

Application deadline: Midday – Friday 15 January 2021

Voluntary Sector Provider Contribution Fund Scheme Application Form

Details of your Organisation

Name of organisation	Carers First
Address:	Unit 4 (Ground Floor) Century Drive, Braintree, ESSEX,
Postcode:	CM77 8YG
Contact Person	Karen Johnson
Position in Organisation	Trusts and Foundations Fundraiser
Telephone Number:	0300 303 1555 / 07707 882 658
E-mail address:	karen.johnson@carersfirst.org.uk
Website address:	https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/
Charity Registration No:	1085430

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: 13th January 2021

Name: Karen Johnson

Position: Trusts and Foundations Fundraiser

Details of Application

Description of work undertaken by the organisation

Carers First is a registered charity, established by carers for carers. We currently support over 24,700 unpaid carers, aged 5-105 across seven localities including Essex. We work directly with, and for unpaid carers to provide personalised information, advice and support. Making it easier for those with caring for someone else to live their life to the fullest.

Our beneficiaries are unpaid carers and the persons that they look after. A carer, is anyone of any age, that looks after another person who could not cope without them. Care provided is unpaid. There are many reasons people require care; illness, disability, frailty, mental health issues and/or addiction. Every carer's story is different, yet issues they face are often similar.

We aim to be a trusted provider of high quality tailored, localised support to carers and their families so that they are empowered, respected and valued for what they do. Since 1st April 2018, Carers First has been providing carer services to unpaid carers across Essex (excluding Thurrock and Southend) <https://carersfirst.org.uk/essex> on behalf of Essex County Council. (We have contracts with Lincolnshire County Council, Medway Unitary Authority and the London Boroughs of Haringey, Newham, Hackney and Waltham Forest to deliver a wide range of services, including in Lincolnshire Statutory Carers Assessments).

Our core contract does not include training or social events so we seek external funding to cover the costs of these activities.

How many paid employees does your organisation have?

140

How many volunteers does your organisation have?

101 who provide added value to paid staff. Their roles include: telephone befriending, administration, setting up and closing events, mentoring, developing and supporting peer groups and forum members.

How many members does your organisation have (if applicable)

24,700 unpaid carers are registered with us across our seven localities. We currently support over 4,555 carers in Essex, 209 of whom live in Uttlesford.

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

We currently support 24,700 unpaid carers (aged 5-105yrs) across 7 localities by trained, staff and volunteers. Staff build up established, professional and trusted relationships with unpaid carers of all ages, improving their resilience, confidence, self-esteem and providing them with information, advice, emotional support and guidance to better support them in their caring role. We have a successful volunteering programme with 100 volunteers (many ex-carers) that compliments and adds value to paid staff.

Since 1st April 2018, Carers First has been providing carer services to unpaid carers aged 18yrs+ across Essex (excluding Thurrock and Southend) on behalf of Essex County Council (ECC). We have been working to ensure that we're represented on strategic boards and that our services are recognised by both health and social care. Across all our localities our approach is not "office based" but reaches out into the community to support carers in their homes and localities. We focus on the well-being of carers that is preventative, proportionate and supportive. We tailor our service delivery to the bespoke individual needs of carers.

Support is flexible, person-centred and outcome focussed. We aim to build up carers own resilience and empower them to self-manage and self-care. The length of time they are supported is proportionate to their needs and we never turn a carer away.

We offer several avenues for people to get the help they need either online, telephone or in their community (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic). Our services include peer support groups, 1-1 advice sessions, benefits checks, training, wellbeing activities, statutory carers assessments (in Lincolnshire only), carer forums and volunteering opportunities.

Our staff help carers to find networks of support in their local community and provide guidance to carers around their rights and emergency planning. Through working with other voluntary sector and health and social care partners our staff raise the awareness of the need to support unpaid carers, widening our reach and impact.

How much money is your organisation requesting?

£7,381

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).

