**Job title:** Information & Signposting Officer

**Contract type:** Permanent

**Salary:** £22,000 to £25,000 per annum, plus pension arrangements

**Location:** Feering, Essex

**Working hours:** Up to 35 hours per week. Part-time applicants welcome.

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**Background**

At Healthwatch Essex, we recently created a brand new ‘one-stop shop’ to provide information about health and social care to the people of Essex. This new ‘information and signposting’ service will be vital to helping Healthwatch Essex realise its vision to be ‘an independent voice for the people of Essex, helping to shape and improve local health and social care services’.

The main aim of the Information and Signposting Service is help people to understand, navigate and access health and social care services in Essex. We want to provide a service that is accessible, person-centred and responsive to the sometimes complex needs of individuals. We believe that this will help improve people’s experiences of health and social care services in Essex. In addition, the service will enable us to gather vital information about people’s experiences of health and social care, and so provide evidence of what is good – and what is not so good – about services in Essex.

The Information and Signposting Service will complement the core work of Healthwatch Essex – which includes innovative outreach and engagement, and rigorous social research. Our ultimate aim is to gather evidence of people’s voice and experiences of health and social care, and to work with service commissioners and providers to make sure that they take these into account. Healthwatch Essex has powers under the Health and Social Care Act (2012) to help us make sure that we are heard.

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. To do so, our success will depend upon building an accessible, person-centred Information and Signposting Service for the people of Essex¹, as well as developing constructive partnerships with the NHS, local authorities and voluntary and community organisations.

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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.
If you think you’ve got what it takes to help us provide an excellent Information and Signposting Service, we’d love to hear from you.

For more information, visit www.healthwatchsex.org.uk

The role

The core function of the Information & Signposting Officer is to work as part of a small team to promote and deliver the Information and Signposting Service.

Key accountabilities

- To handle telephone enquiries from the public and professionals who require information on local services. This includes:
  - Ensuring that people are provided with appropriate and clear information in response to their enquiry.
  - Ensuring that people are signposted to appropriate organisations, and that they understand any steps that they may need to take next.
  - 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.
  - 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.

- To undertake outreach activities in order to increase awareness of the service among referral organisations and the public. This includes:
  - Undertaking planned outreach activities including presentations and service visits across Essex.
  - Networking and creating opportunities to promote the service.
  - Ensuring that promotional materials are effectively displayed at key outreach points.

- To develop and maintain a good knowledge base of health and social care services available in Essex, including those provided by voluntary and community organisations. This includes:
Contributing to the maintenance of the Healthwatch Essex (HWE) directory of services.

Contributing to the development of signposting ‘pathways’ or flow diagrams in relation to patient/service user/carer experiences of health and social care.

Liaising with other members of the HWE team to ensure that information and insights gathered are shared appropriately so as to further our wider role.

Maintaining awareness of changes to services commissioned and delivered in and around the county of Essex.

- To build and maintain positive working relationships with other information providing/complaint handling organisations within health, social care and the voluntary and community sector, ensuring that HWE is able to signpost people to the most suitable source of information and to the next steps open to them.

- To maintain a broad base knowledge 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 HWE information management system, having due regard to charity policies such as data protection and confidentiality.

- To monitor and approve online feedback about services on the Healthwatch Website in line with service guidelines.

- 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.

- Work with the Information and Signposting Manager to ensure that future enhancements to the service are implemented effectively. This includes:
  - The development and handling of email/other electronic forms of enquiry from the public and professionals.
  - The creation of a HWE web presence and other online resources.
  - The development of other innovative forms of outreach and engagement.

- To conduct other tasks and duties as considered reasonable by the Information and Signposting 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 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.

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

- Good standard of general education.
- Extensive knowledge and experience of working in health and social care.
- Experience of handling enquiries from the public.
- An understanding of the difficulties people face in accessing and using information.
- An understanding of the importance of confidentiality and data protection, as it relates to the job.
- Experience of developing and maintaining an information resource.
- Excellent presentation 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.
- Own transport and able to travel extensively to meet the requirements of the role.

Desirable

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