that will be made of any financial aid given by Uttlesford District Council. (Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary).**

Financial aid from UDC in 2021/22 will be used towards the costs of delivering our service although with Covid restrictions we are unsure how this will manifest itself throughout the year.

Throughout the Covid crisis our management team and trustees have continued to meet regularly via Zoom. This has given us an opportunity to reflect on and analyse our project and indeed our future. We believe that a service like ours working at grass roots level will form a vital part in the recovery process after Covid, helping to bring communities together again, enabling families to feel less isolated and building people's self-confidence to access other services.

By operating Buffy in the latter part of 2020 we know that we have procedures in place to keep our service users and staff safe however in order to adhere to social distancing we have to restrict the number of families accessing Buffy to 4 per session. Once the present Lockdown restrictions are lifted and as the year progresses with inoculations becoming more wide spread we aim to increase our service gradually and anticipate that by September we will be able to offer a full five day service again throughout Uttlesford.

When we return to our full service in September the costs will be similar to those from last year i.e. per 39 visits (term time + half term) to each community = approximately **£5709** therefore each visit costing **£146**. We are therefore asking UDC to support one community for a period of one year.

At present due to two staff members retiring in Summer 2020 we have reduced our staff costs and decided not to employ replacements until we are sure that the service can return to the full five days that we offered before the Coronavirus pandemic. Therefore when we resume again we will have the costs of recruitment and staff training for 2 new members of staff. The costs of running the bus have also reduced accordingly however our insurance remains the same.

In this unprecedented time continued funding from UDC is vital to the on-going sustainability and future development of our organisation. It provides us with credibility to approach other funders and gives us confidence that our service is providing an important lifeline to the community of Uttlesford.

(No more than 500 words)

**Name up to three things you aim to achieve in the funding period.**

Our aims in this funding period are to:-

- to alleviate feelings of social isolation and loneliness and improve mental health by providing a full five day service again as soon as possible
- to work closely with partner organisations such as children's centres and Homestart to support families during the post Covid recovery period
- to raise awareness of healthy lifestyles and the dangers of obesity by enabling children and their families to enjoy cooking together on-board Buffy and to have easier access to other support agencies.

**What is the demand for the service and how is this being established? How will your project/service find out what the views of its users are and about the services they (will) receive?**

Up to March 2020 the demand for our service had been growing rapidly and our forecast of a 10% increase in service users was within our grasp. Our registration forms indicated that approximately 300 families were accessing our service per year and before Covid we expected this demand to keep on rising especially with the increase in the local population, the reduction in transport infrastructure, financial constraints due to the uncertainties of Brexit and the increasing caring demands on Grandparents.

Now we have had to reevaluate our projections and in the short term these forecasts are considerably reduced. We have a loyal following through our social media connections and know that demand for our service will grow once the pandemic is brought under control, with the implementation of the vaccine and people feeling more confident to mix with others again.

Whilst running our reduced project in October, November and December 2020 we designed a short questionnaire to gauge the benefit of our service in this extraordinary time, all comments were positive and this has provided us with the impetus to restart our project as soon as we are able to.

Once our service resumes we will revert to our twice yearly questionnaires which have been very effective in eliciting responses that show performance indicators and soft outcomes as well as measurable effects. These findings form the basis of our future development. The twice yearly questionnaires are discussed at our organisations management meetings and our regular staff gatherings. Changes to our service are made when necessary and feedback to our service users is given through social media and included in our Annual Report.

**Does the Council encourage or support your organisation in any way other than financially?  
Please give details.**

UDC supports our organisation in facilitating the two networking groups that I attend as Project Manager of our organisation, The Uttlesford Children and Families Group and The Family Hub Advisory Board.

These meetings are an invaluable way for a small organisation like ours to keep up to date with relevant changes to the local strategies that affect the families that we work with and also enable us to have a voice within the community.

The opportunities to network with other agencies and collaborate have led to many developments of our service such as Spangles Family Hub offering Healthy Family Drop-ins on-board Buffy and a new project that we hope to start in 2021 will enable us to support families on-board Buffy who have children with disabilities. We have secured funding for this project from the British and Foreign Schools Society and are now waiting for the effects of the pandemic to subside so that we can start this exciting new project..