We are requesting a grant of £7,381 to continue to fund our one day a week Uttlesford Events Co-ordinator. We were successful in securing a grant of £6,000 for 2019/20 from the Council to establish this role. During 2021/2022 they will continue to be responsible for:

- Part time administration support to ensure the successful delivery of Carers First activities across Uttlesford
- Designing artwork and branded materials to promote projects
- Publicising Uttlesford event and activities to public, private, community sectors alongside individuals
- Working with the Uttlesford Locality Team to co-ordinate all carer wellbeing packages, on-line events, digital groups and workshops including booking speakers, researching contacts and activities (minimum of three a month in Uttlesford)
- Ensuring all events are accurately detailed on our internal, bespoke carers database and amended as soon as possible if cancelled or changed
- Supporting the Locality Team Lead to track and report expenditure against any funding streams relating to groups or activities
- Referring carers to our on-line 24/7 support <https://carersfirst.org.uk/home> including “My Navigator” for self-care and self-management
- Liaising with the communications team to promote the events on a variety of mediums, including social media platforms, ensuring all the relevant information is correct and meets any deadlines
- Ensuring regular feedback is sought and acted on to ensure constant improvement of services
- Recording all group attendees onto our internal, bespoke carers database to ensure that information about the engagement is up to date
- Developing a strong understanding of the database to enable accurate reporting, ensuring that accurate database records are maintained and provide evidence to report back to stakeholders on the services we provide
- Keeping appropriate records and take part in regular supervision, appraisal and training
- Being flexible to the needs of the service and be open to changes in their work to support such changes
- Working within all Carers First policies, procedures, accreditations and standards

All staff should work within the ethos of the Charity, showing respect to staff, professionals, carers and members of the wider community.

These ongoing digital events and personalised support packages are being planned as we have recently been successful with grant applications from East of England Coop, Essex County Council Themed Wellbeing Support and Tesco’s Bags of Help COVID-19 programme.

The grant will be spent on:

- Carers First Uttlesford Events Co-ordinator salary
- Carers First general running costs
- Contribution towards printing and marketing materials / postage
- Digital training
- Contribution towards travel expenses (as we hope restrictions will ease during the year)
- IT equipment and mobile
- Carers FIRST organisational costs at 15% of total project costs (this is consistent with current externally funded projects)

(No more than 500 words)

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

Over the following twelve months we aim to:

1. Help more Uttlesford residents identify themselves as a carer and seek timely personalised support wherever they are on their caring journey. This will widen our reach and impact and increase the number of Uttlesford carers participating in our services and activities.
2. Encourage more Uttlesford residents to benefit from our digital support including those Uttlesford based activities alongside our wider carer support offer (e.g. African dancing initiated in London and 'Velvety Noses at Christmas in Lincolnshire). Both were digitally available and so can be accessed by all carers registered with us enabling us to support more of our beneficiaries
3. Encourage more Uttlesford carers to participate in our user involvement programme. This will help us to discover what services and activities they would find most helpful and to give them the opportunity to share their view, opinions, concerns and offer a way for them to directly influence our work, inform our strategy and our current digital offer. This model reflects our ethos of co-production.

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?

This project is for one-year continuation funding of our Uttlesford Events Co-ordinator. During the pandemic we have successfully moved all our support provision online and phone without any disruption to our carers. In the first year (2019/20) of this post we have continued to support unpaid carers in Uttlesford in the following ways and the Events Co-ordinator has been fully involved in this work by:

- 1) booking carers onto all digital events/activities
- 2) helping with the promotion of these offers
- 3) designing bespoke branded paperwork and compliments slips
- 4) carried out administrative roles including printing envelopes, writing letters and posting.

