

**Job title: Carers Voices Officer**

**Contract type: Fixed Term 6-9 months with potential 2-year extension**

**Salary: £25,000 per annum**

**Location: Earls Colne, Essex**

**Working hours: Full time or part-time**

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## **Background**

At Healthwatch Essex, we provide an Information & Guidance Service to help people to understand, navigate and access health, care and wellbeing services in Essex<sup>1</sup>, as well as gathering people's experiences to help improve local services, of which carers are a key part of.

The Information & Guidance Service works alongside the Healthwatch Essex Engagement, Research and Communications Teams to gather evidence of people's voice and experiences of health and care, and to work with service commissioners and providers to make sure that they take these into account. We are a charity and have powers under the Health and Social Care Act (2022) to help us make sure that we are heard.

With the introduction of the 2014 Care Act Essex County Council (ECC) assumed statutory duties to provide support for unpaid Carers and subsequently Carers became a key priority. Following extensive consultation with carers and partners the Council co-produced and published the [Essex All-age Carers Strategy 2022](#). The strategy sets out 6 Commitments to Carers which are:

1. To ensure that carers can easily access the information, advice, guidance and support when they need it and early into their caring role.
2. To develop professional practice and processes to improve identification and support to carers.
3. To improve transitions for carers as they move through specific phases or life events in their caring role.
4. To ensure carers will have increased opportunity to access good quality support, including opportunities for breaks, to maintain their own wellbeing and those they care for.
5. To ensure carers' needs and rights will be understood and recognised across Essex communities.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

6. To ensure carers will be the experts that influence, shape and be involved in the decisions that are intended to improve their support and wellbeing.

This role is integral to ensuring the successful delivery of the commitments and ensuring carers are integral to the decision-making process.

Healthwatch Essex comprises a small team of professionals and trained volunteers – but we have big ambitions. We want to be an effective agent of local change, and to reflect the highest standards of national and international best practice.

### **The role**

The core function of this role is to work as part of a small team to identify, engage with and empower unpaid carers. The role will enable carers to have a voice and will put carers at the heart of developments, design and decision making on the things that are intended to support them in their role.

This will include working across the Essex footprint of the three Integrated Care Board areas of Mid and South Essex, Suffolk and North East Essex, and Hertfordshire and West Essex. This post will cover only the Essex footprint.

### **Key accountabilities**

- To reach out and actively engage with individuals in an unpaid caring role. This includes:
  - Identifying unpaid carers and working with them to agree best methods of communication
    - Create the right conditions for carers to be empowered to contribute and influence the things that matter to them.
  - Ensure the individuals have access to information in a format that they can engage with and is personalised to their requirements.
  - Escalating any urgent, emergency or safeguarding issues to the appropriate authorities.
  - Effectively listening to and recording people's often difficult experiences and ensuring these experiences are heard by those who can affect change.
  - To carry out insight and ongoing engagement into the specified area of unpaid carers to gain greater understanding for this specific group of individuals.
  - To portray the findings from this ongoing engagement and live conversation in a range of formats including presentations, reports and papers.

- To undertake outreach activities in order to increase awareness of carers voices program with the public. This includes:
  - Undertaking planned outreach activities including events, presentations and service visits across Essex to capture and articulate the voice and lived experience of carers, through a range of methodologies.
  - Networking and creating opportunities to promote carers voices.
- To build and maintain positive working relationships with other organisations supporting unpaid carers to enable data collection and two open discussions.
- Present findings from the engagement work and represent the views of unpaid carers at decision making boards.
- Hold to account decision makers to ensure actions are carried out.
- To develop and maintain an excellent knowledge base of health and social care services available in Essex, including those supporting carers, provided by voluntary and community organisations. This includes:
  - Contributing to the maintenance and growth of the Healthwatch Essex directory of services and setting up a new directory of services specific to carers.
  - Liaising with other members of the Healthwatch Essex team to ensure that information and insights gathered are shared appropriately in order to further our wider role.
- To ensure that all data and information collected is properly recorded in a timely manner on the Healthwatch Essex information management systems, having due regard to the charity's policies such as data protection and confidentiality.
- 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 conduct other tasks and duties as considered reasonable by the Information, Advice and Guidance Manager and/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 carers within the changing landscape of health

and social care. You will have a passion for enabling the less likely to be heard voices in our county to share their experiences and for addressing health inequalities.

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 and creatively to achieve the organisation's strategic objectives.

## **Knowledge, skills, attributes and experience**

### **Essential**

- Good standard of general education.
- Knowledge and experience of working in health, wellbeing and/or social care
- Experience of working with, or lived experience of being, an unpaid carer.
- An understanding of the difficulties people faces in sharing their experiences and being heard.
- Ability to work with sensitivity and demonstrate sound judgement.
- An understanding of the importance of confidentiality and data protection, as it relates to the job.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- Experience of working in collaboration with other organisations.
- Knowledge and experience of using IT-systems, including Microsoft Office and the internet.
- Ability to work creatively and proactively to solve problems.
- Able to work independently and on own initiative as well as part of a team.
- Willingness to take on different tasks as the role develops, to meet the needs of the organisation.
- Commitment to addressing health inequalities across the system.
- Willingness to travel to meet the requirements of the role.
- Robust understanding of safeguarding.

### **Desirable**

- An understanding of key current health and social care issues. Experience of working in the voluntary sector.
- Experience of undertaking outreach and service promotion activities.
- Knowledge of key health and care providers and regulatory authorities.

For an application form please visit:

<http://www.healthwatchesessex.org.uk/content/vacancies-healthwatch-essex>

For more information about Healthwatch Essex, visit [www.healthwatchesessex.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchesessex.org.uk) or contact Sharon Westfield de Cortez, Information, Advice and Guidance Manager, on 0300 500 1895 or [enquiries@healthwatchesessex.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchesessex.org.uk)