

Application deadline: Midday – Friday 15 January 2021

Voluntary Sector Provider Contribution Fund Scheme Application Form

Details of your Organisation

Name of organisation	Citizens Advice East Herts
Address:	74 South Street Bishop's Stortford CM23 3AZ
Postcode:	
Contact Person	Laura Hyde
Position in Organisation	Chief Executive
Telephone Number:	01920 459 944
E-mail address:	hydel@citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk
Website address:	www.citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk
Charity Registration No:	1083211

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: *LHyde* Date: 12/1/21.....

Name: ...Laura Hyde

Position:Chief Executive.....

Details of Application

Description of work undertaken by the organisation

Citizens Advice East Herts is an independent, local charity and a member of the Citizens Advice network. We provide free, confidential and impartial advice on any subject; the most common issues we see are benefits and tax credits (including Universal Credit), debt, housing, employment and relationships.

Pre Covid (until mid-March 2020), we operated from 2 main locations (Bishop's Stortford and Hertford) with outreach in Buntingford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware. Our Bishop's Stortford office, the closest to Uttlesford, was open 4 days a week for both drop-ins and appointments; located on the main high street within easy reach of rail and bus links.

In response to Covid we switched to a home working service and mobilised resources to enable safe and flexible access to our service via phone, email, online and in person where needed (with video advice due to be introduced shortly). This new way of working has proved very successful and we have been able to help even more people, including many new clients. At the start of lockdown we proactively called some of our more vulnerable clients to check on their wellbeing, providing follow up support to around 1 in 3.

We provide on-going and detailed casework on behalf of our vulnerable clients, tailoring support to suit client need. In 2019/20 we helped 6,509 unique clients (up 11% on 2018/19) with 14,325 recorded issues. Of those that gave a postcode we know that at least 6.4% (276) lived in Uttlesford (figures for those working in Uttlesford were not recorded). Since lockdown we have helped 6,520 people (to end December 2020), up 31% on 2019.

People need different types and levels of support depending on their circumstances and many of our clients required more than one appointment. We've seen a big channel shift as a result of closing our offices to drop ins (post Covid) but are now able to offer face to face appointments in Bishop's Stortford as well as home visits where needed. We intend to maintain this flexibility going forward, making in-person appointments for those who need them. This enables us to help more people and make better use of adviser and specialist caseworker time.

We hold the Advice Quality Standard mark and are authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority to provide debt advice. We know that we help 70% of people solve their problem and four out of five people said that our advice improved their lives, including their health and finances¹.

"Your service is amazing and really helped me understand in a far greater way, the problems that I needed help with."

We have a long track record of providing quality advice to residents of Uttlesford through support from Uttlesford District Council. These [short films](#) show the range of our work.

¹ Citizens Advice Outcomes and Impact Research 2017

How many paid employees does your organisation have?

18 (1 full time, 17 part time)

How many volunteers does your organisation have?

81 (including 10 trustees)

How many members does your organisation have (if applicable)

28 company members

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

We support our clients, volunteers and partners.

Our Clients:

Our vision is that our service should be accessible to everyone who needs us, with free and confidential advice.

In addition to East Herts residents and workers, our service is available to Uttlesford residents and workers who seek help in East Herts rather than Uttlesford. This might be because of where they live or work (Stansted Airport is the largest single site employer in the East of England) or due to better transport links. As a result of Covid we have seen a sharp increase in such residents coming to us for help with employment issues.

The clients we help include those most in need – they are 5 times more likely to live on low incomes than the UK average. They are less likely to be in employment or own their own home. 36% of our clients state that they are disabled or have a long term health condition (2019/20). However, in addition to providing a vital service to disadvantaged people and those living in poverty, we do not forget that problems and their consequences are not confined to the most deprived in our society – highlighted this year by Covid - and our advice is therefore available to anyone who needs it.

Citizens Advice research has shown that the problems people face have a severe impact on their lives and can make every day harder. Solving them stops these situations escalating but knowing how to move forward isn't always obvious. Our independent, confidential and non-judgemental advice helps people deal with their problems, improving their overall wellbeing and health.

