

CITIZENS ADVICE EAST SUSSEX

BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN **2008/09 – 2010/11**



Reviewed and adopted 04/02/08

To be reviewed 2009

Background

Citizens Advice East Sussex was established in 2005 and is a consortium of all the Citizens Advice Bureaux operating across East Sussex.

The purpose of the consortium is:-

To identify and develop options for improving services to clients throughout East Sussex by closer working between individual Citizens Advice Bureaux, and to provide, where appropriate, a single point of contact for funding agencies.

Citizen Advice East Sussex is a registered charity (No. 1112226) and a Company limited by Guarantee (No. 05590977). It is governed by a Board of Trustees drawn from the Chairs and Trustees of the constituent Bureaux, advised by the Chief Officers of the constituent Bureaux.

Citizens Advice East Sussex believes that by working more closely together the constituent Bureaux will:

- Achieve a more effective delivery and co-ordinated approach to the provision of advice services across the county of East Sussex, including the monitoring and evaluation of County-wide outputs and outcomes.
- Be better equipped to analyse and identify existing gaps in service provision and to develop new services to meet those needs.
- Provide greater opportunities to access funding for the development and provision of new services.
- Enable the more effective establishment of robust partnerships with other organisations within the statutory, voluntary and private sectors.
- Where appropriate, be a single point of contact for funding agencies.

Each constituent Bureau will retain the responsibility to develop and deliver local services within its own geographical area, and to secure the necessary funding to ensure the sustainability of those services. Each constituent Bureau will retain its own status as an independent charity with its own governance and management arrangements. Citizens Advice East Sussex will provide added value by enabling new cross-boundary and County-wide initiatives to be undertaken and facilitating a coordinated and consistent approach to service delivery.

Citizens Advice East Sussex has developed a framework and protocols for communication and to provide guidance. The protocols, in recognition of individual Bureaux existing commitments, capacity and planning processes aim to facilitate the effective design, development and management of projects and initiatives undertaken under the umbrella of the consortium of Citizens Advice East Sussex. It aims to ensure effective, efficient and transparent communication that builds ownership whilst maximizing the

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potential to draw on experience and capacity from across the consortium and
minimizing the impact on workloads through over consultation and
communication overload.

To date the tried and tested approach has been what has become known as “The Lead Bureau” approach. This builds on the particular expertise and capacity of a specific bureau and gives a clear role to that bureau to take work forward. Whilst other approaches are not excluded, it is anticipated this will remain the main way of taking forward work through the consortium

Citizens Advice East Sussex has developed this Business Plan to inform its work and development over the next three years, and to demonstrate its commitment to provide a comprehensive range of quality advice services in response to the needs of the local community.

Our strategic aims

Our work programme over the next three years will be informed by seven strategic aims as follows -

1. To ensure that CAB advice services across the County of East Sussex are delivered, monitored and evaluated on a consistent basis to common quality standards.
2. To ensure that the changing needs of the communities of East Sussex are analysed on an ongoing basis and that gaps in service provision are identified and addressed.
3. To ensure that our strategic approach towards service provision is consistent with the priorities identified by stakeholder and partner organisations.
4. To develop robust and effective partnerships with appropriate agencies in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to secure better outcomes for the communities that we serve.
5. To secure funding to enable the development and delivery of effective and sustainable services across the County.
6. To promote and market the work of Citizens Advice East Sussex and the constituent Bureaux in order to make our services more accessible, increase our volunteer recruitment and attract additional funding.
7. To be a centre of excellence that provides a model of good practice for Citizens Advice Bureaux in other Counties to emulate.

Activities to achieve our aims

1. To ensure that CAB advice services across the County of East Sussex are delivered, monitored and evaluated on a consistent basis to common quality standards.

The five Chief Officers (Managers/Chief Executives) of the constituent Bureaux, or their nominated representatives will meet together on a regular basis (at least four times per annum) to discuss and review the systems, processes and methodology for service delivery deployed within their own Bureau so as to ensure that, where appropriate, a common approach is adopted (this will be known as the Bureau Managers Meeting).