Between April - December 2020/21 we:

- Continued to accept new referrals and have 69 new carers in Uttlesford
- supported 387 Uttlesford carers with wellbeing check in calls, emotional support, signposting and referrals
- moved our face to face groups online via Zoom and held 16 for carers across Uttlesford and 9 for those caring for someone with a Mental Health condition (normally held in Dunmow)
- provided 18 Chat and Chill online sessions for Young Adult Carers across Essex
- started a new Working Carers group on Wednesday lunchtimes open to all Essex carers
- held three Carers Forum where all Essex carers could feedback directly to our CEO and Trustees
- held a Virtual Tea Party in Volunteers Week (June) to thank all our volunteers, including those from or working in Uttlesford
- Carers First is a permanent Care Navigation partner in the Essex Wellbeing (was Welfare) Service, facilitated by Essex County Council and Provide
- received over 50 sets of cream teas donated by Waitrose in Saffron Walden for carers and those they look after which our staff delivered with appropriate COVID19 secure measures.
- carers in Uttlesford with email addresses received 9 regular copies of our e-news plus a Digital Magazine during Carers Week (June)
- posted to carers without email a wellbeing pack during Carers Week (June)
- arranged several virtual activities to all carers registered with Carers First (including those living in Uttlesford) including African dancing, walks through an equine therapy centre, 'Don't Tone Alone' a six week course funded by the Carers Trust and talks by authors who have written books about their personal experience of caring
- sent nearly 200 unpaid carers in Uttlesford small gift and Christmas cards
- continued to hold monthly catch ups with volunteers, including those working from or working in Uttlesford and asked them to participate in a survey on our future volunteer strategy
- organised a Volunteers Christmas party in December alongside posting volunteers working from or in Uttlesford a thank you card and gift
- carers in Uttlesford without digital access took part in focussed telephone interviews with an external research company as part of our new strategy development work
- all carers known to Essex County Council, Carers First and some partners received an official letter in April stating that they were carers, which they could use when out shopping with or without the person they care for or in other circumstances as appropriate
- continued to network with partners and stakeholders across Uttlesford including CVSU,

Alzheimer's Society, Community Agents, West Essex MIND and many others. Uttlesford carers were particularly signposted to the Community Hub where necessary,

- been in regular contact with Princess Alexandra and Broomfield Hospitals (our specialist Hospital Team continued to support carers remotely as no one was allowed on site) so that Uttlesford carers whose cared-for were in those settings could receive appropriate support. At Princess Alexandra we supported 88 carers as well as setting up a Virtual Carers group, working on an NHS Charities Together bid and commenting on plans for the new build which all impact Uttlesford carers using this service.

In terms of outcomes for carers between April – December 2020, collated results for Essex County Council showed that

1. 99% of carers replying to surveys felt the information/advice was helpful
2. 98% felt listened to
3. 98% felt better connected to other services as a result
4. 99% felt better able to plan for the future.

One of our key objectives is to “Place carers and their families at the centre of all we do” acknowledging them as expert partners. We continually consult with carers to ensure that our support offer remains effective and meets their evolving needs, interests and capabilities.

During virtual groups and individual wellbeing calls carers we continue to ask carers what support they need from us now and what we should be delivering in the future. As a learning organisation we use this information to design our support offer. Creating a project carers' have designed, want and feel ownership of will increase its effectiveness.

We run carers forums across Essex that provide carers the opportunity to share their views, concerns and offer a way for them to directly influence our work, and the services we provide. Carers can also provide feedback through our secure social media platforms, becoming carer champions and representing carers on individual project steering groups and Board of Trustees.

We currently run a minimum of three digital carer activities specific to Uttlesford. In addition, Uttlesford carers can access our wider digital support offer. Financial aid would enable us to provide dedicated administrative support to deliver ongoing digital (and community-based once restrictions allow) activities and courses to local carers. We have been successful in receiving external grant funding (East of England Coop, Tesco's Bags Help COVID-19) for carer wellbeing activities, their planning and preparation can impact on our current, limited resources.

A dedicated post would be an effective way to organise these events giving our community teams time to concentrate on the carer support and development aspects of their roles for example engaging with primary care colleagues and providing quality services across all areas of our contract. In addition, we will be able to continue to apply for grants to add value to our current offer; widening the choice and opportunities for Uttlesford's carers.