“Having arrived feeling very worried, emotional and confused, the adviser [at Bishop’s Stortford] was very calm, informative, understanding and helpful. Thank you very much for a fantastic service. I now have the information needed to help me move forward and resolve my problem”

Case Study

Sophie (name changed) came to see us in our Bishop’s Stortford office. She lives in Uttlesford. Her sickness and disability benefits had been cut, leaving her unable to pay rent and council tax and facing eviction. We helped her to get her benefits reinstated and to claim for universal credit. Sophie is now in a secure home and we estimate that she is better off by £17,000 pa.

Our Volunteers:

Our advice service is delivered by local volunteers with support from a paid Advice Session Supervisor. Our volunteers give around 21,000 hours of their time per year. Using our HM Treasury approved model, the public value of Citizens Advice East Herts volunteers in wider economic and social benefits is estimated at £468,912.

National research shows that our volunteers benefit too², for example:

- All our volunteers gain at least one practical skill from volunteering
- 4 in 5 believe that they have increased their employability and that volunteering has had a positive effect on their health.
- 9 in 10 have an increased sense of purpose of self-esteem and feel more engaged with their community

Most recently, volunteers have commented on the satisfaction of being able to help during the pandemic, with one noting, "Volunteering at this time is a real 'feet on the ground' reminder of how extra tough and difficult life is now for some of the most disadvantaged people in society for whom life is a struggle even in 'normal times'"

Each volunteer receives training and ongoing support specific to their role. At Citizens Advice East Herts it takes approximately 12 months to train a Generalist Adviser. The average initial cost of training and recruiting a volunteer is £1,700 with an ongoing annual cost of £400. This investment of time and resources ensures that each volunteer is fully prepared for their role and that our clients receive quality advice and support.



Face-to-face advice session at Bishop's Stortford

Our Partners:

We work closely with partners across East Herts and Uttlesford to raise awareness of how we can help residents and to promote self-help materials, such as our online benefits calculator. Earlier this year we presented to Stansted Business Group (made up of local employers, business people and some Uttlesford councillors) and met with some of the team from Stansted Airport Communications and Corporate Social Responsibility to explain how we can support airport workers, with a particular focus on support with settled status applications. We send regular updates to parish councils in Uttlesford to promote our service offer and can give talks to local community groups (free of charge). We have led the adoption of the Frontline model (developed by Citizens Advice Uttlesford and used throughout Uttlesford) in East Herts, streamlining the client journey and creating closer local partnerships.

² The value of volunteering with the Citizens Advice service The benefits to individuals, communities and society Citizens Advice Impact Team, March 2014

How much money is your organisation requesting?

2021/22
£11,500

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).

Historically, Uttlesford District Council has recognised that some Uttlesford residents choose to seek advice at in Bishop's Stortford and has been financially supportive of the advice that we give to them. Whilst Covid restrictions have meant that we have not been able to see as many Uttlesford residents in person over the past nine months, we expect to start seeing more people in person from Spring 2021.

We are requesting funding towards the cost of operating our advice service in Bishop's Stortford. This includes the cost of a paid Advice Session Supervisor and overheads relating to the running of advice premises as well as advice surgeries and 'pop ups' from other community spaces, e.g. Family Centres, Jackson Square shopping centre (in person or via video link). It also includes a contribution to the cost of our volunteer advisers - recruitment, training and travel expenses. The annual cost of running our advice service across East Herts is £250,000 comprising of salaries, volunteers, and premises costs.

The funding requested does not include any inflationary uplift.

