

Job title: Information & Guidance Officer

Contract type: 1 year fixed term – 31st March 2022

Salary: £22,000 to £25,000

Location: Earls Colne, Essex

Working hours: 35 hours full time

Background

At Healthwatch Essex, we provide an Information & Guidance Service to help people understand, navigate and access health, wellbeing and care services in Essex¹, as well as gathering people's experiences to help improve local services.

We know that people often struggle to access the information and support they need and that the pressure on health and care services is increasing. Each month we receive hundreds of enquiries on a wide range of topics including GP registration, accessing social care, hospital discharge, making a complaint and finding local community or advocacy services. As an independent and confidential service, we listen to people's experiences and provide information about their next steps and the choices available to them.

The Information Service works alongside the other Healthwatch Essex teams to gather evidence of people's experiences of health and care, and to work with service commissioners, stakeholders and providers to make sure that they take this into account. We are a charity, with powers under the Health and Social Care Act (2012) to help us ensure we are heard.

The role

The core function of the Information & Guidance Officer is to work as part of a small team to deliver Information, Advice and Guidance in various formats. There will be a requirement to travel across the county of Essex as part of the role at least once a week.

Key accountabilities

- To handle telephone, email, text, whatsapp, webchat and face to face enquiries from the public and professionals who require information on local services and avenues of support and action. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Ensuring that people are provided with clear and appropriate information in response to their enquiry.

¹ Healthwatch Essex has a geographical remit that covers all the administrative county of Essex, which excludes Thurrock and Southend. These areas have their own local Healthwatch organisations.

- Ensuring that people contacting the service feel supported and treated with empathy and respect.
 - Facilitating access to information for people who may face barriers in finding or using information about services including disseminating information created by the Healthwatch Essex team to a broad demographic of the community.
 - Escalating any urgent, emergency or safeguarding issues to the appropriate authorities.
 - Effectively listening to and recording people's, often difficult, experiences of health and social care including hate crime reporting and domestic abuse reporting.
- To work closely with the Information & Guidance Manager and the team, to ensure that the service is delivered in line with all relevant policies, procedures and quality standards.
 - To support and maintain positive working relationships with other information providing/complaint handling organisations within health, social care and the voluntary and community sector, ensuring that Healthwatch Essex is able to guide people to the most suitable source of information and to the next steps open to them.
 - To develop and maintain a broad knowledge base of people's rights, connected with health and social care, as set out in the NHS Constitution and other statutory and regulatory frameworks.
 - To ensure that all data and information collected is properly recorded on the Healthwatch Essex CRM database, having due regard to the charity's data protection and confidentiality policies.
 - To monitor and approve online feedback about services on the Healthwatch Essex website feedback centre and look for opportunities to provide accessible information via the website.
 - To contribute to the production of reports which will enable both Healthwatch Essex and Healthwatch England to have an accurate picture of people's lived experience of health and social care.
 - To collect and collate lived experience in various forms including case studies.
 - To co-produce information guides for the website and for wider distribution into the community
 - To travel to and attend external meetings on behalf of the organisation to share information you have gathered and feed information back in to the Healthwatch Essex team

- To work with the Information & Guidance Manager to ensure that future enhancements to the service are implemented effectively and additional funding to support the service is obtained.
- To conduct other tasks and duties as considered reasonable by the Information and Guidance Manager or CEO.

Person specification

The post holder will be comfortable working with the public, and be an engaging and effective communicator, with good verbal, active listening and written skills. You will be solution focussed, and able to show a high-level of judgement and discretion when dealing with individuals. You will also have a high regard for the sensitivities of working within health and social care. You will be capable of building effective relationships with comparable professionals within other organisations, and be committed to advancing the interests of patients, service users and the public within the changing landscape of health and social care. There will be a requirement for travel to represent Healthwatch Essex in appropriate forums.

You will also be enthusiastic about working within a small and ambitious team, with a demonstrable regard for the values and principles of Healthwatch Essex and a willingness to work flexibly to achieve the organisation's strategic objectives.

Knowledge, skills, attributes and experience

Essential

- Extensive knowledge and experience of working in health, social care and/or the voluntary sector.
- Experience of providing high quality information or advice to the public.
- An understanding of the difficulties people face in accessing and using information.
- Ability to work with sensitivity and demonstrate sound judgement.
- An understanding of the importance of confidentiality and data protection.
- Knowledge of and commitment to the highest customer service standards.
- Excellent active listening and communication skills.
- Experience of working in collaboration with other organisations.
- Knowledge and experience of using IT-systems, including Microsoft Office and the internet, data extraction and the production of reports.
- Excellent administrative and organisational skills, including accurate and timely record keeping.
- Confident in public speaking and interacting with diverse groups from varying strategic and public cohorts.
- Willingness to take on different tasks as the role develops, to meet the needs of the organisation.
- Willingness to regularly travel across the county of Essex as served by Healthwatch Essex to attend meetings with partners / agencies as required.

Desirable

- A demonstrable understanding of how health and care services are commissioned and regulated.
- Experience of maintaining accurate records on a database.
- Experience of safeguarding of vulnerable adults.
- A knowledge of the principles of equality and diversity and a commitment to upholding this as working practice.
- Any other additional language skills