



### ABOUT THE CLIENT

Healthwatch Essex is an independent voice for the people of Essex. They gather and represent peoples' views about health and care services in the county in order to help improve them. Part of the work they do is undertaken by volunteers – known as Ambassadors – who act as the “eyes and ears” of Healthwatch Essex. Ambassadors go out into their communities and gather people’s feedback to build up a picture of experiences. They also meet with NHS and social care authorities who design and deliver services to share that feedback.

### THEIR TRAINING NEEDS

Shortly after setting up in 2013, Healthwatch Essex invited bids from training providers to deliver a programme to train their volunteer Ambassadors. The brief was for Ambassadors to be fully equipped with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to engage successfully with every member of the community, and to be able to use this knowledge to influence decision making within health and social care. VST successfully put in a bid to deliver this training programme, already having 15 years of experience of delivering training of this type to the voluntary sector.

### OUR APPROACH

VST put together a core training programme based on achieving the outcomes in the brief. These were a series of four half day modules on the following: Facilitation Skills for engaging with the public and local communities, Leadership and Communication Skills, The Power of Voice and Lived Experience and Equality and Diversity in Action. This has been followed by a series of three more sessions for Ambassadors taking on more advanced roles covering Commissioning, Understanding and using Evidence for Impact and Advanced Presentation Skills. The programme is continuously evaluated and changes made as necessary to meet the needs of the client and their learners.

### RESULTS

Up to August 2015 ten sets of core training have been run, plus an additional adapted programme for Learning Disability Ambassadors as well as an Advanced and a Research Ambassador programme. This has enabled well over 150 people to acquire or improve their skills and knowledge in order to effectively represent, engage and influence health and social care provision in Essex. This therefore contributes to Healthwatch Essex’s key objective of making a difference to health and social care provision for the people of Essex. Furthermore elements of the programme have been rolled out to local NHS commissioners, patient representative groups and to Essex County Council.

***“It has been a pleasure to work with VST over the last two years. They were instrumental in developing a signature training package to support our work capturing people’s lived experiences of health and care services in Essex. Through this work we’ve been able make a positive impact on people’s lives.”***

Dr David Sollis, Engagement Manager Healthwatch Essex