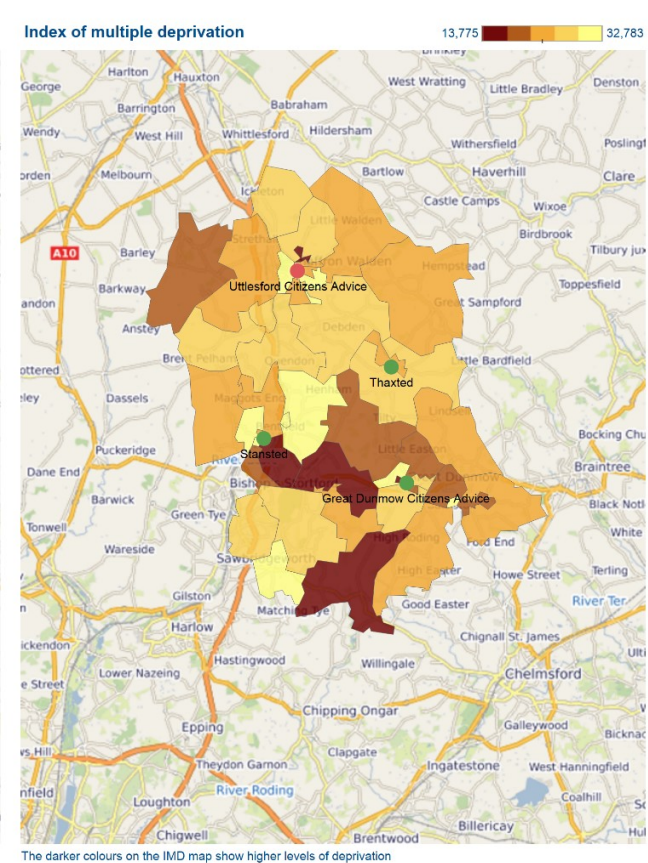
Name up to three things you aim to achieve in the funding period.

1. Improve access to ensure our services are there for those who need us – to be achieved with financial aid from UDC and generally.
2. Be more sustainable – to be achieved generally
3. To enhance external communication to ensure people know that we are here to help – to be achieved generally

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?

Post Covid, we have seen demand for our service rise considerably, with an overall increase of 32% on 2019. Employment issues have increased 127% with many seeking our help on furlough and redundancy rights. Housing issues have increased by 40%, for example with people needing advice on how to access rent or mortgage support or how to respond to an illegal eviction notice. Support on Universal Credit applications and issues has increased 14%.

Our research suggests that we can expect to see this trend continue, with issues becoming more complex as people face into the reality of their situations. A recent report from the Money Advice Service noted “It is estimated the number of people needing [debt] advice will climb for the next 18 months – potentially increasing by over 60% and peaking around the end of 2021.”



Our records show that 21% of our Uttlesford clients live in Takeley, 19% in Stansted South & Birchanger, 15% in Stansted North, 12% in Elsenham & Henham, and 13% in Broad Oak and the Hallingburys. Other clients live in other Uttlesford wards.

This map of the Uttlesford wards and associated indices of multiple deprivation shows that for a number of the wards where a large number of our Uttlesford clients live, in particular Stort Valley, Stansted North, Stansted South & Birchanger and large parts of Takeley, Broad Oak & The Hallingburys, Bishop's Stortford is the closest location for in person advice.

The map also shows that the indices of multiple deprivation for Stansted South & Birchanger, together with Takeley (the Uttlesford wards with the highest number of clients seeking advice from Citizens Advice East Herts) are amongst the highest in Uttlesford. Therefore, in addition to a demand from clients who live in East Herts, evidence shows there is a demand and a need for us to provide an advice service for Uttlesford residents.

We find out the views of our clients in a number of ways:

- National Citizens Advice carry out client experience follow-up surveys with clients via email and text on a quarterly basis.
- We regularly collect feedback from our clients via waiting room surveys as well as (post Covid) digitally. Of those surveyed since lockdown started:

- 66% say that our advice has helped them to understand their problem more clearly
- 65% say that they feel more confident about moving forward
- 97% say they would use the service again

Below is an example of some of the feedback received since lockdown:

"Very professional and knowledgeable advice"

"Your service is amazing and really helped me understand in a far greater way, the problems that I needed help with. Peace of mind and a huge lifting of spirits has occurred which is invaluable. I cannot thank you enough."

"I received professional, impartial advice which has helped me move forward with a difficult decision."

"Very helpful and understanding, especially when you feel helpless and have never been in this situation before."

We also ran an online survey earlier this year to establish how local residents wanted to access our service (results previously shared with Uttlesford Council). We plan to run this again next year, alongside outreach within the community.

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

No

Please explain how your organisation or the proposed project would contribute to the Council's corporate plans objectives?