Carers have fed-back to us during lockdown that “*I am lonely, fed-up and depressed*” and “*I haven't left the house for 120 days, this pandemic is stretching me to the limit*”. As a result of daily conversations, we know they are taking on more responsibilities, caring for longer hours, feeling more anxious, exhausted, socially isolated, not accessing respite breaks, concerned how to give vital support without putting themselves and their family at risk, struggling balancing caring, working and home schooling, lacking pre-COVID-19 crisis systems that provided support/respite all of which are having a detrimental impact on a carers physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Carers First Impact Report (2020) highlights that Carers First has helped carers:

- Find someone to talk to (78%)
- Connect with other carers in the community (76%)
- Provided information and guidance to help in my caring role (86%)

Carers Trust (2020) research reported that the support carers need is:

- A break or respite from their caring role and time for themselves (59%)
- Better health, social care and educational services (60%)
- More financial support (56%)

Carers UK (2020) "Caring Behind Closed Doors: six months on" highlighted that since the start of the pandemic:

- 64% have not been able to take any breaks
- 64% have worsened mental health
- 44% are close to breaking point
- 62% feel lonely

Carers can find out about our activities through numerous channels; in both print and digital.

- 1) Website
- 2) Social media platforms
- 3) E-news
- 4) Individual wellbeing calls
- 5) On-line group activities
- 6) Word of mouth
- 7) Carers Hub
- 8) Partner organisations.

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

Yes, we have a close working relationship with the Council:

- Carers First are a member of Community Response during COVID-19
- The Council invites us to upskill and raise awareness of unpaid carers services to their staff
- Are invited to relevant Council led activities and one-off events
- Receive ongoing referrals from Council staff
- Are a member of the Council led Dementia Action Alliances in Uttlesford and Saffron Walden
- The Council are on our email distribution list and receive details of forthcoming opportunities/activities
- We have a good working relationship with individual officers including the Community Development Officer, Tenant Participation Officer and Tenancy Sustainment Officer
- We have a positive relationship with Uttlesford District parish councils and Essex Association of Local Councils who promote our carer support services
- We are a formal partner in Essex County Councils "We Can" model and actively attend bi-monthly meetings.

In addition, we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council to support any employees who have caring responsibilities.

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>

Organisation:

Carers First model reflects the Councils as we put our beneficiaries first. One of our key objectives is to 'place carers and their families at the centre of all we do'. Through our user involvement programme carers know their views are being listened to and that they feel they have had the opportunity to influence decision making.

As a charity we aim to deliver cost effective and efficient services within our means and constantly seek to improve the quality of our contracts and external grants funded projects. We develop a strong and sustainable funding base to increase and diversify our income.

It is estimated the economic value of unpaid carers in Essex is £2.8bn (Yeandle and Buckner, 2015). This reduces the costs for primary and secondary care which is already at critical levels. If carers don't get the support, they need there becomes two patients instead of one. The potential savings on the health and social care sector by providing early, localised interventions for loneliness cannot be underestimated. By increasing our carer services, through an early intervention and prevention model we will reduce the number of carers reaching crisis; where they and/or the cared for need access to more acute health/social care or hospital admission.

By continuing to support Carers First the Council will continue to work with a registered charity to improve the quality of life for residents, including those that experience social isolation, poor mental health, obesity, addiction and dementia.

Proposed project:

Our project helps meet the corporate plan priority "*8 Promote healthy lifestyles in diverse and inclusive communities*".

In Uttlesford we support carers over 18yrs from diverse backgrounds including those who look after a person with poor mental health, dementia and an addiction. Our services are accessible, inclusive and free. We never turn a carer away.

