# Section A: The organisations and groups within the partnership

## Lead applicant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organisation:</th>
<th>Isabel Hospice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Organisation:</td>
<td>Registered Charity</td>
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</table>
| Contact details:      | Contact - Christine Mills  
                        Email - [Christine.mills@isabelhospice.org.uk](mailto:Christine.mills@isabelhospice.org.uk)  
                        Phone - 01707 382 500  
                        Address - 61 Bridge Road East, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 1JR |
| Summary of organisation: | Isabel Hospice offers palliative and end of life care to adults with a life-limiting illness in eastern Hertfordshire. Our partnership with Citizens Advice East Herts means that our patients and families receive high quality, up to date, professional support in claiming the Welfare Benefits to which they are entitled. Working with patients who are terminally ill is sensitive and demanding and requires expert skills and knowledge provided by the CAB. |

## Partner 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organisation:</th>
<th>Citizens Advice East Herts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Organisation:</td>
<td>Registered charity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Contact details:      | Contact - Laura Hyde  
                        Email - [dm@ehcas.org.uk](mailto:dm@ehcas.org.uk)  
                        Address - 74 South Street, Bishop’s Stortford, CM23 3AZ |
| Summary of organisation: | Citizens Advice East Herts provides free, confidential and impartial advice with the goal of helping everyone find a way forward, whatever problems they face. They provide Benefits advice to patients and families of Isabel Hospice who are living with cancer and other life-limiting illnesses. Issues often go beyond simple Benefits advice to dealing with taxes, employment, debt, housing, health and community care, legal questions and immigration and asylum. |
**Section B: Partnerships & Stories**

**What the partnership is achieving and learning**

1. Your partnership’s project or initiative.

Isabel Hospice recognises that people with life-limiting illnesses have issues that go beyond pain and symptom control. Financial worries cause intense anxiety, particularly if people are unable to work or are faced with complex questions with which they are too ill to cope.

The partnership between Isabel Hospice and Citizens Advice East Herts gives about 900 of our patients each year access to the specialised services of Citizens Advice. Over 600 of these are simple cases handled by our community nurses, having received current benefits training from the Welfare Benefits Adviser, employed by Citizens Advice East Herts but dedicated to working with Hospice patients and families.

A further 250-300 patients and families, with more complicated issues require the expertise of the Welfare Benefits Adviser directly. He works with clients by phone, visits people at home, or at our Day Services or in the Hospice In-Patient Unit, whichever is most convenient.

2. How did your partnership come about and develop?

Many families suffer financial hardship as a result of the patient's illness, and often the patient is too ill and the family too burdened by responsibilities of caring to be able to access the help and advice they need. For some families this is the first time they have had to approach the complex benefits system, and at such a traumatic time, the experience can be overwhelming.

Recognising this additional burden to families, Isabel Hospice formed a partnership with Citizens Advice East Herts in October 2010, from whom we commission our Welfare Benefits Advice Service.

The advantages of this are that it provides:

• a robust ‘kite marked’ service
• professional Liability Insurance cover
• specialist support services which ensure that a full range of client issues can be dealt with by the Adviser.

At the same time there is a benefit to Citizens Advice East Herts, who are now reaching clients who previously had been unable to access their services. Although the service was originally designed to offer advice on Benefits, it has gradually grown to include other areas such as help with Wills, grants, fuel allowances, housing matters and debt. Where necessary the Adviser may advocate on behalf of the client.

3. Impact. Please describe what outcomes you are achieving, your impact or how you are making a difference.

The difference this project makes is impressive. From April – September 2016 (annualised) a staggering total of £551,751 in new Benefits and awards was achieved by the project. In total, in 2015/16, 200 clients were seen with 991 contacts made with or on behalf of patients. Research done by Macmillan Cancer Support in 2012 shows that 83% of people with cancer are on average £570 per month worse off. The main contributory factor is loss of income, but increased expenses for treatment, including travelling to hospital appointments and increased fuel bills are additional, unanticipated expenses. The Benefits Adviser feeds back information to the local and national Citizens Advice Campaigns and Research Teams any perceived problems with government policy or services. This information may be used to support change in wider national policy. Highlighting the problems of Isabel Hospice patients provides evidence needed for government ministers and MPs to address anomalies in the benefits system that can impact negatively on hospice patients nationwide. In one case, the Adviser discovered that the DWP had been advising clients incorrectly on a question of occupational versus state pension income, which meant that the patient was told she was not eligible for Employment and Support Allowance. When this was corrected, her income increased by over £100 per week.