We will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan objective to promote healthy lifestyles in diverse and inclusive communities in the following ways:

1. The need for Citizens Advice

Research shows that East Herts and Uttlesford are affluent areas relative to others in the East of England, however we can find pockets of disadvantage in every district. It's often harder to be poor in the midst of affluence than it is to be poor in stereotypical 'poor' areas. Services, funding, staffing, grants etc. all gravitate to the poorer areas, and so those who are in poverty in 'richer' areas are left even more isolated and excluded. In a previous section it was noted that despite Uttlesford being a generally affluent district there are some areas with higher indices of multiple deprivation, specifically Stansted South & Birchanger and Takeley. Given that the problems people face have a severe impact on lives, it is important to preserve advice services for everyone, but in particular the disadvantaged whose existence may be masked by prevailing affluence, and hence enable inclusive communities. Services such as ours are needed even more post Covid.

2. Helping communities be strong, self-sufficient, resilient and supportive to support vulnerable individuals and communities

We encourage the local community to support itself through volunteering. Our volunteers, ranging in age from 19 to 80 are the backbone of our organisation. Without them we could not exist. In return we help our volunteers:

- Have the experience and confidence to move into work, improve employment prospects and salaries through skill development
- Improve their self-esteem, reduce isolation and have an increased ability to get on
- Experience a sense of belonging, through working with local people, increasing community trust

Our commitment to value diversity and promote equality means we can encourage individuals who might not otherwise volunteer.

All this has a value in terms of volunteer contribution to society, as well as reduced costs of provisions for those people that otherwise might have required state support, through the NHS or benefits system. In 2019/20 the financial value of our volunteers was at least £468,000. By strengthening communities and bringing people closer together, this improves social cohesion and gives people a greater stake in their local area.

Volunteer feedback:

“It really helped the transition from full time work to retirement in so far as one day you are doing a professional job, next day you need an identity”

“Every day I work at Citizens Advice is different: you never know whom you are going to meet or talk to, or what the challenges are going to be. I love this kind of work – it keeps me on my toes!”

3. Promoting healthy life styles

We will contribute to the Council's health and wellbeing agenda through our advice work. The main determinants of health are socio-economic. If we want to promote good health, prevent ill health and reduce inequalities in health, we must act on the social determinants that are likely to impair people's health (Marmot 2010). Our advice helps and supports people on a wide range of issues that comprise many of the social determinants of health, for example, income maximisation, debt management, homelessness and housing problems, employment problems and domestic abuse.

9 in 10 people told us their problem affected their lives negatively in 1 or more ways including becoming stressed, depressed or anxious, having health difficulties or money worries. 70% of clients, after advice, say they feel less stressed, depressed or anxious; they have better physical health (46%) and more money to spend (44%).³

We also often enable clients to make material differences to their lives, helping mitigate social inequalities that can lead to health inequalities.

³ Citizens Advice Outcomes and Impact Research 2017

4. Housing and homelessness support

We advise people on a range of issues however in 2019/20 11% of all the issues we dealt with concerned housing. We support the local community to be able to afford suitable housing by helping them with income maximisation and benefit checks. We help people who are in debt retain their accommodation or calculate more affordable housing. We play a key part in homelessness prevention and help clients navigate private and rented housing legislation and benefits regulations.

We will also contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan objective to be responsible with money and reduce the impact of government cuts, in the following ways:

Due to our volunteer model and tight financial management, our service offers excellent value for money.

We have a diverse funding portfolio including district, town and parish councils, funding from trusts and foundations and unrestricted income raised by a range of community fundraising activities including a long-running '100 club', marathon runs and birthday donations. Our HM Treasury approved model calculates that in 2019/20, for every £1 invested, Citizens Advice East Herts itself delivered £5.39 in fiscal benefits (i.e. savings to government and public services) and £33.81 in public value (i.e. wider economic and social benefits), in addition to the £22.95 in financial outcomes to the people we help. With regard to preventing homelessness and housing evictions alone, the savings we made for our local authorities totalled £3,295,700.

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

Uttlesford Citizens Advice provides a similar service to our organisation in Uttlesford. However, due to the geography of Uttlesford and the location of Stansted Airport some Uttlesford residents – particularly those living in wards near the East Herts border - choose to visit our service based in Bishop's Stortford. Uttlesford District Council has historically chosen to recognise this by giving our organisation a grant.