Caring responsibilities can have an adverse impact on a person's physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing, quality of life, social networks, life opportunities, work and finances. Many carers live-in low-income households; are reliant on benefits, prioritise the needs of the cared for, lack confidence, have low self-esteem, feel angry, depressed, anxious, frustrated, stressed and rarely have time to take a break from responsibilities to have hobbies as they "feel guilty". Loneliness is a powerful emotion many carers experience in silence. These feelings have all been exacerbated during the pandemic.

Many of our carer's are unable to access respite due to their caring commitments. Activities can be difficult to plan, expensive, time-consuming with many carers lacking the motivation, confidence and

friends. Carers tell us that this means they often miss out on experiences that non-carers enjoy.

During lockdowns we learned different methods of working with carers to provide much needed, proactive and timely support. Through a rapid change in our service delivery we expanded our digital offer, building on our existing channels to provide a comprehensive programme of remote activities. These have enabled us to engage with new carers who have not been physically able to attend physical events with us. This has broadened our reach and mitigated against the challenges many rural or isolated carers in Essex face.

Carers have fed-back to us during lockdown that *“I am lonely, fed-up and depressed”* and *“I haven’t left the house for 120 days, this pandemic is stretching me to the limit”*. As a result of daily conversations, we know they are taking on more responsibilities, caring for longer hours, feeling more anxious, exhausted, socially isolated, not accessing respite breaks, concerned how to give vital support without putting themselves and their family at risk, struggling balancing caring, working and home schooling, lacking pre-COVID-19 crisis systems that provided support/respite all of which are having detrimental impact on a carers physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Digital activities:

- offer carers opportunity to access peer support; by meeting and talking to other carers in similar situations they can share coping strategies to prevent them from reaching crisis point
- develop connections and form friendships
- boost their mental and physical health and wellbeing
- increase their resilience
- improve confidence
- relieve stress
- create a sense of belonging that protect individuals from isolation and feelings of loneliness reassuring them they are not alone
- ensure carers feel valued, recognised and supported.

Carers First are also a pro-active partner of Uttlesford Health and Wellbeing Board that helps to promote healthier lifestyles.

We were one of the first organisations to partner up with the Essex Wellbeing Service. We are a registered care navigator plus partner. To date we have received 100 referrals from the Service, the majority of whom were residents who were not known to us before.

We also refer Uttlesford’s carers to statutory carers assessments at Essex County Council to enable them to access further support to help them lead happier, healthier lives.

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

- 1) Action for Family Carers <https://affc.org.uk/> who have been funded to work with Young Adult Carers (16-25yrs). A service we don’t provide that compliments’ our carer offer. In addition, they offer telephone befriending through Essex Befriends (a county-wide offer from Essex County Council)
- 2) Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden dementia cafes for people affected by dementia. These are support and social groups for people with dementia and their carers to meet up for social

companionship, peer support and positive activities. (During the pandemic these have stopped).

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

Carers First, is an outward looking organisation constantly developing partnerships and building relationships. Our approach is collaborative to ensure the best possible outcomes for carers. We do not work in isolation to Action for Family Carers and the dementia cafes identified above and have developed close working relationships. We work collaboratively:

- Referring to into their services
- Receiving referrals
- Promoting their activities in our regular e-news
- Our West Locality Team Lead and/or volunteers regularly attend the dementia cafés
- Attending events organised
- Running joint events. (Including an online event in December 2020) with Action for Family Carers of three taster relaxation techniques.

Your project costs

Please give an estimate breakdown of your running costs

Revenue Costs	2021/22
Salaries, NI and Pension costs	£4,568

Rent

General running expenses (phone, Post, room hire, insurance etc.)	£750
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Producing information, education and Promotional materials	£250
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Training	£250
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Travel expenses a) Staff	£100
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b) Volunteers	£50
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Recruitment costs

Other costs

Additional cost relating to Covid-19

Total revenue costs	£5,968
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Capital costs

IT equipment and mobiles	£450
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Total capital costs	£450
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Total Organisational costs	£962.70
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Income - current year only – Figures are from our 2019/2020 accounts as our accounts as out financial year does not finish until 31 March 2021.