The Bureau Managers Meeting will report to the Board of Citizens Advice East Sussex on a six monthly basis setting out an agreed schedule of service delivery statistics for that period, including numbers of clients, client contacts, issues, amounts of benefits secured, quantity of debt managed etc. in each Bureau. Any anomalies in the schedule that cannot be ascribed to normal fluctuations in workload will be analysed to ensure that data are being collected on a consistent basis.

Citizens Advice East Sussex will use this management information to analyse and identify trends in service take up and to demonstrate to partner organisations and other stakeholders the outputs being achieved across the County.

Citizens Advice East Sussex will explore options for sharing training and experience among the constituent Bureaux so as to facilitate consistent ways of working between volunteers from different Bureaux.

The constituent Bureaux will continue to be audited on a regular basis by Citizens Advice to ensure that quality standards are maintained with each organisation.

2. To ensure that the changing needs of the communities of East Sussex are analysed on an ongoing basis and that gaps in service provision are identified and addressed.

Citizens Advice East Sussex will use the management information collected by the constituent Bureaux as a basis for identifying trends in service take up. It will also look at information gathered by the constituent Bureaux from client surveys, and intelligence gained from partner agencies, to identify any apparent gaps in services and/or need for additional services. This will inform a brief County-wide service review that will be undertaken by Citizens Advice East Sussex on an annual basis. The results of this review, including any recommendations about the need for additional services, will be discussed with appropriate stakeholders and partner organisations.

A consistent and coordinated approach will be developed and adopted in respect of client satisfaction surveys so that the data collected by individual Bureaux can be aggregated and used to track client satisfaction trends across the County.

3. To ensure that our strategic approach towards service provision is consistent with the priorities identified by stakeholder and partner organisations.

Citizens Advice East Sussex will be an active participant in County wide fora and will maintain an open dialogue with County, Borough and District Councils to ensure that our approach is consistent with, and contributes to, the priorities, objectives and targets of other strategic plans.

Citizens Advice East Sussex will sign up to the local Compact and will seek to work in a spirit of partnership and cooperation with other agencies in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to secure the best outcomes for the people of East Sussex.

4. To develop robust and effective partnerships with appropriate agencies in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to secure better outcomes for the communities that we serve.

Citizens Advice East Sussex has developed some experience of working in partnership with Age Concern, British Legion and Childrens Centres. We will continue to be pro-active in seeking to develop partnerships that enable us to fill gaps by extending and developing the service we are able to provide.

5. To secure funding to enable the development and delivery of effective and sustainable services across the County.

Citizens Advice East Sussex has already been successful in securing funding for the provision of County-wide services in the following areas –

- Work within Children's Centres
- Work with existing members of the armed forces and ex-servicemen

We will work together to identify the need for new services and to assess what our priorities should be for exploring the development of new services and how we should respond to any funding opportunities, in particular where these will enable us to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

The priorities for exploring new possibilities to develop new service provision and funding through and for CAES in 2008/09 have been identified as:

- *Increasing our services and ability to build **Financial Capability***
- *Increasing our capacity to support **Older People** to access all entitlements*
- *Extending the successful Hastings **Mental Health** project to East Sussex*
- *Strengthening the **LSC** partnership and putting ourselves in a good position to be part of a successful bid for an LSC CLAN.*

These are new developments, in addition to the on going work and projects, such as the RBL project and commitments to work together to share experiences and strengthen the quality of our work.

We will seek to secure core funding from East Sussex County Council at the time of the next available funding round. In so doing we will demonstrate how the services provided by the Citizens Advice East Sussex and its constituent Bureau impact positively on the

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social and economic wellbeing of the County and reduce budgetary pressures on other County Council services.