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

We communicate regularly with Uttlesford Citizens Advice to ensure that there is minimum duplication of service and that clients are able to access advice at the location of their choice. We are working with Uttlesford Citizens Advice to meet the unmet client advice need in Stansted.

We liaise beforehand to ensure that our presentations to the Council's Community evening are complimentary and not repetitive.

We are in the process of adopting the Frontline model (developed by Citizens Advice Uttlesford and used throughout Uttlesford) in East Herts, streamlining the client journey and creating closer local partnerships.

Your project costs

Please give an estimate breakdown of your running costs

Revenue Costs	2021/22
Salaries, NI and Pension costs	£183,000

Rent	£ 23,000
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General running expenses (phone, Post, room hire, insurance etc.)	£ 32,000
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Producing information, education and Promotional materials	£ 3,000
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Training	£ 2,500
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Travel expenses a) Staff	£ 2,500
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b) Volunteers	£ 4,000
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Recruitment costs	£ 0
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Other costs

Additional cost relating to Covid-19

Total revenue costs	£250,000
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Capital costs

Total capital costs	£0
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Total Organisational costs (service)	£250,000 (for our core unrestricted service)
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Income - current year only

From grants and core unrestricted income)	£481,000 (includes restricted project
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From other sources	£ 41,000
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Total income	£522,000
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Is your organisation financed or supported by other organisations, if yes, give full details, if no, why not?

Grants and donations 2019/20 (unrestricted)

East Herts Council - £151,698
 Buntingford Town Council -£2,916
 Hertford Town Council -£1,200
 Sawbridgeworth Town Council - £278
 Parish Councils - £1,350
 (Uttlesford District Council - £11,500)

Grants and donations 2019/20 (restricted)

Hertfordshire Community Foundation (Training) - £932
 Hertfordshire County Council (Keep Safe Keep Well project) - £6,150
 Ware Charities (Ware outreach) - £8,312
 East Herts Council (Homelessness Prevention and Settled Status project) - £27,317
 Citizens Advice (Universal credit project) - £82,265
 Herts Citizens Advice Service (Scams & Crisis projects) - £28,647
 Henry Smith (Mental health project) - £33,750
 Friends of EHCAS (Training) - £2,000
 Big Lottery Fund (Training) -£5,603
 HCC Locality Grants -£2,810

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.

Friends of East Herts Citizens Advice Service	5,750
Brazier Trust	2,500
Public sponsorship / donations	4,499
Gilfrere Fund	2,000
Henry Smith Charity	51,550
Hertfordshire Community Foundation	16,902
Ware Charities	25,062
Big Lottery	29,171
Parish & Town Councils	16,947
Hertfordshire County Council locality grants	4,959
Total:	£141,313

What percentage of your users are Uttlesford Residents?

2019/20 Of the 1,516 clients receiving advice from our Bishop's Stortford office who gave a postcode, 215 (14%) lived in Uttlesford.

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

In 2019/20 Citizens Advice East Herts helped 6,509 unique clients with 14,325 recorded issues. People need different types and levels of support depending on their circumstances and many of our clients required more than one appointment. Of the 2,517 clients receiving advice from our Bishop's Stortford office who gave a postcode, 276 lived in Uttlesford. (NB. The overall percentage of Uttlesford clients has reduced but the actual client number has increased – from 264 in 2018/19.)

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

We have requested funding for a contribution towards the cost of operating our advice service in Bishop's Stortford. This includes the cost of a paid Advice Session Supervisor and overheads relating to the running of physical locations and advice surgeries within the community. It also includes a contribution to the cost of our volunteer advisers including recruitment, training and travel expenses.

If we were not fully successful in our funding application then, depending on how much the reduction in funding was, then we may have to look at reducing the opening hours we offer in Bishop's Stortford from 4 days per week to 3 days.

A reduction in funding would also have an impact on the number of new advisers we could recruit and train. It takes approximately 12 months to train as an adviser. The average initial cost of training and recruiting a volunteer adviser is £2,800 with an ongoing annual cost of £1,600. Our volunteers stay with us for an average 9 years. Without investing in recruiting and training of volunteer advisers we would not be able to help as many clients per day, or help them with complex, or ongoing issues.

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?

Please see above

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.