From grants - £209,958

From other sources - £3,530,729

Total income

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

We are contracted by Essex County Council, Medway Council, Lincolnshire County Council and the London Boroughs of Hackney, Waltham Forest, Haringey and Newham to provide carer support services. In addition, in Lincolnshire we are commissioned to conduct Statutory Carers Assessments and manage carer direct payments to support them to maintain their own wellbeing and reduce the likelihood of hospital admissions on behalf of the local authority. Please see our accounts (attached) for more details.

With continued pressure on funding we have taken a more strategic approach to fundraising to grow our non-statutory / voluntary income to add value to our core offer. We have been successful with numerous grant funding applications in Essex including East of England Coop, local Tesco stores Bags of Help COVID-19 programme, Colchester Borough Homes, Fowler, Smith and Jones Charity and Waitrose.

During the pandemic local supermarkets have been very supportive donating vouchers to enable us to provide personalised support and supplied wellbeing packs that we have been able to deliver directly to carers doors.

We work closely with partners from across the private, public and community sectors to develop services that improve the quality of life for carers and enhances their caring experience. The provision of a range of person-centred, co-ordinated and outcome focused services focuses on identifying hard to reach carers, increasing their knowledge and rights and increases participation in their communities.

Across Essex we work with local authorities, GPs, Clinical Commissioning Groups, pharmacies, employers, hospitals, schools, Carers Trust, Carers UK, DWP, fire and rescue, further education establishments, charities (e.g. Uttlesford Community Hub, Alzheimers Society), community agents, local Councillors and local groups (this list isn't exhaustive).

In addition, we are also registered as a good cause with Essex Lottery www.essexlottery.co.uk/

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.

Christmas Campaign	£428.85
Essex Community Lottery	£333
Individual donations through sponsored events (2020 figure only)	£1,468
Total:	£2,229.85

What percentage of your users are Uttlesford Residents?

5% of Essex unpaid carers registered with us are Uttlesford residents. Any funding received for this project will be allocated a budget code and reference number against which all spend will be allocated and consolidated. Carers First can confirm and evidence that any additional monies received through this Fund will be spent in Uttlesford and benefit local residents.

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

We currently support over 24,700 carers across our all seven localities. In Essex we have 4,555 unpaid carers registered with us. 209 live in Uttlesford. By supporting the carers physical and mental health, the person being looked after also benefits.

Between April 2020 and Dec 2020 across Essex we supported 3,902 unpaid carers, 189 of whom reside in Uttlesford. 41 were brand new referrals to the service. This project will continue to support those carers who are already in receipt of our support alongside residents who identify themselves as a carer as a result of this project.

We have over 100 volunteers (many of whom are former carers) who will also benefit from this project.

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

If the full cost of the project can't be awarded we would need to offer reduced staff hours and reduce our management costs. (Management costs are consistent with all our other externally funded projects). This will leave us under-resourced and not capable of delivering the immediate support to prevent unpaid carers from experiencing intensified disadvantage during this current COVID-19 pandemic.

With current resources we would be able to deliver more on-line support if we had the administrative support available. Consequently, we would be not be able to increase the number of carers that we support as our lock down experience has taught us that online digital activities attract a difference audience to those who prefer face-to-face contact.

If we were unsuccessful, we would only be able to continue to offer a limited number of carer activities within Uttlesford using our existing Locality Team. Less time could be invested in developing a user involvement programme and consequently fewer resources spent identifying, recruiting, training and empowering carers.

In the long term, our inability to update and deliver a digital support programme based on carer feedback alongside widen our local carer support offer may impact our ability to win new contracts for carers. In a highly competitive environment, it is vital that we can deliver high quality carers services at a cost that local authorities can currently afford.

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 received £6,000 from Uttlesford District Council to deliver this project. This funding ends on 31st March 2021. Without additional grant funding we could not continue to fund a dedicated “Uttlesford Events Co-ordinator”.

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.