We will seek to secure funding from a wide variety of sources, including the statutory and private sectors and charitable trusts. We will maintain and update a spreadsheet setting out existing funding streams, funding applications awaiting decision, funding applications being worked on and possibilities for funding to be explored. We will use the resources available from East Sussex County Council and other sources of information to research funding possibilities.

6. To promote and market the work of Citizens Advice East Sussex and the constituent Bureaux in order to make our services more accessible, increase our volunteer recruitment and attract additional funding.

Citizens Advice East Sussex will promote and market its services through its website at www.escab.org.uk and the websites of the constituent Bureaux. The website will be regularly updated to ensure that correct and timely information is available to users.

We will also promote and market our work through participation in public events, giving talks and presentations, production of information and marketing leaflets and through the local media.

We will develop a marketing strategy within the next 12 months which will be formally reviewed on an annual basis.

7. To be a centre of excellence that provides a model of good practice for Citizens Advice Bureaux in other Counties to emulate.

In the short time since Citizens Advice East Sussex was formed other Citizens Advice Bureaux from all over the UK have contacted us wishing to learn from our experience and develop consortia within their own areas.

We believe that following the consortium approach will become increasingly important for small Bureaux seeking to adapt to the changing external environment, where services and funding allocations to provide those services are being rolled out over wider geographical areas than hitherto.

We believe that Citizens Advice Bureau services are as relevant and essential today (if not more so) than they were when the Citizens Advice movement was founded in 1945. We wish to play our part in helping Bureaux from elsewhere adapt to the changes necessary to ensure their ongoing vitality and sustainability.

We will continue to meet with and advise colleagues from other areas about the mechanisms for setting up a County-wide consortium and to share with them the lessons that we have learned, and continue to learn, from our own experience.

2008-09 Action Plan

Target	Lead	By when	Comment
1. To ensure that CAB advice services across the County of East Sussex are delivered, monitored and evaluated on a consistent common quality standard.			
Develop consistent methodology for client satisfaction surveys	CM	Feb 2008	
Produce and coordinate County wide statistical reports	CM	12/07 02/08 06/08 12/08	
Explore options for sharing training and experience	?	Oct 2007	
2. To ensure that the changing needs of the communities of East Sussex are analysed on an ongoing basis and that gaps in provision are identified and addressed			
CAES to undertake County-wide service Review	?	October 2008	to inform budget planning 2009/10
3. To ensure that our strategic approach towards service provision is consistent with the priorities identified by stakeholder and organisations.			
Meeting with ESCC at least annually	Chair	End 2007	Meeting with Becky Shaw to be set up
Participate in local stakeholder fora	?	ongoing	e.g. Voices successor body, Change Up

4. To develop robust and effective partnerships with appropriate agencies in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to secure outcomes for the communities that we serve.			
Pursue discussions with Probation Service	PG/MN	End 2007	
Pursue discussions with WEL	DT	Mar 2008	
Pursue discussions with Traveller organisation	All	November 2007	
Pursue discussions with RSLs	CM/DC	Mar 2008	
Pursue discussions with PCTs	GB	Mar 2008	
Pursue participation in Hate Crime Steering Group	?	Ongoing	
5. To secure funding to enable the development and delivery of effective and sustainable services across the County.			
Identify key priorities and action plans for areas we want to explore through CAES	Bx Managers	02/08	
Develop a Fundraising Strategy	?	05/08	
Maintain spreadsheet of funding streams and possibilities	GB	ongoing	
Submit funding application to ESCC and any other Donors.	?	?	

6. To promote and market the work of Citizens Advice East Sussex and the constituent Bureaux in order to make our service accessible, increase our volunteer recruitment and attract additional funding.			
Maintain and update website	AB	ongoing	All managers to feed Information to AB
Participate in at least two public events		Oct 2008	
Give at least two talks/presentations on the work of CAES		Oct 2008	
Produce CAES marketing strategy		End 2008	
7. To be a centre of excellence that provides a model of good practice for Citizens Advice Bureaux in other Counties to emulate.			
Promote the CAES model to other Bureaux	Chair/?	ongoing	