In another situation, the Benefits Adviser uncovered an anomaly in the DWP computer system that resulted in corrections to the system and an apology to a patient’s partner from the then DWP Minister, Iain Duncan Smith.
4. How partnership working is helping you to achieve more.

Terminally ill patients come under what the Department for Work and Pensions calls ‘special rules for the terminally ill’. To claim welfare benefits under ‘special rules’, a claimant’s doctor completes a DS1500 form stating that the doctor believes the patient is not expected to live more than six months. Isabel Hospice is adept at making claims under ‘special rules’, but there are situations, particularly with working-age patients, when complicated circumstances require a thorough benefit check by the Welfare Benefits Adviser to ensure the full entitlements are claimed. Generalist Citizens Advice advisers and DWP staff do not often deal with ‘special rules’ clients. However, the Welfare Benefits Adviser who works with Isabel Hospice patients is now highly attuned to these special claims and can expedite claims when the DWP staff have overlooked that they are being made under ‘special rules’.

With his specialist knowledge, the Welfare Benefits Adviser is very effective in appealing decisions that are made incorrectly and can advocate on patients’ behalf. In addition, he can follow through on difficult cases that make demands on energy and resilience that would be beyond the strength of very ill patients and their families. From the point of view of Isabel Hospice, we are confident that our patients are receiving the best advice possible at a critical time for both patients and families. Our nurses can focus on their field of expertise, which is pain and symptom control, while the Benefits Adviser uses his expertise to provide an excellent, professional advice service.

5. How you are making sure that the partnership is working effectively.

This partnership has been working successfully since 2010. The patients and families from Isabel Hospice have gained enormously from having direct access to the expertise of the Benefits Adviser from Citizens Advice East Herts. The nurses and patients know they can trust the Citizens Advice, which has a well-deserved reputation for providing expert advice.

The Benefits Adviser is able to reach patients who would find it impossible to access their services. Patients can be reached by phone, home visit or at Hospice Day Services or In-Patient Unit. Nurses know the anxiety that financial worries can cause to patients and families who are already in distress from dealing with life-threatening illness. They know when they make a referral that the patient or family member will be seen quickly and with understanding and sensitivity.

The Adviser informs the nurses when there are changes to the benefit system that will affect Hospice patients and families. He gives them the basic knowledge they need to deal with straightforward situations, leaving him more time to work on more complicated cases. These often involve families where both partners are still working and unaware of the benefits that are available to people who are too ill to work and for carers, who might have to give up work to care for their loved one.

The Benefits Adviser is able to improve his knowledge from working with working-age patients as well as those who are elderly, learning skills that can be passed on to fellow Citizens Advice advisers.

6. What you are learning from each other.

By working together, both organisations have realised they can provide a more robust and holistic service than they could deliver individually. This partnership gives both organisations the opportunity to enhance the services they offer to people affected by life-limiting illness by enabling them to access a high quality advice service designed to meet individual needs. Citizens Advice East Herts is able to help vulnerable and difficult to reach people in the community who would not be able to access their services in the usual way. The knowledge the Adviser gains from his work can be passed on to the more generalist advisers in the organisation. In addition, and of benefit to Isabel Hospice’s patients, he can access the most up-to-date expert information and support from the wider Citizens Advice organisation for help with the most difficult situations. Isabel Hospice nurses can refer patients to the service with confidence they will be seen quickly and dealt with sensitively. By being embedded in both organisations, the Adviser is not working in isolation like a social worker or benefits adviser employed by a hospice. Both organisations agree that this project illustrates Aristotle’s adage: ‘The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.’