**A link to the Council's Corporate Plan is below. Please explain how your organisation or the proposed project would contribute to the Council's corporate plans objectives?**

<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/corporate-plan>

Our organisation can respond to the Council's Corporate Plan objectives by being transparent and accountable with our offer of support to the community in three specific ways

**Promoting Healthy lifestyles in diverse and inclusive communities**

- Allowing families and carers to feel less isolated and lonely due to the regularity of our service
- By providing a welcoming environment that promotes feelings of belonging and self-esteem
- By providing opportunities for children to exercise and have fun
- By enabling children to learn new skills and have increased abilities to transition to primary education becoming more successful and fulfilled in their future lives
- By working with other partner organisations such as Uttlesford Family Hub to facilitate Healthy Family Drop-ins on-board the bus raising awareness of the dangers of childhood obesity.
- To enable families to feel safe and able to form secure supportive relationships with their peers and our staff

**Improving Community Engagement**

- By consistently providing our service to 15 different communities throughout Uttlesford
- By encouraging the community who use our service to have a voice in the management of our organisation
- By taking part in community events such as fetes to showcase our service and inspire community commitment

**Working with the Voluntary Sector**

- By attending Uttlesford Children and Families Group and The Family Hub Advisory Board and disseminating information about signposting families to other voluntary support services
- By encouraging other groups to use the bus as a platform to get their message heard

**Are there any other organisations providing the same service as your organisation in Uttlesford? If yes, please give details.**

There are no other services providing a project like ours in Uttlesford. We are the only service providing regular face to face outreach support at grass roots level within a families own community. Family support and early years provision will be very important in the coming months after the pandemic has subsided and we aim to be ready to provide this and our collaboration with other agencies such as the Uttlesford Family Hub, Homestart and Accuro will be vital to positive recoveries.

**Do you work in isolation to these organisations or collaboratively in any way? Please provide details.**

Our organisation has enjoyed working collaboratively with organisations such as Uttlesford Family Hub, Homestart, Accuro, Health visitors and other health professionals such as a local dentist and we are keen to continue to provide this partnership working.

This may prove difficult initially until parameters are established due to the uncertainties of Covid however as we will all have an end goal of providing families with the most affirmative support, advice and positivity for the future I hope this teamwork can be achieved.



From other sources to be secured

£38,304

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**Total income**

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**Is your organisation financed or supported by other organisations, if yes, give full details, if no, why not?**

Our organisation is supported by The National Lottery Community Fund, Fowler, Smith and Jones, The Little Butterflies Foundation, Various UDC councillors, Waitrose, Tesco, The Co-op, Great Dunmow Town Council, Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden Rotary Club, Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden Round Table, Various private donors, Broxton Parish Council, Lottery and Amazon Smile.

We also claim gift aid on the donations made by our service users.

**What fund raising activities has your organisation undertaken in the last 3 years and how much money have you raised? Please do not include grants from Uttlesford District Council or other funding bodies.**

<b>2017/18</b>	<b>£923</b>
2018/19 Quiz, Car boot sales, Street stalls	<b>£3125</b>
<b>2019/20</b>	<b>£676</b>
	£
	£
	£
	£
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£4724</b>

**What percentage of your users are Uttlesford Residents?**

100%

**How many people benefit from your service(s) each year?**

Approximately 700 although with present constraints it is very difficult to give an accurate figure

**What effect would a reduction in the amount you have applied for have on your forward plan/service? Please provide quantifiable information?**

The effect of a reduction in the amount that we have applied for would inhibit our ability to restart our service and could mean that over 300 families remain isolated and lonely. Recent data suggests that

there will be dramatic rise in anxiety and mental health issues due to the pandemic and therefore it will be vital for our service to be able to offer support at grass roots level so that we can help to build peoples self-confidence and abilities to recover from the many issues that they have faced recently.

**If you are currently in receipt of a grant from Uttlesford District Council, what effect would a reduction in funding have on your organisation? Please provide quantifiable information?**

We are in receipt of a grant from UDC and this has been vital to help us over the last 9 months. We were able to furlough most of our staff during the first lockdown period and were aided by the government scheme (CJRS) with various levels of support during that time.

From November when we resumed our service we had been able to cease claiming furlough payments, however now with the introduction of lockdown again we will have to claim the job retention scheme (CJRS) possibly until the end of March.

When we restart our project hopefully in April we want to be able to quickly respond to the needs of families throughout Uttlesford and therefore to have your financial support will give us confidence to do this.

## Check List

- **Most recent Audited financial accounts**
- **List of extra spending due to Covid-19**
- **Medium/Long term business plan**
- **Copy of the organisation constitution**



I confirm that:

- to the best of my knowledge the information given above is accurate;
- I am authorised to make this application on behalf of the organisation named overleaf;
- Neither I nor the organisation is seeking to obtain any personal or financial benefit from the project/initiative.